

**Village of Holmen
Planning Commission Minutes
August 28, 2012**

Village President Proctor called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:30 PM on Tuesday August 28, 2012. Present were commission members Szak, Proctor, Dunham, Johnston and Horvath, along with advisory members Olson, and Heinig; members Evenson and Ebner were excused. Also in attendance were Jackie Eastwood, Andrew Bremmer, Derrick Olson, Dave Bentzen, Cordell Adamson, Larry Ryan, Bill Beranek, Doug Schober, Leroy Holley, Kohl Adamson, Leonard Beranek, Keith Carson and Jay Fernholz.

Motion by Szak, seconded by Dunham to approve the minutes of the July 31, 2012 meeting. Carried unanimously.

Public Comment

Doug Schober of the Holmen Area Fire Department asked the Commission to take a look at the 4 second restriction for message changing and consider how the speed limit of the road might affect the ability of the drivers to receive the information.

Cordell Adamson met with Administrator Heinig to review the ordinance and feels he needs to make the public happy, but does not feel this ordinance represents public demand. He looked at other signs in the community and found 9 of the 10 signs out of compliance with this document. If these restrictions had been anticipated, he would have purchased a cheaper sign to get the messaging out rather than buying a state of the art sign. He spoke with the school district and they were apparently not aware of this ordinance. He feels another public hearing is warranted. He has contacted the Holmen Police Department and there is no record of a traffic accident as a result of these signs. He also contacted the City of Onalaska and the City of Galesville and they have no changes planned for their ordinance at this time.

Dave Bentzen from Quality Signs stated it was rumored Holmen is becoming anti-business and anti-sign and does not like to hear that. He has attended a number of the discussions at the City of La Crosse during their discussions regarding their ordinance.

Jay Fernholz is a resident at W7267 McHugh Road and has also attended the meetings held in the City of La Crosse. These meetings had a number of people that expressed an opposition to signs and a people who were in favor of signs that worked for sign companies. He has worked as a Landscape Architect and sees a value to signs, but does not agree with billboards. He appreciates Cordell's as a business because they do good work and will continue to go there for service, but has a policy to boycott businesses that advertise on Billboards. The Town of Holland has restrictions on signs that are very restrictive. He does not want to see the newly annexed area have signs installed that will compromise the residents of the Town that live nearby.

Len Beranek of Pizza Corral thinks business is like a wheelbarrow. The only way to get it to work is to push and signs do that. We need to draw business into the community.

Keith Carson of Olympic Signs stated the people Jay referred to at the La Crosse meetings were the same few that came to every meeting to express opposition. He appreciates the opportunity to work with Administrator Heinig in the document, but believes the off premises sign conditions should be re-visited.

Agenda Items

#4 – La Crosse Area Planning Committee Presentation and Q&A on Coulee Vision 2050.

Andrew Bremmer from MSA presented background and goals of a study that will incorporate transportation needs and future housing needs as the La Crosse area progresses. The study hopes to establish guiding principles for future policy decisions. A web site has been created (www.couleevision2050.com) that has information regarding the program and also contains a survey that they are hoping residents of the area will take. This would provide public input of what is expected of the area as it relates to transportation and housing, since the two are inter-related. The web site also allows people to register an e-mail address that would be used to relay important information and updates as the program progresses. A presentation like this is being made to all planning commissions in the area to give background and participation information to the communities. The plan is to gather the information over the next couple of months, disseminate the information and develop a plan that will be presented in the Spring of 2013 for the communities to "Buy-in" at the local level that would be adopted by LAPC in May of 2013. This will require help from the communities to get the information to the residents in any way possible, by providing paper surveys for residents to complete to adding a link to the program web site on the community's web site.

Steve Johnson asked how this process was done when they updated from the 1970 plan to the 2020 plan. There is little information of how this was done and probably was a DOT study that only involved transportation. This is the first "Visioning" projection that will take a look at traffic movement, but also include alternative aspects of transportation as well as housing ideas.

Mike Dunham asked how the "Buy-in" would work. The LAPC cannot mandate participation, but hopes to create a goal that all communities can work toward collectively as the population in the area grows.

Nancy Proctor asked if our Comprehensive Plan has been taken into consideration. Yes, all area comprehensive plans are being included in the early stages of the study. One source of additional funding is applying for grants and a plan of this type helps in the scoring process of those applications.

#5 – Possible Action and Recommendation on Adoption of an Official Map for the Village of Holmen.

Administrator Heinig presented a copy of the official map prepared by MSA that delineates roadway configurations within and adjacent to the Village. This map defines certain corridors as having larger right of way dimensions, indicating heavier traveled roads, or collector type streets. These range from 100 foot to 80 foot to the Village standard 60 foot width. Other roadways are also shown in red that are conceptual but must be considered in the development process to assure connectivity through the area.

Mike Dunham asked why roads were indicated east of the Deerwood Subdivision when our Comprehensive Plan does not include that as part of the Village. If developed, this area could be served with Village utilities and we want to have the information included in case a land owner was to request annexation to the Village. The Village also has Extraterritorial review rights of developments that take place in Townships if that development falls within 1.5 miles of the boundary of the Village and we can require these patterns be considered. Steve Johnston asked if there conflicts with the City of Onalaska and there are not.

Motion by Horvath, Second by Szak to recommend the Village Board adoption the Official Map for the Village of Holmen - carried unanimously.

#6 – Possible Action and Recommendation on Proposed Amendments of Article XII: Signs, Awnings, Canopies, and Billboards (Tabled July 31, 2012).

Motion by Szack, Second by Horvath to take this item off the table – carried unanimously.

Administrator Heinig provided background regarding the development of the ordinance to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The information gathered at the last meeting was taken into consideration and he had an opportunity to meet with representatives of the sign industry to revise the document to the version being presented. Electronic Variable Message (EVM) operations became part of the document to establish a mechanism to address complaints. The Commission has the authority to allow existing signs to be grandfathered, if that is what they choose. There are currently 10 signs in the Village that this would apply to (3 municipal – 1 at HFD and 2 at Holmen School District) along with 7 privately owned signs.

Mike Dunham asked if a caveat could be considered that would require the sign come into compliance if an upgrade to the sign was needed. Does change of ownership eliminate the grandfathering that would exist. The repair items are covered in the ordinance and a 50% cost repair or upgrade would require full compliance. Sale of the business and the sign would transfer the grandfather clause to a new owner of the sign.

Tony Szak was concerned with brightness and flashing needed to be addressed. The existing ordinance does not permit motion or flash, so those will not apply. Brightness will be something we need to work out with the owner of the sign.

Tony Horvath appreciates the comments by the local businesses. He would like to see the existing signs grandfathered in. He would also like to see the speed limit considered when establishing the time sequence restriction. Cordell's currently uses a 3 second interval. Since the sign at Heritage Homes was approved recently as a Conditional Use, will the grandfather clause apply? No, the Conditional Use states a requirement to comply with this ordinance and would not be under the previous rules.

Member Horvath also has issues with a number of aspects of the ordinance, as presented. He made a motion to amend the purpose statement to include language that preserve freedom of speech. The motion failed due to a lack of second.

Will the required separation distance between signs possibly prevent a business owner from installing a sign? Yes, it is possible that if adjacent property owners place their signs in a certain way that it would be possible there might not be adequate space available, but this should be addressed through proper planning.

Member Horvath made a motion, seconded by Szak to change the base line minimum time from 4 seconds to 3 seconds – carried unanimously.

Member Horvath made a motion to change the window sign coverage back to an allowable 25% coverage – failed due to a lack of second.

Member Horvath questioned the punishment clause, asking if a cap on the fines be established. Member Dunham disagreed with that concept because it would provide an opportunity for someone to "buy off" the ordinance.

Member Dunham asked about signs contractors use while working on a project (ie shingling, siding...) This type is allowed as a temporary sign and does not fall under the sign permit controls. He also asked if signs are distracting or deemed a nuisance, who makes the determination and how is action taken. It would be expected a complaint would be registered with the Administrator and he would provide information to a committee for a determination of action to be taken.

Motion by Dunham, second by Szak to include a grandfather clause in § 195-42 A.(5) of the ordinance for the operation of EVM signs that exist in the community as of 8/28/2012 – carried unanimously.

Motion by Szak, second by Dunham to recommend approval of the ordinance to the Village Board with the grandfather condition and the 3 second minimum time modifications. The motion passed with a vote of 4 to 1, with member Horvath casting the no vote.

Other Items

No other items came before the commission.

Motion by Dunham, seconded by Horvath to adjourn at 8:30 PM - Carried unanimously.

Dean K. Olson
Director of Public Works