

OFFICIAL

**CITY OF LEBANON
SECTION 608 SIGN TASK FORCE
Minutes, May 9, 2017
City Hall—Council Chambers
5:30 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Gregorio Amaro (alternate), Clifton Below, Mark Bradley, Stan Brown (alternate), Megan Chapman (alternate), Brian Clancy, Curt Jacques, Lindamae Peck (alternate), Mandy Spencer, Rob Taylor

MEMBERS ABSENT: Daaron Mathews, Joan Monroe, Mark Pageau, Amelia Sreen, Candy Swift (alternate), Robert Welsch

STAFF PRESENT: Planning & Zoning Director David Brooks, Zoning Administrator Tim Corwin

ALSO PRESENT: Richard Cook of asi Signage and Bob Messier of Tecomet, Inc.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m. by Mr. Corwin.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: April 18, 2017

Curt Jacques moved to approve the minutes of the April 18, 2017 meeting of the Section 608 Sign Task Force. Seconded by Stan Brown.

**The motion passed 8-0.*

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Sign Regulations for Commercial/Industrial Uses

Mr. Amaro said he has a background in graphic design and works for Dartmouth College. He showed a brief PowerPoint presentation. He said good signage provides information and direction, encourages a learning experience, creates and maintains an image, displays rules, and creates a sense of place. They can indicate a community focal point and notable or historic buildings, but they could be an eyesore.

(Mr. Clancy and Mr. Below arrived at 5:37 p.m.)

Mr. Amaro showed examples of non-permanent signs, portable signs, on-premises free-standing signs, building signs, off-premises signs, billboards, and flags. He said allowing total freedom to build signs can lead to sign clutter. This could be distracting for drivers and provide a disjointed

image of the community. Regulations improve aesthetics and minimize clutter. Signs can improve pedestrian safety and attract investors who value the community. Location is key. He showed before-and-after views of Bucharest and Adelaide. When people become involved in design, they have a vested interest, and they are bonded to a place.

Mr. Corwin explained the rules for commercial signs and showed examples. He said the regulations can be designed to get the signs they want. Questions about commercial signs include: Is creating an attractive city a goal? Do signs impact the attractiveness of a city? If so, is it desirable to have regulations to balance the needs of the business community with the goal of creating and maintaining an attractive community? He showed examples of signs and how they are measured. Regulations allow a wall sign and a “bonus” free-standing sign. Mr. Amaro said if a building is close to the road, a sign could be way out of scale. Mr. Brown said some signs are recognizable even without stopping to read them. Mr. Corwin said signs inside windows are not regulated, but signs on the outside of windows are.

Mr. Below asked about signs for tenants inside a building. Mr. Corwin said technically, each tenant could have a sign. Mr. Jacques said with the rise in e-commerce, businesses need to find ways to attract customers. The four-inch letters on his sign can only be seen from 40 feet away. He said there are not a lot of signs in downtown Lebanon because of the nature of the businesses, with more professional offices. He suggested looking at a more refined look and style. He said he hates sandwich-board signs, and when a business has eight signs by the road, it looks like a flea market. He suggested that businesses can buy sign permits for special events. Off-premises signs are important when driving, as they attract customers. He said digital signs should be regulated regarding size and times of the day. Data show that if signs are consistent, the message gets across better.

Mr. Amaro said they need different guidelines for different areas. Mr. Clancy said visual continuity and consistency are important. He said he would not be a customer because he saw a sign; it is only important if he is looking for a business. Mr. Jacques said sometimes decisions to shop are impulse-driven. Millennials tend to use their phones to find out where they want to go. Mr. Bradley said “tastefulness” is subjective. He suggested allowing “old-time,” iconic signs. Mr. Amaro said regulations should include what makes a good sign. There was discussion about different signs for different road widths and differing perceptions by drivers and pedestrians. Mr. Corwin suggested different rules for historic districts. Mr. Bradley said sometimes areas change in character. Mr. Amaro said gateways are good places to improve signage for a more cohesive look. Mr. Brooks said industrial businesses usually have low monument signs; he asked if the City should encourage or require that. Mr. Below said some signs are architecturally or landscape-based. The Task Force discussed access management on Route 12A and grandfathering; Mr. Corwin said he believes they could have a sunset provision.

B. Regulations for Animated Signs

Mr. Corwin said the current definition is very broad. Should they retain the ban on animated signs? Is there a type of animated sign that should be prohibited? Are there animated signs that should be excluded from the definition of “animated sign?” The Task Force discussed animated signs versus signs that change periodically, such as time-and-temperature signs. Animated signs

can provide delight and beauty in commercial areas but could be distracting for drivers. Also discussed were laser signs, projection signs on sidewalks and buildings, and signs that rotate, blink, or flash. It was noted that the sign at the high school was not subject to zoning. Electric scoreboards are signs.

Mr. Messier made a distinction between electronic signs and animated signs, which include video clips. Most use 5-10 seconds as hold time. There could be rotating slots. He said his signs automatically dim at night to a maximum 0.3 foot-candle. Mr. Clancy said regulations could be more permissive in places like the pedestrian mall and more restrictive in places like Route 12A that have more visual clutter and traffic. The Task Force discussed flashing signs inside windows. Mr. Corwin said different signs could be allowed for different purposes. Mr. Cook said plazas could be given an incentive to take down big signs by allowing replacement with electronic signs. Mr. Below said Lebanon can learn from other similar communities.

Mr. Jacques said the Chamber of Commerce could send out an email highlighting what has been discussed, with a refined questionnaire.

III. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Glazer
Recording Secretary