



MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
February 19, 2008

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:56 pm.

Present: Mayor: Randy Gilbert; Council: Ben Goodwin, Jim Benson, Sam Rettinger

Staff Present: City Administrator: Steve Stahmer; City Planner: David Abel; Finance Director: Terry Post; Public Works Director: Marv Wurzer; Consultant: Brady Halverson (SEH)

Absent: Council: Sharon Henderson (with notice)

APPROVE AGENDA

A motion was made by Benson, seconded by Goodwin, to approve the Agenda as presented. Ayes: all.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Sign Ordinance Regulations on Backlighting/Internal Illumination

Mayor Gilbert introduced the topic and stated that this discussion came about as a result of the Long Lake Dental sign variance application.

Stahmer noted that staff had wanted to schedule a joint Council-Planning Commission meeting to discuss the possibility of amending the sign ordinance to allow internal lighting/back lighting for projecting signs. However, only one or two Planning Commission members would have been able to attend this meeting. Therefore, staff would still plan on scheduling a joint meeting sometime in March.

Rettinger stated that he has no problem with internal lighting, if the brightness of the signs can somehow be controlled/limited. However, he stated that there is a language problem in the ordinance that should be addressed. Rettinger stated that the current language in one section of the ordinance is arbitrary in nature.

Goodwin asked what other Cities have done to address these types of signs, and to prevent the poor examples from occurring.

Abel stated that he has done some research on other cities' ordinances and, while it's difficult to control/enforce brightness regulations, it is possible.

Benson pointed out that the current ordinance doesn't prevent externally illuminated signs from being unattractive, and that the ordinance should be changed to allow for internal lighting as well.

Gilbert stated that the goal of the ordinance was originally to prevent the unattractive beer signs, etc., but that the ordinance doesn't address the full problem. He asked if the City can allow internal lighting but be more restrictive in other ways to prevent the "beer sign" type of signs.

Abel stated that the sign ordinance does currently limit signage in that they can only display business name and/or logo. No product names/advertisement would be allowed today. Thus the same types of beer signs that exist in Long Lake would not be allowed if they were installed today, but they are legal non-conforming signs.

The Council directed staff to research allowable restrictions and to bring back the issue at a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Council.

Stahmer stated that staff will also research ongoing sign maintenance code requirements.

TH12 Landscaping Discussion

Consultant Brady Halverson from SEH presented and discussed the concept plans which included, the "minimum" and "maximum" improvements, respectively. He then presented a blended concept plan which included elements of both plans, as previously directed by Council.

The primary item removed from the maximum improvements plan was the brick pavers. Halverson stated that he feels the pavers would provide lower maintenance costs in the long term, but a much higher up-front cost. In addition, the lighted bump outs were removed from the blended plan, lowering the retaining wall costs by half.

The blended concept plan included the following elements:

- Raised tree planters
- Lights relocated to the boulevard
- Hedges
- Tree groupings
- Prairie plantings
- Perennials

Halverson stated that, in its current draft, the blended plan option would be estimated to cost \$193,000 (plus a recommended construction contingency of \$22,000).

Gilbert stated that he would prefer to see less lighting.

Halverson stated that he would recommend either the number of lights already proposed, or no street lighting at all, depending upon Council preference. Reducing the number of lights to half the proposed number, is not recommended, given that a 200 foot spacing is considered the maximum distance. As an alternative to street lights, he stated that uplights in the trees would be a good option. At minimum, it may be preferable to have a street light on each end of the berm area.

Gilbert asked for the Councilmembers' opinions

Rettinger stated that he is still of the opinion that no money should be spent on landscaping in this area.

Benson stated that he supports a plan of the magnitude being proposed.

Rettinger stated that he would agree with reducing the amount of lighting.

Goodwin stated that he could support a reduction in lighting if necessary, but thinks that keeping the street lights would help maintain consistency throughout the City/downtown.

Benson also stated that he prefers the "Long Lake" welcome sign being constructed as a wall, rather than being made out of flowers/plantings.

Halverson will further refine the blended plan based on input from tonight's meeting.

ADJOURN

Hearing no objection, Mayor Gilbert adjourned the February 19, 2008, City Council Work Session at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Stahmer
City Administrator