

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

I. ROLL CALL:

Present: Stephen McKinney Michael Sherwood
Dennis Lewis Julie Want Fred Gregory

Absent: Nick Tri, Chair (excused) Claudia Stewart (excused)
Loni Parrish (excused) Kristen Horn

Staff Present: Barton Brierley, Building and Planning Director
Steve Olson, Associate Planner
Dawn Karen Bevill, Recording Secretary

Others Present: Brian Casey, Police Chief Jared Leatham, YESCO
Ken Mahoney, YESCO Thad Firkins, YESCO

II. OPEN MEETING:

Vice Chair Michael Sherwood opened the meeting at 3:08 p.m. and asked for roll call.

III. MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION #1: Want/Gregory moved to approve the November 5, 2009 minutes as submitted. (5Yes/ 0 No/ 4 Absent [Tri, Parrish, Stewart, Horn]) Motion carried.

MOTION #2: Gregory/Want moved to approve the October 1, 2009 minutes as submitted. (5Yes/ 0 No/ 4 Absent [Tri, Parrish, Stewart, Horn]) Motion carried.
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IV. WORKSHOP: SAFETY/DRIVER DISTRACTION ISSUE:

Review of Studies:

Steve Olson began the workshop by discussing sign lighting. Very bright lights, such as strobe lights, can be blinding for drivers and are banned in our development code. Due to improved technology, LED signs are becoming brighter. They are not an obvious hazard like strobe lights, but could potentially be a problem. Newberg could adopt a brightness limit for signs, as some other cities have done. Mr. Olson stated he will be gathering information and research on brightness standards and bring it back to the committee. **Nighttime** brightness is the real concern. Automatic dimming features are available on most modern signs.

Are electronic signs too distracting? Mr. Olson showed examples and explained this topic is difficult to study and define. Drivers have to deal with many potential distractions both inside and outside the vehicle, so it is difficult to isolate the effect of animated signs on drivers.

He also posed the following questions for the committee to consider:

Are other factors (cell phones, iPods, navigation systems, passengers) more significant distractions for drivers?

Are there any sign design factors that would be too distracting (besides strobe lights)?

If you allow full motion video on signs, should you limit the clip length?

Comments by Brian Casey, Chief of Police, Newberg-Dundee Police Dept.

Brian Casey, Police Chief, was asked to share his thoughts concerning the safety impact of electronic signs. Chief Casey knew he would be addressing this topic and asked his officers for complaints or observations. They have not received any complaints he is aware of regarding brightness or distraction. Nor has a driver who has been in an accident in Newberg blamed brightness or distraction as the reason for the accident. If there were issues, citizens would be calling them into the department. From a law enforcement perspective, there is no information that these signs will create problems or cause accidents. Officers are out all night long and no negative reports have been received.

Michael Sherwood asked if there are any studies on text messaging while driving and the length of time between texting and an accident. Chief Casey replied, yes but he does not know the details per se. Through observation, cell phones are distractions to drivers and cause accidents. There have been accidents where cell phones have been found in a car after an accident and the person was texting. One difference between texting on your phone and viewing a sign is that you are still looking up and out the windshield when you look at a sign, instead of looking down at a cell phone keyboard. Electronic signs and cell phones have different impacts on driving. Chief Casey stated cell phones (non-handsfree) and texting will be banned while driving, effective January 2010 by state law.

Stephen McKinney asked if the Dodge Dealership sign, which flashes, has ever caused a concern in comparison to other signs in town. Chief Casey has not heard any. That particular sign is in a location where there is not a turn or intersection. Mr. McKinney stated he has only heard complaints about that sign because it was hard for drivers to tell if it was an emergency vehicle due to the height of the flashing sign. When talking about distractions, it may not be just one thing but a series of distractions; a conversion of many things. From the discussion last time, the way the building requirements are on either side of 99W and the difficulty in finding room for a sign, especially new business on the south side of the street, we will probably end up seeing more electronic signage.

Fred Gregory has tried to pay attention to what distracts him while driving. If there is something small and moving he has to take time to see it, but if it is big and moving not so much. Sequential signage distracts him and it may be important to consider how often the messages appear.

Steve Olson asked what the committee thinks of full motion video. Fred Gregory stated it depends on how a sign reads. The casino electronic signage on I-5 heading toward Seattle is large and very distracting. Stephen McKinney stated the only two full-motion signs nearby are at the Chuck Colvin Ford Dealership in McMinnville and at the Spirit Mountain Casino.

Chief Casey stated he can be contacted if the committee needs anything further.

V. WORKSHOP: FUTURE SIGNS – TECHNOLOGY AND TRENDS

Presentation by Ken Mahoney and Jared Leatham, Young Electric Sign Company (YESCO)

Jared Leatham, YESCO, explained most people find sign regulations complicated. He brought multiple video clips showing how electronic message boards can be run as well as model code language, which Ken Mahoney handed out. There are four ways to run Electronic Message Signs (EMS) – 1) static displays with a set hold time (often 8 seconds); 2) static display but a transition period between displays such as scrolling; 3) allow static displays with fly-ins such as a photo with movement within the slide; or 4) full motion video such as in Las Vegas. Full motion is constant movement, such as a few words at a time or one line at a time. These are all options to be considered when writing code.

Jared Leatham presented a PowerPoint presentation and offered questions for the committee to ponder with regard to Newberg. He showed examples of EMS ranging from single-colored units for running text to full color with high resolution.

The definition for EMS is a sign that is capable of displaying words, symbols, figures or images that can be electronically or mechanically changed. He reviewed LED technology from the late 1990s to early 2008. Ken Mahoney stated automatic dimming capabilities are needed to dim the signs at night, and are included by most good sign manufacturers.

Some key things to know regarding EMS: They can operate in a broad range of capabilities. The software that controls the displays allows the end user to follow local sign codes easily if the sign codes are easy to understand.

Some reasons why businesses want EMS are it is easy to portray a message and easy for multi retail centers to give visibility to tenants. Mr. Leatham showed examples of businesses with message centers, one of which showed an improvement in sales - up 16% from the year prior. They give better visibility to all tenants, are easier to read, reduce sign clutter, and make shopping center retail space more marketable. Benefits also include increases in sales tax revenue, reduced sign clutter, make unreadable signs readable, and they often look better than static reader boards.

Mr. Leatham reviewed common myths of EMS regarding key regulatory issues such as message hold times, transition method, transition duration and brightness. He showed examples of hold times and transition durations on the PowerPoint. The shorter the hold times the more beneficial for the business. It provides the ability to communicate sequential messages, directions, and event times. Shorter hold times are also easier to enforce.

Stephen McKinney believes a natural transition is much better. Mr. Leatham stated it could be argued movement gets peoples attention, but the true idea behind these signs is for them to read the message and stop in to buy what is being sold.

Dennis Lewis stated signage will change dramatically in the future and he is worried about limiting technology such as a high-density LED sign with motion and a message. The Cultural Center could have an attractive video sign which was largely static but allowed a small amount of motion for interest. Technological advancements are coming. He would like to have a high density video sign at his

business that is aesthetically attractive but questions how that can come together with restrictions on video.

Stephen McKinney stated the need for signage for the Cultural Center would be much different from downtown Newberg.

Jared Leatham showed examples of signs in different zones such as entertainment districts for video, and downtown/historic commercial zones as well as transitions (fade, dissolve, travel scroll, fly-in, and zoom in); and recent YESCO animated sign projects.

He recommended Planning Recommendations should include:

1. Discuss transition methods in terms of Levels 1-4.
2. Show videos when discussing this internally, at planning commission and CC meetings, etc.
3. Decide what "Level" is appropriate for your community (or differentiate by zoning district).
4. Show Examples on your website –"What is allowed", "What is not allowed."

Barton Brierley asked about the durability of the signs. Mr. Leatham replied they could last up to 15 years, although LEDs do lose brightness over time. Running at 100% all the time will run them down faster. LEDs are very "green" and pull minimal power compared to high voltage units.

Planning Considerations on Brightness:

1. Auto dimming is necessary.
2. See the Loveland, Colorado code on how to regulate "NITS"

Steve Olson stated the information presented was very helpful and YESCO may be asked to come back again later.

Due to the late hour, the agenda was cut short. The Follow-up items will be discussed at the next meeting.

VI. ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Approved by the Electronic Sign Ad Hoc Committee this 7th day of January, 2010.

AYES:

7

NO:

2

ABSENT:

2

(List Name(s))

Tri and
Horn

ABSTAIN:

2

(List Names(s))


Recording Secretary


Electronic Sign Ad Hoc Committee Chair