

JO DAVIESS COUNTY
AD-HOC ZONING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 16, 2025

I. Call to Order

Committee Chairperson Cassens called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, in the Jo Daviess County Board Room, Jo Daviess County Courthouse in Galena, Illinois.

II. Roll Call

Roll Call was answered as follows: Present – Dan Caswell, John Creighton, LaVonne Deininger (arrived at 6:02 PM), Michael Dittmar, Brian Engle, William Meeker, LaDon Trost, Cory Cassens. Present: 8. Present electronically – Steve McIntyre. Present electronically: 1. Absent – Beth Baranski, Diane Gallagher, Joel Holland, Tony Jones. Absent: 4.

III. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of October 21, 2025 Ad-Hoc Zoning Committee meeting was made by William Meeker and seconded by Dan Caswell. The motion carried by voice vote.

IV. Citizens' Comments

There were no citizens' comments.

V. Unfinished Business

None.

VI. New Business

The Subcommittee discussed past actions regarding the Jo Daviess County Sign Ordinance and revisited the provisions in the ordinance relating to "non-conforming" signs, specifically, Section 8-4C-5 A 3 of the ordinance.

John Creighton referenced an off-premise sign in Woodbine that had been out of use for a number of years. The sign was refurbished/repared and new business advertising was placed on the sign structure. William Meeker explained that roughly a month ago, the Code Enforcement Officer (who drives from Stockton daily) noticed that the abandoned sign on the east side of Woodbine had been refurbished and new off-premise signage was installed for "The Pit Stop" in Stockton. Notice was sent to the property owner, and he communicated with the business owner that the sign was in violation and a notice was sent out. In light of the current ongoing discussions, enforcement action will be held in abeyance until it is determined what modifications will be made to the sign ordinance related to unused non-conforming signs. John Creighton summarized his recollection of past discussions regarding signage a few months ago (in June 2025). Cory Cassens noted that the action from June required notification to the owners of the signs providing 180-days to remove the sign after 180-days of non-use; nothing else in the code was changed. John Creighton felt that the language should be

clarified to provide notification to sign owners if their sign is out of use; they will have 180-days to repair/replace/remove; the time starts with receipt of the notice from the Zoning Administrator's office. Dan Cassens and William Meeker clarified that the 180-days was provided to remove the sign, but that the Zoning Administrator would work with the owner to provide some flexibility in the timeframe for removal. Steve McIntyre thought that the code required the sign to be out of use for a period of 12 months, then the owner would be given 180-days to remove the sign. Dan Caswell noted that that is not what the current code states. John Creighton noted the importance of tightening up the language to ensure no room for misinterpretation. LaDon Trost stated that this type of provision would be difficult to enforce; William Meeker concurred, noting staffing limitations. He further noted that though the current code references the timing of discontinuance of a business is difficult to monitor.

LaDon Trost asked if there is an annual fee for sign usage; this would provide a means of monitoring the discontinuance of the use of signs. William Meeker noted that this would be similar to the annual renewal process for guest accommodations. LaDon Trost noted that this type of procedure with an annual tag attached to the sign provides a means of monitoring. Mike Dittmar was not supportive of another fee imposed upon businesses, and that this would require additional staffing.

Sean Saunders (Saunders Propane) and Michelle McGee (Pit Stop) noted that the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has issued tags for their signs. Didn't know the County also had jurisdiction. William Meeker noted that the County also has jurisdiction over signage on private property adjacent to roadways; directional signs are separate from this discussion.

LaVonne Deininger noted her experience with a past business; it took years for the business to be sold. How are signs for businesses that are for sale to be addressed? Steve McIntyre noted that this would only permit six months to sell a business; not sure how to address this. One-hundred, eighty days is not enough time. John Creighton noted that the 180-days would be triggered once the County becomes aware of a problem. The fact that a business is for sale would not trigger a finding that a sign has been abandoned. William Meeker felt that providing 180 days to correct abandoned signs, but be willing to work with a business owner to permit the retention of the business sign as long as it is for sale, since it is tied to the value of the asset.

LaDon Trost asked how many such signs exist in the County? William Meeker indicated that this is unknown.

A motion to modify Section 8-4C-5 A 3 to cross out "and removed" and add notification provided to the owner who shall be given 180-days to repair/replace/remove the sign, subject to a reasonable extension of time when the business is for sale was made by Dan Caswell and seconded by John Creighton. The motion carried by voice vote.

The Subcommittee discussed staff's proposal for standards for a new sign category: "Local Business Off-Premise Signs" which is summarized as follows:

- Double-faced signs permitted, limited to no greater than 32 square feet/sign face with an overall height above the adjacent grade of no greater than 20 feet to the top of the sign.

- The business advertised on the sign must be located within Jo Daviess County, and situated no greater than 10-miles from the sign location.
- No more than one Local Business Off-Premise sign structure on a property; sign structures may advertise more than one business as long as all other criteria in this section are met.
- Local Business, Off-Premise signs may be erected no closer than one-mile from any other off-premise sign, including traditional billboards. In determining compliance with this standard, signs on both sides of the highway corridor shall be considered.
- Must be continually maintained in good condition.
- If discontinued for a period of 12 months or greater, the sign structure must be removed from the property.

After discussion, generally there was consensus with the proposed standards, with the exception that language stating that the business shall be "situated no greater than 10-miles from the sign location" shall be stricken and revising the last bullet to modify Section 8-4C-5 A 3 crossing out "and removed" and add notification provided to the owner who shall be given 180-days to repair/replace/remove the sign, subject to a reasonable extension of time when the business is for sale.

A motion to recommend the amendment of the Sign Ordinance by adopting the standards for "Local Business Off-Premise Signs" as suggested by staff and outlined on the agenda, with the exception that language stating that the business shall be "situated no greater than 10-miles from the sign location" shall be stricken and revising the last bullet to modify Section 8-4C-5 A 3 crossing out "and removed" and add notification provided to the owner who shall be given 180-days to repair/replace/remove the sign, subject to a reasonable extension of time when the business is for sale: was made by Michael Dittmar and seconded by John Creighton. The motion carried by voice vote.

VII. Citizens' Comments

VIII. Committee Member Concerns

Michael Dittmar stated that in his experience of serving on boards and committees, he has thoroughly enjoyed participating in this particular group.

IX. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made at 7:36 PM by William Meeker and seconded by LaVonne Deininger. Motion carried by voice vote.