

CARSON CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
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A meeting of the Carson City Planning Commission was scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on Monday, March 24, 2008 in the Cooperative Extension Conference Room, 2621 Northgate Lane, Suite 12, Carson City, Nevada.

PRESENT: Chairperson John Peery
Vice Chairperson Mark Kimbrough
Connie Bisbee
Craig Mullet
Steve Reynolds
William Vance
George Wendell

STAFF: Lee Plemel, Planning Division Director
Kathleen King, Recording Secretary

NOTE: A recording of these proceedings, the commission's agenda materials, and any written comments or documentation provided to the recording secretary during the meeting are public record, on file in the Clerk-Recorder's Office. These materials are available for review during regular business hours.

A. CALL TO ORDER, DETERMINATION OF QUORUM, AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
(1-0014) - Chairperson Peery called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Roll was called; a quorum was present. (1-0053) Chairperson Peery led the pledge of allegiance.

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS (1-0043) - None.

C. PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC WORKSHOP

ZCA-07-208 DISCUSSION ONLY REGARDING PREPARATION OF AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CARSON CITY MUNICIPAL CODE, TITLE 18, ZONING, CHAPTER 18.16, DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS, DIVISION 4, SIGNS, TO ESTABLISH STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMERCIAL SIGNS DESIGNED TO BE VIEWED FROM THE FREEWAY (1-0029) - Chairperson Peery provided background information on this item. (1-0071) Chairperson Peery introduced this item. Mr. Plemel introduced himself, for the record, and provided additional background and logistical information. He introduced Facilitator JoAnn Skelly.

Ms. Skelly provided background information on her position and responsibilities as the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Educator for Carson City and Storey County. She presented a format for the workshop, and reviewed conversation guidelines which were displayed in the meeting room. She offered the workshop participants an opportunity to add or object to any of the conversation guidelines. When no additions or objections were forthcoming, she discussed the purpose for the workshop to develop criteria for freeway signs. She advised that staff had presented to the Board of Supervisors, in February 2008, the intent of pursuing specific regulations for freeway signage to "strike a balance between promoting economic growth and maintaining quality community aesthetics consistent with the goals and policies of the master plan." She discussed the goal of the workshop to reach consensus on points of agreement in order to develop criteria, to understand everyone's point of view, and to have a dialogue based on the issues. She provided the commissioners, City staff, and other workshop participants an opportunity to introduce themselves for the record.

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(1-0300) Carson City Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Ronni Hannaman reviewed a document entitled "The Value of Outdoor Signage," copies of which were included in the agenda materials. She thanked the workshop participants for their attendance, and discussed the importance of developing freeway signage criteria. Ms. Skelly noted the importance of signage to businesses and pointed out that strong businesses generate tax revenue for the community. She discussed the importance of considering the concerns of adjacent residents and the overall aesthetics of the community.

(1-0425) Gary Nigro requested the opportunity to provide an opening statement. He expressed disappointment that there were no representatives of the Historical Society or "some kind of architectural society" present at the workshop. He expressed the opinion that "community aesthetics is part of the reason ... people come to live in Carson City." He recognized the need for successful businesses to advertise, and agreed with the need to "find a balance." He expressed concern that the workshop participation would be lopsided "on business versus community here this evening."

(1-0490) Brad Bonkowski acknowledged the previous comments, and pointed out that "aesthetics help property values."

(1-0529) Chairperson Peery read a prepared statement into the record.

At Mr. Plemel's request, Ms. Skelly reviewed the "talking points," as follows: (1) Signs provide a service to the public with directions to goods and services; (2) businesses need signs; (3) balance with community desires; and (4) that the City needs clear criteria acceptable to the public and to businesses. She reviewed the decision points, as follows: (1) That a one-size-fits-all approach does not work; (2) review staff's definition of freeway-oriented signage; and (3) develop criteria for on-premise signs.

Workshop-type discussion took place with regard to establishing one standard and not deviating from it. Vice Chairperson Kimbrough referred to the standards obtained from Mesa, Arizona, and expressed the hope to develop criteria to avoid the special use permit process as often as possible. (1-1096) Marc Lipkowitz referred to the City of Sparks gateway ordinance which provides for a "certain height above the highest freeway appendage." Vice Chairperson Kimbrough discussed a preference for developing criteria to help the businesses "versus making it all case-by-case." Mr. Nigro expressed a preference to incorporate the formula used by Mesa, Arizona for notification and line of sight studies. In response to a question, a sign company representative expressed a preference for an "adequate standard for the businesses to advertise that they are there." (1-1259) Dan Edgington expressed support for standards, but emphasized the need for "a little bit of flexibility." Ms. Skelly discussed the importance of flexibility for both sides of the issue. (1-1325) Rose Boyer agreed, but pointed out the need for "some sensibility when it comes to a maximum." She reiterated the need for creating "an adequate standard." (1-1419) Mr. Nigro discussed the importance of "addressing the business community's needs without impacting the residents."

Ms. Skelly noted the importance of the subject public process associated with development of the ordinance. Commissioner Mullet suggested that standards can be developed to fit most cases. In consideration of other criteria, he expressed the opinion that "it becomes a matrix." Ms. Skelly summarized the discussion thus far, as follows: advantages of signage and community desires and concerns. She expressed an interest in "getting down to the City meeting the criteria for these signs." She noted this would provide the opportunity to work with the suggestions Mr. Plemel had collected.

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(1-1580) Marc Lipkowitz noted two “glaring issues” discussed, thus far: impacts to residential areas and sign height. He commended Mr. Plemel on the proposals to address both issues. He expressed the opinion, as a citizen, that the Planning Division is responsible for creating buffer zones. He noted the importance of everyone understanding the purposes of signage design, to wit: public safety and advertising. He inquired as to the number of business owners in the meeting room. He referred to the agenda materials pertinent to the benefits of advertising, and to the Frontier Plaza monument sign. He advised that “every little person taking a risk out there would rather die than not have their name on that sign.” He discussed studies done by AAA, “since the automobile and the sign were created about the size of copy and the amount of time it takes to stop, change lanes, at whatever speed you’re going.” He acknowledged the discussion regarding limitations on sign height, but noted the importance of “the right copy area” on a 65-mile-per-hour freeway “or you’re neither advertising or protecting the public.” In response to a comment, Mr. Lipkowitz explained that “the only reason that your on-ramp, off-ramp, and exit signs aren’t twice the size ... is because the freeway department has something unique that the private citizen and private businessman doesn’t have: the ability to warn you at a quarter of a mile that an exit is coming up. If they didn’t have that ability, those signs that you see ... would be twice the size that they are. Businessmen don’t have that. They cannot put an off-premise sign a quarter mile away that says, ‘Slow down, there’s a Wal-Mart coming,’ or ‘Slow down, there’s a Del Taco ahead.’ They have to have signs of an adequate size or they don’t serve their purpose.”

(1-1780) Phil Landry advised that “many other communities differentiate on two topics. One, they differentiate rules for on-site signage versus off-site signage and also day time signage and night time signage.”

(1-1802) Mr. Nigro inquired as to the potential risks if off-site signage was allowed. Mr. Plemel clarified that the subject discussion was in regard to on-premise signs, advertising shopping centers and commercial use properties on which they are located. He advised of an off-premise sign ordinance in Carson City which specifies location. He further clarified that the subject discussion was not intended to modify the existing off-premise standards. He advised of discussions with regard to creating solutions to the problems of visibility by allowing additional off-premise signs. He advised that an off-premise sign is the same as a billboard and opens up the off-premise sign ordinance. He reiterated the purpose of the subject workshop to develop reasonable regulations for on-premise signs. In response to a question, he advised of two or three additional locations for billboards along Highway 50.

(1-1877) Bud Boyer discussed the importance of including regulations for addressing freeway signage which may be vacated due to discontinuation of a business.

Commissioner Wendell requested additional input from the sign company representatives and business owners regarding the previously-outlined talking points.

(1-1924) Mr. Lipkowitz expressed the opinion that each workshop participant has “the same point of view or vision ... of Carson City in the future ... where we have an elevated freeway with nice on and off ramps, less congestion, the downtown area is maybe down to two-lane, pedestrian oriented, hopefully, we have the train rolling up and down the downtown.” He anticipates that downtown Carson City businesses will migrate toward the freeway intersections, which are commerce areas. He related details of conversations with shopping center owners in Carson City regarding their concerns associated with completion of the freeway bypass. He agreed that buffers are needed in friction zones, and reiterated that Mr. Plemel had addressed the issue. He agreed with an earlier comment that a 100-foot sign will interfere with airport operations, and pointed out that Mr. Plemel had also addressed this issue. He emphasized the importance

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of good signage for businesses and the tax base “to pay for the things that we want the City to look for.” “You have to give and take to let the businesses do business.” Mr. Nigro didn’t disagree, but expressed opposition to “the success of a business being at the expense of [his] property value.” Mr. Lipkowitz agreed “nobody wants that.” (1-2109) Brad Bonkowski suggested that the business owners and sign company representatives would have more input once discussion focused on developing criteria. (1-2123) Tim Bixby, of YESCo., noted that many of the questions had already been addressed in Mr. Plemel’s staff report. He advised that the Carson City Municipal Code already addresses abandoned signage.

(1-2235) Ms. Skelly turned the meeting to Mr. Plemel, who suggested there may be points upon which a consensus is not reached at this meeting. He advised these would be noted and that staff would provide alternatives as the public process continues. He reviewed the staff report and the draft development standards which were included in the agenda materials. With regard to section 4.9.10(a), Mr. Lipkowitz suggested that in consideration of the distances, “we have to make sure ... that ... because we’re so focused on College Parkway and the highway, we’re not limiting the ability for other intersections and businesses to have signs ...”

Mr. Plemel reviewed the provisions of section 4.9.3, and Commissioner Mullet noted the importance of keeping in mind that NDOT still has right-of-way to sell following completion of the freeway construction. Mr. Plemel reviewed the provisions of section 4.9.4(b) in conjunction with the maps attached to the staff report. Mr. Lipkowitz expressed support for the “wonderful tool ... to reduce sign clutter.” Discussion followed.

(2-0267) Mr. Plemel distributed, to the commissioners and the citizens present, information regarding maximum sign area and reviewed the same. Discussion followed, and Mr. Lipkowitz expressed support for the proposal “because it does limit square footage and it’s an easy way for an applicant to come in and understand the size of their sign. Very easy.” Chairperson Peery commented that the proposal is “equitable.” Commissioner Wendell agreed and commended the criteria “as excellent.”

Mr. Plemel reviewed section 4.9.4, Location and Siting, of the draft ordinance. (2-0638) Mr. Nigro reiterated the suggestion to use the Mesa, Arizona notification procedures and line of sight study requirements, which he reviewed. (2-0675) Mr. Lipkowitz disagreed because of the provisions allowing a 30-foot sign “that could be five feet from your sound wall.” He expressed the belief that “just because a sign’s on a freeway that we should make this more restrictive.” He further disagreed with adopting the Mesa, Arizona notification provisions for by-right signage. In response to a question, he explained that at the intersections “because of the elevation of the freeway, the signs are not going to be 100-foot tall. They’re going to be between 35 and 55 feet tall. That’s going to be what applicants can afford and what makes sense for these signs.” According to the Mesa, Arizona standards, “to get a 55-foot tall sign on a parcel at Highway 50 and the freeway, you’re going to have to be 550 feet away from any residential. That restricts about seven of these parcels from applying for a sign.” Mr. Lipkowitz reiterated the belief that this would be “too restrictive.” Mr. Nigro expressed concern over the Home Depot property which elevation is “anywhere between six and eight feet higher than the current residents who live there. That additional six to eight feet added onto the height of the additional sign ...” adds considerable height and therefore impact to the adjacent residents. Mr. Lipkowitz advised that three feet for every vertical foot “is a standard in five or six communities ... in northern and southern Nevada.” He expressed support for this standard, and suggested “maybe even five feet is an okay standard.” He expressed the opinion that ten feet is “now restricting future development from being able to utilize their signs because of other properties’ proximity to residential, to apartments, and to trailer parks on Highway 50 and 395, particularly.” In response to a question, he expressed the belief that blight would not be a problem “with the dark background / light copy

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that Lee has in the ordinance.” He expressed the opinion that the two 40-foot signs on Roop Street don’t have any impact on the apartments. Mr. Nigro agreed with Mr. Lipkowitz’s statements “if the person who wants to erect the sign can show that there no impacts.”

In response to a question regarding the lateness of the hour, consensus of the commissioners was to allow Mr. Plemel to continue with his presentation. (2-0882) An unidentified workshop participant expressed appreciation for the information provided from Mesa, Arizona, but stated, “We’re not Mesa. ... We’re in Carson City, Nevada. We have gambling. ... We don’t have to copy what they do.”

(2-0910) Mr. Plemel reviewed section 4.9.5(e), Design and Construction, of the draft ordinance, the staff report recommendation regarding the maximum number of tenants per sign, and section 4.9.9, Permit Requirement, of the draft ordinance. (2-1110) In reference to electronic message display (“EMD”) signage, Vice Chairperson Kimbrough expressed a preference to limit the number of signs. Mr. Lipkowitz suggested tying EMD signage to certain parcel sizes. Mr. Plemel reviewed the provisions of section 4.9.7 of the draft ordinance, and discussion followed. Chairperson Peery suggested requesting the “sign experts” to provide commentary, in future commission meetings, to give the commission sufficient information on which to base reasonable decisions. He suggested the commentary be provided in the form of presentation as part of a non-action item “that would allow us to see the difference between incandescents, LEDs, and so on; a means of measuring them, and what is available in the community currently. Like, for instance, what is Fandango’s output? ... And allow us to develop a standard for luminosity or however you wish to say it rather than just speculate.” Mr. Plemel and Mr. Lipkowitz acknowledged this would be possible. Mr. Nigro expressed opposition “because now we’ve got the fox in the henhouse.” Mr. Plemel explained “this is information that we need to have ...” In response to a question, Mr. Nigro expressed a preference for hearing from neutral parties, such as professors, regarding information on luminosity. Discussion followed.

(2-1385) Mr. Plemel reviewed the language of section 4.9.5(a), Design and Construction, as pertinent to visibility. Extensive discussion ensued, and Mr. Plemel expressed the belief that he had received sufficient information to formulate additional recommendations. He acknowledged the need to evaluate different alternatives and to obtain additional information for presentation to the commission. Chairperson Peery expressed the belief that the meeting should draw to a close. Mr. Lipkowitz thanked Mr. Plemel and Ms. Skelly. Mr. Plemel thanked the workshop participants for their attendance.

D. ACTION ON ADJOURNMENT (2-2000) - Chairperson Peery entertained a motion to adjourn at approximately 7:50 p.m. Commissioner Wendell so moved. Commissioner Bisbee seconded the motion. Motion carried 7-0.

The Minutes of the March 24, 2008 Carson City Planning Commission meeting are so approved this 28th day of May, 2008.

JOHN PEERY, Chair