

CONTINUATION OF APRIL 20, 1998 REGULAR CITY COMMISSION MEETING AND
SIGN CODE WORKSHOP
CITY OF MARGATE, FLORIDA

Monday, April 27, 1998
5:00 p.m.
Municipal Building

Commission Present

Mayor Joseph Varsallone
Vice Mayor Arlene R. Schwartz
Commissioner Arthur J. Bross
Commissioner Pam Donovan
Commissioner Frank Talerico

Also Present

City Manager Leonard B. Golub
City Attorney Eugene M. Steinfeld
City Clerk Debra Dore

All attendees were formally greeted. The speaker is convening the regular workshop.

At the request of the approval of the City Commission, the speaker first sought approval if they could continue with an item from the previous meeting whereby they were reporting on people from the Affordable Housing Authority Committee.

MOTION: No objection by the City Commission

The speaker also informed the audience that there were a number of positions which were not filled and requested that they read the resumes and select their preferred applicant for appointment.

BANKING OR MORTGAGE BANKING INDUSTRY

ROLL CALL ON APPOINTING MARCIA P. BARRY-SMITH: Commissioner Talerico (YES), Commissioner Donovan (YES), Commissioner Bross (YES) and Mayor Varsallone (YES). The motion was approved 4 – 0 (Vice Mayor Schwartz abstained from voting as she had not read the papers).

HOME BUILDING PROCESS (CARPENTER, PLUMBER OR AN ELECTRICIAN)

ROLL CALL ON APPOINTING EDDIE VENTRICIA: Commissioner Talerico (YES), Commissioner Donovan (YES), Commissioner Bross (YES) and Mayor Varsallone (YES). The motion was approved 4 – 0 (Vice Mayor Schwartz abstained from voting as she had not read the papers).

NOT FOR PROFIT PROVIDER OF 4,000

ROLL CALL ON APPOINTING RICK ENGLERT: Commissioner Talerico (YES), Commissioner Donovan (YES), Commissioner Bross (YES) and Mayor Varsallone (YES). The motion was approved 4 – 0 (Vice Mayor Schwartz abstained from voting as she had not read the papers).

RESIDENT OF THE CITY OF MARGATE

ROLL CALL ON APPOINTING KENNETH E. LEALCH: Commissioner Talerico (YES), Commissioner Donovan (YES), Commissioner Bross (YES) and Mayor Varsallone (YES). The motion was approved 4 – 0 (Vice Mayor Schwartz abstained from voting as she had not read the papers).

The speaker now opened the Workshop meeting for sign codes. He advised that those who were involved in the process of the sign code should provide an overview of the signs within the city. Furthermore, he also sought advice on whether our process was advantageous to the business and the community and those areas which could be improved to the committee and City's interest.

Richard Rubin, a licensed architect at Urban Design and offices are 4801 South University Drive was appointed to provide a detailed report on the City's sign code policy.

Mr. Rubin explained that after evaluating the signage, they found that overall, they were well written and there are reasonable standards which are consistent with the standards within the industry. He informed the audience that he also compared the City's policy with other sign companies. However, he indicated that there are areas that need to be tightened up and improved upon.

He believed that this problem could be down to the way that the coding is written; there is no clear instruction or ruling given to an applicant or sign company in order that they can easily understand the process and submit it right the first time. Also, he explained that a template of the sign should be sent for review to the sign code authority and responded forthwith with any additional comments. This process would not need to take a long time to review through the City.

Mr. Rubin presented the group with a diagram of a neighboring city providing an example of an entrance into a mobile home sub-division in an industrial area where a uniformed design of a sign was requested. He expressed that this is an inexpensive way to upgrade an area with minimal amount of time and expenditure to design a sign which is tastefully done.

Further questions were asked concerning the design of the signs which included lighting, colors and wording.

Mr. Rubin informed the audience that there was one business owner that required more parking spaces for his business. He said the City granted this and in return, the business owner donated \$50K back into the community and all parties are trying to work towards a common goal.

Mr. Rubin also provided three recommendations to the City Commission:

- 1) There are two boards looking at the signs but found that this method is unsuccessful as there is a lack of communication between them to gain a common goal and consistency throughout.

- 2) Reorganize the sign ordinance in a very clear and easy format which would include executive summary which you can provide to businesses who seek a permit.
- 3) Define several definitions and provide a section for clear knowledge and consistency of enforcement.

Mr. Rubin also mentioned that it would greatly assist if the City streamlined their sign permitting process. He said Pembroke Pines and Hollywood already have processes in place.

He suggested that an applicant submits five items to the Building Department:

- Permit Application;
- Photo of the building;
- Drawings;
- Meeting the South Florida building code in terms of seal on the drawings, drawn to scale and the proper mount and the owner's approval from the shopping center;
- Uniformed sign criteria.

Mr. Rubin said once this has been submitted, the application should be processed by one individual (namely, an administrator) one day per week at a specified time. He said this usually, in two hours, an inspector reviews the application, takes it to a structural person and also to check that electrical and zoning signs off are applied. This would allow for a more consistent and uniformed sign code process and in most cases, the applicant would receive their sign permit within 2 hours.

Mr. Rubin also suggested that if the administrator does not have an answer to some specific questions, then a supervisor should be available during the same period to answer these queries.

Mr. Rubin said if the applicant is unsuccessful in obtaining a sign approval, they have two appeal processes; administrative appeal (detailing what should be submitted and the justification for it) and the administration to the board/committee/DRC for the next regular scheduled meeting explaining the reason why we would be requesting the appeal. He said if the applicant is still unhappy with the decision, they can submit their appeal to the City Commission for a final adjudication. He said although this process could take four to five weeks, most of the signs would be approved within one day (or through the 2 hour process).

Mr. Rubin expressed his gratitude to the City Commission as he believed that they had taken a major step forward and understood that the CRA group is devising a consolidated plan.

Mr. Rubin also advised the City Commission that they should outline in a document what the problems are and how they can be rectified.

Mr. Rubin also suggested that they should write a five year contingency plan outlining their intentions for each year, provide a source of funds and then leverage enough money for more money. He said depending on what the proposal is, the City can also seek a reduction from the County.

Mr. Rubin noted that signs within Margate contained multiple colors and information without clarity but in comparison to other cities, their signs are more uniformed and attractive which would avoid visual clutter.

The City Commission was also unaware that subsidies could be sought from the County if the plan is applied correctly.

Commissioner Donovan said that due to the way the City was built many years ago, she said that the problem in some aspects is more than uniform signage problem, especially in terms of monument signs.

One Commissioner suggested that they would need to look at each shopping center on an individual basis with professionals within that field.

Mayor Varsallone agreed with some of the points Mr. Rubin outlined, he said that it was vitally important to have someone who works with the community and not just for the intentions of adhering to the code book.

Commissioner Donovan also expressed her concerns that it could be a costly exercise for a business owner to change their sign just based on appearance.

The City Commission explained that it would be difficult to approve a strategy at this evening's meeting but a suggestion was made of planning a goal in desiring a clear vision for a consistent style approach in signs.

The City Commission also reviewed various pictures provided by Mr. Rubin with a variety of styles and discussion was made throughout.

Mayor Varsallone said that "plain English" has to be applied when outlying instructions similar to what the insurance companies provide. He also explained that the size and shape of the facility have to be considered as well as the type of operation.

The City Commission explained that it is difficult to compare Margate with Coral Springs as they are completely two different entities. They further explained that some businesses are attracted by the rates and taxes and that Margate would appear more affordable than Coral Springs. They said accessibility would also play a major part in determining the area of the business.

ROLL CALL: THAT RICHARD RUBAN FROM URBAN DESIGN FINISHES OUT HIS CONTRACT BY RE-WRITING THE ORDINANCE.

Commissioner Talerico (YES), Commissioner Donovan (YES), Commissioner Bross (YES), Vice Mayor Schwartz (YES) and Mayor Varsallone (NO). The motion was approved 4 – 1.

ROLL CALL: WHETHER RICHARD RUBAN FROM URBAN DESIGN RE-WRITES THE ORDINANCE AT NO EXTRA COST.

Commissioner Talerico (YES), Commissioner Donovan (YES), Commissioner Bross (YES), Vice Mayor Schwartz (YES) and Mayor Varsallone (YES). The motion was approved 5-0.

A member of the public said he worked on the 160th Street Shopping Center when it was built in the 1950s/60s. He conveyed his disagreement with some of Mr. Rubin's evidence. He said that the trees obstructed the signage and therefore, some landscape gardening would be required to make the place

look more appealing. He said that there were discrepancies in some of the sign samples as Mr. Rubin indicated that one of the signs had three colors whereas, in fact, it had four colors if you included the border.

Rick Burkhardt, Chief Building Official addressed the meeting.

He explained that he approved a permit allowing two colors (which would include the background color of the building). He stipulated that the sign conforms but one of the colors does not quite match the building color.

The City Commission agreed that the color has to match the paint which is on a building. Mr. Burkhardt said that generally upon inspection, he declines any sign requests that do not adhere to the two color scheme which has to be the exact match.

There was a question that the ordinance which states that from 1 year, each individual shopping center has to submit uniformed signed criteria. It was confirmed that any sign that is erected after that period will have comply with the shopping center's plan. However, it was suggested that in addition to the process of applying for a permit, a warmer approach would be to give the option of inviting business owners to meet with the Chief Building official, the City Manager or the City Attorney if they wish to discuss the sign code in finer detail. Another suggestion would be to write a friendlier letter providing different ideas.

The City Commission requested that City Manager Golub sends out a re-notice to all business and suppliers in shopping areas.

Mr. Rubin explained that in some places, there are three to four standards on the sign and would therefore request the City Commission to review these and provide some plans before the next meeting. He requested that when he creates the new ordinance, he will send this over to the City Commission to fill out the blanks. Mr. Rubin also implied that there was better language which could be used to incorporate this new directive.

Commissioner Donovan asked the audience whether they received notification of this meeting to which a few replied no. She recommended the need for more planners and those who have experience dealing with signs be invited at future meetings as it is detrimental to obtain their input.

Mr. Rubin explained that another sign company called Bundies Sign Company who has been working in South Florida for over 20 years has offered to review his draft ordinance to which he has agreed.

Commissioner Donovan brought up the issue concerning the building directive and that it needs to be included in the ordinance. Mr. Rubin indicated that the South Florida Building Code is already addressed but the only issue is concerning the lease. He further stated that there are two different directives concerning restrictions & controls in terms of art design solution and the other issue concerning permits to which Commissioner Donovan agreed with.

Mr. Rubin sked that although each shopping center has to submit a unified sign plan, he wanted to know what the procedure was for a warehouse district. One of the Commissioner's explained that under the current ruling, it does apply.

The City Commission discussed that Plantation has given \$15,000 to all of the communities on Broward Blvd. to plan a signage for their entrance ways. They also advised the communities that they build new walls to improve on the appearance of area. The communities requested more funds and by doing so, they raised an additional \$15,000 for a bigger sign. They accumulated this sum by selling bricks for \$75 each and allowing the community for the public to get names and memorials engraved on the same. This resulted in a “partnership” between the community and the City of Plantation.

Mr. Rubin advised that it is vital to employ a landscape architect to assist with the planning to which one of the Commissioners agreed with.

David McLean from Margate raised a couple of questions concerning the business area for signs. He questioned the signs in Margate Blvd. He explained that there are a number of signs on Margate Blvd which includes speed limit signs, signs, and school zones. He asked whether “speed limit” and “bus stop” signs be incorporated on polls that are already in place such as street lights.

He also explained that some residents do not maintain their front yard. He also said that some residents on Margate Blvd have four signs in their front yard. He believes that the area could be cleaned up by removing some of these signs.

Mr. McLean stated that the building at *Bargain City* is that the building looks atrocious due to the color of the building and the signs do not match the building.

Mr. McLean asked whether the color of the buildings could be also incorporated into the sign code. The City Commission suggested that this aspect could be included in the CRA although there is nothing in place at present. They also need clarification from the CRA what colors to look at.

The City Commission agreed that they could create a code which incorporates all of this but Commissioner Donovan advised that it should not be made a law if it cannot be enforced due to a lack of resources.

Mr. Rubin wanted clarification about how many colors could be included on a sign and whether this included the border. Mayor Varsallone reiterated that it can only contain two colors which include the border.

Mr. Rubin explained that *Swap Shop* currently has six colors on their sign. The City’s Attorney took them to Court recently and it was ruled that they could retain the sign where it sits but am unsure what the status is concerning the various colors. Mr. McLean said that a sign containing neon lights is a violation of the current code. Mayor Varsallone suggested that Mr. McLean continue to be in contact with them together with providing accurate documentation.

It was clarified that signage erected prior to 1997 is granted for a period of time.

Margate Chief Inspector explained that although he is not a sign inspector and does not have that much knowledge and experience in the same, he found the issue with sign specifics extremely confusing and there is too much interpretation. He further explained that his staff are responsible for doing some enforcement although they are not specialists within that field. He said there was a lack of direction in terms of what the priorities can be enforced in the sign.

Margate Chief Inspector said the permits are now being administered in the Building Department where he believes it should be although prior to that, it was the Police Department's responsibility to provide permits which he did not agree with.

Margate Chief Inspector said that the sign codes, building and zoning codes should not belong in the Police Department. He also mentioned that Coconut Creek, Coral Springs, Boca Rattan amongst others and Pompano Beach have a better structure as these are dealt with in either a building or zoning department.

The City Commission asked why there was a delay in the code enforcement transferring to the Building Department. They said this was agreed last summer and this should have already been implemented.

Commissioner Donovan said that Mr. Rubin gave us an outline for streamlining the signing process and she would suggest that we pass a motion to give City Manager Golub direction to try and come up with something to follow this up and at least this will be place.

Mayor Varsallone said that he was hoping that the meeting would continue for another few hours so that we could gain a recess in order to obtain all the additional information to make some positive decisions and seek direction from City Manager Golub.

Commissioner Donovan said that this whole process is just to streamline our permitting process.

Mayor Varsallone asked for comments from City Manager Golub. He explained that he could put together detailed requirements by the second City Commission meeting in May but Mayor Varsallone said that he wants another workshop on this matter before that date.

The City Commission said the next workshop will be on May 26th at 6:30 p.m.

Police Chief Jerry Blough reiterated that it is not a simple process of enforcing code signage as it will need to be planned properly. He said staffing issues which would include the need for recruitment together with the cost associated with this process will have to be accounted for.

There was no further audio left on the cassette at this point in the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Transcribed by Salene E. Edwards via cassette

Joseph J. Kavanagh, City Clerk

Date