

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



MEETING MINUTES

DATE OF MEETING: **January 16, 2025**

APPEARANCE COMMISSION

6:00 pm

Village Hall Board Room
2020 Chestnut Street
Homewood, IL 60430

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Hrymak called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

ROLL CALL:

Members Banks, Kluck, Scheffke, Preston, and Chair Hrymak were present. Member Quirke was absent.

In attendance from Village staff were Angela Mearos, Director of Economic and Community Development; and Noah Schumerth, Assistant Director of Economic and Community Development. There were no members of the public in the audience, and no members of the public were in attendance at the Zoom virtual meeting.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Chair Hrymak stated that Member Quirke will need to be present to approve the November 13, 2024 meeting minutes. The Commission declined to make a motion on the minutes from November 13, 2024.

Chair Hrymak asked for corrections from the January 16, 2025 meeting minutes. No changes were requested.

A motion was made for adjourning the meeting by Member Preston, second by Member Banks.

AYES: 5 (Members Banks, Scheffke, Preston, Kluck and Chair Hrymak)

NAYS: 0

ABSTENTIONS: 0

ABSENT: 1 (Members Quirke)

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

REGULAR BUSINESS:

25-01 SIGN CODE UPDATE - CONTINUED

Chair Hrymak introduced the workshop presentation to be conducted by Village staff. Chair Hrymak invited Noah Schumerth, Assistant Director of Economic and Community Development, to come forward to present the workshop on proposed sign code amendments.

Chair Hrymak requested that the workshop be presented by individual section, with opportunities for comments in between each presented section. Assistant Director Schumerth noted that staff planned to present the workshop by individual section.

Assistant Director Schumerth introduced the proposed code updates. Schumerth provided an agenda for the workshop.

Assistant Director Schumerth presented key goals of the project. Schumerth stated a need for improved organization, potential legal issues which impact sign regulations, and the need for improved regulation of signs in multi-tenant commercial centers.

Assistant Director Schumerth presented the outline for the new sign code and explained that sign regulations would be moved from Section 30 of the Village Code of Ordinances to the Zoning Ordinance in Section 44 of the Code of Ordinances.

Assistant Director Schumerth presented the purpose and applicability sections of the proposed ordinance and asked for feedback.

Assistant Director Schumerth presented proposed sign prohibitions.

Member Scheffke asked what types of features would fall into the category of “illuminated signs” and if “Open” signs would be included in the category.

- **Schumerth noted that staff wished to discuss “Open” signs and decorative neon window signs which may be desirable in the community.**

Staff Liaison Mesaros noted that the Village wishes to allow “Open” signs and similar types of signs, and staff may need to discuss illuminated sign requirements. Mesaros noted that sign regulation must be “content-neutral;” the Village could not ban all illuminated signs except signs which say “Open.”

Member Scheffke asked if signs with ambient lighting, created with neon or illuminated tubing behind sign letters, would be permitted.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth said yes, though it is dependent on the sign design. The tubing must not be visible.**

Member Scheffke asked why illuminated tubing is prohibited.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth stated that public feedback was against seeing exposed tube lighting, string lighting, and similar lights.**

Member Banks asked what would be done about certain buildings being from a historical period where signs with illuminated fixtures were more common.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth noted that the landmark process, which is proposed to be revised to include signs, would be used to allow these historical sign types. Schumerth noted that a comprehensive sign plan could be approved to allow signs which do not meet code but mimic a historic building type.**

Chair Hrymak noted that the comprehensive sign plan process could be a lot of work for a tenant to preserve a certain sign.

Member Preston asked if age-restricted activities (such as vaping) could be restricted from having signs.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth noted that this would violate content neutrality laws. Schumerth stated that the Village would need to restrict the use or activity and then prohibit off-premise advertising.**

Assistant Director Schumerth noted that any signs which wish to have modifications from standards would need to demonstrate public purpose and adherence to community standards in the Comprehensive Sign Program process.

Chair Hrymak asked for clarification on what would constitute a sign mounted to a fence, and whether residential “slow down” signs would be included.

- **Staff Liaison Mesaros noted that the signage would likely be exempt on residential property, and the sign would likely be classified as exempt from sign regulations and temporarily allowed on private property, similar to political signs.**

Member Scheffke asked if contractor signs are included as a fence sign.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth noted that some contractor signs are required by Village ordinance and exempt from sign regulations, and others are allowed as a temporary banner. Schumerth noted that the Chief Building Inspector was consulting on temporary sign allowances in the proposed code.**

Schumerth introduced a section detailing sign measurements. Schumerth said that Houseal-Lavigne will be creating graphics for the new Sign Code, most of which will be in this section.

Member Scheffke asked for clarification on how lot frontage will be defined in the new sign code.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth explained that lot frontage will be measured as property boundaries adjacent to public right-of-way. Staff Liaison Mesaros added that staff can look at zoning definitions to clarify definitions in the new sign code.**

Member Scheffke asked for clarification on how height will be measured for signs, since height can measure the height from grade or the height of the sign itself.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth said that height in most instances is measured from grade. The height of the sign itself is only measured for certain sign types.**

Assistant Director Schumerth explained new requirements for non-commercial signage. Schumerth also introduced amendments to the Village’s landmark policy to include signage as eligible for designation.

Chair Hrymak asked how signs will be deemed historical.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth noted that any landmark sign requires review and a recommendation for approval by the Appearance Commission, as well as approval from the Village Board.**

Assistant Director Schumerth introduced commercial sign types proposed to be added to the ordinance, and explained the organization of the ordinance by zoning district and type of review required.

Chair Hrymak asked for clarification about which signs will be included as an instructional sign in the new code.

Member Scheffke asked if window signs require a permit.

- **Staff Liaison Mesaros said that window signs require a permit, though some businesses place signs without permits. Mesaros noted that Economic and Community Development staff should be contacted so enforcement can occur for unpermitted signs.**

Chair Hrymak asked if window signs should require Appearance Review to improve enforcement.

- **Staff Liaison Mesaros noted that the issue is many businesses do not apply for window sign permits at all.**

Assistant Director Schumerth explained window signage requirements, including new proposed requirements.

Assistant Director Schumerth introduced requirements for wall signs and projecting signs.

Chair Hrymak asked how high the LoulouBelle projecting sign is.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth said the height is approximately 10-12'.**

Chair Hrymak said that 15' is a generous height allowance for projecting signs and businesses do not need signs this high.

Staff Liaison Mesaros commented that these signs are important to business owners because they are clearly visible for people downtown.

Assistant Director Schumerth introduced proposed regulations for monument signs.

Staff Liaison Mesaros asked if the monument sign example shown, at Buffalo Wild Wings, was allowed by variance.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth said it did not come up in reviewing variances, though staff could look at permit records.**

Chair Hrymak asked if it was standard in other communities to have a 5' height limit in downtown areas and 8' in other areas.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth said he was unsure whether 5' maximum height was standard for downtown areas. Schumerth said the 8' height allowance is standard for monument signs in many suburban communities. Schumerth noted that cities sometimes allow increased height based on location or vehicle speed.**

Chair Hrymak expressed concerns about whether 8' was enough height for many businesses, such as in large shopping centers.

Member Preston noted that the smaller sign at Wal-Mart gets lost in other signage. Assistant Director Schumerth provided sign sizes for various monument signs existing in Homewood. Chair Hrymak stated that 8' was not sufficient for height along Halsted Street. Assistant Director Schumerth noted that Homewood would not be the first community to allow signs larger than 8' in height.

Staff Liaison Mesaros noted that staff should look at other communities more closely for height allowances.

Chair Hrymak called for a 5-minute recess.

Assistant Director Schumerth introduced proposed regulations for electronic changing messaging (ECM) board signs.

Chair Hrymak noted that the requirement "image duration should not exceed 8 seconds" should be changed to "image duration shall be a minimum of 8 seconds."

Assistant Director Schumerth introduced proposed regulations for pylon signs.

Staff Liaison Mesaros noted that there are numerous pylon signs which also have electronic changing message boards installed within them. Assistant Director Schumerth noted that the proposed regulations would prohibit electronic message boards installed into pylon signs. Mesaros said that some gas station signs have electronic message boards which were previously allowed to be built.

Chair Hrymak asked how tall the former Brunswick Zone pylon sign is.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth said that the sign is approximately 20' in height.**

Chair Hrymak said that the sign is an appropriate height. Staff Liaison Mesaros noted that the current code allows signs up to 28' for centers with over 250,000 square feet in floor area. Chair Hrymak said he believed that 25' was appropriate for visibility.

Member Scheffke said he was fine with electronic changing message displays, but wished to regulate the area of such message displays. Chair Hrymak expressed concerns that too many signs could look bad along Halsted Street.

Staff Liaison Mesaros said that staff could consult other communities for ideas on how to regulate electronic message boards in pylon signs.

Chair Hrymak asked if standards should be written for landscape maintenance in the ordinance.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth said that more detail can be added to maintenance standards in the proposed code to ensure landscape maintenance can be regulated.**

Assistant Director Schumerth introduced proposed regulations for canopy signs.

Chair Hrymak asked why a business would install a canopy sign on a building in the M-1 zone.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth noted that there are industrial buildings in the area, including one on 194th Street in Glenwood, which have canopy signs.**

Chair Hrymak expressed that there could be situations where canopy signs could help with visibility for some uses.

Assistant Director Schumerth introduced proposed regulations for gas station canopy signs.

Member Kluck asked if signs above the canopy would be allowed.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth noted that no signs would be allowed to be above the height of the canopy structure itself.**

Member Kluck asked how signs would be regulated for gas stations with more than one canopy structure.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth said that the proposed code does not restrict signs on multiple canopies, but there is a maximum of four signs on each canopy structure. Schumerth offered to revise the allowed number if desired.**

Assistant Director Schumerth introduced proposed regulations for awning signs and marquee signs.

Staff Liaison Mesaros asked if Grady's on Harwood has a sign.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth noted that Grady's does not have a marquee but has other signs which a unique design.**

Chair Hrymak expressed a desire to see a business come in and construct a marquee sign in Homewood.

Staff Liaison Mesaros asked if the example from Milwaukee on the screen was flush to the building.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth said yes, and it is an example of what the proposed code may allow.**

Staff Liaison Mesaros said that marquee signs may look better when not fully flush to the building. Mesaros also commented that 15' is a low height for marquee signs and that extending beyond the roof line can be appropriate.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth said that the recommended changes can be made.**

Chair Hrymak asked where other marquee signs are installed in the area.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth noted that many communities outlaw marquees entirely, and many of the proposed regulations come from other communities with strict form standards on marquees.**

Assistant Director Schumerth introduced regulations for painted wall signs.

Member Preston asked if Dave’s Hot Chicken would be considered to have a painted wall sign.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth noted that the painting is just the color of the building; it would become a painted wall sign with commercial messaging.**

Member Scheffke noted the poor paint quality on Dave’s Hot Chicken. Chair Hrymak noted that code enforcement is needed to control the quality of wall color and painted wall signs.

Member Scheffke asked about vinyl lettering on buildings and how those letters would be classified.

- **Assistant Director Schumerth said that if vinyl letters are affixed to a window, they are considered window signage; if affixed to a metal panel, they are likely to be considered as part of a wall sign.**

Chair Hrymak asked for clarification on the regulation restricting painted wall signs from moving between wall planes. Hrymak said that signs moving across wall planes can be creative.

Staff Liaison Mesaros noted that if painted wall signs are required to go to the Appearance Commission, these signs can be reviewed on a case by case basis with less regulations included in the sign code.

Assistant Director Schumerth presented proposed requirements for window signs and instructional signs. Chair Hrymak praised the proposed regulations of instructional signs.

Assistant Director Schumerth thanked the Commission for input. Chair Hrymak complimented the work done by staff.

Chair Hrymak recommended continuing the remainder of the workshop presentation to the March 6, 2025 meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

ADJOURN:

A motion was made for adjourning the meeting by Member Scheffke, second by Member Preston.

AYES: 5 (Members Banks, Scheffke, Preston, Kluck and Chair Hrymak)

NAYS: 0

ABSTENTIONS: 0

ABSENT: 1 (Member Quirke)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Noah Schumerth

Noah Schumerth, Assistant Director of Economic and Community Development