



Planning & Development Committee

Chaired by Council Member Wagner

Members: Wagner, C. Davis, J. Davis, and Golden

3rd Floor Lobby Conference Room

May 3, 2016 – 4:00 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Present:

Committee Chair Jay Wagner, and Committee Members Cynthia Davis, Jeff Golden, and Jim Davis

Staff Present:

Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager; Randy Hemann, Assistant City Manager; Lee Burnette, Director of Planning and Development; Heidi Galanti, Planning Administrator; Andy Putman, Senior Planner; Herb Shannon, Senior Planner; Jeron Hollis, Director of Communications & Public Engagement; Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

Others Present:

Mike Peters and Eric Stacey, Fairway Advertising

Note: The following handouts were distributed at the meeting and will be attached as a permanent part of these proceedings.

Outdoor Advertising Information

- Map: Outdoor Advertising Inventory Map
- Map: Potential Outdoor Advertising Locations #1
- Map: Potential Outdoor Advertising Locations #2

Chairman Wagner called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Lee Burnette, Director of Planning and Development, shared some information on outdoor advertising signs. He provided some background on the past history on this issue. At the direction of the prior Council, staff conducted some research on outdoor advertising and looked at what the city's regulations were. Staff is asking for the present Council's direction for feedback based upon the work that staff has done. The report was presented to the prior Council and included regulations (both federal, city and state) for outdoor advertising; looked at adopted city policy and did some comparisons with some other cities in terms of how they regulate

outdoor advertising. Staff also did an inventory of existing signs as part of the study. Currently there are approximately 41 signs in the city's jurisdiction (both legal and non-conforming). Mr. Burnette noted based on this report, the city sign standards have been fairly consistent over the last 25 years. The city started regulating outdoor advertising in 1947 and since 1976 outdoor advertising signs had been allowed by zoning only in the industrial areas in the city. He pointed out the 41 signs are primarily in the southern portion of the city, as well as in the ETJ.

Mr. Burnette pointed out Fairway Advertising is the majority owner of advertising signs and noted one thing to keep in mind was that outdoor advertising signage is regulated by the Federal Highway Beautification Act and controls outdoor advertising signs that are located within 660 feet of a primary highway.

Mr. Burnette reported on the prior Council's direction for staff to look at the potential of allowing outdoor advertising signs on Interstate 74/US 311, Business 85 and Highway 29, as well as in the Central Business District. They asked staff to explore a system that would incentivize the removal of the older signs, which is often referred to as a cap and replace type approach. In this approach, staff has looked at the potential along I-74 and B-85. He pointed out whether or not there was a potential was a concern. Staff focused on the commercial/industrial zones because of the federal act requirements and applied the existing sign separation standards. Mr. Burnette reminded the Committee that there were no changes for the sign regulations with the new Development Ordinance moving forward.

Council Member J. Davis inquired about the number of the non-conforming signs. Mr. Burnette advised there are five legal signs and of the other 41, 36 are non-conforming (i.e. may be in the right zone, but may be too tall or too big). At this time, Mr. Burnette asked Andy Putman to proceed with the potential along the interstates for relocation of signs.

Andy Putman of Planning and Development reviewed the maps looking more at the potential signs. He reiterated that staff looked at existing areas along the interstate and the Central Business District as well. To the north, the blue lines indicate the study corridor (500 feet on each side of the centerline of the road) and the potential locations are delineated in the green. He explained the cap and replace is based upon the idea to set a limit and setting a ratio for removing non-conforming signs. For every new sign that would be replaced, a certain number would be determined. The concept is to replace non-conforming signs with new conforming signs.

He reported on the various kinds of signs (i.e. static, digital) and noted that staff desires to get feedback from Council as to what types of signs they want to allow. He pointed out currently digital signs are not allowed. Staff focused on where the receiving zones are for the cap and replace (where the new signs would be allowed). He noted the question is where Council would want to do this. Staff looked at the 1,000 foot corridor along Business-85 as well as the I-74 and US 311 corridors. He reiterated that the Highway Beautification Act limitations that only allow these signs in commercial or industrial zoned areas and pointed out zoning just for the purpose of adding a sign is prohibited; it would have to be a validly zoned area. He reiterated the boundary of the receiving zone basically looks at a 2,000 foot separation distance between signs (larger circles) and a 300 foot separation from residential zones (smaller circles). According to this

analysis, Mr. Piper estimated the city could have seven additional signs on US 311 and 10-15 new signs on Business-85 depending on the number of non-conforming signs were removed. This equates to the potential of 17-22 new signs if this is the direction that Council wants to proceed with.

Mr. Burnette explained this was the first objective staff wanted to explore to see if it would be feasible to continue looking at the interstates. If so, utilizing the current standards if signage could be regulated. He again pointed out that staff is seeking direction from the Committee to focus on the two interstate areas (Business-85 and I-74, as well as the Downtown area) and to look at these as the receiving zones for any kind of cap and replace approach to signage.

Committee Member J. Davis inquired about what the neighbors were doing (from Highway 66 to Winston Salem and from I-85 to Asheboro). He noted he drove this stretch today and did not recall seeing any billboards anywhere in this vicinity. Mr. Burnette pointed out this would be mostly Randolph County and he was not familiar with their regulations, but staff could certainly explore and see what Randolph and Forsyth County's regulations are. He explained staff primarily looked at city regulations. Eric Stacey with Fairway reported that Forsyth County does not allow these in about 15 scenic corridors, and 311 to the county line is one of those. Mike Peters with Fairway pointed out that Randolph County actually does the reverse on their regulations and they actually require the signs to be included as part of the rezoning process.

Assistant City Manager asked if there was a reason why Council would want to put the billboards downtown. Mr. Wagner explained the previous Council discussed the electronic signs and not the static signs. He noted the thought was that so many of the market companies throw up all kinds of advertising during the Furniture Market and there was a desire to clean this up by having an electronic sign. Mr. Burnette replied that there was discussion on this, but there was no clarification and staff needs clarification on whether or not there is a desire to have digital signs in the downtown.

Mr. Burnette explained there is an ordinance in place that allows the signs, but for a temporary period of time. So if Council is willing to change this part of the ordinance, to remove the temporary signs and encourage the permanent signage. Committee Member J. Davis recalled prior discussions that indicated Council wanted to get all the old billboards down in the areas where the industry is not there any longer and to clean up those areas too (removing a certain number and replacing it with a specific number of signs). Mr. Burnette reiterated there wasn't a lot of clear consensus and staff wants to validate this step by step in detail before approaching any regulations. Committee Member J. Davis expressed an interest in getting policies on the surrounding areas and the scenic corridor.

Chairman Wagner mentioned the impetus at that time was a push from CVB and others to allow more signage on the two main highways in an effort to try to get people to come into town and this was the impetus behind that. Committee Member C. Davis pointed out the Wendover area was supposed to be a test site. Mr. Stacey commented at one point he thought there was some talk about N. Main where Wendover and 68 come together. Mr. Burnette advised that Dan O'Shea presented this information to Council which resulted in a lot of discussion and the consensus was to look at the Business-85, I-74 and Downtown areas. Committee Member J.

Davis remembered that they decided against Main Street and Eastchester. Chairman Wagner pointed out there was also a thought that having electronic signs downtown would put more life into the downtown.

Mr. Burnette noted the first question has to do with the cap and replace and asked the Committee if this is the concept in looking at an approach that would identify the receiving zone and look at identifying signs that aren't in the receiving zone and remove them from those locations. He explained there would be some kind of ratio established for this for removal of the old signs to erect the new signs. Chairman Wagner suggested a cap and replace ratio of 2 to 1, but reiterated that he would like to see what the surrounding jurisdictions are doing. He also shared he likes the idea of having electronic signs downtown if it can be done as part of cleaning up some of the temporary signs during the Furniture Market. Committee Member C. Davis preferred a 4 to 1 ration rather than the 2 to 1 because there are eight rotations.

Committee Member J. Davis asked if an objective was to replace the static billboards with digital billboards. Mr. Burnette asked if the interest was just in the downtown for digital and not other places. There were no objections from the Committee to with the digital signs. Mr. Burnette then asked if the Committee wants to look only at digital and no static signs. Committee Member J. Davis felt this would be up to the sign company. Mr. Peters replied that both types of signs are nice and have their own set of attributes, but from an advertising perspective or interest from local businesses they like both. He pointed out the goal, too, is to clean up some of the areas. Mr. Stacey advised that the digital signs are costly and it would have to make sense. He suggested 2 for 1 for the static signs and explained part of this as far as marketability and the interest of advertising is location. Chairman Wagner inquired about outside companies that would like to put up a sign, but does not have anything to replace. Mr. Burnette explained they would have to negotiate with the other companies to acquire a location. Committee Member C. Davis noted the distance between each sign would reduce the numbers no matter who comes into town.

Deputy City Manager McCaslin asked about height restrictions. Mr. Burnette explained there are typically height restrictions, size standards, etc.... and noted location, types of signs was really a policy issue for Council to determine. Committee Member J. Davis asked Assistant City Manager Hemann to elaborate on what Salisbury did regarding signs. Mr. Hemann explained they worked to remove the signs in the downtown and on one particular corridor that would be equivalent to our Business-85 corridor. They cleaned up the entryway (landscaped with public art) and everything from the exit going into downtown Salisbury which was about a mile and a half, they amortized them, paid for them and removed them overtime. They also changed the sign ordinance to require smaller signs. He expressed concerns about the digital signs for the downtown High Point area would be that the signs would stay dark 50 weeks a year and it would look worse than the ones up now because they can at least be seen. He also expressed concerns that if people are allowed to cover up side windows, it could hamper future development. He noted that High Point is unique and felt the locations would need to be carefully decided and stressed the entryways do need to be protected. Committee Member C. Davis felt there were ways to utilize the digital signs in the off months to the city's benefit and depending on the placement, it could work to the city's advantage.

Chairman Wagner asked if there were any studies that show that people are excited about driving through scenic corridors on the way into a city because he has never understood the fascination of driving down the street and looking at trees in corporate parks. Mr. Hemann offered to provide before and after pictures of the corridor he mentioned earlier. Mr. Burnette explained the reasons cities look at gateways, entryways and corridors is because you're going to the place and you know that you have arrived and jurisdictions do look at these things. Committee Member C. Davis felt the city has an opportunity and suggested the distance could be determined and used as a safety net in anticipation of any future changes of success.

Mr. Burnette reiterated that staff would like to get some feedback as to if this is the right approach and wanted to validate if this Council was on board with these areas, receiving zones. **Chairman Wagner stated he liked where staff was going before and would like to see some sort of proposal for cap and replace and liked the 4 to 1 for digital and 2 to 1 for static signs. He also liked the idea of doing digital downtown if it is going to allow clean-up of a lot of the temporary signage and review the regulations of the other jurisdictions for 74/85.**

Mr. Burnette explained the size of the signs could be regulated as well as the design, but not the content. Heidi Galanti with Planning and Development asked if the idea is to direct people to High Point or somewhere down the road. Mr. Stacey explained it could be both. Committee Member C. Davis felt four of the eight should direct people to High Point. Ms. Galanti reiterated that the content cannot be regulated.

Committee Member C. Davis asked for an explanation of static versus digital and which companies are better suited for static versus digital. Mr. Stacey explained that a static billboard is usually used for one thought, one idea, one message. He noted that the digital is the growth of the industry and widely accepted across all communities, but from an advertiser's perspective the digital allows you to tell a better story because the message can be changed quickly and easily. He pointed out another part would be to look at on-premise and off-premise because of the different zoning regulations for both. He shared that High Point is important to Fairway in the Triad area and they hoped to be part of the decision and part of the community.

There being no further discussion regarding this matter, Mr. Burnette indicated that staff has what is needed at this point as far as direction in how to move forward.

Update- Street Abandonment Project

Herb Shannon with Planning & Development provided an update on the Street Abandonment Project that started in 2007. He shared a map of the streets that were identified for abandonment. The Technical Review Committee identified streets that were potentially eligible for abandonment. TRC reviewed these and ranked them.

- 392 right-of-ways identified for potential abandonment
- 213 of these have been abandoned over the last 9 years
- 19 moderate ones left with access issues
- 100 difficult ones left (can't be abandoned due to land locking property)
- 47 deemed to remain open due to public interest

Mr. Shannon reported that about 54% of those right-of-ways identified were abandoned, which equates to 13.2 miles and 58 acres of area that is now back on the tax rolls. He advised that staff would continue evaluating the remaining right-of-ways.

Staff will bring something back to the Committee for consideration at next month's meeting.

Temporary Sign @ Church

Committee Member C. Davis brought a request to staff regarding a church that wanted to put up a temporary sign for fundraising purposes to show the progress. She explained they would like to raise money for a community center on a vacant piece of property that is adjacent to the church that belongs to the church. Mr. Burnette asked that the name and location of the church be sent to him so staff could check into it.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m. upon motion duly made and seconded.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa B. Vierling, MMC
City Clerk

Jay Wagner, Chairman