

**NEWBERG ELECTRONIC SIGN
AD HOC COMMITTEE MINUTES
3-5 p.m., Thursday, September 3, 2009
Newberg City Hall, Permit Center Conference Room
414 E. First Street, Newberg, Oregon**

I. ROLL CALL

Present:	Nick Tri (Chair)	Fred Gregory	Claudia Stewart
	Michael Sherwood	Julie Want	Stephen McKinney
	Loni Parrish (4:00 p.m.)		

Absent:	Kristen Horn (excused)	Dennis Lewis (excused)
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Staff Present: Dan Danicic, City Manager
Barton Brierley, Planning & Building Director
Steve Olson, Associate Planner
Dawn Karen Bevill, Recording Secretary

II. OPEN MEETING

Chair Nick Tri opened the meeting at 3:05 p.m. It was announced that Mayor Andrews sent his regrets that he was unable to attend due to a previous commitment, but that he wanted to thank the committee members for volunteering for this task. Newberg City Staff and the Ad Hoc members in attendance introduced themselves.

III. OUTLINE OF PROCESS BY STAFF:

Why was the Committee formed and what is it expected to do?

Steve Olson explained that the City Council formed the committee to address requests from local electronic sign owners (commercial and schools) to look at the current sign code limits on animated signs. The sign owners felt the current code limited advertising and communication.

Mr. Olson reviewed the charge of the Ad Hoc Committee, which will include examining the impacts on local businesses and institutions, impacts on community aesthetics and safety, and value for information dissemination. Mr. Olson explained the code sections that the committee will review and evaluate, including the potential amendments, appropriate to Newberg. Mr. Olson also explained that Dan Danicic, the City Manager, is running a Pilot Program which authorizes some area sign owners to experiment with animated signs. Participants are experimenting with animation and messages, and have agreed to collect data and comments. The Ad Hoc Committee, along with the City Manager, is to review the results of the Pilot Program and can direct the experiments to test potential code changes.

When will it be finished?

Mr. Olson stated it's difficult to speculate on the timeframe. The committee will serve until the members decide they are ready to make a recommendation to the Council. It is anticipated that this committee will serve up to one year.

What will happen with the Committee's recommendations?

The recommendations will go to the City Council. If the Council decides to initiate a code change then they will send the recommendation to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to City Council. Council will then hold a public hearing and make a decision on the code changes. Code changes must also be approved by the State, as well.

IV. NEWBERG SIGN CODE OVERVIEW BY STAFF:

Sign code vocabulary

Steve Olson stated the committee needs to understand the current code in order to consider changes, and showed various examples of electronic signs.

What is regulated? Varies by zone.

Newberg animated signs are limited to 10 square feet. Animated signs are prohibited downtown (C-3 zone). An animated sign is defined as one where the display changes more than once in a ten-minute period. Mr. Olson showed examples on the overhead.

Mr. Olson reviewed the Purpose Statement in Code 151.590 (A): The citizens of Newberg desire a clean attractive, economically vibrant, and safe community. Well-planned and constructed signs can contribute to the community's success by directing and informing the public about commercial and other activities, and by creating attractive commercial and other neighborhoods. On the other hand, unregulated signage can create clutter, distractions, and hazards.

Code 151.593 (B): Mr. Olson reviewed what the regulations are designed to do, as explained in the meeting packet, page 4.

Code 151.593 Section (B) states no sign shall have bright or flashing lights shining on a public way that blind or impair the vision of drivers. No sign shall be constructed such that it may be confused with any traffic sign, signal or device. Section (C): No animated sign shall exceed 10 square feet in area.

Common types of signs include major freestanding signs (pole sign/monument sign); major attached signs (wall sign), and portable signs (banner, lawn, A-frame).

Downtown is zoned C-3 Commercial, with no animated signs allowed. There are design standards for downtown signs, and a point system that gives you many options for meeting the standards.

V. DISCUSSION: DRAFT WORK PLAN

Workshops on issues (future trends, other cities' codes, safety/distraction)

One possibility is to have a sign company come and explain what is available now and will be available in the near future. We will also discuss safety and distraction concerns, and how other cities regulate signs.

Interview pilot program participants

The committee will interview them soon and discuss what data they've collected. The committee can also suggest ideas to them on what they can try regarding animation.

Field trip

Another option is to have the committee take a field trip to view signs between Newberg and Tigard, or other areas the committee is interested in.

Development Code options & Recommendation

After working through the issues, the committee will discuss code change ideas, review written text changes, and vote on their recommendation. The recommendation will be sent to the City Council.

Questions and Comments:

Michael Sherwood asked the last date that code changes were made. Barton Brierley replied standards for downtown were changed in 2002; the main sign code revision was made in 1998. Mr. Sherwood asked if this is the first time Newberg has had a sign committee. Barton Brierley replied this is the first in a while, although a committee was involved with the 1998 changes. Mr. Sherwood asked who requested a committee like this. Steve Olson explained that a few members of the Pilot Program asked for the City to look into the code and consider changes.

Stephen McKinney brought a request through Dan Danicic for City Council action due to the unlevel playing field for business owners. Ford had to take their sign down with great expense due to the code. Each one of the present electronic signs are different with different capabilities. The present code won't deal with the advancements of the future or allow for community stewardship. Some schools have a reader board but the size is quite restrictive and isn't keeping the parents informed due to the 10-minute rule. Mr. McKinney believes a progressive vision is needed. He likes that McMinnville has a wide variety of signs; but he does object to the large billboards. Changing the sign code in Newberg will make it a useful tool for businesses. The Ad Hoc Committee is in a position now to change size, time, etc. because the City Council he serves on listens well and they are problem solvers. He is proud to serve on the Council.

Michael Sherwood is a retired businessman and he agrees with Mr. McKinney that signs are critical for businesses. He once had a reader board sign that brought in much business. It's very expensive to modify or replace electronic signs.

Julie Want is concerned with leveling the playing field due to the "grandfather" clause for some sign holders. Steve Olson replied there are very few left to conform to the code. Stephen McKinney commented Newberg Dodge might come into compliance long before 2015. Some burdens were created previously for business owners by the current code. Grandfathered signs, in general, will be changing as of March, 2010.

Claudia Stewart suggested gathering data from nationally recognized codes the committee could look at. It's hard to envision what would be visually appealing and still meet the needs of the sign owners. It would be interesting to meet with a city that has recently changed their codes; trying to borrow from their experiences. One thing to consider is having planners from other cities come in to speak to this committee. Salem just went through a large re-write of codes. There may be specific local areas to visit

on a field trip. Santa Clara, California has wonderful signs, which are relatively new and fit the community.

Stephen McKinney stated Walgreens can flash an Amber Alert coast-to-coast, based on regions. There are many possibilities to consider.

Julie Want asked if the Mountain View Middle School sign is animated all night. Claudia Stewart replied yes, they are experimenting with fonts. The school principal said he understands why Walgreens wants an animated sign due to the amount of merchandise they sell, since the school has much information for the parents and community to view. Mr. McKinney added an unanticipated problem with the school is only two thirds of the sign could be animated under the 10 sf limit. Ms. Stewart stated the principal was counting the pixels and isn't sure if any codes cover electronic coverage. Fred Gregory is interested since he's working on a development with the sport fields at George Fox University and can see the value in an electronic message sign listing events.

Ms. Stewart asked if there is a dark skies ordinance. Steve Olson said no, but our light trespass ordinance results in similarly shielded and downward focused lights.

(Dan Danicic left the meeting at 4:00 p.m. and Loni Parrish arrived at the same time.)

Fred Gregory stated some large animated signs near Tacoma are very distracting and could be dangerous for drivers. Steve Olson agreed, but said that it is difficult to say at what point a smaller sign becomes a distraction. Stephen McKinney said Chuck Colvin in McMinnville has an excellent example of an animated sign.

Fred Gregory asked who defines the aesthetic look in Newberg. Steve Olson explained ultimately it's a City Council decision, but this committee and others like it contribute to it. Barton Brierley stated when the sign code was looked at in 1998, many wanted a historic look to downtown and a process began in setting standards for just downtown with signs having particular aesthetic elements. Michael Sherwood is intrigued how without a committee, standards were reached for the downtown. Steve Olson explained there was public comment and the Planning Commission committee, as well. The downtown point system intent was to keep the historic character.

Michael Sherwood asked how a strip mall that sits back from other businesses would be handled. Barton Brierley replied the complex can have one freestanding sign. It has been a challenge for some businesses that are located behind others to get enough exposure. Steve Olson said that an electronic sign could help those sites, whether or not it was animated, by letting businesses take turns being featured.

Julie Want asked how the Electronic Sign Ordinance fits the general sign ordinance. Barton Brierley replied when the code was developed, electronic signs were part of the entire code. There isn't a separate sign code; it is part of the development code. Ms. Want asked how much the committee's decisions may effect code amendments from the past. Steve Olson explained that the committee could recommend changing any part of the code. The change may turn out to be just a few words; changing the definition of animated sign from a sign that changes every ten minutes to a sign that changes every ten seconds would be a small change in the text, but would have a large impact on signs.

Loni Parrish sees the use at schools, libraries, etc. but not throughout every building on Hwy. 99. It would be nice to display the events that are happening in the area. Concerned business owners in town have told her they aren't aware of events taking place in Newberg. Steven McKinney stated there are three gateways to Newberg. He was concerned that if code changes get too specific, an uneven playing

field may happen. Steve Olson said it's relatively easy to change code for zoning districts but changing the code for individual uses can be tricky. Mr. McKinney added that within the school district, there are many who want a sign but the codes are now too restrictive and too small.

(Julie Want left at 4:23 p.m. and returned at 4:45 p.m.).

Claudia Stewart asked if a business or school has more than one entrance, can a sign be located at each one. Steve Olson replied just one freestanding sign per frontage. Barton Brierley stated one sign is usually adequate although some sites are long complexes with many businesses.

Loni Parrish would like to look at extending the aesthetic look and feel out from downtown to other areas. Newberg is becoming a destination tourist area.

Claudia Stewart asked if there are "green" signs and can points be assigned for energy efficiency. Stephen McKinney replied signs are becoming greener all the time and the new technology is bringing about brighter signs with less energy. Ms. Stewart suggested someone who sells signs could give the committee some valuable information.

Steve Olson asked if the committee would like to interview the Pilot Program participants at the next meeting. Stephen McKinney would like to hear from them soon. Chair Tri suggested having one more meeting in preparation, so the committee could prepare questions that they want to ask the participants. Steve Olson agreed and suggested looking at information from other cities first. Barton Brierley added the Pilot Program participants have agreed to try suggestions. Stephen McKinney appreciates the participants because they police themselves to a point on what is or isn't in the best interests of the program. Claudia Stewart stated guidelines for readability are of high importance and hearing from sign company owners would be helpful.

VI. ELECT VICE CHAIR:

MOTION #1: Gregory/Stewart moved to elect Michael Sherwood as Vice Chair. (7 Yes/ 0 No/ 2 Absent {Kristen Horn, Dennis Lewis}) Motion carried.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS: None.

VIII. NEXT MEETING: October 1, 2009. Fred Gregory and Julie Want will be unable to attend.

IX. ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Approved by the Electronic Sign Ad Hoc Committee this 1st day of October, 2009.

AYES: 6

NO: 2

ABSENT: 3

ABSTAIN: 0

(List Name(s))

(List Names(s))

Fred Gregory
Julie Want
Loni Parrish


Recording Secretary


Electronic Sign Ad Hoc Committee Chair