

# **CITY OF SAN DIMAS PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**

Special Meeting – Community Sign Forum  
Wednesday, March 16, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.  
270 South Walnut Avenue, Sheriff's Community Meeting Room

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## **Present**

Chairman Jim Schoonover  
Commissioner David Bratt  
Commissioner John Davis  
Commissioner Stephen Ensberg  
Commissioner M. Yunus Rahi  
Assistant City Manager of Community Dev. Larry Stevens  
Director of Development Services Dan Coleman  
Planning Commission Secretary Jan Sutton

## **CALL TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE**

Chairman Schoonover called the special meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. and Commissioner Bratt led the flag salute.

## **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

1. **RECEIVE INPUT FROM THE COMMUNITY IN REGARDS TO THE CITY'S EXISTING SIGN CODE**

*Assistant City Manager Larry Stevens* stated the focus of the meeting was about regulations on signs in the commercial zones, so he did not include information about residential, industrial, political signs, etc. His presentation will cover what are the standard requirements City-wide and any special requirements for the Frontier Village area. He went over the current standards for permanent window signs, temporary window signs, canopy signs, icon or projecting signs, primary and secondary wall signs, monument signs, multiple tenant signs in large retail centers, directional signs, freeway oriented signs and temporary signs and banners. He also went over the criteria for leasing and for-sale signs. He stated there are a few places where sign regulations may vary from these standards in Specific Plan zones. Many multi-tenant centers have Master Sign Programs; they typically do not allow more signs than would be allowed under the City's sign ordinance, but are utilized to create similarity in shopping centers or business parks. If a certain type of sign is not specifically mentioned as being permitted by the code, it would be prohibited. Many signs, even if they don't require a building permit, would still need approval from the Planning Department.

He stated they will take the comments received tonight and compile them into a report for the City Council's consideration on if they would like to make changes. Tonight's forum is an opportunity for people to express what they like or don't like or have questions about relative to the existing sign ordinance. Staff is not expecting any direction at the conclusion of the meeting, this is just a chance to find out what the community would like.

**Commissioner Davis** asked how high monument signs could be.

**Associate Planner Marco Espinoza** stated they are usually between four to five feet high, not including any architectural features or the base.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated based on the location of the sign and any other site issues, Staff will evaluate how high the base can be. Since most monument signs are in centers with a Master Sign Program, they will be reviewed by DPRB to address appearance and appropriate issues. While there is no definitive cap on base height, Staff would not approve an extremely high base.

**Commissioner Davis** asked if there is a process to get an exception to the code.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated someone could file for a variance by stating there is some unique issue affecting their property. Over the last 20 years, there have maybe been four or five sign variances. In most cases it was to allow a monument sign where normally it would not be permitted. One was for a church to allow a reader board, but subsequently the code was amended to allow that type of sign so the variance request was negated. They process relatively few variances because it is difficult to meet the finding for unique property circumstance and there are a lot of signs that are permitted.

**Commissioner Bratt** stated there wasn't anything in the presentation regarding reader boards or digital signs and asked if they were prohibited.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated reader boards are addressed but not in commercial signs; they are permitted for churches. They have not had an actual application yet for a digital sign, but there was a discussion at DPRB looking for interpretation in regards to public and community message boards, because the hospital was interested in installing that type of sign. The hospital is not located within a commercial zone, but they could always expand the discussion outside of the commercial area if there was interest.

**Commissioner Rahi** asked about the human held signs.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated they were not allowed in the commercial zones.

Chairman Schoonover opened the meeting for public input. Addressing the Commission were:

**Don Green, 127 Maverick**, asked if law enforcement has been involved in this process.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated not at this point that he is aware of.

**Don Green** stated it is well known that law enforcement prefers to be able to see inside of a business establishment when responding to a call for help and it makes their job more difficult and dangerous if the windows are covered with signs and product so they can't see inside. He

would like to see something addressed that would limit signage and product in windows of businesses that traditionally have a higher robbery rate.

**John Rossfeld, CEO, San Dimas Hospital**, stated they have put in a request for an electronic message sign and would like the City to consider permitting this type of sign. He would suggest that the City should allow them initially, and then let Staff work on requirements for limitations and specifications for content and where they will be allowed. This type of sign is less expensive for businesses, can present information readily, and is easy to change. He referred to a review by the Federal Highway Safety Board in regards to driver distraction, which determined they were safe. He would like to see them allowed in the community and would be happy to provide some model codes to Staff for reference.

**David Harbin, 242 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street**, stated he was concerned with the restrictions on monument signs in Frontier Village, because it seemed from the presentation that the only way to have one was if you agreed to a façade upgrade. He felt that was punishing the people who could not afford to upgrade the front of their building. He would like to see monument signs allowed in any circumstance.

**Cyndia Williams, 125 W. Bonita Avenue**, stated she used a freestanding, single-pole sign for years to let people know when her store was open and was recently told that was not allowed. She stated the businesses on Bonita are struggling and need some type of visible sign to let people know when they are open.

**Sid Maksoudian, 120 W. Bonita #E**, stated he is concerned with the limitation of window signs to five percent coverage. He stated this rule has been in the code for twenty years but has only been recently applied to his business only, and is not being applied to other businesses, especially the corporate run businesses such as the fast food restaurants. He also felt the City should have noticed the 2300 businesses in town of this forum, and that the corporate businesses needed to be involved in this discussion as they do not meet the five percent coverage limitation. He stated when he opened his business he was required by the City and the Sheriff's to keep the view from his windows free and clear, which he did until he installed his political signs. He stated he was only allowed three identification signs for his business only after he complained.

**Brad Umansky, Progressive Real Estate Partners**, consultant for San Dimas Station and leasing agent for 702-764 W. Arrow Highway, stated he has been a shopping center broker for 20 years and felt that besides the amount of brokerage signs allowed per the code to be installed along the street frontage, he would also like to be able to hang banners on the empty tenant spaces and place V-signs on the corners. He felt more square footage should be allowed for leasing signs, and concurred that the five percent/45 sq. ft. window sign coverage was too limiting and inconsistent with other cities. He thought ten percent was more reasonable.

**Mr. Umansky** stated in regards to Mr. Torkan's property on West Arrow Highway, it is less than 40,000 square feet so they can't have a monument sign. He felt all shopping centers should be allowed monument signs that list tenant names. He felt the existing banner code was reasonable, but that some cities are temporarily allowing up to 90 days a year for banners due to the hard economic climate.

**Jennifer Simison, Canyon Trail Plaza, East Foothill Boulevard**, thanked the Chamber of Commerce for sending an e-mail to their members. She stated they have spent a lot of time on

their signage, but there is a difference now from when they first developed the project as a “for-sale” project to one where they are leasing out tenant spaces. She concurred that it is helpful to businesses to allow tenant names to be more visible and to utilize other means to let people know the business is open.

**Charlotte Chamberlain, Manager for Sunnyside Senior Apartments**, stated apartment communities are struggling and they were cited last year for an A-frame and other types of signs that they had been using for years. She felt they were not given enough information regarding their violation prior to receiving the citation. She stated apartment communities derive a large percentage of their business from drive-by traffic and the use of signs and balloons draws people in when traditional forms of advertising do not. Inquiries from drive-by traffic at their location have decreased since they have not been allowed to use those types of signs.

**Mr. Dilip Patel, Holiday Inn Express**, stated people do not know he is a hotel based on his building design, and he needs some type of internally illuminated monument sign on the corner of his property so people can find him at nighttime, and know that he is a hotel.

**Brad Umansky, Progressive Real Estate Partners**, wanted to add that since Mr. Torkan’s property is less than 100,000 square feet, he is not allowed to have a freeway pylon sign, and they would like one to assist the center.

**Sid Maksoudian, 120 W. Bonita #E**, reiterated that the five percent coverage for window signs was too restrictive and is hurting businesses. However, he felt if this was the code, the City should be enforcing this code on all businesses, not just his.

**Robert, owner of a graphics business in La Verne**, stated he lives in Woodwalk and assisted the HOA when they wanted to redesign their entry monument. He stated City Staff asked him for what he considered a minor detail before approving the sign. He felt there should be balance between creating clean looking graphics and sign code requirements.

There being no further comments, the public comment period was closed.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated Staff will summarize what was presented tonight, as well as raise some other possible points and bring that back to the Planning Commission for discussion, and how to best present the information to the City Council. If the City Council determines the ordinance should be modified, then they will discuss the issues and areas to be reviewed, do a comparative analysis and start crafting a code amendment. He stated notices of upcoming meetings will be mailed to those who filled out the sign-in sheet.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Moved by Ensberg, seconded by Davis to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m. to the regular Planning Commission meeting scheduled for April 6, 2011, at 7:00 p.m.

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James Schoonover, Chairman  
San Dimas Planning Commission

ATTEST:

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Jan Sutton  
Planning Commission Secretary

Approved: May 4, 2011