



## RUTLAND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

City Hall – 52 Washington St. – Rutland, VT 05701  
Mailing Address: P. O. Box 969 – Rutland, VT 05702  
Phone: 802-773-1800

### **Minutes September 13, 2017**

**Present:** Susan Schreibman (SS), Larry Walter (LW) and Alvin Figiel (AF).

**Also Present:** Mike McClallen, Stephanie Lorentz, Brennan Duffy, Mike Gauthier, Alderman Humphrey, Alderman Mattis, Tara Kelly, Bob Tanner and Barbara Spaulding, recording secretary.

SS, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

- I. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS – None.**
- II. PUBLIC COMMENT – None.**
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 23, 2017.**

LW moved to approve the minutes of August 23, 2017. AF seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

- IV. NEW BUSINESS – None.**
- V. OLD BUSINESS – Proposed Sign Ordinance Presentation.**

SS thanked everyone for attending the presentation and gave a brief history of the work that has gone into the presentation and revision of the City's sign ordinance.

The purpose of revising the 1996 ordinance, with the latest amendments added in 2014, is to control existing and proposed signs, for relaying information and creating a more attractive business environment, while promoting public safety and welfare.

The following comments were made and discussed during the presentation:

AF said the gateways into the City are the first view of Rutland and the current signage resembles New Jersey. The gateways need to be more in-scale with Vermont.

SS said, as proposed, pre-existing signs would be grandfathered acknowledging the significant investment property owners made on their signs. The new regulations would affect new businesses, change of use, deterioration and a catastrophic event.

Tara discussed the possibility of amortizing the signs over a time period based on anecdotal information from South Burlington's recent signage changes.

Brennan said diversity in signs shows commercial activity and economic vitality and the proposed policy wouldn't change the aesthetic landscape in our lifetime.

Stephanie asked if there were grants available to assist existing businesses to convert their signs to the new policy with emphasis in the Gateway Districts.

Internal versus external illumination was discussed.

Alderman Humphrey asked if there was data on the percentage of signs that would be impacted by the new policy.

AF discussed how multiple tenants signage could be addressed by identifying the street number as in Trolley Square, 69 Allen Street or Gebo Business Park. The way people search for business with the internet and GPS was discussed.

Bob Tanner mentioned a 10-year-old article in the Rutland Herald that referred to the cluttered signage in Rutland City.

Stephanie said the DRB does ask property owners to reconsider plans for design and signage and they have complied, resulting in a better overall project.

Stephanie asked about the research into South Burlington's sign ordinance and how it better relates to Rutland. Brennan added that a comparison to Williston Road as a similar commercial gateway to Route 7&4 would be interesting.

Tara explained the next steps including a legal review of the draft ordinance. She suggested distributing the draft ordinance because it has more detail than the presentation which is just a snapshot of the changes.

Brennan said the proposed sign ordinance could be considered adverse to Rutland's recent efforts to create a more business friendly climate to encourage new jobs and bring in commercial investment and businesses. He asked if any business owners gave input into the policy changes.

Alderman Mattis discussed her first impressions of Rutland as ugly and uninviting as she drove through on Route 7 and that she supports the proposed signage as a way to make Rutland more inviting and more in-line with Vermont.

Brennan said he is concerned the proposed sign ordinance could diminish the value of a commercial site as the site could be perceived as less competitive. That limiting a new business's ability to promote themselves by limiting a sign to 32 sq. ft. could put them at a competitive disadvantage with existing businesses and could potentially affect an investment decision.

Several examples of smaller, but effective signage along the gateway corridors were discussed.

Mike McClellan asked for clarification of what would initiate a change in signage.

The following recommendations were made to strengthen the presentation:

- Include more examples of signs earlier in presentation
- Use google maps
- Include business support through Chamber of Commerce
- Communicate with South Burlington businesses who originally opposed changes then complied.

Next steps include inviting Mayor and Sharon Davis as well as REDC and Chamber directors to October meeting; Alderman Mattis will ask to refer to Community & Economic Development at the next BOA meeting and encourage Aldermen to attend.

**VI. CORRESPONDENCE – None.**

**VII. ADJOURN.**

AF moved to adjourn. The meeting ended at 6:57 pm.

For the Commission:

Barbara Spaulding, Recording Secretary