

PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MINUTES

MARCH 24, 2014

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Groat at 7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Deborah Groat, Henk Berbee Absent: Nevin Taylor

OTHERS PRESENT: Tim Aslaner, Derek Hutchinson, Connie Patterson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes for the February 24, 2014 meeting were approved as presented.

AGENDA:

- Sign Code Discussion

Code Enforcement Officer Derek Hutchinson said in the last few months, small changes have been made, which have helped. He doesn't have many issues with new businesses. When they come in to set up their new business, Mr. Hutchinson outlines all the sign code regulations so they have all the details before they open.

Most struggles are with existing businesses. Mr. Hutchinson takes every opportunity to talk to business owners prior to them requesting a sign change, which seems to help. Once that communication is established, it's good. The biggest complaint is when a business owner can't do something that they want to do.

The sign code is very thorough. It is very comparable to codes for other communities. One issue is that there is so much there. You have to pick and choose your battles. It is very time consuming, so prioritizing is key. Safety is number one then you look at cosmetic. He has an inventory of issues that need to be addressed.

As far as code changes, there a few things that would make sense. He noted permit fees on small stuff. There are some business essential signs, such as open and closed signs and hours of operation signs. We should regulate these as far as size, but he feels they should not necessarily be counted toward the total sign allowance or the permit cost.

Research shows that the average size for an open/closed sign is 2 or 3 sq. ft. Our code permits 2 sq. ft. The majority of existing signs in town are over that size. Historically, those have not been regulated.

Mrs. Groat said the code for temporary signage was rewritten with the intent to revisit it at some point in time. Mrs. Groat encouraged Mr. Hutchinson to review proposed

changes with staff and bring those changes to Public Affairs. The important thing is that the code be business-friendly. She has no problem with Mr. Hutchinson recommending reduction or elimination of permit fee or allowance of something additional to the 25% coverage, as long as staff is on board with the recommendation.

Mr. Berbee asked if a business has a 3 sq. ft. open/closed sign, would that count towards total window coverage. Can that be enforced?

Mr. Hutchinson compared sizes of the open/closed sign sold at Office Max, Office Depot, etc. and found that most of those signs are a little larger than 2 sq. ft. He said most of the signs in town would fall in line with that.

Mrs. Groat suggested that anything over the permitted sign size should be counted towards the business's window coverage. That way, it gives the owner a choice whether they want a larger sign or not. Mr. Berbee agreed.

Mr. Berbee said you never want to direct people without giving them a choice.

Mr. Berbee asked if Mr. Hutchinson looks at the downtown businesses differently than the businesses on Coleman's Crossing. Mr. Hutchinson said they would be regulated the same. He did note, however, the businesses downtown have more limited window space. He has received a lot of comments about the permit fee being as much as the actual signage itself. The fee is \$50.00 per sign, no matter what the sign. Window and wall signs are the same fee.

Mrs. Groat would like to know the income received in the last six months on permit fees at \$50 a permit. Mr. Hutchinson will check and report back at the next meeting.

Mr. Berbee said it's never been the intent to make money on signage, just recuperate the expenses that we have.

Mr. Hutchinson said temporary signs are a very sensitive subject. Most of his time is spent on temporary signs.

Mr. Berbee asked if the problem that people have with temporary signage is that they don't have their vision for the whole year and they have to come in multiple times a year.

When Mr. Hutchinson started with the city, staff was just wrapping up a big push where they were going out to each business for temporary window sizes. He feels this is a service that we should provide at the time of occupancy. When someone comes in for a change of use, opening a new business, occupancy, the sizes are given at that time.

Mr. Hutchinson meets with every potential customer or business to give them any information necessary to start their business.

There is a guide to opening a new business or change of use, which they collaborate with the Union County Building Department. Also, the Chamber has their Open, Open, Open program, which gives a step-by-step for opening a new business or change of use.

Mrs. Groat asked what Mr. Hutchinson would like to see changed in the temporary sign code. Mr. Hutchinson said banners.

Mrs. Groat said when it comes to changes in the code, it's important to be business-friendly, but not so much that the city looks trashy.

Mr. Berbee noted that the code was changed to permit A-frame signs, but he doesn't see many of those around.

Mr. Hutchinson said our portable sidewalk sign code section is longer than our district sign code sections and permanent sign sections. We restrict colors and material. The most common A-frame sign is a white plastic A-frame sign. Mr. Berbee noted the type of sign he sees in Dublin. Mr. Hutchinson said when you go with anything other than a white plastic A-frame sign, the price doubles.

Mrs. Groat asked Mr. Hutchinson to work on permit fees for signage, banners and A-frame signs for discussion at the next meeting.

- o Council Rules of Procedure

The proposed change to be discussed is as follows:

2. On Second Reading and Public Hearing

Legislation may be read in full and comments from the public shall be heard.

*** There may be exceptions where a citizen's comments may be heard at 3rd Reading. Citizens **and Council members** wishing to speak at 3rd Reading are required to contact the Clerk in advance of the meeting, and may only be heard with the consent of the presiding officer. ***

The original intent from Mr. Taylor was that anyone from the general public wishing to speak to Council at the third reading, must call the Clerk and may be heard with the consent of the presiding officer. It was then questioned whether Council members should be included as well, putting Council members on the same playing field as the general public. Mr. Reams brought

up that there is natural back and forth response to that because that person has not previously asked to be recognized.

Proposed language to allow for Council members to speak at third reading without prior consent:

*** There may be exceptions where a citizen's comments may be heard at 3rd Reading. Citizens **and Council Members** wishing to speak at 3rd Reading are required to contact the Clerk in advance of the meeting, and may only be heard with the consent of the presiding officer. **"Council members, without prior consent and at the discretion of the presiding officer, may respond to the comments made by citizens and/or Council members."***

The meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.