



AGENDA
MAYOR'S DOWNTOWN TASK FORCE
Meeting #4 – August 4, 2008
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Siskiyou Room, Community Development Building
51 Winburn Way, Ashland OR

- 2:00 p.m. Call to Order – Pam Hammond
- 2:05 p.m. Public Comment
- 2:20 p.m. Complete Committee discussion of options on remaining issues from July 21 meeting.
- Sign Code
- a) Exempt Signs
 - b) 3-D/Display of Merchandise Signs (AMC 18.96.040 F)
- 3:45 p.m. Discuss agenda for August 11 meeting.
- a) Confirm topics to cover
 - b) Additional information needed?
 - c) Final Report from Task Force
- 4:00 p.m. Adjourn

**DOWNTOWN TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES
JULY 28, 2008**

CALL TO ORDER

Task Force Chair Pam Hammond called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way. Hammond noted several of the members attended a tour of downtown sign issues, which was conducted prior to the meeting.

Members Present:

Pam Hammond, Paddington Station, Chair
John Morrison, Mayor
Renee Compton, Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory
Daniel Greenblatt, Greenleaf Restaurant
Sandra Slattery, Chamber of Commerce
Dave Dotterer, Planning Commission
John Stromberg, Planning Commission
Dana Bussell, Public Arts Commission
George Kramer, Citizen at Large
Don Laws, Citizen at Large

City Staff Present:

Martha Bennett, City Administrator
Richard Appicello, City Attorney
Adam Hanks, Permit Center Manager

Absent Members:

Dale Shostrom, Citizen at Large

PUBLIC COMMENT

Judy/Shakespeare and Co. Bookstore/Stated she is in a difficult situation because her business is located down an alley. She explained sales have dropped 60% since the City has prohibited her from placing the wagon at the alley's entrance and explained that she is doing her best to keep the bookstore open.

Jeff/ Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory/Commented that the proposed changes are insufficient and felt more change was needed. He stated businesses can't stay in business if they cannot have something that lets customers know they are there. He stated customers will not visit a store if that business does anything "too tacky" and he does not understand what the task force is afraid of.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION OF OPTIONS

Issue #3 – Downtown Businesses with Limited Signage Opportunity.

Hammond read the issue and the options aloud. She voiced her support for Option 1, which would change the sign limitation to 24" from the wall and would provide greater visibility for businesses on side streets/alleys/pedestrian access ways. Mr. Hanks used Shakespeare and Co. as an example and explained how Option 1 would allow them to place a sign at the entrance to the alley that would project out from the corner.

Greenblatt/Compton m/s to accept Option 1 for Issue #3. Voice Vote: all AYES. Motion passed.

Issue #5 – Placing Signage in the Public Right-of-Way.

Hammond read the issue and options aloud. City Administrator Martha Bennett clarified if Option 2 were selected, the City would have to establish a program and identify the parameters for a temporary sign permit process. Slattery suggested they consider City owned signs that don't include business names, but

rather indicate “lodging” or “dining” and directional arrows. She stated these could be artistically done and may encourage people to walk. Ms. Bennett commented that another option would be for the City to install signs and allow businesses to purchase a spot on that sign. She stated this option would help with the Blue Giraffe’s signage situation and noted a City sign could be placed in the Water Street parking lot. Comment was made voicing support for a combination that would allow for generic directional information signs as well as City signs that list specific business information.

Compton/Dotterrer m/s to accept Option 1 for Issue #5. Voice Vote: all AYES. Motion passed.

Laws/Kramer m/s to reject Option 2 for Issue #5. DISCUSSION: Kramer stated he is interested in looking at encroachment opportunities that pertain to all businesses and voiced opposition to creating a separate authority in this area. Laws felt it would be a mistake to allow temporary signs in addition to directional signs. Compton commented that if the City decided not to place a directional sign, Option 2 would provide the business owner an opportunity to apply for a permit. It was questioned if the City could stipulate that this option would only be available if the City does not do Option 1. Ms. Bennett voiced her hesitations with Option 2. Suggestion was made for the group to table the motion and come back to this after they have dealt with the encroachment issue. **Motion was tabled.**

Issue #7 – Encroachment Permit Process.

Hammond read the issue and the options aloud. Kramer voiced support for a list of approved items that could be placed in the City right of way. He stated this list of allowable items should be separate from the items the City would require a permit for. City Attorney Richard Appicello commented on the legality of this issue and recommended a process where items would be donated and accepted by the City; and the City would then decide where the item is placed. He stated the City would only accept items that met generic durability standards and the individual would need to sign a maintenance and hold harmless agreement. Ms. Bennett questioned if the City already owned these items and she stated it was her understanding that if someone places an item in the City right of way, they are essentially donating it to the City. Laws commented that it would be difficult to come up with a list of approved items and stated the list would have to be regularly amended. He added that he does not feel a list of approved items would solve the problem and voiced his support for Option 1. Kramer voiced concern that requiring a permit and the donation process would stop these types of objects from being placed. Hammond noted that there are also safety measures to be considered, such as the Black Sheep’s lion. Suggestion was made for a two part process that includes a list of general items that the City endorses and requiring the placement of all other items to go through a permit process.

Ms. Bennett summarized the group’s deliberation and stated they would like to allow for the placement of functional items and recognize that these will be owned by the City; they are willing to let staff evaluate whether to establish a donation process or include a general acceptance provision in the code. Ms. Bennett stated staff could also look into a 3D allowance for functional objects designed to address safety issues and noted there will need to be criteria established for how to decide on the placement of these objects.

Stromberg/Laws m/s to approve the staff direction as outlined by Ms. Bennett. DISCUSSION: It was clarified this is not a final decision and this issue would be returning to the group at their next meeting. Stromberg commented that he views this as enabling certain uses, not prohibiting everything else. Bussell noted that if someone wanted to donate art there is already an approval process for that. Mr. Appicello clarified the two processes would work together. **Voice Vote: all AYES. Motion passed.**

Issue #6 – Newspaper/Misc. Publication Racks.

Hammond read the issue and the options aloud. Comment was made questioning if the City could completely remove the racks. Mr. Appicello clarified he does not believe completely banning them is appropriate.

Kramer/Greenblatt m/s to combine Options 1 and 2 and direct staff to inventory all downtown newspaper/publication racks and prepare a recommendation. DISCUSSION: Recommendation was made for the inventory study to indicate their preferences and for it to be referred directly to the City Council. Kramer and Greenblatt agreed to include this amendment in the motion. **Voice Vote: all AYES. Motion passed.**

Issue #9 – Administering the Downtown Parking Program.

Ms. Bennett noted the draft ordinance that was submitted to the group and indicated staff needs clarity on the towing vs. booting then towing options. She clarified the City is not proposing to boot the vehicle and leave it there until the owner pays, but rather boot the vehicle and have it towed after 24 hours if payment is not received.

Support was voiced for towing and not booting vehicles. Hammond questioned the dollar amount owed before the City would take action and suggested raising it from \$250 to \$500. Ms. Bennett commented on why the \$250 amount was chosen and cautioned them about raising this too high. Greenblatt noted the provision in the ordinance that states the individual will be noticed 10 days in advance before any action is taken. Stromberg supported the towing option and stated booted vehicles could take away from the City's ambiance.

Mayor Morrison left the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

Ashland Municipal Judge Pam Turner commented on the 10 day notice period and shared a few situations where individuals might not receive the notification. Comment was made suggesting the City affix a colored placard to the vehicle prior to it being towed.

Dotterrer/Greenblatt m/s to recommend the Ordinance as drafted with the exception of removing the booting provision. DISCUSSION: Mr. Appicello suggested the notification period be changed to 14 days. Consensus was voiced for including this modification. **Voice Vote: all AYES. Motion passed.**

DISCUSS POSSIBLE AUGUST 4 MEETING

Hammond stated it will be necessary for the group to meet again and asked for the members' preference on meeting dates. She noted the group could meet next Monday, or meet two weeks from today. Mr. Appicello indicated he would likely need more than one week to prepare the draft right-of-way ordinance.

The Task Force reached consensus to meet on August 4th and August 11th.

Ms. Bennett clarified the Task Force's final report is scheduled to go before the City Council on September 2, 2008. She noted recommended changes to the Sign Code will have to go to the Planning Commission; however, the Council could enact the rest of their recommendations. She added the group will need to complete their work by August 19th in order to make the September packet deadline.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

April Lucas, Administrative Assistant

Memo

Date: July 31, 2008
Bill Molnar, Community Development Director
From: Adam Hanks, Permit Center Manager
To: Downtown Task Force
Re: Sign Code Options – Issues #1 & #2

The following issues and options have been modified based on the discussion and informal straw pole votes made by the Task Force. Through the course of Monday's meeting discussion, several suggestions were made to "simplify" the ordinance in general, which may be something worth discussing but may not be feasible at this time given the charge of this Task Force and the time that has been allotted.

Staff would stress that the committee proceed with caution. In particular, the city sign code is an extremely successful tool that has had a tremendous influence upon the transformation of Ashland's downtown into a community focal point, revered throughout the State and beyond. The existing sign code is a classic product fashioned by a community well-known for its dedicated and farsighted citizenry. Significant changes that lack a full assessment and understanding of potential unintended consequences, may lead to a slow and deliberate dismantling of one of the formidable elements integral to the town's unique and historically resilient town center.

Changes to the Sign Code beyond tweaks to the exempt sign number and size allocation and other similarly scaled changes could have a much greater affect on the overall intent and long standing effectiveness of Ashland's Sign Code. Staff feels strongly that much more work would need to be done to research and present alternate methodologies for the allocation of signs.

With that caveat, Staff has provided the following revisions to the options put forward in the last meeting and has offered some additional comment on the potential effect of each option.

Issue #1:

Particularly in the Downtown area, the limitation on exempt signs (no permit required) of 2 signs of two square feet do not meet the needs of the businesses

Option #1: Modify the Sign Code to allow one additional exempt sign (2 sq ft or less) to provide additional sign area and number for items such as restaurant menu's, sale of the day, specials, etc in ~~the C-1-D zone~~ **Downtown Design Standards Overlay** only.

Option #2: Modify the Sign Code to allow the existing exempt signs to be a maximum of 3 square feet rather than the existing 2 square feet

Option #3: Modify the Sign Code to allow one additional exempt sign with a maximum area of three square feet. This would provide businesses with two exempt signs of two square feet each and one exempt sign of three square feet.



Option #4: Allow one of the two (or three) exempt signs to be three dimensional with a similar scale of the exempt signs, such as a 1x1x2. (also listed as option #1 on 3-D Issues #2)

Effect: Additional sign area is created with each option. The Task Force seemed to be in favor of option #3 which is a hybrid of options #1 and #2. Businesses would have the choice of using the exempt signs as permanent (affixed to the building, window, awning or ground) or temporary (on a stand, hanging during the day, removed at night, etc). While this solves some of the enforcement concerns recently raised, it should be noted that many businesses already have three or more exempt signs so the true effect of adding exempt signs is making some existing signs legal rather than providing the availability of new signage opportunities.

Issue #2:

The Sign Code currently prohibits three dimensional signs/representations of merchandise of any type

Option #1: Allow one of the two (or three) exempt signs to be three dimensional with a similar scale of the exempt signs, such as a 1x1x2.

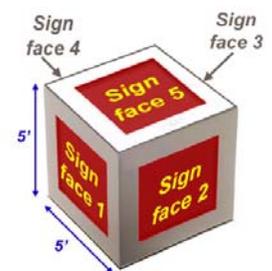
Option #2: Remove prohibition of 3-D/rep of merchandise from the Sign Code entirely (AMC 18.96.040 F), which would allow 3-D/rep of merchandise as a sign type, but would not necessarily add number or square footage to the signage allowed.

Option #3: Retain prohibition of 3-D/rep of merchandise code section, but create exemption for 2-D or 3-D Public Art based on acceptance by a Jury appointed by the Public Arts Commission with predetermined criteria for acceptance. Additionally, the art would need to be donated and be located on public lands or public easement areas. (see Public Arts Memo for further details)

Option #4: Remove prohibition 3-D/rep of merchandise from the Sign Code, but create a separate sign area/volume and number maximum separate from the current maximum sign areas for 2-D signs.

Effect: Allowing 3-D/rep of merchandise in addition to the existing 2-D signage opportunities would create flexibility in determining the appropriate total volume (cubic feet) of the 3-D being permitted as it would not have to relate to the 2-D area allocation (square footage).

The Task Force should also consider the possibility of a business utilizing the 3-D sign option to create a solid cube with graphic content on five or more surfaces (see illustration). This could have a substantial impact on the overall sign area devoted to one business.



The Task Force will also need to discuss whether they feel it is appropriate to require the 3-D sign/merchandise to be permanent (attached to a structure, ground, etc) or if it could be temporary and be moved at will around the private property, removed at night, etc.

