



Betty Jo Mahan <bettyjo.mahan@knoxmpc.org>

[MPC Comment] Fwd: Sign Ordinance - Nov. 13 meeting

1 message

Gene Burr <geneburr@comcast.net>

Sat, Nov 8, 2014 at 8:18 AM

Reply-To: geneburr@comcast.net

To: commission@knoxmpc.org

Cc: Mark Donaldson <mark.donaldson@knoxmpc.org>

Madam Chairperson and Commissioners:

I was able to observe the recent MPC workshop held to discuss the recommendations of the SignTask Force. In anticipation of the Nov. 13 MPC meeting and the further discussion of those recommendations and possible actions, I would like to share some concerns with you.

As an architect and urban planner with many years' experience in East Tennessee and elsewhere, dealing with planning and community design issues, I was interested in and attended several meetings of the Sign Task Force in order to be familiar with the issues addressed and the process of resolution.

While I was impressed with the extent of research into best signage practices in several other cities, as well as the recent history of signage practice in Knoxville, as references for the standards that would be applicable in Knoxville, I became concerned with one particular aspect of sign regulation that did not seem to get addressed - the importance of effective sign regulation enforcement. There is little benefit to our community from improvement in sign regulations if the regulations are not consistently enforced. This observation was also made in the recent workshop, and makes sense. From my experience, **I am convinced that more specific regulations, as have been proposed, aid the process of code enforcement, and provide an environment where the value of information and advertising is enhanced and is more cost-effective. The proliferation of signage, which predictably happens when regulations are too general and do not provide standards of good practice, diminishes the value of all signs as they compete for attention. The resulting clutter does not speak well for any community.**

I frankly expected the Sign Task Force to address the adequacy of Knoxville's Code Enforcement staff to effectively monitor the signage throughout the city, as well as the sufficiency of fees required to support an adequate staff. The Task Force was diligent and invested many hours over several months in their designated task, but did not, to my knowledge, address this issue. The experiences of our peer cities, as a basis for constructive comparisons, would be very informative and provide guidance in setting realistic goals for the community. Enforcement may have to be "complaint-driven" to a significant degree, as was suggested in the workshop, but the technical proficiency of the enforcement department combined with adequate staffing will determine the effectiveness of regulation.

Given the time and effort invested by the Task Force, it seems essential for MPC to have the benefit of an objective overview at the outset of your discussion on the 13th by the Task Force Chair, Councilman Duane Grieve, or his designated representative.

Thank you for your valuable service to the community in your role as MPC commissioners. I hope you will give thoughtful consideration to these observations.

Sincerely, Gene Burr, AIA, AICP
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