CITY of THE DALLES
313 COURT STREET
THE DALLES, OREGON 97058

(541) 296-5481 ext. 1125
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

CITY OF THE DALLES PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Thursday, December 4, 2014
City Hall Council Chambers
313 Court Street
The Dalles, OR 97058
Conducted in a handicap accessible room
6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER:
Chair Lavier called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
Bruce Lavier, Mark Poppoff, Chris Zukin, John Nelson, Jeff Stiles, Dennis Whitehouse, Sherry DuFault

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:
None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:
Planning Director Richard Gassman, City Attorney Gene Parker, Administrative Secretary Carole Trautman

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:
It was moved by Nelson and seconded by Zukin to approve the agenda as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
It was moved by Nelson and seconded by Stiles to approve the November 20, 2014 minutes as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
None

LEGISLATIVE HEARING (continued):
Application Number: ZOA 87-14; City of The Dalles; Request: Amendments to the Land Use and Development Ordinance regarding sign codes.

Director Gassman reported no written comments were received. He thanked the Sign Committee (Committee) members, guest to the Committee Chad Walter, Main Street Coordinator Matthew Klebes, and staff for participating in Committee meetings.

Gassman highlighted certain issues related to signage. Sign codes that were not mentioned in the staff report were as follows:

Signs in the downtown area – Gassman reported it was the general consensus of the Committee to encourage Matthew Klebes to work with the downtown property owners and/or business owners to suggest any changes to the sign code in the Central Business Commercial zone. Klebes reported to the Committee that Main Street was working on themes and colors for the downtown area, and changes to sign codes would be discussed in the future. Gassman reported that signs in the right of way were also discussed, and it was the general consensus of the Committee not to make changes in the current code. He said the Committee briefly discussed placing a time limit on non-conforming signs, but it was the Committee's general consensus that the proposed sign code changes would not create many new non-conforming signs due to the fact that the proposed changes tended to be more lenient than existing code, rather than more prohibitive. One exception was the topic of digital signs. Proposed changes were more restrictive, he said, mostly because at the time of the last sign code change digital signs were not in existence.

Director Gassman pointed out that City Attorney Parker would review language for technical language and formatting after the recommended changes were finalized. Those changes would be reviewed at a January Planning Commission meeting.

Gassman commented on various proposed changes (in accordance with the format of the staff report) as follows:

A. <u>Definitions: 13.010.030</u>

2. Most Committee members were in favor of encouraging people to put murals on walls and not be too restrictive on classifying a mural as a sign. In cases where there would be a mural with words, only the area with words would be counted as a sign. Murals and historic murals were listed under the Exempt Signs section also.

3. "Ghost Signs" – The Committee proposed a definition for a ghost sign, also listed under the Exempt Signs section. The Committee did not want to be too restrictive on this type of sign.

4. Window Signs – Because of technological improvements in the sign industry, it has become much easier to install signage on the outside of windows. The Committee was proposing to have a definition and list window signs in the Exempt Sign section. Therefore, interior and exterior signs on the window are proposed to be exempt. Under the proposal, signage must be affixed to the window.

5. Framed Sign – A framed sign consisted of a rigid border. Weather typically hindered the usage of temporary signs. If a banner was placed in a frame, it would for the most part withstand the weather conditions, and it would stay fixed in place. The proposal stated that permits for fixed signs would be valid for 90 days (maybe longer).

B. <u>Exempt Signs: 13.030.010</u>

1. CFO Zone (Community Facilities Overlay) – CFO, typically existing for public schools and church facilities, the Committee proposed allowing one 20 square foot name sign as exempt; otherwise a name sign would count as part of the facility's signage allowance.

3. Garage and yard sale signs – The word "yard" was added to this section.

5. For Sale Signs – Current code language was unclear in differentiating between residential and commercial properties. Therefore the Committee recommended a language change.

6. Subdivision Signs – The Committee proposed a 32 square foot maximum.

C. Temporary Signs: 13.030.020

1. One temporary sign per street frontage was proposed in addition to other signage for up to 90 days in duration. No change in the maintenance of signs code was proposed.

2. Balloons – The Committee proposed that permits for balloons and other inflatable devices be limited to 7 days.

D. Prohibited Signs: 13.030.030

4. Digital Signs – Administrative Secretary Trautman presented a slideshow illustrating various time length segments for a digital display – 6 seconds, 10 seconds, 12 seconds and 15 seconds. The Committee's recommendation was to prohibit digital signs that change display in less than 15 seconds, or that have more than three lines of text at any time, or exceed the brightness allowed under the regulations of the State of Oregon.

Stiles said the recommendation prohibited moving displays, which was today's current trend. Director Gassman pointed out there was a fine balance between allowing business and property owners to attract people without distracting drivers from taking their eyes off of the road. It was discussed that the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) regulation allowed static movement for six seconds for any traffic—any sign visible to the state highway.

DuFault asked what other cities had developed for sign code for digital signs. Gassman indicated he conducted a limited search and found nothing on digital sign regulations. He said Portland was facing some lawsuits by sign companies that claimed the City of Portland digital sign code was too restrictive.

Russ Brown, 909 East 9th Street, The Dalles, Oregon (Sign Code Committee member) reported that the Committee discussed the Griffith digital sign. The sign was located in a 30 mph speed zone. It had flashing text and backgrounds. Brown said he thought the business had slowed the movement down from what it was in the beginning, but he felt the sign could be a distraction to motorists.

DuFault stated she thought it would be more distracting and a larger hazard to slow the timing down. Whitehouse advised that several of the area schools are planning on changing to digital signs in the future. Stiles and DuFault indicated they liked moving signs. Stiles felt that if one or two signs were causing an alarming distraction to motorists, he would be in favor of going to the property owner rather than prohibiting any graphic movement at all. Brown stated it would be difficult to approach a property owner about changing a digital sign without some sort of regulation. He cautioned that more digital signs would come to the area, and rules needed to be in place. Brown commented that without codes, enforcement becomes subjective. Director Gassman directed the Commission to the code section on prohibited signs. As the code reads currently, the language on a distracting sign was a subjective tool to regulate and would probably be interpreted by the Planning Director and possibly forwarded to the Planning Commission, he said.

Zukin pointed out that there were two reasons for digital signs: 1) digital signs were an easy way to change copy; and 2) the movement and strobe light effect of digital signs draw peoples' attention. Lavier said that changing copy was one thing, but distraction was a problem. Poppoff indicated he saw no problem with local code following ODOT regulations. Stiles said part of the problem with the high school digital sign was the brightness in a residential zone.

Final comments from Commissioners were: 1) Stiles – It goes against the grain to take away digital movement; 2) Poppoff – It's an issue of roadside safety; 3) DuFault – Not in favor of restricting movement; 4) Whitehouse – Not in favor of restricting movement; 5) Lavier – Not in favor of restricting movement; and 6) Nelson – Suggested different standards for commercial and residential zones. Director Gassman identified the main unresolved issue on the proposed digital sign code was the movement of copy.

Taner Elliott, 397 Summit Ridge Drive, The Dalles, Oregon, suggested looking at the frames per second on digital motion. He said the number and timing of frames could regulate the strobe light effect.

After further discussion, it was the general consensus of the Commission to gather more information on digital signs and revisit the topic at the January 15, 2015 meeting. Zukin will provide vendor information to staff for review.

E. <u>Others</u>

4. The current sign code was unclear. Proposed revisions clarified what needed to be done.

5. Freestanding signs – Proposed revisions added more flexibility to the property/business owner for freestanding signs.

8. One of the most significant proposed changes. The current code restricted flush mount signage to the building front. The proposed change would allow flush mount signs on any exterior at the maximum square footage allowed.

STAFF COMMENTS:
Director Gassman reported that the City Council public hearing regarding residential infill policies was scheduled for Monday, January 26, 2015.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:
Commissioner Nelson reported that he attended ODOT's Bike Hub meeting. Many good ideas were presented, and the meeting was very productive. An area near the Lewis and Clark Festival Park was the designated area for the new bike hub. A preliminary design was formulated along with a theme that would tie in with the historic highway theme to help connect The Dalles with the region.

NEXT MEETING:
January 15, 2015

ADJOURNMENT:
Chair Lavier adjourned the meeting at 7:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Secretary Carole Trautman

Bruce E Lavier

Bruce Lavier, Chairman