

CITY OF SAN PABLO
SIGN ORDINANCE INFORMATIONAL MEETING MINUTES
MAY 12, 2009
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
ONE ALVARADO SQUARE
SAN PABLO, CA

1. INTRODUCTION AND AGENDA REVIEW

Mr. Avanindra Gangapuram began the meeting at 6:35 P.M. and introduced himself as the City of San Pablo's Planning Division Manager and introduced Mr. Kanwal Sandhu, the City's Assistant Planner. He gave a brief introduction of the agenda and topics to be discussed and that the overall purpose of the meeting is to assemble a committee that would update the City's existing Sign Ordinance by addressing pressing and complicated issues. Next, Mr. Gangapuram asked all the persons to individually introduce themselves, their affiliation and interest in attending the meeting.

2. OUTLINE SOAC RESPONSIBILITIES

Mr. Sandhu gave a quick overview of the general roles and responsibilities of the Sign Ordinance Advisory Committee, SOAC. Mr. Sandhu stated that a key issue to agree on was the regularity of future meetings.

Additionally, Mr. Gangapuram added that we could nominate a Chair and Vice Chair to coordinate future meetings.

Mr. Bob Buchen recommended that the meetings be held once a month.

Mr. Robinson asked if meetings would be held once a month, or should they meet twice a month.

Member White said that two meeting in a month may not be practical and staff will not be in a position to prepare material for review.

Vice Mayor Calloway mentioned that the update may be completed in a few meetings and once a month meetings would be reasonable.

Ultimately it was agreed by a majority of those present that the meetings should be held on the second Tuesday of each month at the same time and place. Additionally, there was a consensus that staff should coordinate the meetings.

Ms. Dawson representing VJI Enterprises asked staff if they had done any research prior to this meeting.

Mr. Gangapuram replied that staff had polled all the cities in the state regarding various sign concerns, such as allowing phone numbers, and had received limited responses which they could share with the committee in the future. Staff also indicated that they

will be reviewing other codes and identify appropriate sections for committee consideration.

Mr. Doug Millar asked staff if the updated Sign Ordinance would be short term or long term.

Mr. Gangapuram replied that the intent was for it to be long term.

Mr. Buchen was concerned about enforcement and window signs and wanted to see specific language on this issue and expressed an interest in allowing more window signs.

In response to Mr. Buchen's comment, Ms. Madrigal indicated that it would be appropriate to eliminate all window signs.

Ms. Olivia Liou wanted to know about temporary lease signs.

Mr. Gangapuram indicated that the current code did not address this issue; however the revised code will have specific language to address this issue.

Council Member Cruz, wanted to know the procedures involved in removing billboard and off site signs. Mr. Cruz also wanted to know if we can restrict or ban cigarette and alcohol sale advertisements.

Vice Mayor Calloway, indicated that the word clutter is subjective and may not be a correct tool in evaluating sign content.

Vice Mayor Calloway also indicated that it would be appropriate to allow temporary signs for the next six months, until the new regulations have been adopted.

Staff indicated that if someone wanted to install a permanent sign, they have to comply with existing regulations. However, staff will advise them that the City is in the midst of revising the sign regulations and they can apply for a design review after the adoption of the new regulations.

Mr. Ron White, of Sign-A-Rama, indicated that all new sign applications shall comply with existing regulations and the new code shall have an amortization section that would require the removal of nonconforming and illegal signs within 5 years.

Mr. Jesus Patino wanted phone numbers on signs.

Vice Mayor Calloway stated that the rules of the Sign Ordinance Advisory Committee should not be too rigid.

Mr. Gangapuram replied that these proposed rules were not set in stone and may be altered. He indicated these were draft rules and the committee can amend the requirements.

3. POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Mr. Gangapuram next gave a PowerPoint presentation that outlined a historical background of Sign Ordinance and highlighted some of the more pressing concerns that the Sign Ordinance Advisory Committee would resolve and accomplish.

Vice Mayor Calloway recommended that staff continue to item five on the agenda so the primary concerns for those attending could be addressed and discussed.

4. IDENTIFIED ISSUES

Mr. Gangapuram opened the meeting for discussion. Some of the main issues discussed are listed below:

- Billboards are hazardous and should be addressed
- Small businesses are indiscriminately made to remove signs
- Displaying phone numbers and email account information would attract more business
- Public outreach is critical
- City's sign policy and enforcement during the update process
- Abandoned signs are an eyesore and they should be consistently removed
- Sign review and permitting should be simplified
- English should be included in signs to identify the nature of the business
- Directional signs are necessary during special events
- Murals can deter graffiti and should be promoted perhaps with youth involvement
- Businesses with no signage should be allowed temporary signs during the update process
- The current Sign Ordinance is restrictive and allows limited sign area
- Timing of City's sign enforcement was not appropriate when businesses are financially struggling
- City should provide a status on national chains window signage compliance
- Time limits to allow businesses to changeover to the revised Sign Ordinance
- Staff should address issues raised during meetings and notify the SOAC members before the next meeting
- Outdoor display of merchandise should be uniform
- Temporary signs should be addressed and resolved first
- Apartment lease sign standards should be addressed
- Eliminate window signs

5. NEXT STEPS

Mr. Gangapuram mentioned that the next step of the Sign Ordinance Advisory Committee is to meet on Tuesday, June 9th at 6:30 P.M. in the Council Chambers.

Additionally, staff will notify the members at least one week in advance of the meeting by mailing the agenda for the next meeting.

Councilmember Cruz recommended that staff mail the agenda to all the commercial businesses in San Pablo to attempt more involvement.

Mr. Gangapuram said that staff would send a meeting request to all the commercial businesses.

6. ADJORNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 P.M. to the June 9th meeting.

Avanindra K. Gangapuram,
Planning Division Manager