

MINUTES
City of Glenwood Springs Planning and Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting
January 27, 2025
Council Chambers, First Floor
101 W. 8TH STREET 6:00 PM

1. Roll Call

Present: Commissioners: Carolyn Cipperly, Amy Connerton, Pete Waller, Joy White, Connie Geiman, John Haughton, Gregory Cowan

Also Present: Community Development Director Trent Hyatt, Senior Planner Emery Ellingson, , Long Range Principal Planner Jim Hardcastle, Deputy City Clerk Liz Jeplawy, City Attorney Karl Hanlon

2. Conflicts of Interest

None

3. Receipt of Minutes

No receipt of minutes

4. Comments from citizens for items not appearing on the agenda

No public comment was offered.

5. New Items

a. Planning File VAR-000098-2025 Variance, Iron Mountain Hot Springs

Long Range Principal Planner Jim Hardcastle presented Planning File VAR-000098-2025, Variance, for Iron Mountain Hot Springs, recommending denial with findings and conditions in the staff report.

Commissioner questions, comments, and staff responses included the following:

- Clarification requested of changes between the sign proposed in 2014 from the new proposed sign. **Staff response:** Changes include the public is not allowed to access the tower, sign is integrated into the surface of the structure, and signage is smaller in size. However, the previous variance staff report was recommended for denial as this one is today.
- Are there similar structures or signs in Glenwood Springs? **Staff response:** Not that we are aware of. Of note, the nature of such a structure was not anticipated for pole signs in the Municipal Code, hence the need for the variance.
- Clarification requested on maximum sign heights in other places in the city. **Staff response:** The maximum for most districts, especially with commercial expose to the public, is 20'.

- Why does the Municipal Code only allow 1 pole support for a pole structure and not two. **Staff response:** The definition was created as such to establish a standard; one pole also minimizes the number of items that can block the view of drivers.
- Explain the variance criteria and review the staff recommendation for denial, as many of these are subjective. **Staff response:** These were reviewed and clarified.
- As there was an opportunity to further review and interpret the definitions of signs and how that has affected the variance request, is there the need to possibly revise the code? **Staff response:** The unique nature of this tower focused on the definitions of the code, and they we included for reference, not necessarily cited as a need to examine the code for potential modifications.
- Clarification requested on the number of variance criteria required to be approved. **Staff response:** The list was reviewed and it was stated that all seven items must be met to gain approval.
- Were any code compliant alternatives considered by applicant. **Staff response:** Staff met with the applicant, and alternate locations and options were discussed by staff, alternate to where it had originally been proposed, though that option was taken off the table by the applicant.
- What is the intent of the criteria and how long have they been put in place? **Staff response:** These have been in place for many years, and it is common to find such findings lists of some sort in all jurisdictions.
- Please explain the difference between a pole sign and an attached sign on a building vs a structure and how this affects heights. What would change if this were a building. **Staff response:** The sign would be allowed higher as a sign on a building based on building maximum heights, much higher than an allowed sign pole.

Applicant Bruce Barth gave a presentation to the Commission on the application.

- He discussed the merits of the previous variance approval in 2014.
- Comparison between the original and current pole sign.
- The current location for installation.
- The proposed location, over 100' from the interstate.
- Comparison of other similar properties and existing signs in various districts, other RE zone parcels and existing signs, and other 6 & 24 corridor existing signs.

Commissioner questions, comments, and applicant responses included the following:

- Specify the grade difference between I-70 and the proposed location of the sign. Applicant responded with 5'-6' as a guess, later clarified at 10' by the Director.
- Discuss the differences in height between the 2014 sign and the current proposed sign. Applicant responded that the sign is lower by 1' between 36'-44', though the structure is 47' compared to 52' from the past approval.
- Describe the tower location: It is proposed at 50' to the right-of-way, and 100' to I-70 asphalt, on a parking island in a landscaped area as required by code.
- Describe what the sign says and if it is wayfinding. It is not directional and indicates "Iron Mountain Hot Springs - A World Springs Property."

- Please explain the expiration of the previous variance. It expired 3 years from the 2014 approval, and staff explained how the location and design changes currently planned would have necessitated a new variance regardless of expiration.
- Clarification requested on the height of the lowest bars on the proposed sign from grade and if someone could walk under it or climb on it. The applicant indicated the cables and space of the wooded braces would not invite the public to access the structure.
- Is there lighting that would illuminate the structure? The applicant indicated the base of the tower would be highly visible at night.
- Commissioner Cipperly expressed disappointment at the applicant choosing not to install a “green roof” on one of their campus structures as proposed in the 2014 development approval, as this expected innovation would have been a nice to have. Where is it?
- An examination of the historical site photo of the site focused on scale.

Commissioner Waller opened the item to public comments. No members of the public presented. Commissioner Waller closed the item to public comment.

Commissioner Connerton made an alternate motion, opposing the staff recommendation, to approve Action Items 1 and 2 with the following findings:

- Exceptional site conditions: The site has a unique shape and is adjacent to the river. The buildings are angled unusually, and the property looks down from I-70, making the site conditions not typical or common
- Strict code application produces undue hardship: Due to the site's physical and regulatory constraints, strict compliance with current signage rules would prevent the sign from functioning reasonably for identification and wayfinding comparable to similar properties. This hardship is considered a "practical difficulty."
- Hardship not self-created: The hardship arises from the inherent characteristics of the site and existing regulatory constraints, not from the applicant's design choices.
- No harm to public or code intent: The proposal is seen to advance design quality, consolidate signage, and enhance the corridor's character in a manner consistent with the intent of sign regulations.
- Hardship beyond convenience or financial gain: The hardship stems from physical site constraints affecting basic site identification, not from a desire for increased exposure or profit.
- No building/fire code conflict: This was already supported.
- Minimum variance necessary: The requested sign configuration represents the minimum relief needed to address the site-specific visibility and placement constraints.

Commissioner Cowan seconded the motion.

Commissioner discussion after the motion included:

- The applicant had created their own hardship by choosing this specific design and not a more code compliant option, some commissioners cannot approve of this as in their opinion all seven criteria cannot be met.
- Discussion regarding the impact of signage on the community.
- Consideration for visibility from I-70 was discussed.

- Concept of how the sign contributes to decline and/or enhancement of community character and economic vitality, and how the Code addresses protecting the character of the community.
- Consideration of signage alternatives and how the proposed sign compares to a code compliant pole sign.

Commissioner Waller called the item to question. Motion passed with a vote of 4-3 with commissioners Connerton, Cowan, Chair Waller and Geiman voting in favor, and commissioners Cipperly, Houghton, and White not voting in favor.

b. Lighting and Illumination Work Session

Senior Planner Emery Ellingson presented lighting, illumination, and signage and provided several discussion points for Planning and Zoning Commission to discuss.

Commissioner discussion included:

- Interested in the regulation of lighting fixture color.
- Request for staff to come back with comparisons of ordinances, incentives, and initiatives from other communities.
- Variable lighting controls for parking lots
- Balancing the needs of safety vs. Light pollution and obtaining input from the Police Department
- Previous efforts at light regulation within the City, including efforts in the early 2000s to address the issue.
- Consideration of how excessive lighting can affect animals.
- Consideration of how lighting controls can affect businesses in terms of safety, security, and insurance.
- Considering adapting the curfew for signing to be more expansive than just within view of residential zoning districts.
- Discussion of the City's role in contributing to illumination, including exterior lighting at Two Rivers Park and North Landing.
- Discussing differences in signage illumination and permitted locations for each type.

Following the discussion, the Commission requested that staff come back with additional information which would include examples from other communities.

6. Commissioner Comments

Commissioners discussed Carolyn Cipperly, they noted.

- Appreciation for Service: Commissioners thanked her for her six years of service, highlighting how different things were when she started.
- Positive Energy and Focus: She was praised for bringing "good energy" and a "specific focus" to the discussions.
- Mentorship and Collegiality: Colleagues noted her willingness to take new commissioners "under her wing" and appreciated sitting alongside her.
- Future Endeavors: Carolyn herself mentioned her plans to continue with other volunteer projects, including work with the preservation commission, museum presentations, and

botanical gardens. She stated it had been a pleasure to serve with all the staff and commissioners.

- Commissioner Cipperly noted her thanks and appreciation for her time on Planning & Zoning Commission and staff.

Regarding the vacant land north of Walmart, which is a combination of private and BLM holdings, can it be developed into mountain biking trails? The city cannot maintain additional amenities in addition to the many locations of public use in the city. Hiking is a highly utilized use and biking registers less participants currently.

7. Director Comments

Community Development Director Trent Hyatt noted the following:

- He specifically thanked **Carolyn Cipperly** for her service on multiple public service platforms, noting it was good to have familiar faces when he returned.
- He emphasized the significant service the commissioners provide to the community, reiterating his appreciation for their contributions.
- Future projects next month from applicants and a set of proposed code amendments: 070.040.050 - Landscaping, Screening, and Fencing

8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:10PM.