

Meeting minutes
Charter & Ordinance Committee
August 1, 2019

Committee members present: Aldermen Bill Gillam, Chris Etori, Melinda Humphrey, Rebecca Mattis (chair)

Others present: Aldermen Matt Whitcomb and Matt Reveal; Dave Coppock, Susan Schreibman, Dave Cooper, Zoning Administrator Tara Kelly, Building Inspector Bob Pelletier.

Meeting convened at 5:30 pm.

The reason for the meeting was to discuss the grandfather clause of the proposed sign ordinance. The ordinance would consider all current signs that do not conform to the requirements of the ordinance to be "legal but nonconforming signs." The clause includes a list of triggers that would require a new sign to conform; for example, when a grandfathered sign is moved or significantly altered.

There was concern that the triggers in the draft are too strict, and might result in the unintended consequence of poorly-maintained signs, which is counter to the goal of the ordinance. On the other hand, without triggers, some nonconforming signs would be grandfathered indefinitely, which is also counter to the aesthetic goal.

There was also concern that grandfathering would be unfair to new businesses, who would have to conform to the new ordinance while their neighbors might continue to have nonconforming signs.

A time limit on the grandfather clause would solve both of these concerns. It would balance the interests of both existing businesses and new businesses, while easing concern about effectiveness of the triggers; at some point, all signs would need to conform. A majority of committee was in favor of a time limit on the grandfather clause, and agreed to use 10 years as a period of time that would respect investment in current signs while ensuring that the city achieve a more attractive signscape with a policy that is fair to all businesses.

The committee discussed the specific language of the triggers, clarified understanding of permit processes, and tightened up vocabulary. We also agreed that a sign should need to conform if 50% of it was damaged, and not the 20% in the current draft.

Meeting adjourned at 6:37. The draft sign ordinance remains in committee, and this report is for information only.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Mattis, chair