

APPROVED

MINUTES OF
THE VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS
DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING
HELD AT THE ARLINGTON HEIGHTS MUNICIPAL BUILDING
33 S. ARLINGTON HEIGHTS RD.
AUGUST 28, 2018

Chair Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: John Fitzgerald, Chair
Kirsten Kingsley
Ted Eckhardt
Jonathan Kubow
Scott Seyer

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Michael Jones, DMG Contractors for *Stonebridge Apartments*
Steve Hautzinger, Staff Liaison

REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES FROM AUGUST 14, 2018

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER KUBOW, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 14, 2018. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

ITEM 2. SIGN CODE MODIFICATIONS

DC#18-079 – Sign Code Modifications

Mr. Hautzinger began by explaining that the Staff Report covers proposed amendments for five separate signage matters. Two of these matters (wall signs for permitted non-residential uses located in residential zoning districts and awning signage) are intended to be less restrictive than current code, to allow more signage flexibility for these applications. The proposed changes regarding wall signs for multi-story building are intended to clarify code to be consistent with current practice for this type of signage. Finally, the proposed changes regarding perimeter window lighting and window signage are intended to address concerns regarding poor aesthetics and character.

1. RESIDENTIAL WALL SIGNS

Mr. Hautzinger explained that the Zoning Code allows certain non-residential uses (ex. places of worship, schools, and park facilities) to be located in residential zoning districts. Currently, the sign code only allows ground signs for these applications, and wall signs are not allowed.

Although not currently allowed by code, all of the schools and many of the churches, and park facilities already have wall signs. Additionally, numerous requests have been received for this type of signage. Not allowing some amount of wall signage for these uses is overly restrictive and problematic, and can result in unnecessary sign variation requests.

A summary of the existing wall signs on many of Arlington Heights' churches, schools, and park buildings was presented. A common characteristic of these signs is that none of the signs are internally illuminated, which is appropriate in a residential location. The sizes of the signs vary, with the majority of the signs being less than 45 square feet, and a few instances of signs larger than 45 square feet. The existing wall signs generally face an adjacent street, but there are some instances of signage above an entrance that does not face the street, which should also be allowed.

POSSIBLE OPTIONS :

Option 1: Make no change to the current code.

- Continue to not allow wall signage for permitted non-residential uses located in residential zoning districts.

Option 2: Modify the code to allow wall signs for permitted non-residential uses located in residential zoning districts.

- Wall signs shall not exceed 25% of the signable wall area, or a maximum of 45 square feet, whichever is less.
- One wall sign shall be permitted per street frontage.
- One additional wall sign, 20 square feet maximum, shall be permitted at a main building entrance which does not have street frontage.
- All signs shall be designed to be compatible with the architectural style of the development.
- Internal illumination shall be prohibited but external illumination shall be allowed.

Staff recommends the Design Commission recommend approval of the proposed sign code revisions as outlined in **Option 2**, with the proposed text amendments as outlined in Attachment 1.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KUBOW, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL TO THE VILLAGE BOARD FOR SIGN CODE MODIFICATIONS TO CHAPTER 30,

SECTION 30-203, RESIDENTIAL (R) DISTRICTS SIGNAGE PROVISIONS, AS OUTLINED IN ATTACHMENT I DATED AUGUST 28, 2018.

Commissioner Kingsley asked for clarification that a wall sign would be allowed per street, as well as on the main entrance facing a parking lot. **Mr. Hautzinger** replied that Staff is recommending that one wall sign per street frontage be allowed, as well as a second wall sign up to 20 sf that might be above a main entrance that does not have street frontage. This is coming from what Staff found in their survey that schools and churches can be laid out differently than commercial businesses that face major roads, with entrances sometimes facing parking areas on the back of the building. These wall signs would be non-illuminated and not have the impact of an illuminated sign. **Commissioner Kingsley** pointed out that along with a ground sign, many buildings would now be allowed 4 signs, which she felt was too much. She suggested allowing a wall sign on either the main entrance or the street, or eliminating the monument sign; a maximum of only 3 signs. **Mr. Hautzinger** reiterated that ground signs for these uses are limited to six feet in height and are generally non-illuminated, which is less impactful than a commercial building that is allowed 16 ½ feet tall illuminated ground signs and much larger wall signs. He referred to the survey that shows that most schools have only 1 or 2 wall signs. **Chair Fitzgerald** liked the idea of allowing a total of 3 signs, with the option for a variation.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KUBOW, TO AMEND THE MOTION TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING REVISION:

1. A MAXIMUM OF THREE WALL SIGNS.

Mr. Hautzinger clarified that the motion supports what Staff recommended, with the extra condition of three wall signs maximum, and the commissioners agreed. **Commissioner Seyer** clarified that this would have no impact on the number or location of monument signs, and **Mr. Hautzinger** concurred.

**KINGSLEY, AYE; KUBOW, AYE; SEYER, AYE; ECKHARDT, AYE; FITZGERALD, AYE.
ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.**

2. WALL SIGNS FOR MULTI-STORY BUILDINGS

Mr. Hautzinger reviewed the Staff Report. For wall signs, the current sign code states, "Each business establishment shall be permitted one wall sign per street frontage it faces, provided, however, that an additional wall sign shall be permitted on an additional wall which fronts on a privately-owned parking area for that building serving more than one establishment." This generally works well for most businesses, including multi-tenant single-story buildings, such as a typical retail center where each business has a separate entrance with a wall sign above their storefront.

Code does not specifically address wall signage for multi-tenant, multi-story buildings, such as a typical multi-story office building where wall signage can be located at the top of the building. Multi-tenant, multi-story buildings typically share a common building entrance, which is unique from multi-tenant, single-story buildings, where each business has a separate entrance. Additional wall signs facing the parking area are used to guide customers from the parking area to the business entrance, which is not necessary when there is a shared common entrance.

If each business in a multi-tenant, multi-story building had a wall sign facing each street frontage, it could result in signage clutter on the building wall, with signage scattered at various locations and levels over the building facade. Fortunately, most landlords prohibit excess wall signage and generally allow just one wall sign for their major tenant. Furthermore, additional wall signs facing the parking area are not necessary due to the use of a common shared entrance, except for ground floor tenants with a separate dedicated entrance. Staff's policy/practice has been to encourage just one wall sign at the top of the building for multi-story buildings, but code should be updated to be consistent with this practice.

Staff presented examples of multi-story buildings with one wall sign at the top of the building per street frontage, and an example of a multi-story building with excessive signage.

POSSIBLE OPTIONS :

Option 1: Make no change to the current code.

- Continue to allow one wall sign per street frontage for each business in multi-story buildings.
- Continue to allow additional walls signs for each business in multi-story buildings facing the parking area.

Option 2: Modify the code to limit wall signs for multi-story buildings to one wall sign at the top of the building per building per street frontage. Additional wall signs would still be allowed for ground floor businesses with separate dedicated entrances.

Staff recommends the Design Commission recommend approval of the proposed sign code revisions to modify the current code as outlined in **Option 2**, with the proposed text amendments as outlined in Attachment 1.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KINGSLEY, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL TO THE VILLAGE BOARD FOR SIGN CODE MODIFICATIONS TO CHAPTER 30, SECTION 30- 402, NUMBER, AS OUTLINED IN ATTACHMENT I DATED AUGUST 28, 2018.

**KINGSLEY, AYE; KUBOW, AYE; SEYER, AYE; ECKHARDT, AYE; FITZGERALD, AYE.
ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.**

3. AWNING SIGNAGE

Mr. Hautzinger explained that the current sign code allows signage on awnings up to 20% of the awning surface area. However, the code limits the size of a logo to 25% of the 20% signable area, which equates to logos being limited to just 5% of the awning surface area. Current sign code also states that signage on awnings shall only denote the name, address, and/or logo of the business, whereas other types of signage can include other pertinent information related to the business, such as products sold or services rendered.

The limitation on logo size is overly restrictive and has been problematic for some businesses. Branding design for each business is unique, and some businesses rely on logos as their primary signage identity. Logo designs are generally attractive forms of signage, which should be allowed up to the full 20% of the awning surface area. Some businesses prefer to include additional information about their business on their awnings, such as products sold or services rendered to effectively promote their business.

Examples of awnings with logos used as the primary signage, and examples of awnings with pertinent supplemental information related to the business were presented.

POSSIBLE OPTIONS :

Option 1: Make no change to the current code.

- Continue to limit logos on awnings to 25% of the 20% signable awning area.
- Continue to limit signage on awnings to the name, address, and/or logo of the business.

Option 2: Omit the 25% restriction for logos.

Option 3: Modify the code to allow awning signage to include other pertinent information related to the business, such as products sold or services rendered.

Staff recommends the Design Commission recommend approval of the proposed sign code revisions to modify the current code as outlined in **Options 2 & 3**, with the proposed text amendments as outlined in Attachment 1.

Commissioner Seyer was concerned about awning signage becoming too busy, and referred to one of the examples shown. **Commissioner Kubow** felt that including products and services on awnings looks cheap, and he was in favor of keeping the code as is, except for the change to the logo size. **Commissioner Seyer** agreed, and **Commissioner Eckhardt** added that information such as products sold or services could be accomplished with window signage.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER KUBOW, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KINGSLEY, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL TO THE VILLAGE BOARD FOR SIGN CODE MODIFICATIONS TO CHAPTER 30, SECTION 30-201.h.2.b, DOWNTOWN DISTRICT SIGN REQUIREMENTS, AND SECTION 30-701 CANOPIES, AWNINGS AND MARQUEES, AS OUTLINED IN ATTACHMENT I DATED AUGST 28, 2018, WITH THE FOLLOWING REVISION:

1. **DO NOT ALLOW AWNING SIGNAGE TO INCLUDE PRODUCTS PRODUCED OR SOLD OR SERVICES RENDERED.**

**KINGSLEY, AYE; KUBOW, AYE; SEYER, AYE; ECKHARDT, AYE; FITZGERALD, AYE.
ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.**

4. PERIMETER WINDOW LIGHTING

Mr. Hautzinger reported that concerns regarding the use of perimeter window lighting have been expressed, including specific complaints from the Design Commission regarding this matter. Most of these concerns relate to the poor aesthetics of perimeter window lighting, and the view that they call too much attention and dampen a community's image.

Currently, Arlington Heights' sign regulations prohibit the following:

- All flashing, moving, rotating, undulating, swinging or blinking signs are strictly prohibited in the Village.
- All miscellaneous attention getting devices like pennants, character balloons and spotlights are prohibited by code.

In an effort to call attention to their business without the use of prohibited blinking or flashing lights, or other specifically prohibited attention getting devices, some businesses have installed steady lit lights around the perimeter of their storefront windows and doors. While intended as attention getting devices, such perimeter window lighting is not currently specifically prohibited by the Village.

Staff surveyed a number of communities that have instituted prohibitions on perimeter window lighting. Staff, along with the aid of the Northwest Municipal Conference and the American Planning Association, also surveyed area municipalities to ascertain whether perimeter window lighting is allowed in their community. Table 1 summarizes local communities that have been identified as either prohibiting, or allowing, steady lit perimeter window lighting. Of the 39 communities listed in the Chicago area, 25 currently prohibit perimeter window lighting.

Some of the communities contacted for this survey who responded that perimeter window lighting was not prohibited in their community, typically did so because like Arlington Heights, their ordinance did not specifically address the matter or specifically prohibit perimeter window lighting. Some communities also indicated that while their code presently does not address perimeter window lighting, the issue of perimeter window lighting has been recently raised in their community. Many of the communities that prohibit perimeter window lighting make the distinction in their code to allow temporary traditional seasonal holiday lighting.

POSSIBLE OPTIONS:

Option 1: Make no change to the current code.

- Continue to allow perimeter window lighting.

Option 2: Modify the code to prohibit perimeter window lighting.

- Prohibit LED lighting, neon tube lighting, rope lighting, and other similar lighting around windows, doors, and other similar building features.
- Do not prohibit temporary customary holiday and seasonal decorations and lighting.

Staff recommends the Design Commission recommend approval of the proposed sign code revisions to modify the current code as outlined in **Option 2**, with the proposed text amendments as outlined in Attachment 1.

Chair Fitzgerald felt that 'temporary' should be defined, and he suggested a maximum of 1 and ½ months, from Thanksgiving to just past the New Year's holiday. Commissioner Eckhardt was not opposed to a scenario where an antique store has very low level Italian-style lights that are woven in a wooden trellis that is very attractive, which is not the same as an O'Hare airport landing strip around the windows. He felt the Sign code should include specific light levels. Commissioner Kingsley agreed, and asked if the current sign code includes language about how much light levels can emit from a store; there should be some kind of link to the current standard of what is allowed to emit from a store. Mr. Hautzinger stated that there is language in the code about light levels which will already apply because it applies to all signage, but it can be difficult to measure and enforce. He asked for clarification if the Design Commission is okay with perimeter window lighting if they were less bright. Commissioner Eckhardt said

no, definitely not, and he clarified that any holiday and seasonal lights in the window need to have a specific light level. **Chair Fitzgerald** and **Commissioner Kingsley** agreed.

Commissioner Eckhardt supported Option 2, with language added to let Staff determine the appropriate light levels for holiday lighting.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KINGSLEY, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL TO THE VILLAGE BOARD FOR SIGN CODE MODIFICATIONS TO CHAPTER 30, SECTION 30-120 PROHIBITED SIGNS, AS OUTLINED IN ATTACHMENT I DATED AUGUST 28, 2018, WITH THE FOLLOWING REVISION:

1. THAT ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE BE INCLUDED THAT ADDRESSES A LOW LIGHT LEVEL FOR THE SEASONAL HOLIDAY LIGHTING, WITH THE SPECIFIC LIGHT LEVEL LIMIT TO BE DETERMINED BY STAFF.

Chair Fitzgerald felt the motion should include specific language pertaining to the time period for 'temporary'. **Mr. Hautzinger** said that the primary goal is to prohibit the type of permanent perimeter window lighting shown in the examples presented tonight; there have been no issues with seasonal window lighting, and he recommended re-visiting seasonal lighting in the future if necessary. **Commissioner Eckhardt** suggested using the language 'reasonable period of time'.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KUBOW, TO AMEND THE MOTION TO ADD THE FOLLOWING:

2. THAT LANGUAGE BE ADDED STATING THAT TEMPORARY CUSTOMARY HOLIDAY AND SEASONAL DECORATIONS AND LIGHTING BE ALLOWED FOR A REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME.

KINGSLEY, AYE; KUBOW, AYE; SEYER, AYE; ECKHARDT, AYE; FITZGERALD, AYE.
ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

5. WINDOW SIGNAGE

Mr. Hautzinger explained that the current sign code states that window signs posted in public view shall not exceed 40% (20% in the Downtown) of the window or surface area through which or on which they are seen. This requirement is vaguely stated, and can be confusing to follow. Since sign permits are not required for window signs, there is no opportunity to check proposed window signs for code compliance, so the requirements should be clarified. Window signage is intended to be pedestrian scale, with signs contained within individual windows.

Some businesses have taken advantage of the loosely stated window signage requirements to create large oversized window signs. This is done by breaking the sign message into several sections and installing the signage over multiple windows side-by-side to create one large sign.

Examples of window signage combined to create an oversized sign as compared to examples of appropriately designed window signage were presented.

POSSIBLE OPTIONS :

Option 1: Make no change to the current code.

Option 2: Modify the code to clarify that window signs shall be contained within individual window panes, and shall not be combined together to form larger signs.

It is recommended that the Design Commission recommend approval of the proposed sign code revisions to modify the current code as outlined in **Option 2**.

Commissioner Kingsley questioned the definition of a window sign, and asked if it could be something more artistic that goes from one window pane to another, connecting them. **Mr. Hautzinger** replied that simple graphics that might extend across windows would probably be acceptable, but it is difficult to write code language to address every possible scenario, and the goal is to communicate the intent to avoid oversized signs. He added that language is also being included for the timeframe for removing existing window signs that are in violation of this change. **Commissioner Kubow** asked about enforcement of these signs and if a ticket can be issued, and **Mr. Hautzinger** replied that citations can be issued that carry a fine and a hearing date if necessary.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER KUBOW, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KINGSLEY, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL TO THE VILLAGE BOARD FOR SIGN CODE MODIFICATIONS TO CHAPTER 30, SECTION 30-103 EXEMPTIONS, AND SECTION 30-201h.3&4, DOWNTOWN (B-5) DISTRICT SIGN REQUIREMENTS, AS OUTLINED IN ATTACHMENT I DATED AUGUST 28, 2018.

**KINGSLEY, AYE; KUBOW, AYE; SEYER, AYE; ECKHARDT, AYE; FITZGERALD, AYE.
ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.**

Chair Fitzgerald stated for the record that there is nobody in the audience at this time.