
SIGN ORDINANCE TASK FORCE MINTUES
August 27, 2009

PRESENT: Ted Clem
Judy Bowles
Wendy Martin
Britt Knight
Napoleon Harris
Lula Davis
Valerie Brown-Williams
Todd Deen
Nancy Brooks
Gary Eller
Bill Chambers, Jr.
Gary Willis
Jay Kimbro
Bo Henry
Sharon Gross
Pamela Barkley
Jackie Dixon
Jason Ward
Ginger Goodyear
Jeff Wiggins
Wright Woodall
Lawrence Boyd
Lydia Crew
Scott Sapp
Alan Dismuke
Kirby Browning
Mac Hare
Melissa Goodin
Roger Marietta
William Spires

STAFF PRESENT: Howard Brown, Co-Chairman
Mike Tilson, Co-Chairman
Nathan Davis, City Attorney
Tracy Hester, Development Services Senior Manager
Nathaniel Norman, Chief Code Enforcement Officer
Gloria Thompson, Administrative Assistant
Jennifer Newton, Administrative Secretary, SR

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 3: 03 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Brown stated that everyone present would vote today on all of the issues that were discussed at the last meeting. The city staff will be excluded from the voting. The recommendations from the SOTF will be given to the City Commission during their September 15th work session and then to the Planning Commission on October 1st. The recommendations from the SOTF, staff, and Planning Commission will then go back to the October City Commission work session and then the City Commission public meeting on October 27, 2009.

CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

Mr. Brown opened the floor to continue the discussion for Issue #3 – use of streamers.

Mr. Clem suggested allowing any retail establishment to use streamers to delineate a permanent outdoor display of merchandise.

Mr. Henry mentioned that Lee County business owners use streamers and he wouldn't want the dealers here in Albany to move to Lee County.

Ms. Brooks passed around pictures of car dealers from other cities that allowed streamers to be used. She also passed around a petition signed by the dealers in Albany that thought streamers, balloons, and flags should be allowed to be used. Mr. Chambers also added some pictures of dealerships that were allowed to use streamers in other surrounding cities.

Mr. Deen provided a list of cities that the auto dealers were using flags, streamers, and balloons on their automobile lots. The information was provided by Gallagher Promotional Products which is a national vendor/supplier of marketing materials to new and used automobile dealers.

Mr. Eller mentioned that the group of people meeting today was just a small statistical sampling of the people that make up Albany. He thought that the media should do a survey of the local citizens to see how they felt about these issues so that the City Commission would be able consider more opinions.

The SOTF recommended three options for Issue #3: 1. allow streamers, flags on poles, (small) balloons with Code Enforcement enforcing against dilapidation; 2. allow streamers, flags on poles, (small) balloons with a permit (the three are inclusive) and code enforcement enforces against dilapidation; or 3. the staff recommendation of prohibiting the use of streamers. Twenty SOTF members voted for #2; six others voted for #2; two others opposed #2.

Mr. Brown asked that they go back through the issues and take a vote.

Issue #1: Display of Signage on Public Right-of-Way – Twenty SOTF members voted for the staff recommendation and six others also voted for the staff recommendation.

Issue #2: Use of Banners – Nineteen SOTF members voted to allow the use of banners up to six times per year, 14 consecutive days, one banner per road frontage, up to 48 square feet on building or fence, and up to 32 square feet on property (one per road frontage) if secured properly. Four others voted for, two SOTF voted against, and one other voted against this recommendation.

Issue #4: Use of Citizen Appeal Board – Twenty SOTF members voted for the staff recommendation and seven others also voted for the staff recommendation.

Issue #5: Use of Vehicle Signs – Fourteen SOTF members voted for staff's recommendation with no cap on the number of vehicles allowed with signs as long as the vehicles are legal, operable, properly licensed and registered and allowed onsite of business. Four others in the audience also voted for this recommendation.

Mr. Henry asked if the City and County had to follow the same regulations as the businesses in Albany. Mr. Davis replied that the government bodies do not have to follow the zoning laws, which include signs, but the City could voluntarily follow the same regulations.

Mr. Henry was also concerned about making laws that can't be enforced. Mr. Tilson stated that Code Enforcement did not have the staff to handle every single sign and they never would have that staff but the regulations will be enforced by Code Enforcement the best that they can.

Mr. Carter asked why signs on windows were regulated. Ms. Bowles stated that the police officers said that they couldn't see into the stores. Mr. Hester added that the intent of regulating signs on the windows was to limit the number of signs on a site.

Issue #6: Use of Window Signage – Fourteen SOTF members voted for changing the current standards from 10% to 50% without regard to road frontage. Seven SOTF members voted for no regulation on window signage and two others did too.

Mr. Tilson mentioned that his officers almost always give a warning notice before issuing a citation. He would like for them to continue to have the discretion to give a warning or a citation when necessary if determined to be an imminent hazard or safety issue. After a period of time, there may need to be zero tolerance.

Issue #7: Use of Warning Notice – Twelve SOTF members voted for accepting the staff recommendation and giving Code Enforcement discretion to give citations if deemed necessary and five others voted for the same. Eight SOTF members voted that Code Enforcement should always give a warning with no discretion and two others voted for the same.

Issue #8: Number of wall signs should be reconsidered – Twelve SOTF members voted to use total square footage in force now but allow it to be transferred to multiple walls and the signs must face the street or parking lot. Four others also voted for this option. Six SOTF members voted for allowing each wall to have wall signs with the square footage now allowed on each wall. Five others also voted for this option.

Issue #9: Real Estate and Directional Signage on corners – Nineteen SOTF members voted to accept the staff recommendation and four others also voted to accept the staff recommendation.

Issue #10: Abandoned and Dilapidated Signage – Seventeen SOTF members voted to accept the staff recommendation and four others also voted for the same. Two SOTF members voted to accept the staff recommendation but add the requirement for signs with no operating businesses to be removed by property owner. Five others voted for this also.

Several people requested that more issues be added to inform the City Commission of their other concerns. The following recommendations were added:

Issue #11 – remove pending prohibition for portable signs

Issue #12 – add a grandfather clause for nonconforming signs

Issue #13 – remove cap on number of LED ground signs allowed in the City

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 5: 25 p.m.