NEWBERG ELECTRONIC SIGN
AD HOC COMMITTEE MINUTES
3-5 p.m., Thursday, March 4, 2010
Newberg City Hall, Permit Center Conference Room
414 E. First Street, Newberg, Oregon

I. ROLL CALL:

Present:	Nick Tri, Chair	Michael Sherwood, Vice Chair
	Stephen McKinney	Dennis Lewis
	Fred Gregory	Loni Parrish (left meeting at 4:31 p.m.)

Absent: Claudia Stewart (excused) Julie Want (unexcused)
Kristen Horn (unexcused)

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

Others Present: Jerry Carlson, Manager of A Storage Place of Newberg (arrived at 3:48 p.m.)

II. OPEN MEETING:

Chair Nick Tri opened the meeting at 3:04 p.m. and asked for roll call.

III. MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION #1: Lewis/Gregory moved to approve the February 4, 2010 minutes as submitted. (6Yes/ 0 No/ 3 Absent [Stewart, Horn, Want]) Motion carried.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT: February 4, 2010 email from Scott Cassidy –

Steve Olson referred to the February 4, 2010 email from Scott Cassidy, Operating Manager of A Storage Place, (page 14 of the official meeting packet). Although Mr. Cassidy is not advocating full motion video, he is requesting that the sign rules not be as restrictive as those found in other communities. Staff noted that some of the displays on the Storage Place sign would be considered videos, however, so they could only be shown in the future if Newberg did allow video messages.

Dennis Lewis suggested allowing a background display with some motion; falling leaves, for example. A percentage of the screen could be limited for full motion for a specified amount of time so it would not be continuous action or a movie. Stephen McKinney spoke a word of caution concerning adapting and quantifying the number of seconds and minutes allowed since it could be detrimental in transitioning from analog into digital signs in the future. Michael Sherwood agreed with the idea brought forth by Dennis Lewis regarding a sign with a moving background and stationary message.

Mr. Lewis also believes the size of an electronic sign should not be limited to less than a standard sign since technology is neutral. He advocates managing a sign well so it becomes an asset, and restricting size does not accomplish anything.

V. WORKSHOP: Discussion & preliminary voting on sign review process and potential development code amendments -

Steve Olson started with a discussion of the sign review process. He stated there are pluses and minuses to allowing discretion in the approval process. If the process allows no discretion in the code, it will be consistent and probably easy to understand and enforce. It is predictable, less expensive, treats everyone the same, but has no flexibility. The two-track process is another option that would have two review tracks. One track would be non-discretionary and would allow small, animated electronic signs. The other track would allow larger signs and a license to operate the sign flexibility, based on meeting certain standards, such as no flashing or rapid scrolling. If the sign was not operated within certain parameters then the license would not be renewed and the sign would be required to be operated under the same limits as the non-discretionary signs. The review of the sign could be done by the Planning Commission. Another idea to consider is non-code options. These are other things that can be done outside of the sign code, which can be part of the committee's recommendation to the City Council. One example is that a community-based group could create an annual award for signs that show public service messages. The Council could encourage a local group to take on this role. Another option that has been mentioned is that the committee could request that Council create low interest loans for sign upgrade projects. Dennis Lewis suggested there might be a way to take 10% of the Hotel Tax dollars, going towards tourism, and bank 1% to help fund the program for the community to improve their signs. Perhaps there is an opportunity, such as the Main Street Program, to help in shaping and forming signs to be used for the next several decades; making sign choices easier for business owners. The committee was in agreement regarding signage assistance being given to those businesses coming into the City of Newberg as well as incentives to those already located in the City to help aid in signage upgrades. Mr. Lewis believes it is important for this committee to take its time in making recommendations due to the change in technology that is quickly approaching.

Steve Olson asked the committee to make a preliminary vote on the code amendments listed in the meeting packet. The first part consisted of new definitions and the existing code for downtown, which prohibits animated sign. Stephen McKinney believes the ten-minute rule and the current size limits are insufficient and needs to be adjusted. Dennis Lewis stated the ten-minute rule would eliminate some signage, such as time and temperature. Transitions could be limited to a certain amount of time for animation. Stephen McKinney suggested language stating appropriate intervals for appropriate zones; the ten-minute rule is counterproductive. Steve Olson clarified that the limit on animated signs downtown is not a proposed change. It is the existing situation, which the committee seemed to support at the previous meeting. The committee did decide at the previous meeting to change the animation time limit for the zones outside of downtown, which is in the code amendment sections that follow. Loni Parrish would like to hear what the Main Street Coalition has to say about it. She is concerned with keeping the historic feel of downtown as a destination location; tourists want to escape the ordinary and she is unsure if electronic message signs are appropriate for downtown. Stephen McKinney is reluctant to vote on propping up the existing code. The motivation seems to be restriction rather than managing the options. The consensus of the committee was to recommend the downtown portion be revisited in the future as part of the downtown coalition process.

The committee initially liked the idea of the two-track review process but was concerned about how to implement it. Stephen McKinney asked what signs would become non-conforming if the special review was put into place. Barton Brierley replied A Storage Place would become non-conforming. Jerry Carlson stated they went through non-conformance before which cost them money and would like not to see that happen again. Barton stated that under the proposed process, when they are finished with the Pilot Program; they would have to go back to the original use of the sign unless they went through the special review process. Dennis Lewis does not agree with the special review at all as proposed. Stephen McKinney stated the reason why the Pilot Program exists is to show the present technology can operate in a way that is not objectionable to the community. He would hate to take a step backwards after seeing the possibilities and any proposal that would render a present sign or present technology to become non-complying is counterproductive to the process.

Barton Brierley explained the special review language could be changed, if the committee wishes. Dennis Lewis stated the size of an electronic sign should not be the restriction. If you can have a 100 square foot sign, why does it matter how much of it is animated? If you want to restrict the sign for movement, change the way you look at it. It is not a size issue but an action issue. If trying to eliminate video, you could limit movement to no longer than 20 seconds, for example.

Steve Olson stated size is discussed in the maximum size sections as listed on page 11. Mr. Olson reviewed each of the three options. All but one committee member was in favor of Option 1; only one was in favor of Option 2; no committee member was in favor of Option 3. Option 1 allowed the entire EMC to be an animated sign.

The committee returned to discuss the two- track process review. Stephen McKinney believes three citizens is too low a number to trigger a review under the renewal process. He suggested staff return with suggestions on new parameters with a likelihood of success under the two-track section. Steve Olson stated staff would bring back variations for the committee to review at the next meeting.

Regarding brightness, the preference of the committee was Option 1, which required automatic dimming but did not set an absolute number for a brightness limit.

Staff discussed the video display methods language, and said the language would be revised to include the Institutional zone. The committee agreed to not allow flashing, and that rapid scrolling would need to be further evaluated.

The consensus of the committee agreed that electronic scoreboards with video screens in stadiums or at sports fields are not considered signs or limited in size if they are oriented inward to the playing field. They did not like the language on "obscure", as it was not defined. Language could be added to eliminate the scoreboard being used as a billboard. The scoreboard could be turned on one hour before the event and off one hour after, for example. Steve will come up with an option with regard to obscurity and time limits.

The consensus of the committee agreed to sign maintenance requirements. Since there is already an ordinance in place regarding landscaping maintenance, there is no need for a repetitive code.

VI. ADJOURN: Meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Approved by the Electronic Sign Ad Hoc Committee on this 1st day of April, 2010.

AYES: 5 **NO:** 0 **ABSENT:** 4 **ABSTAIN:** 0

(List Name(s)) Tri, Lewis, Gregory, Want **(List Names(s))**

Dawn Karen Bevill
Recording Secretary

Michael Allen
Electronic Sign Ad Hoc Committee Chair