

ORDINANCE NO. O-1213-6

ITEM NO. 7

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: On-Premise Digital Electronic Signs

The Business and Community Affairs Committee initiated a discussion regarding on-premise digital electronic signs in March, 2012 and at their May, 2012 meeting requested that the draft Ordinance be presented to full Council at a Study Session. The staff presented the proposed amendments to City Council at their Study Session on June 19, 2012. The draft ordinance is attached as Exhibit A and includes changes as discussed with the Business and Community Affairs Committee and the full City Council.

The highlights of the draft include the following:

- The Sign Code establishes regulations for broad categories of uses, and digital signs would only be allowed within the Commercial and Industrial categories, as well as for Institutional uses in low density residential areas.
- An individual business would be allowed either a wall (building) sign or a freestanding ground sign.
- In those areas utilizing joint use signs (such as shopping centers) if the joint identification sign were digital, each business within that area could still opt to install a digital wall sign.
- Because of the potential for visual distraction, language is included that restricts the location of digital signs near signalized intersections to be no closer than fifty feet (50') to the edge of pavement.
- Like the billboard language, digital on-premise signs cannot have "visual movement" but must simply project one or more "static" images. The "dwell time" was adjusted to twelve seconds, as these signs are smaller than billboards, and persons must be able to absorb the proposed content.
- As currently drafted, illumination levels are the same as billboards, that is 5000 NITs daytime and 300 NITs at night.
- Devices must be installed which adjust for ambient light levels, as well as a device that will "freeze" the image if a malfunction occurs.
- Because many businesses are located near residential areas, the draft seeks to limit any potential impact by requiring a separation of two hundred feet (200') between the sign and any nearby residential zoning district.

- An exception to the 200-foot rule is provided for churches, schools and other institutional uses in the section of the Sign Code that regulates signs for institutional uses when they occur in neighborhood areas (identified as low density residential in the Code).

Staff believes the regulations proposed will help to minimize any impacts on-premise digital signs might have on either the traveling public or nearby residents.

There are two reports attached separately for your information that were submitted to staff by a concerned citizen. The titles are listed below.

1. Safety Impacts of the Emerging Digital Display Technology for Outdoor Advertising Signs/FINAL REPORT, Submitted Under NCHRP Project 20-7 (256), Prepared by Jerry Wachtel, CPE, President, The Veridian Group, Inc., Berkeley, California, April, 2009
2. Illuminating the Issues, Digital Signage and Philadelphia's Green Future, by Gregory Young