

MINUTES OF THE PLAN COMMISSION
February 27, 2012

The regular meeting of the Plan Commission was called to order by Chairman Mark Moore at 7:18 p.m. at the Village Hall.

Members present: Chairman Mark Moore, Scott Adams, William Cotey, Dan Donahue, Walter Oakley, Kurt Schultz, and David Semmelman.

Members absent: None.

A quorum was established.

Village Staff present: John Spoden, Director of Community Development; David Smith, Senior Planner; and Karen Marren, Associate Planner.

Commissioner Oakley moved, seconded by Commissioner Cotey, to approve the January 23, 2012, Plan Commission meeting minutes.

Motion carried 7 - 0.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

PC 12-01 Village of Libertyville, Applicant

Request is for an amendment to Section 11 of the Libertyville Zoning Code relating to sign regulations.

Mr. John Spoden, Director of Community Development, stated that Staff will present proposed changes to Zoning Code Section 11 regarding the C-1, Downtown Core Commercial District tonight. He stated that it is Staff's intent to have an open discussion with the Plan Commission and the public in attendance and then to continue the Sign Code discussion to the March 19, 2012 Plan Commission meeting.

Ms. Karen Marren, Associate Planner, presented the proposed changes to the C-1 District section of the Sign Code to the Plan Commission. She stated that Staff is recommending that freestanding signs be eliminated from the C-1 District. She stated that Staff is recommending that commercial tenants in the C-1 District may choose either awning signs or wall signs, but not both. She stated that Staff is recommending that commercial tenants in the C-1 District be permitted up to two (2) projecting signs per business. She stated that Staff is not recommending any changes to the regulations for marquee signs. She stated that valence signs will continue to be permitted and are different than awning signs due to their smaller size and location on awnings.

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Ms. Marren stated that a new sign proposed for the C-1 District is the projecting signs. She stated that Staff is recommending that they not exceed three (3) square feet in area.

Mr. Spoden stated that Staff reviewed what other communities have done for projecting signs and the current proposal is in line with them.

Ms. Marren stated that the proposal for projecting signs includes a height clearance of 7'6" and that they not be permitted to be internally illuminated.

Ms. Marren stated that Staff is also proposing that portable sidewalk signs be permitted as temporary signs, but only during the months between May and November.

Mr. Spoden stated that due to potential liability issues of allowing portable sidewalk signs, part of the requirement shall include some form of certificate of insurance with the Village listed as the certificate holder. He stated that the location requirement shall include having the portable sign pulled up next to and abutting the building as well.

Ms. Marren stated that Staff is not proposing to change the current regulations for Professional Service signs.

Mr. Rod Buss, 31260 North River Road, stated that he has a contract to purchase the apartment building on Cook Avenue. He stated that there will be a sign issue for that property if the Village prohibits freestanding signs in the C-1 District. He stated that there currently isn't a sign on the property to identify the apartment building. He asked if side streets in the C-1 District can be exempt from any future regulations that prohibit freestanding signs. He stated that the neighboring police station has a freestanding sign although it is in a different zoning district.

Mr. Spoden stated that he had met with Mr. Buss today in Community Development. He stated that the apartment building that Mr. Buss is referring to is next door to the Community Development Department. He stated that there is a one-story office building directly in front of the subject apartment building and that the existing freestanding sign is actually on the property that would belong to the owner of the apartment building. He stated that Staff will give further consideration to revising the C-1 regulation to exclude side streets from the freestanding sign prohibition.

Mr. Brian Grano, stated that the proposed projecting signs are a great idea. He stated that portable sidewalk signs are a terrible idea.

Commissioner Adams stated that consideration could be given to requiring easel signs to be made to look aesthetic.

Ms. Marren stated that design restrictions for temporary portable signs will be difficult to regulate.

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Commissioner Adams stated that many of the portable signs look tacky and he stated that consideration should be given to allowing the Appearance Review Commission having a chance to review these signs.

Mr. M.J. Seiler, 1015 Thornbury Lane, stated he is requesting that the projecting signs be allowed up to four (4) square feet in sign area. He stated that he wants a vibrant downtown. He stated that trees obscure many of the downtown wall signs. He stated that projecting signs are meant for both pedestrian and vehicles. He stated that pedestrians don't know what is ahead of them as they are walking downtown without the benefit of projecting signs. He stated that four (4) square feet of sign area for projecting signs will serve both pedestrians and vehicles. He stated that if the portable sidewalk signs are done well, they will be very attractive, if they are done poorly, they will be a detriment to the downtown.

Commissioner Schultz stated that he supports the proposed projecting signs, but was concerned as to whether they might block the line of site of the wall signs. He stated that consideration be given to the elevation or height from grade for projecting signs as they relate and are juxtaposed to existing wall signs.

Ms. Marren stated the projecting signs installed at the Libertyville Crossings commercial buildings are in the C-2 District, are larger than what is being proposed for the C-1 District, and are multi-tenant. She stated that further research could be given to regulating the wall height of projecting signs in order to accommodate the line of sight for the existing wall signs, but that there is not a lot of space to work with as wall signs are not permitted anywhere above the first floor building wall facade.

Mr. Spoden stated that Staff can look at incorporating design guidelines.

Chairman Moore stated that he is concerned about the spacing between wall signs and projecting signs as well.

Ms. Marren stated that the projecting signs at Libertyville Crossings do block the view of the wall signs.

Commissioner Donahue stated that the projecting signs in the photos look larger than three (3) square feet.

Mr. Spoden stated that most of the projecting signs in the photos presented to the Plan Commission are three (3) square feet in sign area. He stated that the photos were intended for presentation purposes.

Commissioner Donahue stated that consideration should be given to including a maximum footprint area for which the portable signs would be permitted to be located.

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Mr. David Pardys, Village Attorney, stated that part of the proposed sign ordinance regulations include a requirement for a certificate of insurance. He stated that part of a potential for a trip hazard is the proposed requirement to locate the portable signs up against the building wall.

Commissioner Semmelman stated that consideration should be given to allowing the portable signs to remain in place during the winter months depending upon snow removal.

Commissioner Cotey stated that consideration should be given to extending the portable sign period to December 31 in order to allow them during the holiday shopping season. He stated that the portable signs should be required to be parallel to the sidewalk in order to allow for more walking space on the sidewalk. He stated that there should be some control over the portable sign materials for aesthetic purposes and to perhaps consider an Appearance Review Commission review. He stated that he is concerned over the proposed number of both wall signs and projecting signs permitted as being too many. He stated that consideration be given to requiring that projecting signs be lower than wall signs. He stated that better use of window signage should be considered. He stated that he does not object to external illumination of projecting signs. He stated that he does not object to projecting signs being larger than three (3) square feet in area.

Commissioner Adams stated that the appearance of the portable signs is important and that there should be some continuity to their appearance. He stated that the allowed gross sign area should be both for the projecting signs and for the wall signs combined. He stated that the existing Way Finding sign currently located at the intersection of Cook Avenue and Milwaukee Avenue should be bigger.

Mr. Spoden stated that the existing Way Finding signs located at Cook Avenue and Milwaukee Avenue were a first attempt by the Village at constructing such a sign. He stated that he can request that the Parks Department review the Way Finding sign to determine if changes can be made to it.

Commissioner Cotey inquired as to the status of Staff's review and development of using kiosk signage.

Mr. Spoden stated that the kiosk signage regulations shall come during the next phase. He stated that public kiosk signs are better suited as a public issue not a Zoning Code issue.

Commissioner Oakley stated that the projecting sign at the Five Guys restaurant was not tastefully done. He stated that the Staff proposal for projecting signs is a good start.

Mr. Seiler stated that the projecting signs at the Five Guys restaurant are not normal for the downtown. He stated that the Libertyville Crossings commercial center is not like downtown.

Chairman Moore asked Staff about the research done relative to deciding about the proposed three (3) square foot sign area for the projecting signs. Mr. Spoden stated that part of the process for determining projecting sign size was anecdotal. He stated that Staff also surveyed other communities that allow projecting signs in their downtowns. He stated that Staff views the purpose

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of the downtown projecting signs as being pedestrian-oriented, not auto-oriented. He stated that projecting signs can become an enhancement for the downtown. He stated that four (4) square feet is too large.

Chairman Moore stated that the Village of Libertyville downtown is unique. He stated that he is concerned about the potential lack of flexibility for the sign location on the building facade.

Commissioner Schultz stated that he is concerned about the potential lack of consistency.

Chairman Moore asked for further clarification of the proposed regulations for portable signs and permitting them as temporary signs.

Mr. Spoden stated that the intent is to limit the portable signs to fair weather seasons and to avoid any conflicts with snow.

Chairman Moore asked for clarification for the sign regulations relative to marquee signs.

Mr. Spoden stated that a marquee sign would only be appropriate for the movie theater and therefore did not see any reason to revise the current sign regulation for marquee signs.

Chairman Moore stated that he is in favor of controlling the materials used for portable signs and projecting signs for aesthetic reasons.

Mr. Spoden stated that it would be appropriate to control aesthetics with design guidelines, not the Zoning Code.

Mr. Grano stated that the A-frame signs should be illegal. He stated that if the Village permits both the projecting signs and the portable signs then there would be too much clutter.

Ms. Pam Hume, MainStreet Libertyville, stated that the intent for projecting signs should be oriented to both the pedestrian and to the passing vehicles. She stated that it may be appropriate to eliminate portable signs as long as the projecting signs are four (4) square feet in sign area.

Mr. Seiler stated that he is one of the older individuals along Milwaukee Avenue with seniority. He stated that the downtown is unique and special. He stated that he is concerned about creating too much homogeneity with a revised Sign Code.

Commissioner Schultz stated the Barrington ordinance seems to have incorporated a restriction on sign materials. He stated that consideration should be given to encouraging certain materials for the projecting signs.

Mr. Spoden stated that the Village's Appearance Code is not strict law to the degree that the Zoning Code is. He stated that Staff can explore as to whether design guidelines can be incorporated into the process.

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Mr. Pardys stated that aesthetics can be regulated to a certain degree, but the Village should tread lightly in this regard.

Ms. Marren asked if the projecting signs should be permitted to go to four (4) square feet in size, but reduce the size or number of wall signs.

Commissioner Cotey stated he agreed with Ms. Marren.

Chairman Moore stated that a limit on the gross sign area should be enough to control sign sizes.

Commissioner Schultz stated that he is in favor of reducing the wall signs to allow for projecting signs for each business.

Mr. Spoden stated that Firkin's is a good example of a business who installed wall signs tastefully.

Commissioner Adams stated that projecting signs on the front facades facing Milwaukee Avenue should suffice.

Mr. Spoden stated that the intent is to create a double frontage appearance for the buildings in the downtown. He stated that Staff will come back to the Plan Commission with design guidelines.

Chairman Moore stated that he cannot visualize the difference between three (3) square feet and four (4) square feet.

Mr. Seiler stated that the projecting signs should be above the ground between 12 and 15 feet.

Commissioner Donahue stated that he does not object to four (4) square feet in sign area for the projecting signs.

Chairman Moore stated that he does not object to four (4) square feet in sign area for the projecting signs.

Commissioner Oakley stated that he does not object to four (4) square feet in sign area for the projecting signs.

Commissioner Schultz stated that he does not object to three and one-half (3.5) square feet in sign area for the projecting signs, but they should be higher above the ground.

Commissioner Cotey stated that he does not object to four (4) square feet in sign area for the projecting signs.

Chairman Moore stated that tonight's public hearing highlighted the following issues for Staff to review; consider freestanding signs in the C-1 District, but only on side streets, drafting design guidelines for signs in the C-1 District, and limit or restrict the materials for the portable signs.

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Mr. Spoden stated that Staff will bring revised sections of the Sign Code to the Plan Commission incrementally in order to provide the Plan Commission the opportunity to be thorough. He stated that the Plan Commission recommendation to the Village Board will be after all sections have undergone the public hearing process. He stated that he anticipates that the remaining portions of the Sign Code should be completed with public hearings by the end of the summer.

In the matter of PC 12-01, Commissioner Adams moved, seconded by Commissioner Semmelman, to continue this item to the March 19, 2012, Plan Commission meeting.

Motion carried 7 - 0.

Ayes: Moore, Adams, Cotey, Donahue, Oakley, Schultz, Semmelman
Nays: None
Absent: None

COMMUNICATIONS AND DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Cotey moved and Commissioner Oakley seconded a motion to adjourn.

Motion carried 7 - 0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.