

Sign Regulation Committee – Summary of Meeting

Monday, January 26, 2009

Conference Room 1, Urban Government Center

Present:

Steven Ward, Greg Williams, Jo Bishop, Paul Whitty, Kelly Will, and Maggie Harlow.

Staff:

Christopher French, Debra Richards, Theresa Senninger, Bill Schreck, Bob Keesaer, Dave Marchal, 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 is a continuation of the discussion of LED/Changing Image Signs.

LED and Changing Image Signs (also referred to as “Animated” or “Moving Image” signs)

Mr. French showed a Power Point presentation that showed examples of LED signage that had been discussed at the previous meeting. Some of the photos depicted signs that had part of the sign as static/unchanging, and a portion is a moving LED.

Mr. French reviewed the handouts. He discussed some of the ways other cities regulate LED / moving-image signage (see handout for detailed presentation.) The four different types of regulatory types are Location, Operational, Design Options, and Light Intensity Level (see handout for details.)

He said the Planning Commission will be interested in looking at permit enforcement issues, especially regulating timing restrictions, which may be difficult to enforce. He reviewed other points already covered in previous meetings, notably intensity of brightness, light trespass, and enforcement. He said one of the biggest complaints heard during these meetings was day- and night-time intensity. The brightness should be decreased at night.

Bob Rueff said most signs are programmed to dim at night. Proximity to residential areas was also a concern. Maggie Harlow pointed out that standard illuminated or neon signs do not have this problem – they are one brightness all the time. Mr. Rueff said the cost of running an LED sign is less than a standard

illuminated sign. He said a ban would cause a great deal of concern in the business community. Another Committee member said LED signs would be difficult if not impossible to regulate; also, they cause much light pollution and degrade the cityscape.

Maggie Harlow listed some of the benefits of LED signs (need for readerboard replacements; easier to change the message; businesses can communicate with their potential customers; saves electricity; flexible technology, etc.) versus the disadvantages (signs can be made too obtrusive; etc.) She said she would be in favor of restricting LED's to be used as readerboards, but that is not what businesses do with them. They put movies, etc. on the signs. She said the percentage of LED on a sign should be limited.

Mr. French discussed what the current permitted signage is now for commercially-zoned districts, and that all signage currently can be LED.

A Committee member discussed some of the photos of the LED signs that he had taken (shown during Mr. French's Power Point presentation.) He said that they can be difficult to read during the day, even when they are large. He said that limiting these signs to readerboards allows businesses to get their messages across without making the signs glaring or overtly conspicuous; also, the LED message will not compete with the company's logo.

The value of these signs to the business community, as well as the community at large, was discussed. The importance of limiting visual clutter vs. helping the business community was also discussed.

Mr. French asked that the Committee decide about timing restrictions, and also if institutional uses located in residential districts should be permitted to have LED signs. The Committee agreed to leave in the current timing restrictions, and also leave in the restrictions against scrolling or blinking. The Committee agreed that institutional uses located on major arterial/commercial streets could have LED signs, with greater separation between the sign location and the property line of any property with a residential use (the distance of 400-600 feet was discussed.)

Debra Richards asked if the opacity requirements in the form districts apply to these signs. Mr. French explained some of the current definitions and regulations in the form district designations regarding opaque signage.

In response to a question from a Committee member, Mr. French said that mixed use developments can be treated as a non-residential use.

Light-intensity control, particularly at intersections, was discussed. This is something that should be discussed with Metro Public Works.

Mr. French asked the Committee members about limiting the # of LED signs on a property. He reviewed the current signage limitations. For multi-tenant signs, the purpose of the signage is directional, not promotional (advertising sales.) It was suggested that LED signs be limited to one per site (could be a double-sided sign.) A Committee member asked if each individual tenant of a mall/multiple business could have their own attached LED sign. It was decided that only one LED sign per site was the best option.

Regarding the question of what percentage of a sign should be LED, It was decided that the form district could decide the percentage. Mr. French said he would provide those percentages at the next meeting.

Staff has proposed that video signs could require a Conditional Use Permit. This would necessitate review on a site-by-site basis, notice to neighbors, going through BOZA or other public review committees, etc. Mr. French said he could draft a potential regulation, and bring it to the next meeting for Committee review.

Topics for discussion at next meeting

- Review the new draft regulations done by Mr. French based on today's meeting
- Review a mapped example or two of distances of LED signs to residentially zoned property
- Discuss the definition of a sign

Next meeting: February 23, 2009

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.