

**MINUTES OF
WORK SESSION**

**PLANNING BOARD
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
CITY HALL, MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE**

6:30 P.M.

MARCH 12, 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paige Roberts, Vice Chairman; Donald Coker; Anthony Coviello; Anthony Blenkinsop; Cindy Hayden, Deputy City Manager; Richard A. Hopley, Building Inspector; and MaryLiz Geffert, Alternate

MEMBERS EXCUSED: John Ricci, Chairman; M. Christine Dwyer, City Council Representative; John Rice; and Norman Patenaude, Alternate

ALSO PRESENT: David M. Holden, Planning Director; Lucy Tillman, Chief Planner

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Acting Chairman Coker called the meeting to order and turned it over to Rick Taintor, City Consultant.

I. DRAFT REVISED ZONING ORDINANCE

A. Article 10 – Signs;

Mr. Taintor started off with a powerpoint presentation, which showed the different type of signs that are being addressed.

Pole signs vs. monument signs will be a big change and he is still working on defining them.

(Vice Chairman Roberts arrived at 6:45 and Mr. Coker stepped down)

Parapet and roof signs also need to be better defined, depending on what they want to achieve.

Gas station canopies need to be reviewed. Auto dealer branding is also a new issue that needs to be addressed.

He showed signs in Haverhill, MA where they have a 15' height limit and it's very noticeable. The signs area very visible even though they are much smaller than normal signs.

Various animated signs were displayed as examples of what Portsmouth doesn't want.

Mr. Taintor continued with his new draft of Article X which was handed out. He pointed out his revisions as a result of their previous discussions. They combined all directional and information signs. Miscellaneous business signs were clarified.

Mr. Coker asked about regulating things inside the windows. The new ordinance says that they don't regulate anything more than 3'. Mr. Taintor explained that a sign that this 1' behind the window has the same effect as a sign outside the building.

Temporary signs are more specific about real estate signs and contractor signs.

Roof signs were discussed. Do they want to prohibit a roof sign? Mr. Coviello didn't mind them being all the way up to the parapet. He felt it was tacky unless they are vertical. He doesn't like the sign sloping. Roof signs are currently not allowed so Deputy City Manager Hayden felt they should continue that way. Mr. Taintor understood them to be saying that they don't have objections to a sign on a flat parapet like Home Depot or Christmas Tree. The other extreme is a sign that is physically on the highest point of the roof which they do have objections to. Mr. Coviello asked if they could clearly define the height of the roof. Mr. Blenkinsop questioned the definition of parapet and Mr. Taintor said he would work on the details. Ms. Geffert asked if the temporary sign definition covers a truck parked on the street. She then asked about a truck parked in a dealership lot? She felt that maybe anything that is internally illuminated should be a sign. Mr. Taintor will take another stab at the roof issues. The Board had consensus that the half way point between the pitched roof and the eaves is the top of the roof. Ms. Tillman indicated that sometimes they have parapets right up against the roof which confuses things. The major concern was that the Board had a problem with signs at an angle on the roof.

Under Section 10.1023, item g, they were not sure this will take care of a truck with advertising on it.

Ms. Tillman asked if item b takes care of animated signs that have the text that phases in and out or phases from text to pictures? Mr. Taintor felt that it did, as long as it only changes once a day.

On Page 157, Mr. Taintor he added a few things that had been omitted in the tables. He will also follow the list of signs and make sure he has the same signs in the same order for sign height and illumination to make sure they are catching it all.

He will add an illustration on page 158 showing the setback of a projecting sign.

On page 159, measurement of sign area, Mr. Taintor added other shapes in addition to a polygon. Many photos have been provided as examples. He explained the difference between the monument sign and the pole sign and how the square footage would be calculated.

The City's maximum sign height for Lafayette Road is now 20'. A discussion was had regarding going lower. Ms. Tillman felt if they bring the height of the sign down, the height of the landscaping will come down also. A suggestion of a maximum of 15' was made. Along the Spaulding Turnpike it is also 20'. Ms. Geffert was all for a maximum of 15' everywhere for sign height. Mr. Coviello thought zone 6 should be higher. It was the general consensus to have all sign height be no higher than a maximum of 15'.

On page 161, section 1053.40, sign area of a canopy sign. This is a new definition for gas stations. Signage shall not include the area with stripes and no words. Ms. Tillman asked if they should limit how much canopy sign they can have? Mr. Hopley felt they were already doing that.

Section 1053.70, states that the sign area of a spherical, free form, sculptural sign is determined by putting an imaginary box around the image and measure the four sides and take 75% of it. Mr. Taintor will add an illustration.

Section 1053.80 on decorative lighting should be reviewed some more. Mr. Coviello asked if they can give a minimum dimension of linear lights? Mr. Taintor found an ordinance that restricted outline lighting and maybe that would be good to include. On the flip side, Ms. Geffert asked if decorative

lighting was too broad? She wants to make sure this addresses the degree of offensiveness and spillage. Deputy City Manager Hayden suggested adding anything that is calling attention to the site. Ms. Tillman asked how would that effect dark sky lighting. Mr. Taintor asked if they want to deal with the outline lighting. It was felt that they should not prohibit it but indicate that it counts towards the total sign square footage but that would be difficult to measure. Mr. Taintor felt they might be able to measure 4" from the light, or something like that.

Mr. Coviello asked if the ordinance addresses spillage of sign lighting over property lines? Mr Taintor was not sure but he will look into that.

Mr Taintor indicated they will have to add maximum areas of roof signs and parapet signs to the tables.

Mr. Holden felt they will be getting more square footage of signage with the new ordinance. Mr. Taintor disagreed. Mr. Hopley added that the square footage is the same but they are including more items that can be a sign so there is a lot less to play with and they need to compensate for that.

Mr. Coker had a concern with non conforming signs. It seems they are getting away from grandfathered signs. Section 10.1082 covers the repair and replacement without a change of use. Section 1082 and 1083 are conflicting. Mr. Blenkinsop thought it was a good thing to bring existing signs into compliance. Mr. Coker understands the concept of moving towards conformity but he can't understand abandoning a non conforming sign. Ms. Geffert suggested adding the wording not under the reasonable control of the occupant/owner.

The sign definitions shall remain in the sign section.

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B. Article 9 – Off Street Parking;

Mr. Taintor indicated there were a lot of questions the last time they went through this. He highlighted some sections.

Page 140. Location of Parking Facilities on a Lot. There were two provisions before and they were combined but he added some restrictions. Where would this be used? Ms. Tillman did not think they should restrict where one and two family dwellings park as parking is so tight. Ms. Roberts didn't want to open the door for people to start moving their houses back to create parking spaces as it would not fit into the streetscape on the HDC. Off street parking is not regulated now. Mr. Taintor pointed out that they were initially thinking about industrial districts. Maybe they should just eliminate the single and two family dwellings all together. Front yards would be allowed. This would only be for commercial.

On Page 142, Mr. Taintor referred to requirements for physically disabled and it referred to ICC/ANSI A117.1.

In section 10.914.40, they added a line about pervious surfaces.

In section 10.914.30, Mr. Coveillo suggested substituting walkway for sidewalk. Mr. Holden felt they should also exempt single family dwellings.

Mr. Taintor advised the Board that off Street parking provisions are still in progress, which includes unmet parking need.

Mr. Taintor indicated he would like to have a final draft ordinance by May 7th.

They are also working on revisions to the zoning map.

Vice Chairman Roberts mentioned that there are some new issues, such as wind turbines and electric vehicles are due to come on line in the next few years so they may want to think about accommodating them. Deputy City Manager Hayden indicated that this is always a work in progress and it is important to finalize this document and get it adopted

Next week is a regular Planning Board meeting and March 25th is a joint work session on the Islington Street Corridor. April 2nd will be a work session on Borthwick Forrest.

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II. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:35 pm was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

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Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse
Acting Secretary for the Planning Board

These minutes were approved by the Planning Board on April 16, 2009.