

REGULAR MEETING
TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE PLANNING BOARD
MARCH 20, 2006
MONDAY - 5:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL

The Planning Board held a regular meeting on Monday, March 20, 2006. Members present were Don Stephenson, Dan Wright, Rex Feichter, Lee Bouknight, Gary Sorrells, Patrick Bradshaw, Marty Prevost, Brooks Hale, and Patrick McDowell. Also present were Planning Director Paul Benson and Deputy Town Clerk Freida Rhinehart. Chairman Rex Feichter called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes of February 20, 2006

Gary Sorrells moved, seconded by Lee Bouknight, to approve the minutes of February 20, 2006 as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Text Amendment - Section 154.308(B)(2) Signs - Moss Sign Company

Planning Director Paul Benson presented the following staff report:

Moss Sign Company has requested a change in the standards for internally illuminated signs to permit neon tubing and channel letter type signs. They also wish to eliminate the standards for a dark background and to eliminate the limit on the percentage of light transmitted by the sign face.

The ordinance currently permits internally illuminated signs to use fluorescent tubes only. The ordinance also requires internally illuminated signs to consist of light lettering or symbols on a darker background. The background must constitute at least 60% of the sign, and transmit no more than 15% if the light source. The letters and symbols are limited to 35% luminous transmittance.

The amendment requests that:

Neon tubing be permitted as an internal illumination source.

Channel letters be permitted for all types of signs.

Three types of channel letters be permitted:

Translucent Plexiglas with internal neon tubing

Reverse channel letters silhouette lighted by neon tubing

Open channel letters lighted by exposed neon tubing

All illuminated signs must bear the underwriter laboratories label.

The background ratio and transmittance limitations be eliminated for internally illuminated signs.

Staff Recommendation:

The staff agrees that channel letters with neon tubing should be added as a permitted type of internally illuminated sign. However, we are concerned about allowing exposed neon tubing, so we recommend that type of channel letter sign not be permitted because of the potential for excessive brightness. We do not support eliminating the requirements for background ratio and light transmittance for other types of internally illuminated signs.

The staff recommends that Section 154.308(B)(2) of the ordinance be amended by adding the following text:

Channel letter type signs may use neon tubing as an internal illumination source, provided that the light source is shielded by translucent faces or that a silhouette type sign is used where the light source illuminates the sign background and the letters or symbols are opaque.

Mike Herron spoke on behalf of Moss Sign Company. He questioned just how the percentages of light transmissions were going to be controlled.

Rex Feichter asked Paul Benson just how light outputs could be measured. Mr. Benson replied that a light meter could be used by holding it to an exposed light source and then replacing the panel and using the light meter again to determine a percentage of how much light is being transmitted. Mr. Benson also stated that the Town does not have a light meter. Instead, Mr. Benson feels that the intent of the ordinance is to prevent the use of excessively bright lights. Since the size of the signs allowed is fairly small, the light transmission problem should not become excessive. Also, applicants for a sign permit could be required to provide information on light transmission. Directly exposed neon lights are not permitted. Signs are required to be semi-opaque.

Mr. Herron further explained that channel letter signs are individual letters that are internally illuminated by a neon tube shaped the same as the letter. These are currently in use at CVS and Belk. The reason fluorescent tubes are not used are because they cannot be purchased in shapes of the letters. Mr. Herron requested to be allowed to use channel letter and silhouette type signs.

Mr. Herron pointed out that the sign at the current Coldwell Banker office is internally illuminated by neon. It has a medium blue background with white letters. He would like to find an existing sign that could be used to set the standard for internally illuminated signs for the Town.

Marty Prevost stated that she does not wish to depart from our current sign ordinance.

Mr. Herron replied that none of the other cities and towns he deals with from Murphy to Morganton have a sign ordinance like ours.

Mr. Benson reiterated that the intent of the ordinance is to tone down the brightness of signage. We probably need a more measurable way to determine the brightness of internally lit signs.

Mr. Feichter felt that the Planning Board might need more information.

Mr. Herron stated that his problem with signage is that the Town does not allow neon. He would like for us to consider allowing neon lit channel letters.

Mr. Benson agreed that neon should probably be allowed as long as it is shielded. He does not advocate using exposed neon tubing but sees not problem with allowing channel letter signs.

Patrick McDowell moved, seconded by Dan Wright, to recommend to the Board of Aldermen that Section 154.308 (B)(2) be amended by adding the following text:

Channel letter type signs may use neon tubing as an internal illumination source, provided that the light source is shielded by translucent faces or that a silhouette type sign is used where the light source illuminates the sign background and the letters or symbols are opaque.

The motion carried unanimously.

Other Business

Marty Prevost inquired about the Habitat for Humanity house located on Meadow Street.

Mr. Benson explained that when Byron Hickox checked the zoning for the property on the Haywood County system that it was listed in the North Main Street Neighborhood District. There actually is no North Main Street Neighborhood District. Mr. Hickox checked the North Main Street Boulevard District which has a zero setback requirement and issued the certificate of zoning compliance. The building permit was issued and construction was begun. A neighbor came to Mr. Benson and asked him about the setback requirements. Mr. Benson then discovered the error and notified Habitat for Humanity that they would have to apply to the Board of Adjustment for a variance. Since the variance has been applied for, construction can be allowed to continue. It is scheduled for a hearing before the Board of Adjustment. Also, the next door neighbor who owns the adjoining vacant lot could sell Habitat a small strip of property so that a variance would not be required. So far, this has not occurred.

Ms. Prevost also expressed concerns about a person in the Country Club Neighborhood District who purchased an old house that would require extensive renovations. This person is considering tearing the house down and placing condos on the property.

Mr. Benson will look into existing density requirements and uses in the Country Club Neighborhood District for presentation at the next Planning Board meeting.

Adjournment

With no further business Dan Wright moved, seconded by Lee Bounknight, that the meeting be adjourned at 6:10 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Rex Feichter, Chairman
Freida F. Rhinehart, Secretary