


# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Randy Recklaus, Village Manager

**FROM:** Charles Witherington-Perkins, AICP   
Director of Planning and Community Development

**DATE:** February 17, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Electronic Signage Restrictions

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Mayor Hayes has requested that a packet of materials relating to Electronic Signage be distributed to the Village Board for general input over the next week. In the past few months this issue has been raised by various entities (although no plans have been submitted) within the community including the Metropolis Theater, the Arlington Heights Memorial Library, Arlington Downs, Arlington International Racecourse, and a potential business. All of these entities have expressed an interest in utilizing some kind of electronic signage. Currently, such signage is not permitted in Arlington Heights, but some area communities are beginning to permit them in certain circumstances while others do not. Staff is in the process of updating the Community Survey, which will be completed within the next two weeks. This topic has been discussed at the staff and Design Commission level. Most recently this matter was scheduled on the Design Commission agenda of January 2016 where it was continued and will be placed on the agenda for February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mayor Hayes will be requesting the Design Commission to discuss the matter of Village-wide electronic signage and come back with some general input for Board consideration prior to proceeding to attempt to draft any specific language, should the Design Commission so recommend. In the meantime, the attached materials are being distributed to the Village Board for their review and general input.

## Background

The Design Commission first discussed this matter in 2007 relative to several specific sign variation requests, all of which were recommended for denial by Staff and the Design Commission and one request denied by the Village Board. After detailed research by Staff, the Design Commission discussed the matter again in 2008 at a kick-off meeting and then in detail in 2009 where the Design Commission concluded not to allow electronic LED signs. Since then the Design Commission has discussed this matter in 2012 relative to the Visual Preference Survey undertaken, 2015 regarding Patton School request, and most recently placed on the agenda for reconsideration in January 2016. Also on the January agenda were Staff research and proposed changes to allow businesses additional signage options such as digital menu boards for drive-through restaurants and changeable bulletin boards.

The following portion of this memorandum is a brief summary of some of the attached materials.

## Types of Signs

Generally, the following is a summary of the types of electronic signs:

1. **Electronic Changeable Signs:** Used by businesses to replace manual changeable signs. The sign is capable of limited animation such as a character walking across the screen, and multiple color options. The text has the ability to scroll, and has simple images.
2. **Electronic Graphic Display Sign:** An example is the Sears Center electronic sign on the I-90 expressway. The electronic images are presented in a series of static displays similar to a power point presentation, which may be high definition; however, no animation is involved.
3. **Video Display Sign:** Similar to a large jumbotron with a high definition image. The effect is that of watching moving images on a television or a theater.
4. **Multi-Vision or Tri-Vision Sign:** Allows pre-set images and text to change by mechanically rotating a printed image. The number of images on a board is limited to three.

## Alternatives to Electronic LED signs

Staff has researched 2 alternative options to LED signs as part of the 2015 re-review.

- Flip Disk Signs which is old technology.
- Electronic Ink Signage is an interesting new technology, and is currently commonly used in products such as Kindle readers. Electronic Ink Signs have a substantially improved appearance with the functionality of an electronically changeable sign. Power consumption is extremely low and the display does not emit any light, which completely eliminates the concern of glare. Internal or external illumination can be added to allow visibility in the evening, similar to a traditional sign, but illumination is not required in the daytime. The display is commonly black & white; however, recent development has added full color capability. For these reasons, Electronic Ink Signage has great potential as an aesthetically pleasing alternative to existing manual change bulletin boards, without the negative visual impact of an LED electronic sign. However, it is Staff's understanding that current electronic ink technology cannot properly function in freezing temperatures, but this issue is under development and Staff has continued to monitor this technology with various manufacturers.

## Summary of Issues

The following is a summary of some of the issues to be considered.

- Visual impacts
  - Aesthetic impact of multiple electronic signs on a corridor.
  - Glare
- Distraction to drivers.
- Electronic signs adjacent to or within residential neighborhoods.
- Proportions and scale of electronic signs.
- Enforcement. Certain standards if developed dealing with message sequencing and timing may be difficult to enforce.
- Fairness/Level playing field. Issues of signage relative to similar use in different zoning or similar zoning and different uses would need to be considered.
- Other considerations include energy consumption and Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act. (RLUIPA)

### General Overriding Questions

The following are some general overriding questions for consideration:

1. Is electronic signage something that the Design Commission should continue to explore?
2. Is electronic signage something that should be pursued only on a limited basis?
3. Should electronic signage be allowed in residential districts for schools and churches across from residential homes?
4. Should electronic signage be allowed in business or manufacturing districts with restrictions for all uses, irregardless of size, location or number of potential electronic signs?
5. Should electronic signage be allowed for specific use groups such as major tourism venues such as Arlington International Racecourse, Metropolis Theater, Star Cinema Grill, and major developments over a certain size such as Arlington Downs?
6. Should electronic signage be allowed in specific locations or corridors such as I-90 or the Rand Road corridor with restrictions?
7. Should electronic signage be allowed in some of the scenarios above as of right or through an additional discretionary review process?
8. Should electronic signage continue to be deferred until more energy efficient and aesthetic technology has been developed such as electronic ink signs?
9. What is the image the Village wants for its corridors?
10. What information relating to this issue would the Board like to have before making a final decision on this issue?

As a side note, current ground signs are typically internally illuminated providing for nighttime visibility. Electronic signage often referred to as LED or light emitting diode, actually projects the light or image forward creating much brighter light transmission and glare throughout day and night, drawing greater attention which may be acceptable in some locations but not all.

### Preliminary Analysis

Although the functionality of changeable electronic signage is appealing to some businesses, the majority of residents during the Visual Preference Survey in 2012 did not support electronic signage. The most recent review of electronic LED signage requests by Patton School received neighbor objection. Electronic LED signage in, adjacent to, or across from residential homes and neighborhoods would not be appropriate. A primary concern that needs to be carefully considered is the aesthetic impacts that electronic signage could have on the character of Arlington Heights if they were allowed throughout the community. Dozens of electronic signs along Arlington Heights corridors promoting products ranging from milk to hot dogs may not present a positive image. Control of message content is legally limited. The bright, glaring, changing display of electronic LED signs has the potential to create a nuisance for properties adjacent to this type of signage. Additionally, electronic signs do draw and hold the attention of drivers, especially when messages are changing, and this distraction to drivers is a legitimate and serious concern.

The electronic ink signage technology is intriguing and could be a positive solution to the electronic LED conundrum. As electronic ink signage technology continues to develop, it could be considered as an aesthetically pleasing means of incorporating the functionality of electronic signage in place of manual change bulletin boards. While permitting electronic LED signage wholesale throughout the community may have negative impacts on the community, limited application of electronic LED signage for major tourism venues such as Arlington International Racecourse could provide an effective way to communicate information to a major tourism venue. Additionally, electronic signage along the I-90 corridor may also be considered as a means to attract commerce to the Village and may have limited impact on the character of the community.

These preliminary thoughts along with more detailed review will allow the issue of electronic LED signage to be discussed in further detail with the Design Commission and the Village Board.

### Board Feedback

As noted above, Mayor Hayes has requested some general input from the Board over the next week or so regarding this matter.

### Next Steps

As noted above, this matter is scheduled again on the Design Commission agenda for February 23 for a preliminary discussion. The Mayor will be requesting the Design Commission to discuss this matter and explore it further over the next few months and respond back to the Village Board for a more detailed discussion at a future meeting. The Design Commission will be asked to determine whether this is something to pursue at all, whether it is something to pursue on limited basis or with certain restrictions?

### Attachments:

1. Summary memo to Design Commission January 2016
2. 2015 Village-Wide Re-Review
3. 2015 Design Commission Discussion – Patton School Request
4. Electronic Signs – Comprehensive Report & DC Minutes 2009
5. Visual Preference Survey Summary

c: Design Commission  
Steve Hautzinger, Design Planner

CW-P/pd

# MEMO

DATE: January 26, 2016  
TO: Design Commission:  
Chairman Eckhardt  
Commissioner Bombick  
Commissioner Fitzgerald  
Commissioner Fasolo  
Commissioner Kubow  
FROM: Steve Hautzinger, Design Planner  
RE: **Village-wide Electronic Signs**

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## **BACKGROUND:**

In 2007, sign variation requests for electronic LED signs were denied for Bob Rohrman Auto Mall, Walgreens, and Tanita Corporation.

In 2009, the issue of electronic message board signage was studied in detail by the Planning and Community Development Department and presented to the Design Commission. Issues such as visual impact, driver distraction, and code enforcement were discussed. The conclusion of the 2009 study was a decision by the Design Commission to continue to not allow electronic LED signs, but to revisit this topic in the future.

In 2012, a visual preference survey was conducted by the Planning and Community Development Department with the objective to evaluate signs of different types throughout Arlington Heights, including electronic LED signage. Overall, residents did not prefer electronic LED signage. The results were reviewed by the Design Commission, and they agreed that electronic LED signage should continue to not be allowed.

Recently, in 2015, School District 25 submitted a sign variation request for an electronic changeable LED sign at Patton Elementary School. After a brief re-review of Village-wide electronic signs, the Design Commission decided to not support the Patton School sign variation until such time that a detailed Village-wide re-review of electronic LED signs is undertaken.

The detailed electronic sign reports previously prepared have not been re-reviewed at this time as the purpose of this memo is to determine if the Design Commission wants to re-discuss this issue, and if as part of that review, a site tour to field view some electronic sign examples is desirable.

## **PROCESS:**

At this time, Staff is seeking the feedback from the Design Commission regarding the process to move forward in regards to the topic of electronic LED signs:

- 1) Does the Design Commission still want to review the topic of electronic signs?
- 2) Would the Design Commission like to go on a tour to view electronic signs in other communities?
- 3) What type of additional research would the Design Commission like to see?

# MEMO

DATE: February 24, 2015  
TO: Design Commissioners  
FROM: Steve Hautzinger, Design Planner  
RE: **Village Wide Electronic Signs, Re-Review**

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In 2009, the issue of electronic message board signs was studied in detail by the Planning and Community Development Department and was presented to the Design Commission on April 14, 2009 (refer to the attached Report and Meeting Minutes both dated April 14, 2009). Issues such as visual impact, driver distraction, and code enforcement were discussed. Nineteen other communities were surveyed, with seven (7) allowing electronic message board signs (with restrictions), and twelve (12) not allowing them at all.

Electronic signs of the following types were discussed:

1. **Electronic Changeable Signs:** Used by businesses to replace the manual changeable signs. The text allows limited animation such as a character walking across the screen, and multiple color options. The text may scroll, and has simple images.
2. **Electronic Graphic Display Sign:** An example is The Sears Center electronic sign on the I-90 expressway. The images are presented similar to a power point presentation, which may be high definition, however no animation is involved.
3. **Video Display Sign:** Similar to a large jumbotron with a high definition image. The effect is that of watching moving images on a television or at a theater.
4. **Multi-Vision or Tri-Vision Sign:** Allows pre-set images and text to change. The number of images on a board is limited to three.
5. **Electronic Static:** Time and temperature and gas price signs may also be electronic, and remain static throughout the day, which is currently allowed in the Village.

The conclusion of the 2009 review was a decision by the Design Commission to continue to not allow electronic LED signs, but to revisit this topic again in the future. In light of the current sign variation request by Patton Elementary School for an electronic LED sign, the issue of LED electronic signage Village wide is being briefly re-reviewed. The Design Commission should provide feedback on whether electronic LED signs will continue to be prohibited, or if they will be allowed community wide (with restrictions on their functionality).

Due to the precedent that the Patton School sign variation request will set for all schools, churches, and park facilities throughout Arlington Heights' residential neighborhoods, the Design Commission should consider this request from a holistic, Village wide basis rather than one individual precedent setting request.. The Design Commission should not allow this individual request to influence what is best for all neighborhoods in Arlington Heights. The attached map of Schools, Churches, and Parks throughout Arlington Heights, with a total of 74 locations, illustrates the magnitude of Patton Elementary School's request.

## UPDATE:

Manual Change Bulletin Boards. As a result of the 2009 discussion, sign code modifications were reviewed by the Design Commission and approved by the Village Board on 12/21/09 to clarify the use of manual change bulletin board signs throughout Arlington Heights as follows:

1. The definition of bulletin board signs was clarified to be "manual change" bulletin boards.
2. The use of bulletin board signs in Residential Zoning Districts was clarified to be for "manual change" bulletin boards only.
3. Automobile Service Station signage was clarified to allow a manual change bulletin board and an electronic or manual change display for price information.
4. Design considerations were added to promote a cohesive appearance for manual change bulletin boards on wall and ground signs.

Visual Preference Survey. In 2012, a visual preference survey was conducted by Staff with the objective to evaluate signs of numerous types throughout Arlington Heights, including electronic changeable message boards. A series of three visual preference review meetings were conducted, and participants included village residents, village business owners, and sign companies. The following is a summary of the results regarding electronic LED signs:

1. Conventional ground signs versus an LED ground sign:
  - a. 79% of participants preferred a regular ground sign instead of an LED ground sign.
  - b. Residents strongly preferred the sign without the LED display.
2. Ground Sign with a manual change bulletin board versus a ground sign with LED message board:
  - a. 82% of participants preferred a ground sign with a manual change bulletin board instead of an LED changeable sign.
  - b. Business owners strongly preferred the sign without the LED display.
3. Should electronic changeable message signs be considered in Arlington Heights?
  - a. 42% of participants preferred that electronic changeable message signs could be considered for special venues only.
  - b. 22% of participants preferred that electronic changeable message signs should not be allowed at all.
4. Should electronic graphic display signs be considered in Arlington Heights?
  - a. 41% of participants preferred that electronic graphic display signs could be considered for special venues only.
  - b. 25% of participants preferred that electronic graphic display signs should not be allowed at all.
5. Should video display signs be considered in Arlington Heights?
  - a. 43% of participants preferred that video display signs could be considered for special venues only.
  - b. 36% of participants preferred that video display signs should not be allowed at all.

In summary, the feedback from the visual preference survey was:

- Residents do not want electronic LED signage.
- 82% preferred a static manual change message board instead of an LED changeable sign.
- Two thirds of residents did not want electronic changeable message boards or electronic graphic displays for all businesses.
- 79% were opposed to video signage.

The results of the visual preference survey were reviewed by the Design Commission on February 28, 2012, and overall, the Design Commissioners agreed that electronic LED signage should continue to not be allowed.

## ANALYSIS:

### Alternatives to Electronic LED Signs:

At the initial Design Commission meeting on January 27, 2015 to review Patton School's variation request, the Design Commission requested additional information on electronic signage options. The following two options have been identified. However, additional research is necessary to fully explore alternate options, which was not feasible at this time due to limited time and staffing.

#### 1. Flip disc signs

- a. Flip disc displays are an older technology comprised of a series of small discs that flip from a white or black side based on an electromagnetic signal.
- b. Flip disc signs have the appearance of a manual change bulletin board, but with the electronic capability to automatically change the message.
- c. Flip disc signs have excellent visibility in ambient daylight. No illumination is needed during the day.
- d. Low power consumption and environmentally friendly. A quick pulse of power is all that is necessary to change the display. The sign then holds the display without power. Many are battery operated.
- e. No glare.
- f. Availability is a concern. Primary manufacturer is a company in Poland.
- g. Animation and scrolling is possible and must be prohibited.
- h. Frequency of message change must be restricted.
- i. The sound of the discs flipping may be a concern if the display changes frequently.
- j. Cost is similar to LED sign.

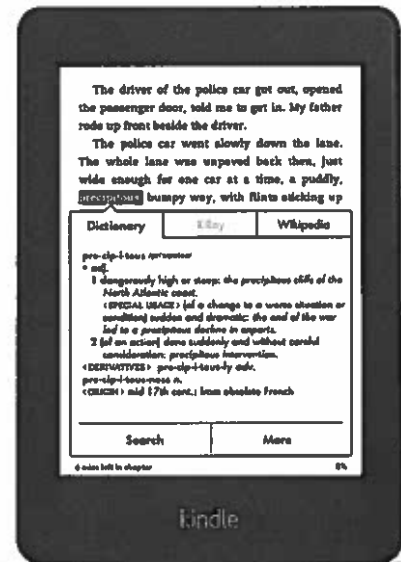
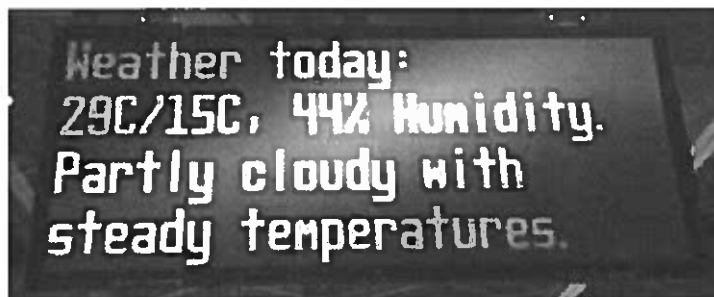


Examples of flip disc signs.



## 2. Electronic Ink signs

- a. Electronic ink displays are made up of tiny microcapsules containing positively charged white particles and negatively charged black particles suspended in a clear fluid. A positive or negative charge is applied which forces either the white or black particles to the surface where they become visible. The effect is the appearance of printed ink on paper.
- b. An electronic ink display has the appearance of a manual change bulletin board, but with the electronic capability to automatically change the message.
- c. This technology is used in hand held electronic reader devices.
- d. Low power consumption and environmentally friendly. Power is only needed for changing the display, and then the sign turns off and holds the display.
- e. No illumination needed during the day.
- f. No glare.
- g. Current technology does not operate below freezing temperature, and this product is not yet readily available.



Examples of electronic ink displays.

Electronic ink technology represents a very interesting emerging technology that has great promise as an aesthetically pleasing alternate to LED for electronic changeable signs. Extremely low power consumption, visibility in natural light, and a clear, clean display are all advantages of this type of display. However, the use of electronic ink technology for outdoor signage is currently limited and is in development.

### **Previous Requests:**

Previous requests for electronic LED signs have been denied. In 2007, the Bob Rohrman Auto Mall requested variations for a 30-foot and a 60-foot tall electronic signs, resulting in no action by the Design Commission. Also in 2007, Walgreens and Tanita Corporation requested sign variations for electronic message signs. Walgreens' request was denied by the Design Commission and the Village Board. Tanita's request was also denied by the Design Commission, but was not submitted for Village Board review. Southminster Presbyterian Church omitted the electronic portion of a sign variation request in 2007 after the Design Commission raised concerns over an LED sign in a residential neighborhood, and other requests for electronic signs have been discouraged by Staff without submitting a formal request.

### **Visual Impact:**

Multiple electronic signs on a commercial corridor may also have a negative aesthetic impact. Some of the main commercial corridors in Arlington Heights already have perceived visual blight, and allowing conversions to bright LED signs will magnify the existing conditions. Currently, large and small businesses are allowed the same size signs which could result in electronic LED signs spaced closely together.

Electronic LED signs are especially out of character in residential neighborhoods and they should not be allowed. Schools, churches, and parks facilities are often surrounded by single family homes and the daytime and evening illumination and brightness, as well as the changing display on LED signs poses a nuisance to the surrounding homes. A home represents a significant financial investment for homeowners. Would you want an electronic LED sign in your neighborhood?

### **Distraction to Drivers:**

In addition to aesthetic concerns, safety is another key concern with electronic changeable messages posing a distraction to drivers. Studies indicate that LED signs are brighter and more distracting to drivers than any other type of sign. Changing messages hold drivers attention to finish a message or to see what will be displayed next. Driver distraction is of particular concern at a school where there are numerous small children and vehicles, especially during busy drop off and pick up times.

### **Code Enforcement:**

Code enforcement of electronic signs remains another key concern, with enforcement of the operation and use of electronic sign restrictions being nearly impossible to monitor and difficult to enforce.

### **Options for Code Modifications:**

The 2009 report listed the following options to consider:

#### A. Residential Zoning Districts

1. Do nothing and continue to **not allow** electronic bulletin changeable signs.
2. Allow electronic bulletin changeable message signs with restrictions concerning operation.
3. Allow electronic bulletin changeable message signs for specified uses (ex. Only for public entities such as schools).
  - a. *Note: this may violate the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) so if approved for schools, would also have to be approved for churches and other gathering places.*

## B. Business, Manufacturing, and/or Institutional

1. Do nothing and continue to **not allow** electronic bulletin changeable signs.
2. Allow electronic bulletin changeable message signs in designated business, manufacturing, and/or institutional districts with restrictions concerning operation.
3. Allow electronic bulletin changeable message signs for specified uses (ex. major tourism venues) with restrictions concerning operation.
4. Allow electronic bulletin changeable message signs in specified locations (ex. Along I-90 or on Rand Rd. corridor) with restrictions concerning operation.

### **Possible Restrictions:**

If the Design Commission considers such a request, the following previously outlined issues will need to be evaluated and further researched:

1. **Static Message.** LED sign shall display static messages only, and should not be allowed to blink, scroll or animate in any way.
2. **Spacing.** A minimum spacing between signs would need to be established.
3. **Frequency of Message Change.** The FHWA recommends a minimum of 8 seconds.
4. **Colors.** Consider restricting the display color to amber only. Red shall not be allowed.
5. **Illumination Levels.** Establish maximum daytime and night time levels. Consider requiring an automatic photo sensor to automatically reduce the brightness in the evening.
6. **Sign Area.** Determine the maximum LED sign area, as a percentage of the overall allowed sign area.
7. **Setback.** Consider the orientation towards adjacent residences and establish a minimum setback distance.
8. **Sign Type.** Consider if electronic message signs are appropriate as ground sign and/or wall signs.
9. **Window Signs.** Current Village regulations do not require a permit for window signs. A window sign can be a paper graphic, neon sign or LED screen. A window signs cannot exceed 40% of the window area.
10. **Design Standards.** Consider the integration of the sign with the design of the building.
11. **Sound.** Sign shall not be allowed to emit sound.
12. **Hours of Operation.** Evaluate appropriate hours of operation based on different zoning districts.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

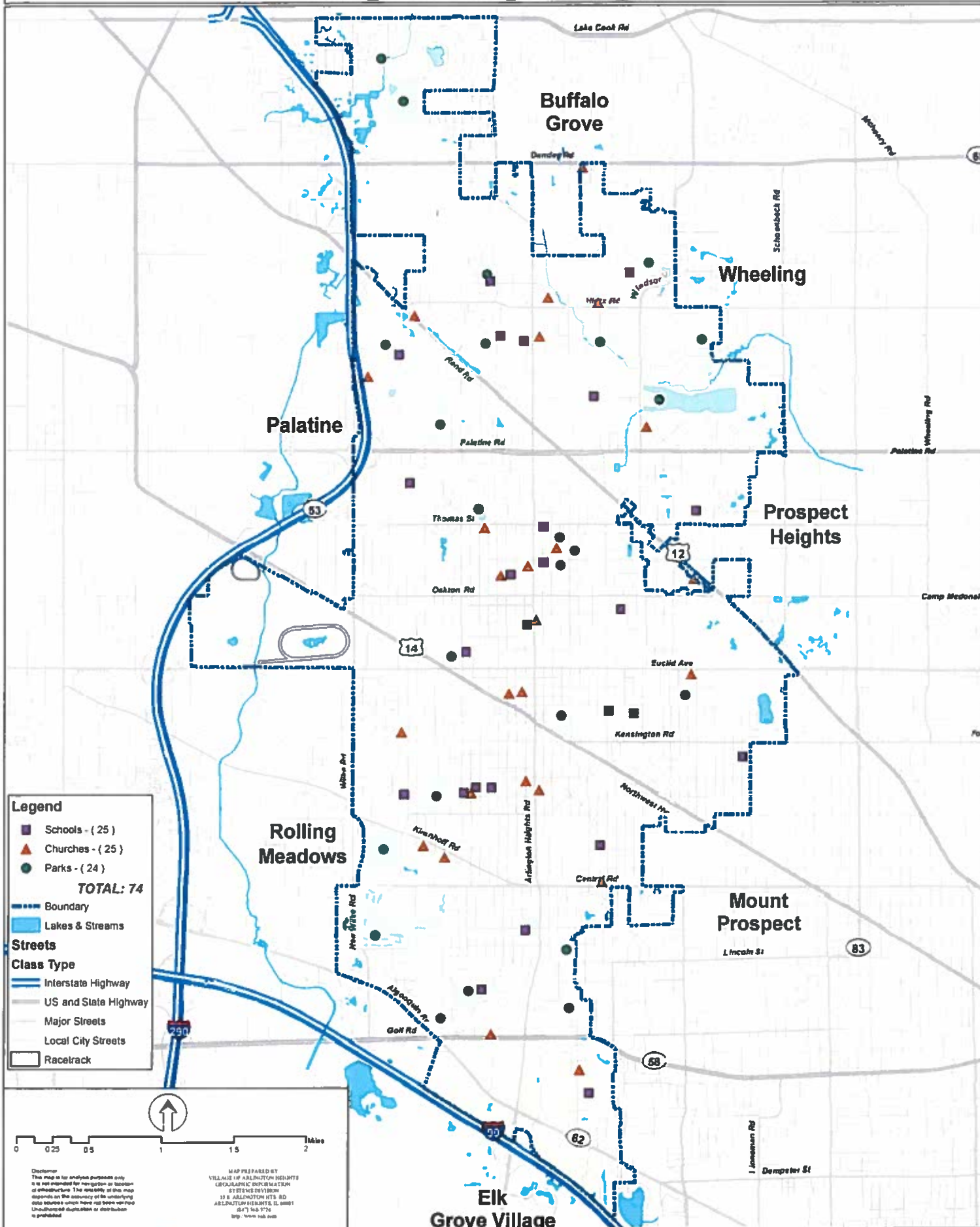
Although there are options to consider, Staff maintains the position that electronic LED signs are unattractive and allowing them would result in a negative impact on the appearance of Arlington Heights. Daytime illumination of LED signs is unattractive, and additionally is a waste of power. LED signs tend to have a glare that is unattractive and hard to look at. The cycling of messages on electronic LED signs poses an annoyance to adjacent properties, and it contributes to signage blight.

The only options to consider for electronic LED signs in Arlington Heights might be for major tourism venues and possibly for businesses along I-90, which the Design Commission may prefer to evaluate on a case-by-case basis as sign variation requests.

Lastly, emerging technology such as electronic ink signs should continue to be monitored in the future.

# Schools, Churches, and Parks

## Village of Arlington Heights



**Legend**

- Schools - ( 25 )
- ▲ Churches - ( 25 )
- Parks - ( 24 )

**TOTAL: 74**

- Boundary
- Lakes & Streams

**Streets**

**Class Type**

- Interstate Highway
- US and State Highway
- Major Streets
- Local City Streets
- Racetrack



Disclaimer: This map is for analysis purposes only and is not intended for navigation or location of structures. The quality of this map depends on the accuracy of the underlying data sources which have not been verified. Unintended duplication or distribution is prohibited.

MAP PREPARED BY:  
VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS  
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS DIVISION  
13 E ARLINGTON HTS. RD  
ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, IL 60017  
630.354.5776  
http://www.vah.net

Patton Elementary School  
1616 N. Patton Ave.  
DC 15-001 (Sign Variation)  
PIN: 03-19-109-024, 035

## STAFF DESIGN COMMISSION REPORT

### PROJECT INFORMATION:

Project Name: Patton Elementary School  
Project Address: 1616 N. Patton Ave.  
Prepared By: Steve Hautzinger

Date Prepared: January 16, 2015

### PETITIONER INFORMATION:

DC Number: 15-001  
Petitioner Name: Eric Larson  
Petitioner Address: 1616 N. Patton Ave.  
Arlington Heights, IL 60004  
Meeting Date: January 27, 2015

### Requested Action:

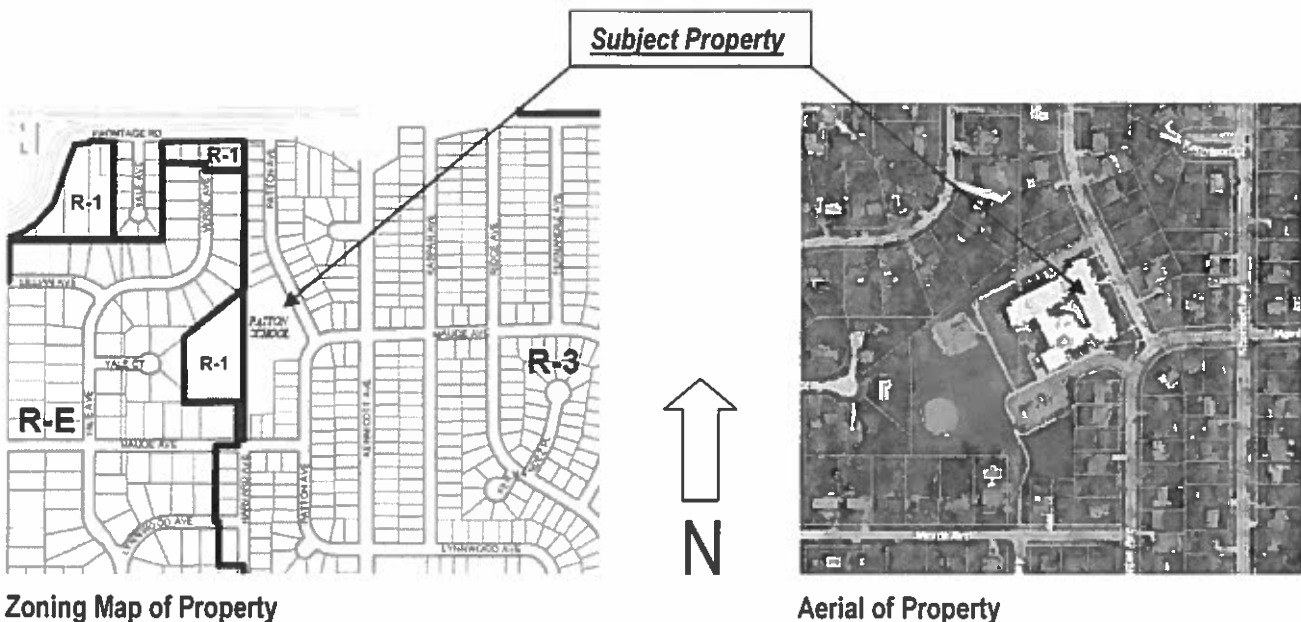
1. A variation from Chapter 30, section 30-121.a, Prohibited Signs, to allow an electronic changeable LED wall sign.
2. A variation from Chapter 30, section 30-203.b, to allow a 24 square foot electronic changeable LED wall sign in a Residential District, where only a 12 square foot manual change bulletin board sign is allowed.

### ANALYSIS:

#### Summary

The subject design is being forwarded to the Design Commission for review pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Municipal Code, specifically Section 6-501 (e)(1), which states that the Design Commission "shall review all Plan Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Permit and Sign Permit applications for new construction...to determine whether it meets with the standards, requirements and purposes of the Design Guidelines and Chapter 30, Sign Code."

The petitioner is proposing to replace an existing non-conforming 24 sf manual change bulletin board wall sign with a new 24 sf electronic message board wall sign. The new sign is of similar design as the existing sign, and it will be installed in approximately the same location on the east exterior wall of the school. Electronic changeable LED signs are prohibited per the sign code. Patton Elementary School is located in an R-3 One Family Dwelling District surrounded by single family homes. The proposed wall sign will be set back from the property line approximately 35 feet, and will face single family homes directly across the street.



**Background:**

Electronic message board signs are currently prohibited in Arlington Heights with the exception of the price display on gas station signs. However, there are two electronic message board signs existing in Arlington Heights: one received a sign variation in 1996, and the other is a Village owned Civic Events sign:

- Daily Herald. A sign variation for an electronic message board sign for the Daily Herald was granted in 1996 with restrictions that the message board copy remain stationary and messages change no more frequently than: time and temperature - one minute, traffic and major news messages - 5 minutes, Daily Herald messages – 1 hour, and community service messages – one per hour. This was determined to be a unique condition being adjacent to the I-90 tollway.
- Arlington Heights' Civic Events Sign was installed in 2014. This sign is allowed by code as an exempt Municipal sign providing non-advertising information as a public convenience per Section 30-103.



Image 1. Daily Herald electronic sign viewed from I-90.



Image 2. Arlington Heights' Civic Events sign.

Two other electronic message board signs were installed by School District 214 without Village approvals.



Image 3. Hersey High School electronic message sign.



Image 4. Forest View School electronic message sign.

**Other electronic sign requests:**

In 2007, Walgreens and Tanita Corporation requested sign variations for electronic message signs. Both requests were denied by the Design Commission and the Village Board. Also in 2007, Southminster Presbyterian Church omitted the electronic portion of a sign variation request after the Design Commission raised concerns over an LED sign in a residential neighborhood.

**Electronic Sign Code Evaluation:**

In 2009, the issue of electronic message board signs was studied in detail by the Planning and Community Development Department and presented to the Design Commission. Issues such as: visual impact, driver distraction, and code enforcement were discussed. Nineteen other communities were surveyed, with seven (7) allowing electronic message board signs, and twelve (12) not allowing them.

The culmination of the 2009 study resulted in options for Sign Code amendments for the Design Commission to consider. Multiple options were presented for Design Commission consideration as follows:

**A. Residential Zoning Districts**

1. Do nothing and continue to not allow electronic bulletin changeable signs.
2. Allow electronic bulletin changeable message signs with restrictions concerning operation.
3. Allow electronic bulletin changeable message signs for specified uses (ex. Only for public entities such as schools).

**B. Business, Manufacturing, and/or Institutional**

1. Do nothing and continue to not allow electronic bulletin changeable signs.
2. Allow electronic bulletin changeable message signs in designated business, manufacturing, and/or institutional districts with restrictions concerning operation.
3. Allow electronic bulletin changeable message signs for specified uses (ex. Only for public entities such as schools or major tourism venues) with restrictions concerning operation.
4. Allow electronic bulletin changeable message signs in specified locations (ex. Along I-90 or on Rand Rd. corridor) with restrictions concerning operation.

At the outcome of the review, the Design Commission decided to continue to not allow electronic message board signs throughout Arlington Heights. Instead, Sign Code amendments were subsequently drafted and approved to more specifically define the use of manual change bulletin board signs throughout Arlington Heights. (Reference attachment: 4/14/09 Design Commission Meeting Minutes).

**Current Request:**

The Design Commission must consider that, if approved, this variation will set a precedent for all other schools and churches in all residential neighborhoods in Arlington Heights. The Design Commission should evaluate this specific request individually, but must also consider the effect of this request on a community-wide basis. Eight of the nine schools in School District 25 alone have manual change bulletin board signs as shown in the images below. All of these schools share similar characteristics, and approval of this sign variation could likely result in numerous other similar sign variation requests for public schools, private schools, day care centers, and churches in residential neighborhoods.



Image 5. Subject Property, Patton Elementary School



Image 6. Dryden Elementary School





Image 7. Greenbrier Elementary School



Image 8. Thomas Middle School



Image 9. Ivy Hill Elementary School



Image 10. Olive-Mary Stitt Elementary School



Image 11. Westgate Elementary School



Image 12. Windsor Elementary School



**Sign Variation Criteria:**

The Village Sign Code, Chapter 30, Section 30-901 sets out the criteria for granting a sign variation.

- a. *That the particular difficulty or peculiar hardship is not self-created by the Petitioner.*
- b. *That the granting of said variation will not create a traffic hazard, a depreciation of nearby property values or otherwise be detrimental to the public health, safety, morals and welfare;*
- c. *That the variation will serve to relieve the Petitioner from a difficulty attributable to the location, topography, circumstances on nearby properties or other peculiar hardship, and will not merely serve to provide the Petitioner with a competitive advantage over similar businesses;*
- d. *That the variation will not alter the essential character of the locality;*
- e. *That the Petitioner's business cannot reasonably function under the standards of this chapter.*

The petitioner has submitted a letter addressing the hardship criteria. While Staff does agree that manually changing the message on a bulletin board sign is an inconvenience, electronic message signs are out of character in a residential neighborhood, and the negative impact on the character of the locality needs to be considered. Additionally, safety needs to be considered, as electronic signs can be a distraction to drivers.

Staff surveyed seven communities surrounding Arlington Heights and determined that only two communities allow electronic message signs at schools in residential neighborhoods (with restrictions), and of all of the schools in those seven communities, only two elementary schools were reported to actually have electronic message signs.

**Possible Restrictions:**

If the Design Commission considers such a request, the following issues should be evaluated:

1. **Static Message.** Chapter 30, Section 30-121.a, Prohibited Signs, states "any flashing sign or sign with moving or rotating lights, or any sign creating the illusion of movement is not allowed". The proposed LED sign shall display static messages only, and shall not be allowed to blink, scroll or animate in any way.
2. **Hours of Operation.** Chapter 30, Section 30-117, Illumination: Hours of Operation, states "Illuminated signs located on a lot adjacent to or immediately across the street from any residential district shall be turned off at all times between the hours of 11:00 pm and 7:00 am". Consider extending this restriction from 9:00 pm until 7:00 am.
3. **Illumination Level.** Per Chapter 30, Section 30-118.a, Illumination Standards, states "in no case shall the lighting intensity exceed 250 foot candles when measured flush and in contact with the face of the sign". Furthermore, it is recommended that the sign be required to have a photo sensor dimmer to automatically reduce the brightness in the evening.
4. **Frequency of Message Change.** The message display shall be static, with changes made only once per day, unless urgent or emergency information is necessary to be displayed.
5. **Colors.** Consider restricting the display color to amber only. Red shall not be allowed.
6. **Setback.** Consider the orientation towards adjacent residences and establish a minimum setback distance.
7. **Sign Type.** Consider if electronic message signs are appropriate as ground sign and/or wall signs.
8. **Window Signs.** Current Village regulations do not require a permit for window signs. A window sign can be a paper graphic, neon sign or LED screen. A window signs cannot exceed 40% of the window area.
9. **Design Standards.** Consider the integration of the sign with the design of the building.
10. **Sound.** Sign shall not be allowed to emit sound.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff has concerns regarding the precedent of this request relative to all residential neighborhoods, and therefore suggests the following options:

1. Defer action at this time to allow a comprehensive Village wide re-evaluation of electronic LED signage (the detailed report from 2009 could be reissued with updates).
2. Deny the request.
3. Continue the request to allow time for detailed restrictions to be prepared as possible conditions.
4. Approve the request with restrictions.

Of the four options listed, Staff recommends that the Design Commission proceed with either Option 1 or Option 2 regarding the proposed electronic message board wall sign variation request for *Patton Elementary School* located at 1616 N. Patton Avenue. These recommendations are based on the plans received 1/5/15, Federal, State, and Village Codes, regulations, and policies, and the issuance of all required permits.

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Steve Hautzinger, Design Planner  
Department of Planning & Community Development

c: Charles Witherington-Perkins, Director of Planning and Community Development, James McCalister, Director of Building & Health Services, Petitioner, DC File 15-001

# APPROVED

MINUTES OF  
THE VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS  
DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING  
HELD AT THE ARLINGTON HEIGHTS MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
33 S. ARLINGTON HEIGHTS RD.  
JANUARY 27, 2015

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

Members Present: Ted Eckhardt, Chair  
John Fitzgerald  
Anthony Fasolo  
Alan Bombick  
Jonathan Kubow

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Frank LaSalvia, Owner of 602 E. Clarendon Ave.  
Joe Zivoli, Owner of 1005-1015 S. Arlington Heights Rd.  
Julio Rufo, Architect for 1005-1015 S. Arlington Heights Rd.  
Eric Larson, Principal of Patton Elementary School  
Mike Brown, A.H. School District 25 for Patton Elementary School  
Steve Hautzinger, Staff Liaison

## REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES FROM JANUARY 13, 2015

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 13, 2015. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### ITEM 3. SIGN VARIATION REVIEW

#### DC#15-001 – Patton Elementary School – 1616 N. Patton Ave.

Mr. Eric Larson, representing *Patton Elementary School*, and Mr. Mike Brown, representing *Arlington Heights School District 25*, were present on behalf of the project.

Chair Eckhardt asked if there was any public comment on the project and there was no response from the audience.

Mr. Hautzinger presented Staff comments. The petitioner is proposing to replace an existing non-conforming 24 sf manual change bulletin board wall sign with a new 24 sf electronic LED message board wall sign. The new sign is of similar design as the existing sign, and it will be installed in approximately the same location on the east exterior wall of the school. Electronic changeable LED signs are prohibited per the sign code. Patton Elementary School is located in an R-3 One Family Dwelling District surrounded by single-family homes. The proposed wall sign will be set back from the property line approximately 35 feet, and will face single-family homes directly across the street.

Mr. Hautzinger also gave background information regarding LED signs. He explained that electronic message board signs are currently prohibited in Arlington Heights with the exception of the price display on gas station signs. However, there are two electronic message board signs existing in Arlington Heights: one received a sign variation in 1996 (Daily Herald), and the other is an exempt Village owned Civic Events sign. There are two other existing electronic message board signs that were installed by School District 214 without Village approval, one at Hersey High School and the other at the former Forest View High School. In 2007, Walgreens and Tanita Corporation requested sign variations for electronic message signs, and both requests were denied by the Design Commission and the Village Board. Also in 2007, Southminster Presbyterian Church omitted the electronic portion of a sign variation request after the Design Commission raised concerns over an LED sign in a residential neighborhood.

In 2009, the issue of electronic message board signs was studied in detail by the Planning and Community Development Department and presented to the Design Commission. The culmination of the 2009 study resulted in multiple options for Sign Code amendments that were presented for Design Commission consideration, but the Design Commission decided to continue to not allow electronic message board signs throughout Arlington Heights. Instead, Sign Code amendments were subsequently drafted and approved to more specifically define the use of manual change bulletin board signs throughout Arlington Heights.

Mr. Hautzinger stated that the current sign variation request from Patton Elementary School must be considered by the Design Commission that if approved, the variation will set a precedent for all other schools and churches in all residential neighborhoods. The commissioners should evaluate this specific request individually, but must also consider the effect of this request on a community-wide basis. Eight of the nine schools in School District 25

alone have manual change bulletin board signs, and all of these schools share similar characteristics, and approval of this sign variation could like result in numerous other similar sign variation requests for public schools, private schools, day care centers, and churches in residential neighborhoods.

The petitioner has submitted a hardship letter addressing the hardship criteria, and while Staff does agree that manually changing the message on the bulletin board sign is an inconvenience, electronic message signs are out of character in a residential neighborhood, and the negative impact on the character of the locality needs to be considered. Additionally, safety needs to be considered, as electronic signs can be a distraction to drivers. **Mr. Hautzinger** added that Staff recently surveyed 7 communities surrounding Arlington Heights and determined that only 2 communities (Mt. Prospect & Des Plaines) allow electronic message signs at schools in residential neighborhoods (with restrictions), and of all of the schools in those 7 communities, only 2 elementary schools were reported to actually have electronic message signs.

**Mr. Hautzinger** also noted that if the Design Commission was to consider this request, certain restrictions for the signs operation should be evaluated, which include the following:

- Static Message. Shall not be allowed to blink, scroll, or animate.
- Hours of Operation
- Illumination Level. Should require an automatic photo sensor dimmer.
- Frequency of Message Change. Consider only once per day.
- Colors
- Setback
- Sign Type
- Window Signs
- Design Standards
- Sound

In summary, Staff has concerns regarding the precedent of this sign variation request relative to all residential neighborhoods; and therefore suggests the following options:

1. Defer action at this time to allow a comprehensive Village-wide re-evaluation of electronic LED signage.
2. Deny the request.
3. Continue the request to a future meeting to allow time for detailed restrictions to be prepared as possible conditions.
4. Approve the request with restrictions.

Of the 4 options, Staff recommends the Design Commission proceed with either Option 1 or Option 2.

**Mr. Larson** gave background information on the variation request. He stated that Patton School has a very involved PTA who raise funds to purchase items in the district, signs being one of them. It was the PTA's desire that drove the request for the LED sign. School representatives went door-to-door to the homes that face the school to explain the proposed sign, and they distributed flyers to all parents in the school inviting feedback from them. The only feedback received was from one person who thought the LED sign was "really neat". **Mr. Larson** also addressed some of the concerns from the 2009 study and concerns that the commissioners might have. He said that the school does not want to be a distraction and are very much in favor of limiting when the LED sign would be on/off, such as on school days during school hours. The proposed LED sign has a photo sensor built in, which will adjust its brightness/darkness based on outside conditions, and the amount of light the LED sign is actually casting is no different than a back-lit, fluorescent sign. It was noted that the school is a no bus school, with students either walking or being dropped off by parents, and the LED sign would provide a lot of important information to the high amount of foot traffic outside the school. **Mr. Brown** reiterated that safety in the school is a big concern for them with the parent volunteers that change information on the existing bulletin board sign. He saw the LED sign as no more than a civic desire; the school is a representation and a support for the community.

**Chair Eckhardt** asked if there was any written response from residents living directly across the street from the school regarding the new LED sign. He also noted there was nobody in the audience tonight other than the petitioner's team. **Mr. Larson** replied that written responses were not received from any residents about the new sign. **Chair Eckhardt** recalled the previous variation request from the church on Central Road for an LED sign, which was denied by the Design Commission.

**Commissioner Bombick** was concerned about the pixels of the proposed LED sign, which did not allow for the same amount of text as the existing manual change bulletin board sign without continuously moving. He was also concerned that a changing LED sign could be annoying to surrounding neighbors, even during the day, and the brightness of the sign should be considered as well. He explained that he was not opposed to the LED sign; however, the color of the letters, the brightness, and amount of information and how often it would change, need to be considered.

**Commissioner Fasolo** felt the proportions and design of the LED sign were fine; however, he was unsure if this type of sign is appropriate in a residential neighborhood, instead of across from commercial properties or on a busy road. He felt the sign would be a nuisance to the surrounding homes and he was surprised that more feedback was not received from neighbors. He also acknowledged that approving this LED sign would set a precedent for other schools.

**Commissioner Kubow** questioned how necessary a sign really is in this day and age with information technology. His biggest concern is the snowball effect of allowing this type of sign, especially in a residential neighborhood. Although he wants to help the school get their message out there, he was in favor of Option 1, which is to defer action at this time. He felt additional research was needed, with the snowball effect concerning him the most.

Additionally, a rendering of how the LED sign will look both during the day and at night would be very helpful.

**Commissioner Fitzgerald** felt the existing bulletin board sign was very unattractive, and he wanted to keep an open mind about the proposed LED sign, as long as the sign was not going to change, or it changed only once a day. He felt a changing LED sign would be a huge distraction and a safety issue. He commented that in the past, he has not cared for LED signs; he does not like them or how the text message changes into other moving symbols, which he is definitely opposed to.

**Chair Eckhardt** reiterated that the only LED sign the Design Commission ever approved was the Daily Herald sign located near the tollway, and all other previous LED sign requests were denied by the commission, including the church on Central Road who had all good reasons for wanting an LED sign. He understood that the LED sign being proposed by the school is a convenient way to digitally spread information, and he appreciated the efforts of the PTA. He also felt that it might be time to allow the convenience of technology through signs in the Village; if it's good for the Village, then maybe it's good for churches and schools. However, until a comprehensive plan is developed to control LED signs, he felt the sign had to be static with a change only once or twice daily. He had concerns about the neighbors and about distractions with a changing LED sign, even though the sign sits far back from the street. Although he wanted to help the school get their message out, he agreed with Staff about the precedent that approving this sign would set.

**Chair Eckhardt** said that if a vote is taken tonight, he would vote for Option 1, to defer action at this time to allow a comprehensive Village-wide re-evaluation of LED signs, with plenty of input from residents.

**Commissioner Bombick** commented that part of the issue and anguish with LED signs is the change from a typical static sign with black and white letters, to a sign that consists of red lights and a black background with moving/changing letters. He referenced the LED signage at the fashion mall in Rosemont and asked Staff if there were any statistics on traffic accidents before and after that sign was put up. He felt that the Village could allow a digital sign with black letters on a white background that changed 2 or 3 times a day and was dimmed at night, which he thought could be a good solution.

**Chair Eckhardt** questioned whether the technology being shown tonight for the proposed LED sign was considered 'old technology', because that was how it looked to him. He wanted to see a high quality resolution display for the sign, because it will set a precedent if it is approved. He felt that additional education on the technology for the proposed electronic sign was important to share with the commissioners. **Mr. Brown** replied that they are not opposed to providing a presentation of the sign technology if necessary. He added that the existing sign is dated and dirty and makes the building look bad, which is why they are trying to propose signage that not only meets the community's desire, but also is a communication piece.

**Commissioner Kubow** reiterated his preference for Option 1; defer action at this time to allow a comprehensive Village-wide re-evaluation of electronic LED signs. He added that although the commissioners want to help the school, he felt this LED sign was a 'big picture' item that really needed to be evaluated further.

**Mr. Larson** clarified that the proposed LED sign can provide for 4 lines of text, consistent with the existing bulletin board sign; the sign can be static or change only once a day, which is appropriate for the school; and the color of the lettering can be changed. They have no interest in making things bounce across the sign, and understand the need to find a balance between modern technology and not being obtrusive to the neighbors. They want to work with the Village to be pro-active in accommodating the concerns of the commission.

**Commissioner Fasolo** stated he was in favor of Option 1; defer action at this time to allow a comprehensive Village-wide re-evaluation of LED signs. He also agreed with Commissioner Kubow's comment about how necessary a sign really is in this day and age with information technology being what it is.

**Chair Eckhardt** said that it appears as though the commissioners all prefer to defer the request at this time, and commented that the Village-wide re-evaluation could take a long time.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, TO PROCEED WITH OPTION 1 TO DEFER ACTION AT THIS TIME OF THE SIGN VARIATION REQUEST FOR PATTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (DC#15-001), TO ALLOW FOR A COMPREHENSIVE VILLAGE-WIDE RE-EVALUATION OF ELECTRONIC LED SIGNAGE.**

**Commissioner Kubow** did not want to see the project delayed while the Village put together an ordinance on LED signs. **Chair Eckhardt** agreed and felt that a time limit should be put on the re-evaluation by the Village. **Commissioner Bombick** agreed as well and felt this was a specific and unique situation with the school that the commissioners should make a decision about, after which time could be taken to discuss LED signs relative to commercial projects.

**Chair Eckhardt** said that it appeared as though the commissioners all agreed that there needs to be a comprehensive Village-wide change to the sign ordinance with regards to LED signs. In the meantime, he questioned why the commissioners would discourage the petitioner from continuing their variation request and bringing additional information back to help educate the commissioners and help in their variation being approved. He preferred a motion stating that while the commissioners agree to defer action for a comprehensive Village-wide re-evaluation at this time, they did not want to discourage the petitioner from continuing their request, and continuing to educate and bring something back before the Design Commission that may or may not be approved. The other commissioners agreed.



A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO TO AMEND THE PREVIOUS MOTION, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, TO PROCEED WITH OPTION 1 AND DEFER ACTION AT THIS TIME OF THE SIGN VARIATION REQUEST FOR *PATTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL* (DC#15-001), AND THE FOLLOWING:

1. TO CONTINUE THE PETITIONER'S VARIATION REQUEST AND ALLOW TIME FOR THE PETITIONER TO PROVIDE A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED LED SIGN, AND A PRESENTATION BY THE SIGN MANUFACTURER, SO THE DESIGN COMMISSION CAN EXPLORE THE TECHNOLOGY REQUESTED.
2. TO ALLOW FOR A COMPREHENSIVE VILLAGE-WIDE RE-EVALUATION OF ELECTRONIC LED SIGNAGE, AND SIMILAR LED SIGN VARIATION REQUESTS IN RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS.

It was noted that the motion should include a date specific to continue the project to, which would eliminate additional notification requirements. The petitioner agreed to return to the Design Commission on February 24, 2015 with additional information on the technology of the proposed LED sign. Mr. Hautzinger referred the petitioner to the "Possible Restrictions" listed on Page 5 of the Staff report, and recommended these items be reviewed with the sign contractor and information provided to Staff on how the LED is intended to be used.

3. TO CONTINUE THE PROJECT TO THE DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING ON FEBRUARY 24, 2015.

BOMBICK, AYE; FITZGERALD, AYE; KUBOW, AYE; FASOLO, AYE; ECKHARDT, AYE.  
ALL WERE IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

# MEMO

DATE: February 24, 2015  
TO: Design Commissioners  
FROM: Steve Hautzinger, Design Planner  
RE: DC 15-001, Patton Elementary School, Sign Variation

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On January 27, 2015, the Design Commission reviewed a sign variation request for Patton Elementary School to allow replacement of their existing manual change bulletin board with a new electronic LED changeable sign. At that time, the Design Commission decided to defer action and continue the request to February 24, 2015 to allow time for a Village wide re-review of electronic LED signage, as well as to allow time for the petitioner to more clearly define how they are proposing to use the sign, and for Staff to research electronic signage options and recommend operational restrictions.

Highlights of the Design Commissioners feedback from January 27 are as follows:

1. It was commented that it might be time to allow the convenience of "new sign technology" in the Village.
2. There was mixed feelings about the appropriateness of electronic signs in residential neighborhoods.
3. Concerns were expressed about nuisance to residents.
4. Concerns were expressed about frequent message changing.
5. The proposed LED sign looks like "old technology", and a higher quality display is preferred.
6. A digital sign with black letters on white background was suggested.
7. The necessity for having a message board sign at all was questioned, considering email and the internet for sharing information.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

Due to the precedent that the Patton School sign variation request will set for all schools, churches, and park facilities throughout Arlington Heights' residential neighborhoods, as well as other zoning districts and uses, it is recommended that the Design Commission consider this request on a holistic, Village wide basis. The Design Commission should not allow this individual request to influence what is best for all neighborhoods in Arlington Heights. On February 24, 2015 Staff will present a brief Village wide re-review of electronic signage for the Design Commission's consideration. Staff recommends the following options:

Option 1.

If, at the conclusion of the Village wide discussion, the Design Commission decides to continue to not allow electronic LED signs in Arlington Heights, then it is recommended that the Patton School sign variation request be **denied**.

Option 2.

If, at the conclusion of the Village wide discussion, the Design Commission decides to proceed with further evaluation of possible code amendments for electronic LED signage, then it is recommended that the Patton School sign variation request be **continued** until such time that the Village wide study is completed.

# APPROVED

MINUTES OF  
THE VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS  
DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING  
HELD AT THE ARLINGTON HEIGHTS MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
33 S. ARLINGTON HEIGHTS RD.  
FEBRUARY 24, 2015

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

Members Present: Ted Eckhardt, Chair  
John Fitzgerald  
Alan Bombick  
Anthony Fasolo

Members Absent: Jonathan Kubow

Also Present: Keith Ginnodo, Kingsley/Ginnodo Architects for 737 S. Chestnut Ave.  
Brad Thomas, Owner of 737 S. Chestnut Ave.  
Paul Psenka, Psenka Architects for 206 S. Evergreen Ave.  
Denise Rabe, Owner of 206 S. Evergreen Ave.  
Brian Roginski, Owner of Cortland's Garage  
Kelle Bruckbauer, Tinaglia Architects for Cortland's Garage  
Eric Larson, Principal of Patton Elementary School  
Mike Brown, School District 25 for Patton Elementary School  
Steve Hautzinger, Staff Liaison

## REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 10, 2015

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 10, 2015. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Hautzinger suggested the commissioners consider moving 'Old Business' to the end of the meeting to allow for the lengthy amount of time anticipated to discuss those items.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO, TO MOVE 'OLD BUSINESS' TO THE END OF THE MEETING. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

**ITEM 5. SIGN VARIATION REVIEW (continued from 1/27/15)****DC#15-001 – Patton Elementary School – 1616 N. Patton Ave.**

**Mr. Eric Larson**, Principal of *Patton Elementary School*, and **Mr. Mike Brown**, representing *School District 25*, were present on behalf of the project.

**Chair Eckhardt** asked if there was any public comment on the project and there was response from the audience.

**Mr. Hautzinger** presented Staff comments, stating that since the key concerns regarding Patton School's sign variation request were discussed during the Village wide re-review discussion, Staff would just like to briefly reiterate that due to the precedent that the Patton School sign variation request will set for all schools, churches, and park facilities throughout Arlington Heights' residential neighborhoods, as well as other zoning districts and uses, it is recommended that the Design Commission consider this request on a holistic, Village wide basis. The Design Commission should not allow this individual request to influence what is best for all neighborhoods in Arlington Heights. Staff recommends the following options:

**Option 1.**

If, at the conclusion of the Village wide discussion, the Design Commission decides to continue to not allow electronic LED signs in Arlington Heights, then it is recommended that the Patton School sign variation request be **denied**.

**Option 2.**

If, at the conclusion of the Village wide discussion, the Design Commission decides to proceed with further evaluation of possible code amendments for electronic LED signage, then it is recommended that the Patton School sign variation request be **continued** until such time that the Village wide study is completed.

**Mr. Larson** said that previously, the commissioners asked that they spell out how they want to use the proposed LED sign, as well as state concerns about the changing message. He assured the commissioners that Patton School was not looking to do anything flashing or with scrolling animations; they want to keep things simple. Hours of operation for the new sign would be from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with the intent to change the message once in the morning and possibly once in the afternoon, depending on the amount of information needed to be displayed each day. These hours fit well within the hours of restriction set by the 2009 recommendations. With regards to red versus amber for the LED sign, he was told by his sign manufacturer that the color amber shares the same color properties as sunlight and because of the inconsistencies of the diodes, amber could be more difficult to see, as opposed to red which does not share any color properties. Amber also has a halo effect that red does not have. He pointed out that their wall sign faces east, which could pose a challenge on a sunny morning.

**Mr. Larson** reiterated that their intent is to replace an existing sign with modern technology, and give it a static look as best as they can, which is the general concern. They understand they are setting the standard with the LED sign and they want to be cautious. **Mr. Brown** added that property maintenance and following restrictions for the sign are very important to them because the school is part of the neighborhood. In fact, they want to be more restrictive than the existing sign, which glows all night, and feel they can bring the illumination down to a lower level of lighting than the existing sign.

**Commissioner Bombick** asked Staff to find out whether there has been an increase in accidents on I-294 in Rosemont since the wall of LED lights were turned on at the new fashion outlet center.

**Mr. Larson** explained that their sign manufacturer, who is one of the largest and located in Florida, provided them with a video of the capabilities of the LED sign they are proposing. He played the video which showed the aesthetics of the LED sign, while pointing out that the sign in the video had 4 lines of text as opposed to their proposed sign having only 3, and the graphics being very crisp, very clear, and able to be dimmed to any level. **Mr. Larson** also introduced Jenny Stanhope, co-president of the Patton School PTA. **Ms. Stanhope** said she was here to represent the PTA who had a discussion about this matter at their last PTA meeting. Parents are in support of a new sign that can more easily push information to the community; however, they are concerned about safety and do not want to distract drivers. They are also not aware of any neighbors being opposed to the new sign until tonight and were interested in hearing those concerns.

**Chair Eckhardt** said that at the last meeting in January, the question of why an LED sign is necessary outside the school with all the texting and social media that exists, in addition to the newsletters, bulletins and e-mails sent out by the school was brought up by one of the commissioners. **Ms. Stanhope** replied that a visual reminder each morning of school events was the primary focus of the new LED sign.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Mary Ann Mueller** said that she lives at 1014 W. Maude Avenue, which is at the northeast corner of Patton and Maude, and directly across the street from Patton School and the existing wall sign. She is concerned about the type of LED electronic sign being proposed for the school, which she compared to the LED sign at Elk Grove High School on Arlington Heights Road. She understood the issues with the existing manual change bulletin board sign; however, she was concerned about the impact the LED sign would have on her property values, as well as that the main living areas of her home face the sign. She felt that the stop sign at the corner already causes a distraction, and she was concerned about another distraction with the LED sign. She was not bothered too much by the existing wall sign; however, she was concerned about the brightness and possible flashing of the new sign, and she questioned why the sign could not be located at the entrance to the school on the other side of the building. **Mr. Larson** replied that they considered moving the sign to the entrance side of the school; however, they determined

that in the best interest of the school and the most visibility, the sign location should remain where it currently is.

**Chair Eckhardt** asked if the school would agree to move the sign to the other side of the building if approval came down to location. **Mr. Larson** was unsure if there was enough wall space to accommodate the sign. **Mr. Brown** added that feedback from the parent community on whether this location would meet their communication purposes was necessary. **Mr. Larson** reiterated that the school wants to be a good neighbor.

**Ms. Mueller** reiterated that her biggest concerns are the type of LED sign being proposed with regards to brightness, the disturbance/distraction of the LED sign, and property values being affected by the sign. She also referred to the other side of the building at the gymnasium as an alternate location for the wall sign.

**Chair Eckhardt** asked the commissioners for their comments at this time.

**Commissioner Fitzgerald** acknowledged the issue of getting information to families attending the school; however, he still had a problem with the look of the sign that was shown in the video by the petitioner. He was trying to keep an open mind and hoping for better technology to come around quicker. He was still not in favor of the sign variation request for the school.

**Commissioner Fasolo** felt that the restrictions stated by the petitioner regarding illumination, on/off times and static message, were all steps in the right direction; however, it was unfortunate that red or amber were the only color options available with current technology. He was not in favor of approving the electronic sign and opening up the floodgates for all the other schools and churches in town.

**Commissioner Bombick** asked if the name of the school at the top of the new sign is intended to be internally illuminated. **Mr. Larson** replied that the name of the school would be backlit fluorescent at the top of the sign; however, it would be unlit when the sign was turned off. **Commissioner Bombick** felt that 5:30 p.m. seemed a bit early to turn the sign off. He was also still bothered by the red color of the text located across from someone's living room, although he questioned if the red lights would be less annoying and less bright than the existing white fluorescent sign. He asked the neighbor how much she notices the existing wall sign and **Ms. Mueller** replied that although the sign is noticeable, it was not obtrusive or flashing and the colors of the existing sign were acceptable even though the sign is on all the time. However, she is concerned that restrictions set up for the new sign will not always be followed if a different principal is brought into the school. **Commissioner Bombick** said that he was still concerned about the appearance of the red lights on the black background.

**Chair Eckhardt** asked the petitioner if they felt the proposed new LED sign would be less disruptive than the existing wall sign, and **Mr. Larson** felt that it would be because of the restrictions they were proposing for it. **Chair Eckhart** also asked if the measured illumination of the new sign would be more or less than the existing sign, and **Mr. Larson** felt it would be less,

based on what the sign manufacturer shared with them comparing a new fluorescent sign to a new LED sign. Although Chair Eckhardt appreciated the information obtained from the sign manufacturer, he was curious to see an actual light meter comparison between the existing sign and a new LED sign in terms of dimming levels, and while the commissioners may not like the amber or red color option, he felt the new sign would be less disruptive than the existing sign in terms of brightness.

Chair Eckhardt shared concerns with the other commissioners about the amber/red color option for the new LED sign; he was hoping to see a color similar to the existing sign that could be changed electronically; however, it appeared as though technology did not yet offer this option at an affordable price. He said that he was in favor of these types of LED signs and felt they should be there, although he understood the precedent it would set.

Commissioner Bombick asked how the new LED sign that has 3 lines of text would be able to get the same message across as the existing sign that has 4 lines of text. Mr. Larson replied that by changing the sign twice a day, all of the information shown on the existing sign could be shown on the new 3 line sign. He reiterated that since the existing sign has to be changed manually, more information had to be placed on the sign, whereas less information will need to be placed on the new sign since it could be changed electronically on a daily basis. Mr. Brown added that parents want the current 24/48 hour school information on the sign.

Chair Eckhardt asked the commissioners for their comments about the new sign if it were to be relocated or placed in a different orientation. Commissioner Fasolo said that his decision about the new sign would not change because of the color and the precedent it would set. Commissioner Bombick said that rotating the new sign 30 degrees out from the building so it almost faced Maude would direct the light away from all the residents and possibly resolve the issue of light into the neighbors' home; however, the color would still be red, making the sign look cheap and old. Commissioner Fitzgerald said that location was not the issue for him, it was the sign. Chair Eckhardt said his issue was the color factor for the new sign, although he is in complete support of what the school is trying to accomplish.

Chair Eckhardt commented on the options available at this time, which include taking a vote tonight or tabling the project to determine if there was a fallback position, since it appeared as though there was a "no" vote from 3 commissioners and a soft "no" vote from one commissioner. Commissioner Fasolo suggested a motion to table the sign variation until such time as the Village and the Design Commission can further study the issue of color as well as other technology options available for electronic bulletin board signs.

Chair Eckhardt pointed out that the project needs three favorable votes in order to be approved tonight, and one commissioner is not here. As the commission gets further educated on the technology of electronic signs, it could bring a different light to the issues. Tabling the project tonight would also give the petitioner an opportunity to discuss the concerns stated tonight as well as consider a possible alternate location for the new sign. A continuation to a specific date would eliminate the public notification requirement.

**Mr. Hautzinger** said that Staff could prepare an outline of the Design Commissions' direction to be brought back to the next meeting in March; however, additional time would be necessary to conduct the necessary research required to draft possible code amendments resulting from this discussion, which could not be accomplished until May. **Chair Eckhardt** felt it was unfair to the petitioner who came here for a variance request to wait months to see if code amendments are approved. He felt there was enough on the table to keep the project moving along and return to answer some of the questions discussed tonight, and determine if it is appropriate for a vote at that time. **Commissioner Bombick** agreed that it was unfair to the petitioner and he asked for a more reasonable timeframe.

**Mr. Larson** said that although a month was probably an adequate amount of time to return, he questioned whether it was just delaying the inevitable. He was unsure if in the next month he could produce technology that is any different from what he or Staff already presented tonight or remotely affordable. He has data comparing the amount of light emitted from the existing wall sign to the new LED sign, which he forgot to bring tonight; however, he was unsure if this would even solve the issue because it was clear that not all of the commissioners were in favor of the new sign in terms of concept or color. **Mr. Larson** said that he was happy to come back with comparative data of replacing the existing sign with an identical LED sign. **Chair Eckhardt** felt that what the petitioner was asking for was not unreasonable based on the self-imposed restrictions; however, he was unsure if that was enough for him to vote in favor of the new sign.

**Mr. Larson** questioned whether proposing amber instead of red for the new LED sign, which would be the same color as the Village's LED sign, would even make a difference. **Chair Eckhardt** said that it appeared as though some of the commissioners were against the new LED sign simply because of the precedent it would set. **Mr. Hautzinger** asked the petitioner how they would proceed if their variation request is denied by the commission, and what School District 25 plans are for implementing LED signs at all of the other schools. **Mr. Larson** replied that the intent is to replace the existing wall sign, one way or the other. **Mr. Brown** added that the School District is hoping that the new LED sign works out best for the entire community, neighborhood and everyone involved, and as a representative of the school district, he was here to see that happen. Because of the programming capabilities behind the LED sign and the trust factor involved with the school following the sign restrictions, the school district felt this was the direction for all of their schools' new signs; however, if he drove past the new sign and felt it was not a good precedent to set, the district would not go any further with implementing electronic signs district wide.

**Chair Eckhardt** wanted to give the petitioner the opportunity to have all five commissioners present to vote on the project, as well as an opportunity to consider the comments made by the commissioners, Staff and the community here tonight. He suggested postponing a vote on the project until the next available meeting; however, if the petitioner preferred, the commissioners could vote tonight. **Mr. Larson** replied that his preference was to come back in a month after collecting more data. **Chair Eckhardt** encouraged the petitioner to re-visit with



neighbors again and work with them, as well as provide a mock-up of the new sign on the actual school building for neighbors to see and comment on.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER BOMBICK, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, TO CONTINUE THE SIGN VARIATION REQUEST FOR PATTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (DC#15-001) TO THE NEXT AVAILABLE MEETING IN APPROXIMATELY ONE MONTH (MARCH 31, 2015).**

Mr. Hautzinger reiterated that one month would not allow enough time for Staff to conduct all of the requested research discussed during the Village Wide re-review. Chair Eckhardt clarified that this is not dependent on Staff providing research on new technology at the next meeting. The petitioner will be conducting their own research and returning with the final sign design they are requesting a variation for. Commissioner Bombick asked that Staff provide research about a community that has solved the problem of electronic signs, most likely a community that is very picky about signs such as Lake Forest, or a community with a lot of historic buildings.

**BOMBICK, AYE; FASOLO, AYE; FITZGERALD, AYE; ECKHARDT, AYE.  
ALL WERE IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.**

# MEMO

DATE: March 31, 2015  
TO: Design Commissioners  
FROM: Steve Hautzinger, Design Planner  
RE: DC 15-001, Patton Elementary School, Sign Variation

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On January 27, 2015, the Design Commission reviewed a sign variation request for Patton Elementary School to allow replacement of their existing manual change bulletin board with a new electronic LED changeable sign. At that time, the Design Commission decided to defer action and continue the request to February 24, 2015 to allow time for a Village wide re-review of electronic LED signage, as well as to allow time for the petitioner to more clearly define how they are proposing to use the sign, and for Staff to research electronic signage options and recommend operational restrictions.

At the February 24, 2015 Design Commission, the Design Commission decided to continue the request to the March 31, 2015 Design Commission meeting to allow the petitioner time to conduct additional research regarding the proposed sign.

**At this time, the petitioner is requesting to continue the review of their request to the June 9, 2015 Design Commission meeting.**

**APPROVED**

**MINUTES OF  
THE VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS  
DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING  
HELD AT THE ARLINGTON HEIGHTS MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
33 S. ARLINGTON HEIGHTS RD.  
MARCH 31, 2015**

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

Members Present: Alan Bombick, Acting Chair  
John Fitzgerald  
Anthony Fasolo  
Jonathan Kubow  
Ted Eckhardt, Chair

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Keith Neumann, Greenscape Homes for *1805 N. Fernandez Ave.*  
Douglas Espinal, Owner of *428 S. Evanston Ave.*  
Josh Wohlreich for *Arlington Downs*  
Todd Bellis, Studio3 Design for *Teleflex*  
Chad McRoberts, Catalyst GC & Development for *Teleflex*  
Brian Murphy, K. Hovnanian Homes for *Christina Court*  
Mark Rykovich, K. Hovnanian Homes for *Christina Court*  
Randall Wilt, K. Hovnanian Homes for *Christina Court*  
Steve Hautzinger, Staff Liaison

**REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES FROM MARCH 10, 2015**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KUBOW, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 10, 2015. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.**

ITEM 3. SIGN VARIATION RE-REVIEW (continued from 2/24/15)

DC#15-001 – Patton Elementary School – 1616 N. Patton Ave.

Mr. Hautzinger stated that the petitioner has requested to continue the review of their request to the June 9, 2015 Design Commission meeting.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KUBOW, TO CONTINUE THE SIGN VARIATION REQUEST FOR PATTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (DC#15-001) TO THE JUNE 9, 2015 DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING.**

**FASOLO, AYE; FITZGERALD, AYE; KUBOW, AYE; ECKHARDT, AYE; BOMBICK, AYE.  
ALL WERE IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.**

Commissioner Eckhardt asked if the petitioner has contacted Staff regarding the probability of the sign mock-up that was encouraged by the commissioners. Mr. Hautzinger replied that the petitioner requested a continuation until June so they can see if any additional funds become available at the end of the current school year, with the intent to potentially purchase a full color LED sign, as opposed to the red/amber display originally proposed. The full color LED sign will allow the ability to display white letters on a black background.

# MEMO

DATE: June 9, 2015  
TO: Design Commissioners  
FROM: Steve Hautzinger, Design Planner  
RE: DC 15-001, Patton Elementary School, Sign Variation

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The following is a summary of the Patton Elementary School Sign Variation review to date:

## Design Commission Meeting, January 27, 2015:

On January 27, 2015, the Design Commission reviewed a sign variation request for Patton Elementary School to allow replacement of their existing manual change bulletin board with a new electronic LED changeable sign. At that time, the Design Commission decided to defer action and continue the request to February 24, 2015 to allow time for a Village wide re-review of electronic LED signage, as well as to allow time for the petitioner to more clearly define how they are proposing to use the sign, and for Staff to research electronic signage options and recommend operational restrictions.

### Highlights of the Design Commissioners feedback from January 27 are as follows:

1. It was commented that it might be time to allow the convenience of "new sign technology" in the Village.
2. There was mixed feelings about the appropriateness of electronic signs in residential neighborhoods.
3. Concerns were expressed about nuisance to residents.
4. Concerns were expressed about frequent message changing.
5. The proposed LED sign looks like "old technology", and a higher quality display is preferred.
6. A digital sign with black letters on white background was suggested.
7. The necessity for having a message board sign at all was questioned, considering email and the internet for sharing information.

## Design Commission Meeting, February 24, 2015:

On February 24, 2015, Staff presented a study of Village-wide electronic message board signs. Staff's presentation was a re-review of a study that was originally reviewed by the Design Commission in 2009. The presentation included code and research updates since 2009, as well as information on emerging sign technologies as alternatives to LED signs. In 2009, the Design Commission decided to continue to not allow electronic LED signs, but on February 24, 2015, the Design Commission recommended that Staff continue to explore options for, and the appropriateness of, electronic signs for residential and commercial districts.

### Alternative Technology:

Electronic ink technology represents a very interesting emerging technology that has great promise as an aesthetically pleasing alternate to LED for electronic changeable signs. Extremely low power consumption, visibility in natural light, and a clear, clean display are all advantages of this type of display. However, the use of electronic ink technology for outdoor signage is currently limited and is in development. Electronic ink displays are made up of tiny microcapsules containing positively charged white particles and negatively charged black particles suspended in a clear fluid. A positive or negative charge is applied which forces either the white or black particles to the surface where they become visible. The effect is the appearance of printed ink on paper.

Also on February 24, Patton Elementary School presented additional information regarding their sign variation request, including possible operational restrictions and additional manufacturer data. The Design Commission decided to defer action and continue the request to March 31, 2015 to allow time for the petitioner to conduct additional research on options for the proposed sign.

Highlights of the Design Commissioners feedback from February 24 are as follows:

1. The petitioner was encouraged to study alternate sign locations or orientation.
2. Provide light meter measurements of existing sign as compared to the proposed LED sign.
3. Address concern about red display on black background. Is an electronic sign with black letters on a white background an option?
4. Revisit with the neighbors to further discuss the proposed sign.
5. Study a mock-up of the proposed sign.

**Design Commission Meeting, March 31, 2015:**

On February 31, 2015, Staff reported that the petitioner requested to continue the meeting to June 9, 2015 to allow time to review their budget for a sign which will allow a white letter display on a black background.

**Update, June 9, 2015:**

In follow-up to feedback received at the 2-24-15 Design Commission meeting, the petitioner has reported the following updates to their sign variation request:

1. The petitioner considered other locations for the sign, but they are requesting to keep the sign in the same location as the existing manual change sign.
2. The petitioner is now proposing a full color sign which has the capability to display white text on the black background. The red text display on the petitioner's exhibits will be revised to have a white text display.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Due to the precedent that the Patton School sign variation request will set for the (25) schools, (25) churches, and (24) park facilities throughout Arlington Heights' residential neighborhoods, as well as other zoning districts and uses, it is recommended that the Design Commission consider this request on a holistic, Village wide basis. The Design Commission should not allow this individual request to influence what is best for all neighborhoods in Arlington Heights. Staff suggests the following three options. Of the options listed, Staff recommends that the Design Commission **proceed with either Option 1 or Option 2.**

**Option 1.** Deny the Patton School sign variation request based on the criteria for granting a sign variation request not being met, with specific concerns regarding altering the essential character of the locality, depreciation of nearby property values, and traffic hazard.

The Village Sign Code, Chapter 30, Section 30-901 sets out the criteria for granting a sign variation:

- a. *That the particular difficulty or peculiar hardship is not self-created by the Petitioner.*
- b. *That the granting of said variation will not create a traffic hazard, a depreciation of nearby property values or otherwise be detrimental to the public health, safety, morals and welfare;*

- c. *That the variation will serve to relieve the Petitioner from a difficulty attributable to the location, topography, circumstances on nearby properties or other peculiar hardship, and will not merely serve to provide the Petitioner with a competitive advantage over similar businesses;*
- d. *That the variation will not alter the essential character of the locality;*
- e. *That the Petitioner's business cannot reasonably function under the standards of this chapter.*

**Option 2. Continue** the Patton School sign variation request until such time that the Village-wide study of possible code amendments for electronic signage is completed.

**Option 3. Approve** the request with the following restrictions:

1. **Static Message.** Chapter 30, Section 30-121.a, Prohibited Signs, states "any flashing sign or sign with moving or rotating lights, or any sign creating the illusion of movement is not allowed". The proposed LED sign shall display static messages only, and shall not be allowed to blink, scroll or animate in any way.
2. **Hours of Operation.** Chapter 30, Section 30-117, Illumination: Hours of Operation, states "Illuminated signs located on a lot adjacent to or immediately across the street from any residential district shall be turned off at all times between the hours of 11:00 pm and 7:00 am". It is recommended that the proposed hours of operation be restricted from 5:30 pm until 7:30 am (as proposed by the petitioner).
3. **Illumination Level.** Per Chapter 30, Section 30-118.a, Illumination Standards, states "in no case shall the lighting intensity exceed 250 foot candles when measured flush and in contact with the face of the sign". Furthermore, it is recommended that the sign be required to have a photo sensor dimmer to automatically reduce the brightness in the evening.
4. **Frequency of Message Change.** The message display shall be static, with changes made only twice per day (as proposed by the petitioner), unless urgent or emergency information is necessary to be displayed.
5. **Colors.** The display shall be restricted to white text on the black background.
6. **Sound.** The sign shall not be allowed to emit sound.

**Attachments:**

1-27-15, Staff Report with 4-4-09 Design Commission Minutes

1-5-15, Petitioner Exhibits

2-24-15, Petitioner's Proposed Restrictions

2-24-15, Village-Wide Electronic Sign re-review Memo

2-12-15, Map of Schools, Churches, and Parks

1-27-15 Design Commission Meeting Minutes

2-24-15 Design Commission Meeting Minutes

3-31-15 Design Commission Meeting Minutes

**APPROVED**  
**MINUTES OF**  
**THE VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS**  
**DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING**  
**HELD AT THE ARLINGTON HEIGHTS MUNICIPAL BUILDING**  
**33 S. ARLINGTON HEIGHTS RD.**  
**JUNE 9, 2015**

**Chair Eckhardt** called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

**Members Present:** Ted Eckhardt, Chair  
Anthony Fasolo  
John Fitzgerald

**Members Absent:** Alan Bombick  
Jonathan Kubow

**Also Present:** Mike Schwartz, Owner of *Westgate Park & Shop*  
Jason Miller, Fitness 19 for *Westgate Park & Shop*  
Jon Ridler, A.H. Chamber of Commerce for *Westgate Park & Shop*  
Eric Larson for *Patton Elementary School*  
Dennis Kulak, KLLM for *Cassidy Tire*  
Rick Ahern, *Cassidy Tire*  
James Ahern, *Cassidy Tire*  
Kevin Kordes, *Cassidy Tire*  
Steve Hautzinger, Staff Liaison

**REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES FROM MAY 26, 2015**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 26, 2015. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.**

**Chair Eckhardt** stated that because only 3 commissioners are here tonight, a vote must be unanimous for an item to move forward or be approved.



**ITEM 2. SIGN VARIATION REVIEW (continued from 1/27/15)**

**DC#15-001 – Patton Elementary School – 1616 N. Patton Ave.**

**Mr. Eric Larsen**, representing *Patton Elementary School*, was present on behalf of the project.

**Mr. Hautzinger** presented Staff comments. The petitioner is requesting a variation to allow an electronic changeable LED wall sign where electronic signs are not allowed, and a variation to allow that sign to be 24 square feet where only a 12 SF manual change sign is allowed. This request was initially reviewed on January 22, 2015 and again on February 24, 2015. At the meeting in February, Staff presented a Village-wide re-review of electronic signs and the commissioners recommended that Staff continue to explore options for electronic signs throughout the Village's residential and commercial districts. **Mr. Hautzinger** also reiterated the alternative technology that is emerging with electronic ink, which Staff still feels has a lot of great promise as an aesthetically pleasing alternate to LED for electronic changeable signs.

Also at the last review, the petitioner presented possible operational restrictions if the electronic sign is approved. Commissioner feedback from that review is as follows:

1. The petitioner was encouraged to study alternate sign locations or orientation.
2. Provide light meter measurements of existing sign as compared to the proposed LED sign.
3. Address concern about red display on black background. Is an electronic sign with black letters on a white background an option?
4. Revisit with the neighbors to further discuss the proposed sign, and study a mock-up of the proposed sign.

**Mr. Hautzinger** said that the petitioner is here tonight to seek approval of the original variation request. Although they considered other locations for the new wall sign, the petitioner ultimately decided to pursue approval for the location as originally proposed, which is the same location as the existing wall mounted manual change sign. However, there is a change in the technology of the proposed sign; instead of either a red or amber display, the petitioner is proposing full color sign which has the capability to display white text on a black background.

**Mr. Hautzinger** reiterated Staff's recommendation that due to the precedent that the sign variation request for Patton School would set for the 25 schools, 25 churches, and 24 park facilities throughout the Village's residential neighborhoods, as well as other zoning districts and uses, it is recommended that the commissioners consider this request on a holistic, Village wide basis.

Staff suggests the following 3 options. Of the options listed, Staff recommends that the Design Commission proceed with either Option 1 or Option 2:

**Option 1. Deny** the request based on the criteria for granting a sign variation request not being met, with specific concerns regarding altering the essential character of the locality, depreciation of nearby property values, and traffic hazard.

**Option 2. Continue** the request until such time that the Village-wide study of possible code amendments for electronic signage is completed.

**Option 3. Approve** the request with the following restrictions:

- a) **Static Message.** Chapter 30, Section 30-121.a, Prohibited Signs, states “any flashing sign or sign with moving or rotating lights, or any sign creating the illusion of movement is not allowed”. The proposed LED sign shall display static messages only, and shall not be allowed to blink, scroll or animate in any way.
- b) **Hours of Operation.** Chapter 30, Section 30-117, Illumination: Hours of Operation, states “Illuminated signs located on a lot adjacent to or immediately across the street from any residential district shall be turned off at all times between the hours of 11:00 pm and 7:00 am”. It is recommended that the proposed hours of operation be restricted from 5:30 pm until 7:30 am (as proposed by the petitioner).
- c) **Illumination Level.** Per Chapter 30, Section 30-118.a, Illumination Standards, states “in no case shall the lighting intensity exceed 250 foot candles when measured flush and in contact with the face of the sign”. Furthermore, it is recommended that the sign be required to have a photo sensor dimmer to automatically reduce the brightness in the evening.
- d) **Frequency of Message Change.** The message display shall be static, with changes made only twice per day (as proposed by the petitioner), unless urgent or emergency information is necessary to be displayed.
- e) **Colors.** The display shall be restricted to white text on the black background.
- f) **Sound.** The sign shall not be allowed to emit sound.

**Mr. Larson** said that after the last meeting, he met with Mr. Barley, PTA President for Patton School who is here tonight, and Ms. Mueller, a resident who expressed concerns about the sign at the last meeting. They discussed Ms. Mueller’s concerns that included the location of the new sign and the type of text to be flowing or flashing, and reiterated to her that the school does not intend to have flashing or flowing text across the new sign. They also discussed alternate sign locations, such as a ground sign to face north and south of Patton Avenue and the financial costs associated with it, and Ms. Mueller indicated that she was not in favor of a ground sign. At the end of their meeting, Ms. Mueller said she was in support of the new LED wall sign and understood why the school wanted it.

**Mr. Larson** commented on the issue of the display color and background color. He previously contacted the sign manufacturer to ask if a red LED color could be scaled down to pure white, and was told that it would not be pure white, but would look white to most people, except at an angle it would have a slight pink hue. They obtained a cost estimate for a full color display which they now have the funds for, to try to honor the commissioners’ request to have either white letters on a black background, or black letters on a white background; however, they

would suggest white lettering with black background which would be less illumination. Other concerns previously brought up included the photo sensor and its capability to dim at night. He explained that the proposed LED sign has 10 different levels of brightness that can be manually set for different times.

**Commissioner Fitzgerald** asked how many lines of text the new sign would display, whether the name of the school at the top of the sign was part of the LED technology, and how many times a day the text message would change. **Mr. Larsen** explained that the new sign can hold up to 3 lines of text, or 2 larger lines of text, consisting of white letters on a black background; the name of the school at the top of the sign is not part of the LED technology, and would be internally illuminated similar to the current wall sign; the text message would change no more than twice a day. **Commissioner Fitzgerald** also asked if there was information about the LED technology available on-line and **Mr. Larsen** replied that he previously provided Staff information that contained a photograph of an existing LED sign at a school in Glendale Heights that is from the same sign manufacturer. **Mr. Hautzinger** clarified that the technology for the LED sign being proposed tonight is exactly the same as originally proposed, except that the lettering comprised of red dots will just be a series of white dots.

**Commissioner Fasolo** asked if the petitioner studied a mock-up of the proposed sign as previously suggested by the commissioners. **Mr. Larsen** replied that they did not create a mock-up of the sign, and instead found and visited 2 schools in Glendale Heights that have the same LED sign technology being proposed. One reason for not doing a mock-up was because they wanted the mock-up to be the exact sign being proposed and the sign manufacturer is located in Florida, and they did not want to work with a local sign company on a mock-up when they had no intention of purchasing the sign from them. **Chair Eckhardt** added that the suggestion for the mock-up was in response to the concerns stated by the neighbor at the last meeting, who was not at the meeting tonight.

**Commissioner Fasolo** said that he was in favor of new LED technology and he does not like the old wall sign, but he was leaning towards Option 2 because of the precedence the new LED sign would set throughout the Village, until such time that the Village-wide study of possible code amendments is further studied.

**Chair Eckhardt** appreciated the sign code requirements for a variation; however, he felt that the petitioner's self-imposed restrictions for the new LED sign would satisfy to the extent that the variation would not be altering, but actually might be softening the existing wall sign. He appreciated the petitioner's efforts to use white letters on a black background, restrict the sign to a static message only changed up to twice a day, and restrict the hours of operation; therefore, he was inclined to be in favor of the new sign. He added that the Design Commission is here to hear variation requests, which is an option for any petitioner in the Village. He felt that a lot of time and effort has gone into this request, both by the commission and the petitioner, to study the proposed new LED sign with what he believes to be very restrictive requirements for controlling the sign, and he could be in favor of it. He felt it was ridiculous,

with today's technology, to send a parent out to manually change the message on the existing wall sign a couple times a day.

**Chair Eckhardt** asked if there was any public comment on the project and there was no response from the audience.

**Commissioner Fitzgerald** preferred Option 2, to wait to see the results of the Village wide study. If the proposed LED sign is approved tonight, every school and every church is going to want the same thing, and they will get approval because Patton Elementary School did. **Commissioner Fasolo** agreed. **Chair Eckhardt** pointed out that 2 commissioners were not here tonight, although he was unsure of their position on the new sign.

**Mr. Larsen** said that he was disappointed that all 5 commissioners were not here tonight, given that he has put in over 8 months of effort into this request; however, he had to move forward with the directive he was given by the Superintendent that whatever happens tonight is final. **Chair Eckhardt** encouraged the petitioner to table the project at this time to leave the door open to come back in the future. **Mr. Larsen** appreciated the support and feedback given by the commissioners; however, at this point the school had to move forward with a new sign, and if they could not move forward with the LED sign, then they had to move forward with a direct replacement. He just could not give any more time to this matter.

**Mr. Barley** asked if it was possible to approve the sign (Option 3) and lay out the self-imposed restrictions as strict and absolute. **Chair Eckhardt** replied that he supported the LED sign because he felt the self-imposed restrictions are tough enough for future variation requests. He felt the petitioner answered every question positively and developed a case that is precedent-setting for others; the LED sign proposed makes sense to him because it is current technology. **Mr. Larsen** thanked the commissioners again and reiterated that the directive he was given is to no longer pursue the variation if the commissioners do not approve the variation tonight.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FASOLO, TO APPROVE OPTION 2, TO CONTINUE THE PATTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (DC#15-001) SIGN VARIATION REQUEST UNTIL SUCH TIME THAT THE VILLAGE-WIDE STUDY OF POSSIBLE CODE AMENDMENTS FOR ELECTRONIC SIGNAGE IS COMPLETE.**

**FASOLO, AYE; FITZGERALD, AYE; ECKHARDT, NAY.  
THE MOTION FAILED.**