

Sign Regulation Committee – Summary of Meeting

Monday, March 9, 2009

Conference Room 1, Urban Government Center

Present:

Donnie Blake, Paul Whitty, Greg Williams, Debbie Brent, and Paul Ackermann.

Staff:

Christopher French, Charles Cash, Debra Richards, 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 are the response from Public Works regarding LED/Changing Image Signs, a continuation of the sign definition discussion from the last meeting, and the possibility of forming a "Sign Review Board".

LED/Changing Image Signs – discussion of response from Metro Public Works

Mr. French discussed the response received from Metro Public Works regarding LED/Changing Image signs. He said the 20-second time limit is not a concern. However, they did want to be notified of any waivers or requests to have any LED signs change faster than 20 seconds, as that could be a concern. He said Public Works and/or any Sign Review Board should be involved in that review.

Continue "sign" definition discussion

Mr. French discussed three options for the definition of a sign (see handout for verbatim presentation.) Related to this topic: a change in the meeting summary from February 23, 2009 was requested. On page 2, a sentence was removed that incorrectly stated that the words "draw attention to" should be left in the current definition. This was incorrect – those words will be removed.

Regarding the definition of a sign, Paul Whitty said he did not feel prepared to make a decision at this time. Paul Ackermann said the current definition is fine (with the strikeout.) Donnie Blake agreed.

The term "street graphic" was discussed – one member objected that the term could be confusing. Various types of visual displays were discussed as possibly belonging to that category (a symbol, not necessarily text; an illuminated visual

display; also “sidewalk signage, which is videos/pictures projected onto sidewalks.)

Debbie Brent asked about strobe lights – they are not used to light something, but to draw attention to something. Mr. French said he will check the lighting ordinance for references to strobe lights; also, he will check references from other cities regarding these sidewalk projection signs.

Possibility of “Sign Review Board”

Mr. French reviewed the handout regarding a potential Sign Review Board. Currently, BOZA is doing sign waiver requests in Louisville Metro. He discussed what other cities have done regarding review boards /committees, and “Mandatory” versus “Optional” design reviews. He described “areas of special interest” (similar to our Overlay Districts.) He said this board usually takes the place of the Board of Zoning Adjustment for variances and waivers, etc.

He said the proposed Board can include additional members of the public (architects, sign industry members, etc.) who can bring more emphasis on sign design and how a sign can fit in to the streetscape.

Charles Cash asked if this could be a sub-committee of BOZA. This option was discussed. Another Committee member asked if this could be a sub-committee of the Planning Commission. He added that many of these signs could be staff-approvable. Mr. Blake suggested that, since there were already several sub-committees of the Planning Commission, whether one of those Committees could be used to address these issues, instead of making a new board. Mr. Cash said a separate Sign Review Board would have more members of the community.

A Committee member asked if the Sign Review Board would have the final say over a sign, or if there would be an opportunity for the applicant to appeal? Mr. French described some aspects of review boards in other cities, and said it would depend on how Louisville Metro’s would be set up. He also described some aspects of the appeal process, and said form districts and neighborhood plans could be used for design guidelines.

Mr. French said he will contact legal counsel and get their input on how to create this Board, how it would be used, duties and roles of Board members, etc. Guidelines would be set up which promote a more comprehensive character of signage in specific areas. Mr. Cash and Mr. French discussed overlay committees and reviews.

Mr. French suggested that many sign variance requests for height-related issues could be eliminated by dealing with elevation of the signage compared to the roadway.

Mr. Blake said this proposed Board would generate a lot of interest in the “sign community” and asked if some of this information should be sent out to them and comments solicited before the next Sign Regulation Committee meeting. Mr. Cash suggested sending out a summary of what’s been done so far regarding the proposed board and the definition of a sign.

Next meeting: March 23, 2009.

The meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.