



**PLANNING COMMISSION  
WORK SESSION  
ANOKA CITY HALL COMMITTEE ROOM  
Tuesday, February 16, 2016  
5:30 P.M.**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The Work Session of the Anoka Planning Commission was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:**

Commissioners present: Chair Don Kjonaas, Borgie Bonthuis, Karna Brewer, Manley Brahs, Sandy Herrala, Peter Rech and James Cook.

Commissioners absent: None.

Staff present: Chuck Darnell, Associate Planner and Clark Palmer, Associate Planner.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

**1. Sign Ordinance Review and Updates**

Associate Planner Darnell introduced the topic reviewing and identifying potential updates to the sign ordinance, which was one of the goals for the Planning Commission in 2016. This review would also include reviewing all other sections of the zoning ordinance that relate to signs. Associate Planner Darnell stated that the Planning Commission had discussed this topic a few years ago, and identified some areas of the sign ordinance that may need to be investigated or updated. Staff requested that the Planning Commission discuss the areas of the sign ordinance that may need to be investigated further, and provide guidance for staff on areas of the ordinance that should be focused on.

Commissioner Brewer stated that during the previous discussion there had been questions about how billboards, illuminated, and changing electronic signs should be regulated. Commissioner Rech stated that there were definitions on electronic variable message signs and flashing signs, which could be considered to be flashing electronic signs. Staff stated that these definitions would be further investigated to determine if updates were needed.

Commissioner Brewer asked about the electronic sign that the City manages on Main Street on the north side of the Rum River bridge. Staff stated that there was language in the code that allowed for public signs to be exempt from the requirements of the sign ordinance.

Commissioner Cook stated that the definition of governmental sign could be expanded to include any sign that is used to share necessary public information or is used for a public purpose.

Commissioner Herrala asked if there was literature or studies on how signage could distract drivers, and stated that the Planning Commission should consider literature from subject matter experts when considering any changes to sign regulations.

Commissioner Cook stated that LED signs should be further defined and regulated in the ordinance because they are a new technology that did not exist the last time that the sign ordinance was updated. The Commissioners had a discussion on LED lighting and light intensity.

Commissioner Rech noted that all light intensity is measured in foot candles, and that type of measurement could be used to regulate sign light intensity. Commissioner Brahs noted that we already regulate light intensity on other types of development and commercial properties, and that some of that language could be used specifically for signs.

Commissioner Herrala stated that some signage exists in the City that does not blend in well with the architectural quality or character of the building that it is located on. Staff noted that the City did have language on regulating the design of signage in the Main Street districts to be integrated with the architectural character of the building on which it is being placed. However, that language is somewhat vague and further regulations could be investigated.

Commissioner Brewer stated that signage should be included as a requirement during the site plan review process.

Commissioner Bonthuis asked whether temporary signs, like banners, should have time limits. Staff stated that some temporary signs do have time limits, but others do not. Staff suggested that all of the types of temporary signs that are currently listed in the sign ordinance be reviewed and updated, and that time limits be considered for each type of temporary sign. Commissioner Herrala asked whether existing banners would have to comply if a time period was adopted. Staff stated that those existing banners would likely be grandfathered in, but that any existing banner that was not permitted would have to apply for permits and follow current regulations.

Commissioner Brewer asked that the time limit on temporary election signs be changed from specific dates to just regulating based on the number of days before and after an election, to allow for signage to be regulated during special election periods. Commissioner Rech stated that temporary real estate signs should also be investigated, including size, location, and time limits on how long they can be erected.

Staff stated that they would be investigating sign ordinance in other communities before drafting any recommended changes to Anoka's code. Commissioner Bonthuis stated that staff should look at other communities with historic areas such as Stillwater or Excelsior.

Chair Kjonaas asked about signs in residential districts, particularly along Highway 10 if an overlay sign district were ever adopted. Staff stated that signs in residential districts are regulated differently, but that staff would focus on residential areas when considering the regulations in a Highway 10 overlay district. Chair Kjonaas also asked whether we could regulate the density of signs along the highway. Commissioner Brewer then asked whether a no sign area could be established, and referenced a past effort in the beautification of highways. Staff stated that they would investigate those questions. Commissioner Herrala stated again that any changes that are proposed should be based on literature or studies related to signage and driver safety.

Chair Kjonaas stated that the city needed to balance business interests and the city's interests in regulating signs. Associate Planner Darnell stated that staff would be reaching out to the Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce and the Anoka Business and Landowners Association to gather their input on potential changes to the sign ordinance. Associate Planner Palmer also noted that freedom of speech should be considered when considering any changes to sign regulations.

Commissioner Rech asked whether the City could require that signage be removed from a property when a tenant vacates the property. Staff stated that they would investigate that further. Commissioner Cook suggested that a sunset clause or some other language be used that would require the property owner to remove signage at some point after a building becomes vacant.

Staff stated that they would begin research and outreach, and would bring more detailed recommendations on potential sign ordinance changes back to the Planning Commission at a future work session meeting.

## **2. Other Staff Updates**

Associate Planner Darnell reminded the Commissioners about upcoming meetings.

Time of adjournment 6: 25 p.m.

Submitted by: Chuck Darnell, Associate Planner