

Sign Regulation Committee – Summary of Meeting

Monday, May 4, 2009

Conference Room 1, Urban Government Center

Present:

Steven Ward, April Robbins, Paul Ackermann, Bob Rueff, Paul Whitty, Jo Bishop, Paul Bergmann (Scenic Kentucky), and David Watkins.

Staff:

Christopher French, Bob Keesaer, Charles Cash, and Chris Cestaro (notes)

Summary of the Meeting:

Items for discussion were handed out by staff prior to the beginning of the meeting.

Christopher French introduced the subjects of today's meeting, which include finishing the discussion on potential sign guidelines, and portable/temporary signage.

He said the handout distributed at the last meeting has the proposed design guidelines for the Sign Review Board. He explained the changes that had been made (specifically, to #3 and #5 which dealt with waiver and variance reviews.) He asked the Committee members if they had any questions or anything else to add.

Paul Whitty asked about #11 regarding the scale of a sign being "appropriate". He felt that this word was too ambiguous, and asked if it could be replaced with a more specific word or phrase. One of the Committee members asked if that guideline could be removed, since the idea was already covered in #3. Mr. Whitty asked that the word "scale" be added to #3.

Another Committee member asked what constituted "unnecessarily bright"? Mr. Whitty said the lighting standard already defined the standard for brightness. Mr. French said this might be more of a glare issue. In response to a question from a Committee member, Mr. French briefly discussed footcandle levels.

A Committee member pointed out that the word "Day-Glo" is a brand name and should be removed. Use of fluorescent and reflective colors were discussed.

Regarding Item #14, Mr. French suggested that specific sign designs should be limited based on the standards of the form district where they are located. He discussed "pedestrian-oriented" signage, and said that some form districts are not designed to be pedestrian-oriented.

Regarding Item #17, a Committee member suggested inserting language that would exclude logos (limiting letters and styles.) Mr. Rueff said it was more important to regulate height, square footage, and the distance from the road, rather than what's on it.

Mr. Whitty described a case he brought before BOZA in which corporate "brand" colors were an issue. Another Committee member said it was more about contrast and visibility, rather than taste.

In response to a question from April Robbins about waiver reviews, Mr. French said that glare and light trespass issues were covered in the current Code regulations. He said the applicant would need to show how the proposed sign conforms to current light regulations.

Portable / Temporary Signage

Mr. French discussed the findings of the Portable Sign Committee (appointed in 2004 to study and make recommendations for any amendments to the Code regarding portable/temporary signage.) Amendments were incorporated into the Code in 2006; however, the Louisville Metro Council did not adopt any amendment that applied to Chapter 8. The reason for this Committee is that the Metro Council wanted a broader look at sign regulations.

He reviewed the handout given to the Committee members regarding portable sign area allotment per parcel/property, based on the form district. He discussed the proposed amendments.

In response to a Committee member's question, Mr. French explained that provision #5 (page 8 of the handout) was added as a form-district specific standard. It states that the suburban marketplace corridor currently is the only one that allows a portable readerboard *and* a permanent freestanding sign. This allowance meant that a business could either add square footage to a permanent freestanding sign, **or** have a standard square footage permanent sign and a portable sign.

Charles Cash said this was a discussion that took place among a small task force that was made up primarily of business owners along Preston and Dixie corridors (the primary users of that type of signage.)

In response to a question from an attendee, Mr. French described some types of portable signs, their size, etc. and the current regulations that govern their use. Bob Rueff explained about the construction of temporary signs and why they can be so large. Banners were discussed. Mr. French clarified allotment sizes.

Enforcement and public safety issues were discussed. Mr. French cited Section 8.4.1 in the Code. In response to a question from a Committee member, Mr.

French said that the square footage of only one face of the sign was counted, not both.

Bob Keesaer asked about vehicles that are painted and used as portable signs. Mr. French said that signs on vehicles have never really addressed. Sometimes vehicles advertise a business, but are parked in one spot and never driven, thus becoming signs. April Robbins discussed enforcement issues of delivery vehicles versus advertising.

A Committee member mentioned that the City of Baltimore taxes any sign that sits over a public right-of-way.

In response to a comment from a Committee member, Mr. French discussed regulations for banners, and some enforcement issues related to these.

He also discussed current requirements/regulations for window signs (no more than 25% of a window can be covered by a sign.) Enforcement of this percentage was discussed. Ms. Robbins explained some issues that have come up with window signs (lack of visibility into buildings, can cause security/safety issues, etc.) Mr. French said that some cities have included window signs as part of their attached signage allotment. In response to a request from Steven Ward, Mr. French said he would check with our staff and also research how other cities have dealt with these issues.

(NOTE: Charles Cash left the meeting at approximately 1:50 p.m.)

Mr. French said he would research how portable signage was dealt with in other communities.

“Street spam” was also discussed. These are signs that are put in right-of-way areas. He suggested that this might be a “clean-up” or littering issues. He said some council members have expressed some concerns about liability issues. This is something that should be discussed with legal counsel.

One committee member said that Walgreens has started making fake “windows” in their walls and putting their logo behind glass, which then is not included as attached wall signage.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:00 p.m.