

**Village of Holmen
Planning Commission Minutes
July 31, 2012**

Village President Proctor called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:30 PM on Tuesday July 31, 2012. Present were commission members Ebner, Szak, Proctor, Johnston and Horvath, along with advisory members Olson, and Heinig; members Evenson and Dunham were excused. Also in attendance were Keith Carson, Richard Daffinson, Craig Breitsprecher, Ryan Roberts, Bill Bulawa, Cordell Adamson, Larry Ryan, Scott Beranek, Doug Schober, Dawn Kulcinski, Leroy Holley, Ray Hale, Kohl Adamson, Leonard Beranek and Andy Sobkowiak.

Motion by Szak, seconded by Ebner to approve the minutes of the June 26, 2012 meeting. Carried unanimously.

Public Comment

Scott Beranek expressed his concerns regarding the Fire Department sign and the limits being proposed on colors and light on Smokey the Bear had to be turned off from 10 to 6 and wanted to make sure things were done right.

Ray Hale from Interior Designs – they are exploring the possibility of installing an electronic sign and want to do it the right way. They are interested in what is going on with the new ordinance.

Larry Ryan explained they had just put up an electronic sign and stated they oppose any restrictions that would require turning the sign on and off. They have been pro-active to work with the neighborhood and have reduced the lighting at night. This is a lifetime investment that he and his family have made to help improve sales. With a difficult economy, business is difficult and they ask that they not be hampered by restrictions that may hurt the business.

Richard Daffinson donated the new sign at the Fire Department. At first the sign was operating under full function. Later the colors were changed to a black background with white lettering because the lighting was not right on the sign. He wrote a letter to the Fire Department to put the sign back in full operation so they knew the sign was able to operate under all functions before he made final payment. They changed it back to a 5 second rotation because with the long interval, they received complaints that people were only able to view one message when driving by. Businesses in town could use signs like this and they should not be restricted. There can be some type of ordinance, but did not feel they should be abandoned. If he wanted to spend \$50,000 he should have bought a chalkboard with white chalk to get messages out. He is upset about this and feels more research should be done before adopting the ordinance.

Kohl Adamson representing Cordell's – they put in a message board that has been a valuable tool. They advertised for a position that was available and received a number of applicants. They understand the issues with brightness and have been pro-active to try and change to black background with red lettering at night. He opposes putting too many restrictions on the signs to change the signs at 10 to 15 seconds. 5 seconds or 3 seconds is a good interval. He opposes some of the strict regulations that he has heard.

Cordell Adamson reiterated what Kohl said and that he Fire Department sign was not allowed to scroll messages. The font size was pretty small and he struggled trying to read what the message said and he felt that was more distracting while driving 25 MPH. All signs

are going to be LED type signs because of the technology advancements. We need to look at working together to allow the signs for the business community.

Doug Schober represented the Fire Department. The public is happy with the Fire Department sign's appearance. It is one of the best things added to Main Street in a long time. It also gets important messages to the public along with emergency notices. And the additional lighting adds security to the property. People are unhappy that the messages change so slow and would ask the rate be increased. Personally would like to see something uniform established for consistency throughout the community.

Keith Garson with Olympus Media wanted to address the off-premise restrictions. The off-premise portion that was crossed off was a pretty well written document that adequately addressed spacing and size. The new document does not allow billboards to be located in the Village leaving little options for available space on Hwy 53. Prohibited signs may not be able to be enforced. If you eliminate these the owner is due just compensation for the signs. Regulation set forth in 8430(6) and also Trans 201-10 apply to these on highways. He is willing to work with the Village to establish proper language in the ordinance on a few things he feels need to be addressed.

Craig Breitsprecher from La Crosse Sign expressed his appreciation of the Planning Commission because he has been in the same situation in the City of Onalaska on similar committees. Staff has produced a good working document that is not perfect, but is a starting point. He has offered his assistance as a member of the sign industry to come up with a document that will work better. He asked the commission consider turning the ordinance back to staff to make the needed modifications to create a stronger final product.

Ryan Roberts from Kwik Trip stores spoke to Scott about the document and has worked with this at 400 stores in 300 cities. This not new to him since he is in charge of signs for the company and feels there are some aspects of the lighting that need to be revisited. He understand the Village needs to establish some regulations to prevent someone from abusing the situation but the regulation needs to be created from a pro-business/pro-community point of view. The grandfather clause should be addressed that requires existing signs to be brought into compliance with the new ordinance presented.

Dawn Kulcinski is a member of the Village Board and felt she needed to be present to become more informed.

Leonard Beranek feels Holmen is a bedroom community and needs the tax base generated by the businesses and wants to keep this in mind when creating the ordinance so we don't keep businesses away and work with the businesses that are here now.

Andy Sobkowiak is the manager of Ziegler Heating and heard about this the other day. He wanted to come and listed and voice his opinion as needed.

President Proctor thanked the public for their comments and reassured everyone that this is a working document that is being considered at the Planning Commission level. The Commission has been working on this for a while and has reviewed and discussed earlier drafts and provided direction at earlier meetings. This is latest and greatest version.

Agenda Items

#4 – Possible Action and Recommendation on Proposed Amendments of Article XII: Signs, Awnings, Canopies, and Billboards.

Administrator Heinig provided some background regarding the consideration of a revision to the ordinance. The Village hired MSA to do a number of projects recently that included an update to the Comprehensive Plan, the South Holmen Drive Corridor Study and various design standards for the community. Law requires that zoning ordinances be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the ordinance we currently have is not. A number of provisions being considered are a result of those plans and much of the terminology used was taken directly from those previously approved documents. The operational aspect of the EVM is not a part of the Comprehensive Plan, but needs to be discussed as part of the ordinance review. In the past few months, significant research was done to evaluate different aspects of the document. While the research was being done, and also knowing some of the complaints related to brightness and flashing we were presented with the idea of the Fire Department sign. We worked with Mr. Daffinson and the Fire Department to come up with a sign that would not be a nuisance sign on Village Property. We imposed restrictions on the sign to make sure that this would work. As part of the evaluation of how those restrictions worked, we learned some changes needed to be made to fit well into that area. We learned that a white background added significant brightness to the surrounding area. We also looked at how other communities restricted the timing of the message changes and learned they ranged from 5 seconds to 24 hours. For this sign, we originally set the frequency at 60 seconds and found that did not work for the community. Over the past couple of weeks, those restrictions have been lifted to allow messages to be changed more frequently and operate under the guidelines called for in this document. The Fire Department sign is compliant and there are no issues with how it is currently being operated. We also wanted to have feedback from the business community and the sign industry and thought we were making progress to get this completed, but obviously there is additional work to be done. Given the comments and the issues that need to be addressed, he recommended the Commission table action on this item until staff has had an opportunity to review comments and evaluate the input from those parties. We have a good start, but there are some items that we should take another look at to create a strong document to be brought back in another month or two.

Steve Johnston asked if there were any federal regulations that governed this type of sign. The response was that the municipality can create the ordinance to establish that type of control.

Tony Horvath thanked the public for coming out and expressing their concerns. These revisions flow logically from the documents previously passed and he wishes the people had been involved in the discussion of those approvals. This is a small part of the overall changes we are looking at. As a commission, we need to look at the principals used to establish the ordinance. Restrictions on free speech such as the restriction on political messaging in itself should be discussed before finalizing the document. We should look at doing something as business friendly as possible. Start with the business friendly aspect and see how that might affect residents.

President Proctor once again reiterated that this is a document to be worked on yet. This is also a very old document that needs to be updated.

Bill Ebner felt the document was a business friendly document, not that things should not be tweaked and asked how to go about coordinating the input to get to a final state. Is this to be done at a staff level or to be discussed at a meeting. The consensus was to have staff meet with people to make modifications to be brought back. This was not the first time this has been discussed and that people should take the opportunity to look through agendas to see if there is something listed that may affect them.

Tony Szak welcomed the input from business owners and the community so the Commission can do the right thing. He felt a lot of good work has been done to get us to this point and appreciates the public input.

Member Szak made a motion to table this item until the document can be revised and brought back for further discussion. Member Horvath seconded the motion that was passed unanimously.

Other Items

Steve Johnston thanked those that attended the meeting and appreciated their comments.

Tony Horvath felt there is a need to try harder to get the information out to the public so they can be better informed.

No other items came before the commission.

Motion by Ebner, seconded by Horvath to adjourn at 7:20 PM - Carried unanimously.

Dean K. Olson
Director of Public Work