

Charter & Ordinance Committee Report

RE: Sign Ordinance

Date: February 25, 2019

Chair: Christopher Etori (Alderman Mattis was ill)

Other committee members present: Alderman Humphrey, Board President Davis (quorum)

Other Aldermen present: Aldermen Clifford, DePoy, Gillam, Tommola, Whitcomb

Others present:

Mayor Allaire

Matt Bloomer, City Attorney

Tara Kelly, Planning/Zoning Administrator

Susan Schreibman, Planning Commission

Dave Coppock, Planning Commission

Dave Cooper, RRA

Matt Reveal

The meeting convened at 5:30pm. I noted that Alderman Mattis had outlined an in depth process with President Davis for the C&O committee that will take the Board through a slow and methodical process to understand the details that are found in the proposed ordinance by collecting questions from the Board and gathering answers that will help us create an ordinance that best reflects this Board's vision for signage in the city. Tara Kelly then gave those present a packet of information that included the current sign ordinance, the new proposed ordinance, a rough draft of the map, and a list of items that the board could consider as we reviewed the proposal. As a substitute chair, I asked that rather than take the issues up as individual topics, that we start at the beginning and take it line by line, sentence by sentence.

The first section was the grandfathering clause. Concerns in this section were the triggers that would cause a grandfathered sign to become in violation of the ordinance, specifically whether or not they were too low of a bar and would create an unfair burden on current businesses. Questions asked were: How would insurance claims for damaged signs be impacted and could business owners have to pay out of pocket? What are triggers in other communities? Can we create incentives to help business owners bring their nonconforming signs into legal conforming signs? The building inspector seems to have a lot of leeway in enforcing the ordinance, what is the process for appealing their decision? How are awnings and signs in the right-of-way impacted in the grandfathering clause? Should there be a final expiration date of any and all grandfathering of signs?

The second section covered was the Violations section, which covers abandoned, unsafe, and unlawful signs. Concerns in this section were about creating additional costs for property owners. Question asked were: What happens if a property owner is actively recruiting or working with a prospective tenant but it will be longer than 180 days before a sign will be in place? Does it make a difference if the sign is conforming? Should the condition of the sign and not a timeframe determine whether it is in violation?

The third section covered was the Districts. There was general consensus that there should be districts, particularly to protect residential property values, but concerns were about whether the boundaries were appropriate and whether or not the sign districts should match the zoning districts. Given that the zoning ordinance is currently being worked on, questions asked were about the legal impacts of having districts that did not match up perfectly.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm and the issue will remain in committee for continued discussion.

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher Etori, Vice-Chair

ITEMS WITHIN THE SIGN ORDINANCE DRAFT THAT THE BOA COULD FOCUS ON

Districts

1. Are differing standards for different districts a good idea?
2. Is the general idea of how the districts were distinguished the right idea?
3. Okay doesn't match zoning?
4. Tweaks / changes to district boundaries?

Sign Types

1. Temporary signs – right time period?
2. Illumination – external vs. internal
3. Electronic message boards – how to handle?
4. Window signs – different on upper floors? Percentage correct?

Size Restrictions

1. Agree with reducing 2 free standing to 1?
2. Height limits make sense?
3. Square footage make sense?
4. Okay for monument signs to be larger?

Existing Signs

1. Grandfathering vs. amortization
2. Triggers for non-conforming to conform appropriate?

Levels of Review and Process

1. Building Inspector still the proper reviewer?
2. Appeals makes sense?
3. Role of ARC make sense?