

**MINUTES
PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD
TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2011
4:00 PM**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 4:00 PM with the following members and staff present:

Board Members

George Whitlock, Chairman	Shirley Brown (entered late)
Melva Sawyer	RoseAnne Collins
Russell Summers	Michael Pooser

Arcadia City Staff

Assistant City Administrator Judi Jankosky	City Recorder Dana Williams
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1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MARCH 8, 2011 REGULAR MEETING

On motion of Russell Summers and seconded by Melva Sawyer, the minutes of the March 8, 2011 meeting were unanimously, 4-0, approved.

2. CONSIDERATION OF ORDINANCE 965, AN AMENDMENT TO THE SIGN CODE

The Chairman briefly discussed the proposed amendment to the Sign Ordinance and the background of how it came to be. Mrs. Sawyer asked about ownership of the Chamber property to which the Assistant City Administrator responded it was owned by the City.

Mr. Summers noted what he believed to be a conflict between section 6-68 (1) and (3) regarding the allowance for such signs on main thoroughfares, but not within 50' of a residential district. He questioned the zoning on the 70 and 17 roadways in the residential districts. The Asst. City Administrator displayed the zoning map to point out areas where the electronic signage would be permitted.

Addressing the Board, Mr. Brian Burns of Leadership DeSoto, explained the proposed sign would be placed approximately 40' behind the current sign's location and that it is static rather than a scrolling sign with a message that will change very six seconds or so.

(Shirley Brown entered the meeting at this point.)

The chairman questioned how close or far apart these signs could be.

Mr. Burns distributed sketches of the proposed signage, noting it was a 6x6 on a post of rough cut lumber and stained to match the Chamber building. He added it was Leadership DeSoto's goal to enhance McSwain Park and that Deputy Mayor Keene, a member of this particular class, had initially come up with the project idea. Mr. Burns went on to say it would be a community based sign designed to promote community events and even emergency information in the case of severe weather; and that

aesthetically they were attempting to blend the old with the new. He also stated it would be his suggestion not to allow the LED information to change any less than 10 seconds.

Mr. Summers questioned to the size of the proposed display, which Mr. Burns stated would be 4x8 with a sufficient height to be seen from the road.

Mrs. Brown pointed out that the Board had not discussed flashing (digital) signs when they spent months crafting the sign code. Mr. Whitlock also felt the need to clarify the sign size, pointing out this would potentially open the floodgates to others in the future.

Both Mr. Summers and Mrs. Brown felt the amendment needed a lot of work and clarification for the many "ifs, ands, and buts" and suggested having the City Attorney present at the next meeting to provide that clarity and potential rewrite. The Chairman agreed and noting a special meeting to be convened on Monday, April 25th as the BOA, he suggested adding time at the end of that meeting to again discuss this amendment.

Stating her respect for the Chamber and its efforts, Mrs. Sawyer felt if these types of signs were allowed, Arcadia would turn "Vegas like" in no time.

Mr. Summers also pointed out that while signage is important, the City needs to establish parameters and control over what is approved, so that things will blend with the character of the City.

Mr. Burns, returning to the podium, disputed the results of a survey designed to gauge public input Mrs. Craven had placed in Wheeler's Cafe. He questioned names on the list and even the manner in which the question was posed. Then he added that approval of this amendment is needed prior to the graduation ceremony in June, and that a fundraiser for the project was planned for the following night. When asked, he estimated the cost of the proposed sign between \$13-17,000.

Mrs. Brown felt that input from the community was important and that perceived information creates issues. She wanted to know how the chamber felt, as well as the downtown merchant and other local businesses. The Chairman added that he too, felt the Board needed to do what is right for the community, but that intending no disrespect to Mrs. Craven, he was not influenced by the survey.

Mrs. Martha Craven spoke to the fact that a lot of historic cities similar to Arcadia had done a good job of keeping LED/Digital signs out of their towns, but that already she knows of a church and another business who wants one of these signs if this amendment is adopted. She believes allowing the Chamber sign will set a precedent that will be difficult to control. She also felt disallowing them would keep the city cleaner. As for the survey, Mrs. Craven defended her efforts as a means to let the public know what was being proposed since many of them hadn't heard the initial presentation.

Mr. Summers again expressed concern over the second interval, height, size, design elements, and conforming requirements. He conceded that eventually these types of signs would be allowed in Arcadia, but felt by establishing parameters now, when it happens, the City will have control.

Mrs. Sawyer also questioned why the Board was not approached first rather than having this "dumped in their laps" mid-way through the process.

Ms. Janie Watson also spoke to the subject, saying the P&Z Board had worked long and hard on refining the sign code over many months and with the assistance of a private consultant; but now the first person to come along who wants something different is requesting a change or exception. She felt the Leadership class was putting the cart before the horse; adding one shouldn't put up a sign saying come to the park with nothing at the park to come to. She felt the park should be fixed up with amenities first, then add the sign.

Dr. Ernie Hewett applauded the efforts of the Board on their scrutiny of the sign ordinance and proposed amendments; adding the Council had overstepped their bounds by not first considering a recommendation of the Board. He noted that the 12' height limit exceeds the maximum allowable height in some districts but also pointed out by allowing these signs, there is the potential for each of the businesses at the intersection of Hwy 17 and 70 to have one. Dr. Hewett also praised Mrs. Craven for having provided the names of those she surveyed, adding that the Council rarely does. He continued that while the survey may be unscientific, it does attempt to gather the downtown perspective and point of view. Dr. Hewett went on to say that it is difficult to allow signs but then limit how they can be put up.

Ms. Adrian Daly added that the Board should establish definite criteria for signs.

Mrs. Craven requested that at the very least, LED/digital signs not be permitted in the historic district.

The Chairman, with the consensus of the Board, expressed that the issues of concern could not be resolved during this meeting and felt the Board should recommend to Council the item be tabled at their meeting on April 19th.

Russell Summers made a motion to request Council table any consideration of Ordinance 963 on April 19th, to provide time for the Planning and Zoning Board to scrutinize the ordinance more thoroughly, to have the City Attorney present at their next (specially called) meeting, to be provided with a copy of the current sign ordinance of the City and that of similar size/style cities such as Punta Gorda, Mount Dora, and Eustis. Michael Pooser provided a second to the motion, which passed unanimously, 5-0, upon voice vote of the Board.

3. ADJOURN

Having no further business at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:05 PM.

APPROVED THIS 25TH OF APRIL 2011.

By:


George Whitlock, Chairman

ATTEST:


Dana L.S. Williams, CMC, City Recorder