

# CITY OF SAN DIMAS PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Regularly Scheduled Meeting  
Thursday, June 7, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.  
245 East Bonita Avenue, Council Chambers

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## **Present**

Chairman Jim Schoonover  
Commissioner David Bratt  
Commissioner John Davis (arrived 7:38 p.m.)  
Commissioner Stephen Ensberg  
Commissioner M. Yunus Rahi  
Assistant City Manager of Community Development Larry Stevens  
Planning Commission Secretary Jan Sutton

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

Chairman Schoonover called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:04 p.m. and Commissioner Bratt led the flag salute.

## **CONSENT CALENDAR**

1. Approval of Minutes: May 2, 2012

**MOTION:** Moved by Bratt, seconded by Ensberg to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Davis absent).

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

2. **CONSIDERATION OF MUNICIPAL CODE TEXT AMENDMENT 11-03** – A request to amend San Dimas Zoning Code Chapter 18.152 Signs. **(Continued from May 16, 2012)**

*Assistant City Manager Larry Stevens* stated tonight he will be going over three areas of discussion; one is complete and the other two are for the Commission to identify the desired standards, and then those will be brought back at a future meeting with completed language. It is his intent to try and have the proposed ordinance language back at the June 21<sup>st</sup> meeting in a form that will allow them to make a substantial approval, with possibly just a few minor changes to the language.

The first item is A-Frame Signs. The proposed text allows them in all commercial zones, but not in the AP and Industrial zones, and creates a definition of what is a “portable sign.” There was some discussion about the wire framed signs, but he doesn’t think that will fall under the

definition for allowed portable signs as this type of sign is prohibited from being located in landscape areas. He may include them in the prohibited signs section for clarification, but did not think they will meet the definition for inclusion in the allowed section. He went over the standards for what will be allowed, and that the language in blue in the staff report is what is proposed for addition to the sign code in the various code sections.

**Commissioner Bratt** asked what his intention was in regards to whiteboards and chalkboards; would they be limited to the same size and other standards as a pre-printed A-Frame sign.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated the same standards would apply. These are typically used at restaurants so that they can write down what the daily specials are.

**Commissioner Bratt** felt they might want to specify in the language that these were only to be used at restaurants.

**Chairman Schoonover** asked if they specified for restaurants only, would they be eliminating another class of business from using that type of sign.

**Commissioner Bratt** stated personally he would like to see them eliminated altogether, but if they were going to allow them, he didn't really want to see them at other types of businesses. His concern is if they are trying to maintain a professional quality with portable signs, the use of a whiteboard or chalkboard with handwriting can lower the professional look.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated possibly the hardware stores or drug stores might want to use them to advertise daily specials. He will go through the example ordinances and come up with a list of user restrictions for their consideration at the next meeting.

He stated a maximum height of four feet seemed reasonable as they are intended to be pedestrian oriented. Additional requirements included only being out during business hours, located within 10 feet from the door of the business being advertised, and restricted from certain locations as identified in the staff report. He felt having a specific number identified was prudent in order to keep a row of them from being lined up at a strip center. The one at Starberry Farms is an example of an A-Frame placed out at the sidewalk; this is one that will need to be relocated closer to the building. When 99 Cent Only opened they put several unpermitted signs along the street frontage until they were advised that wasn't allowed. The problem is once one business starts to do that, others will want to as well. The signs cannot block ADA access or sidewalks; may not have attachments to them; must be made of durable weather-resistant material; and be professional looking. If they are in a shopping center, they will also need permission from the owner or agent of the center because they may have more restrictive standards than the City's.

**Commissioner Ensberg** thought there had been discussion about some uses in the industrial zone that had used them in the past.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated the discussion was in reference to a multi-tenant monument sign, so he did not create a standard for A-Frames in the industrial zones. Where you might see an industrial zone with some commercial uses in the front is in the center along Arrow Highway between Eucla and Amelia.

**Chairman Schoonover** did not see a need to allow them in the industrial zones.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated the next topic was regarding electronic message boards and the need for additional guidance on standards. First would the Commission want to

evaluate animated signs and text based signs differently. Animated signs usually have an image that appears in a flash, stays on for 8-10 seconds, and then changes to a new image instantly. Text based signs were more like the one at the high school which scrolls a single line of text. The problem with this type of sign is if you are driving by, you may be distracted from trying to read the whole message as opposed to an animated sign, which is why he wanted to know if they would like them handled separately.

**Commissioner Ensberg** felt they should consider Commissioner Davis' remarks at the last meeting of trying to be more supportive of the business community, and he was willing to trust the hospital to design a good sign.

**Chairman Schoonover** was concerned that if they allow animated signs, eventually they will want to use moving graphics, and he would be opposed to that.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated most ordinances restrict the type of graphic he is describing, and include language stating the image must be static, and you can say that blinking and moving characters are prohibited. Both La Verne and Monrovia have restrictions like that, and a standard can be created to address his concern.

**Commissioner Bratt** stated he liked Monrovia's standards that limit the signs to on/off messages.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated currently the code allows what is called a changeable copy sign at educational institutions and churches. He asked if the Commission wanted to merge that into the new standard, or leave it separate and the way that it is. He thought the only time he has seen a changeable copy sign commercially was at some Walgreens. He felt it might be best to leave them as a separate category and limit them to churches and educational institutions, but also allow churches and educational institutions to have the option to have an electronic message board if they desired.

The Commission concurred with that suggestion.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated the next question was what types of uses, other than the identified churches, educational institutions, hospitals and gas station price panels, would be permitted to have the electronic message boards.

**Commissioner Bratt** stated he would like to see them limited to individual, stand-alone businesses and not used at shopping centers, and to maybe control the number by setting a minimum street frontage requirement of at least 150 feet.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated the sample ordinances greatly varied on setting a minimum parcel size, and that was probably based on who in their cities wanted to have one when the code was adopted. Several were really focused on certain types of businesses, such as auto dealerships.

**Chairman Schoonover** stated he has seen them in other cities at some Walgreens, but he did not think he would want to see it at the Walgreens at Lone Hill and Arrow.

**Commissioner Rahi** stated he concurred that he would be more inclined to allow them at individual businesses and not for shopping centers.

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Commissioner Davis arrived at 7:38 p.m.

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**Commissioner Ensberg** felt they didn't need to be limited and we should allow them wherever someone wanted to use one.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated he thought he had seen one used at Montclair Plaza. They could always consider setting a minimum size for shopping centers in order for one to be permitted, which could then accommodate the larger centers along the freeway. Then the smaller centers like Walgreens and Fresh & Easy wouldn't be eligible unless there is a free-standing building. That might be a way to allow some flexibility but ensure you don't have too many of them.

**Chairman Schoonover** asked if a shopping center wanted to use one, would they need to modify the master sign program.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** that is probably how it will be handled, so it would be taken to the DPRB for review on how to incorporate an electronic message center into the existing master sign program. He stated the direction he is hearing from the Commission is to write a standard that would allow electronic message boards in commercial zones at shopping centers with a minimum acreage or an individual business with a minimum frontage size.

The Commission concurred with that direction.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** then went over the technical standards contained in the sample ordinances on pages 5-7 of the staff report which set limits on such things as motion, commercial messages limited to the business on the site with the sign, public service information, traffic hazards and change rate, and hours they can be on. He stated he thought La Verne's standard of no later than midnight was written for Person Ford which was located near residential.

**Commissioner Bratt** stated they could have a similar situation at the hospital since it is also located near residential zones.

**Commissioner Davis** stated maybe you could control some of that by increasing the length of time for copy change during non-business hours.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated they will want to set criteria for shielding, prohibiting animation and motion, and luminance. He passed around industry standards for luminance for the Commission to review.

**Chairman Schoonover** felt Monrovia's ordinance was written to accommodate the car dealers along the freeway, which are quite a ways back from the traffic and could account for the high footcandle amount.

**Commissioner Davis** felt a 30 second interval before changing was too long.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** concurred and felt something in the 10 second range would be more reasonable.

**Commissioner Davis** asked if there were any standards for clarity of the sign because he really dislikes the ones that look like dots. He felt they wanted something that looked more like a screen.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated he has not been able to find any clarity standards yet. He asked if they would be interested in a standard like Upland's that required 10% of an hour's display to be public service announcements, in addition to a time and temperature display.

**Commissioner Davis** asked who would define what constitutes a public service announcement.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated they could make it a requirement but leave it up to the business to determine what is appropriate, other than they cannot have any other messages except for the businesses on the site. He stated he could not find any standards that regulated ticker-tape signs, since he reads the code to say they are prohibited on the exterior of a business, but asked if they wanted to allow them to be inside a business but facing to the outside.

**Commissioner Ensberg** felt it would be okay with having that type of sign displayed to the outside, and asked why it would be considered a problem.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated signs can be distracting so most regulations are created to minimize distractions. The problem with scrolling text signs is that people can become distracted trying to read the entire message.

**Commissioner Davis** stated he would be okay with some type of electronic window sign but felt it should have the same type of standard and have a static image, not a scrolling line of text. He stated he really dislikes the signs with the red dots.

**Commissioner Bratt** stated he is neutral on this type of sign, but has seen some that flip up a message one line at a time instead of scrolling.

**Commissioner Rahi** asked if using an electronic sign in the window would be in lieu of some other permitted window sign.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated is correct, and that standards could be written similar to the exterior electronic message boards which would limit animation and motion.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated the final topic for direction dealt with open house and yard sale signs. The two examples from Duarte and Upland dealt with open house signs only, and that he was unable to find any ordinances that give a similar opportunity for yard sale signs. However, since they are looking at increasing penalties for damage caused by signs, he felt they would want to create some type of standard. He went over the sample ordinance requirements for allowed location, number of signs, and design standards. He felt they need to have a numerical limit in the ordinance, clarify the size, and limit attachments, similar to the standards for A-Frame signs.

**Commissioner Davis** asked about construction and appearance standards for the signs.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated there should be a quality standard, but that maybe it will be more general in the ordinance, and then they can adopt a more specific policy for certain types of signs. A policy will help with identifying who sets out the signs, and they can work with

the realtors on being self-policing in following the policy. He doesn't really want to require issuing a permit for these signs, he just felt they should have the standards in place. They are looking at having Code Enforcement one weekend a month, and they can always advise the realtors that if their open house signs do not comply, they can be removed.

He went over the previous discussion on A-Frame signs for Commissioner Davis, who concurred with the direction given by the other Commissioners.

**MOTION:** Moved by Bratt, seconded by Davis to continue the public hearing to the June 21, 2012 Planning Commission meeting. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

### **ORAL COMMUNICATION**

#### **3. Director of Development Services**

*Assistant City Manager Larry Stevens* stated there is the possibility of a joint meeting with the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Equestrian Commission on Tuesday, July 17, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the consultant's recommendation for the new park in the Walnut Creek Area. They are still waiting to receive the consultant's final report, so this date may change, but he wanted to let the Commissioners know so they could put it on their calendars.

*Commissioner Davis* stated he will be out of town that evening, as well as for the regular Commission meeting on July 19, 2012. He asked if the City had jurisdiction over the Walnut Creek area.

*Assistant City Manager Stevens* stated the City has jurisdiction over what can occur on their six acres except for zoning requirements, which will be through Los Angeles County, but they are working cooperatively with the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy on developing the parcels together.

*Assistant City Manager Stevens* stated there may be two more pads developed along Lone Hill at the Costco site, but it will probably be several months before the projects are before the Commission. The Gladstone pad is still being marketed. Olive Garden has opened and he hears it is doing quite well.

He stated they just received word that the new buyer for Bonita Canyon Gateway has pulled out, so VCH is looking for a new investor/buyer. The 99 Cent Only store opened, and he understands it was very successful. The City Council will be discussing the NJD trails proposal in closed session at the next meeting, so that is still in on-going discussions. Panda Express has started construction and could be 60-90 days away from completion.

#### **4. Members of the Audience**

No communications were made.

#### **5. Planning Commission**

*Commissioner Davis* asked if the Redevelopment Oversight Committee has met, and if those meetings are open to the public.

*Assistant City Manager Stevens* stated they have had two meetings to discuss the revised ROPS since the first submittal was turned down by the Department of Finance. The biggest issue was the City loans, but the second submittal put them on the itemized list of obligations but did not ask for any funds during the first six months, which was approved. He explained the

situation regarding how cities were permitted to loan money to the agencies under State law instead of doing bond issues, but now the State is saying those are not contracted obligations that need to be repaid, which the cities all disagree with. Currently they are waiting to see what legislation is passed, and if it is not acceptable, they will go to litigation. The Walker House loan was approved, as was the Costco payment. The Committee is meeting on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month at City Hall either at 3 or 4 p.m., and the meetings are open to the public. The next task the Committee will be looking at concerns the housing projects at Grove Station and Loma Bonita.

**Commissioner Bratt** asked when the approved loans will be paid.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated the payment was included in the first six months so the first payment from the County will be on July 1<sup>st</sup> for what is on the list. They need to submit a ROPS every six months, so the next one will be submitted in the fall for the January payment from the County.

**Commissioner Davis** stated then the \$14 million loan from the City is the payment that is delayed.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated that is correct. The League is trying to incorporate some language in the budget trailer bill to address these types of loans, but we don't know at this time how that will turn out. They are preparing to litigate this issue if it doesn't go favorably for the cities.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Moved by Ensberg, seconded by Davis to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m. to the regular Planning Commission meeting scheduled for June 21, 2012, at 7:00 p.m.

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Jim Schoonover, Chairman  
San Dimas Planning Commission

ATTEST:

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Jan Sutton  
Planning Commission Secretary

Approved: