



Meeting Notes

Sign Revision Taskforce

August 30, 2016 at 5:30pm

INRC Ballroom, 708 E. Michigan Street

PEOPLE PRESENT

Karen Celestino Horseman,
Chairman
Emily Mack, DMD Director
Pat Andrews
Lisa Bentley
Shelli Bergen
Tim Brown
Kate Collins
Catherine Esselman
Judith Essex
Commissioner Megan Garver
David Hittle

Chris Iversen
Marjorie Kienle
John Kisiel
Kristen Kohl
Councillor Scott Kreider
Ed Locke
Norm Pace
Chris Pryor
Michael Rabinowitch
Brittanie Redd
Donna Sink
Doug Staley Jr.

Jim Walker
George Wright
Chris Dossman

City Staff:
Chris Schuck
Eddie Honea
Tammara Tracy
John Neal
Keith Holdsworth
Madi Gregory

Meeting was called to order at 5:32PM.

Greeting and opening remarks were given by Tammara Tracy.

Karen Celestino Horseman outlined factors leading to the creation of the taskforce: Supreme Court ruling in June, consequently the city was sued; changing technology; public sentiments toward community aesthetics; and new ordinance, Indy Rezone.

Karen shared her ground rules: meeting starts on time, respectful of each other, no talking over each other, everything is to be shared with all.

Emily Mack further outlined the purpose and role of the task force. As an advisory group, the taskforce is needed to provide information, share perspectives and viewpoints, and talk with and obtain opinions of others.

Emily acknowledged that the Commission and then the Council are the entities charged with approving any proposal, the taskforce is the forum to express views, suggest ideas, and voice reaction to the draft language. As such Emily indicated that 100% consensus was not likely, but all perspectives needed to be heard.

Karen Celestino Horseman asked each participant to introduce themselves and voice their expectations.

Introductions and Expectations	
Jim Walker – Ordinance flexibility	John Kisiel – An ordinance with balances interest
Tim Brown – To help reach a balanced consensus	Judith Essex – Mitigate neighborhood impact and improve quality of life

Councillor Scott Kreider – To learn more about the issues and modernize the Ordinance	Kristin Kohl – To perform a duty to her customers and achieve Ordinance flexibility.
Doug Staley Jr. – To help produce a clear and easy ordinance (translatable)	Shelli Bergen – To modernize the Ordinance as it relates to technological advancement
Misha Rabinowitch - To have an Ordinance with clarity and balance	Commissioner Megan Garver – To participate as an MDC duty and to reach an Ordinance that possesses clarity
Chris Dossman – To improve neighborhood protection, particularly artistic neighborhoods	Marjorie Kienle – To preserve neighborhood interests, particularly historic neighborhoods, and improve their quality of life
Pat Andrews – To produce an organized Ordinance	Ed Locke – To produce an Ordinance with clarity and fairness
Donna Sink – To have aesthetically beautiful signs and city	Brittanie Redd – To have an Ordinance with clarity
David Hittle – To make the new sign ordinance as successful as Indy Rezone	Norman Pace – To have positive dialogue; reach a balanced ordinance; and eliminate bad signage
Kate Collins – To have monumental signs that function effectively as they relate to residential projects	Lisa Bentley – To encourage economic and business development
Chris Pryor- To have an Ordinance with clarity and simplification	George Wright – To have an effective ordinance
Catherine Esselman – To understand the regulations better	

Tammara Tracy elaborated on the information in the binders that were distributed to each individual taskforce member. Tammara indicated that the glossary was gleaned from the current ordinance and can help everyone understand what each is talking about. Referencing the zoning synopsis materials, Tammara encouraged the taskforce to familiarize themselves with the different zoning districts, since the districts are more purpose-driven and the Sign Regulations would need to support those purposes. The current sign regulations were also included so the taskforce could consider what is good or bad about the current regulations.

Tammara pointed out that there was nothing behind the Working draft tab. She said staff had not drafted anything yet because staff wanted to hear what the taskforce wanted or didn't want. She then encouraged bravery and asked the taskforce to share their opinions and give input.

Karen Celestino Horseman reiterated further ground rules for discussion and asked the taskforce to elaborate on their interests, viewpoints and desired changes.

Donna Sink stated that she wanted to eliminate light pollution, wanting Dark Sky compliance standards to be considered, and encouraged the creation of a companion guide to the Ordinance for the common citizen.

Jim Walker stated that he wanted a pedestrian and residential friendly ordinance.

Chris Iverson questioned whether or not billboards are ill-defined or misunderstood. He then discussed the negative effects of the 2003 Sign Regulations amendment which effectively halted the construction of billboards. He stated that he wanted to help produce an ordinance that is fair.

George Wright questioned when inventory of billboards shrink, does the demand remain the same.

Chris Iverson answered 'no' to George's question. He then stated that businesses wish to find employees after the Great Recession. He further stated that existing lousy structures exist, but are not being replaced.

Karen Celestino Horseman asked George what he feels strongly about regarding sign regulations. George responded that he feels strongly about sign proliferation near residential areas.

Chris Dossman discussed sign proliferation near their residence at 71st Street and Shadeland Avenue. They further stated their wish to ensure businesses cannot file variances to deviate from the regulations.

Ed Lock stated that he would like to see higher standards set for granting variance requests. He stated that technological advancements go both ways, and that technology advancements may reduce the need for signage.

Chris Pryor stated that their surveys show signage is still needed by way of physical exploration of those who know where they want to live and do not want to rely on the internet exclusively to find listings.

Councillor Scott Kreider stated that he believed the current sign regulations are murky and unclear. He further stated that business owners feel that they are shaken down by the city through violations and fines.

Kate Collins stated her main goal is to ensure that essential business needs are met.

Karen Celestino Horseman asked the taskforce what they thought was murky about the sign regulations.

Doug Staley Jr. stated that provisions related on on-premises signs are murky. He gave an example of how upper and lower tenant floors are treated within the Central Business Districts sign regulations. He further stated that such signage issues can have an adverse effect on tenant contracts. Another example provided were the design guidelines for properties within the Regional Center. He then discussed regulations restricting wayfinding signs had become problematic for hospitals, as patients have had issues finding the entrances they need.

Kristin Kohl stated that ordinance flexibility was a primary issue. She stated that in her experience it can be difficult to explain to customers why they can or cannot have the sign they want.

Marjorie Kienle stated that she would like to see neighborhood protection preserved. She further stated that the efforts to create the Regional Center were intensive, and that the success of those efforts should be protected. She then stated that it would be beneficial to review sign ordinances both nationally and internationally to identify best practices.

Pat Andrews stated the importance of the taskforce being aware of technological advancements and the speed at which they improve. She stated that in her opinion the current sign regulations never caught up to current technology. As such, she stated that it is important for the new ordinance to be adaptable for any such further advancement. She then stated that code violations must be more effective in order to act as a true deterrence. She then stated that billboards that were issued permits or legal non-conforming use certificates that are in disrepair should be removed. She then stated that mobile advertising is not regulated and that the new regulations should address such advertising.

John Kisiel stated that billboards are an economic tool and have a place in the market and physical environment. He further stated that it was important to remove the ban on digital billboards. He stated that advertising could become an important financial source to facilitate mass transit shelter construction. He then stated that regulations as they relate to special events are a "hodge-podge", and stressed the importance of advertising helping the tourism industry grow.

Shelli Bergen stated that she did not wish to see the continuation of sign clutter, and acknowledged that new technology may be able to help this issue.

Doug Staley Jr. stated that digital billboards can have less light pollution than traditional billboard, and also be safer. Specific examples include the eliminated risk of injury when altering changeable copy signs as well as damage from broken vinyl slats as a result of storms.

Catherine Esselman stated that some older downtown signage on news racks have become basically waste receptacles and that they should be replaced with digital kiosks. She also stressed the importance of understanding terminology.

David Hittle stated that the new sign regulations should follow the best practices nationally, and that would include becoming a billboard-free city.

Norman Pace stated that he believed billboards have gone up without permits or not complying with the conditions of issued permits, and that such billboards should be removed.

Kate Collins questioned why the Pacers Bike Share signage is not regulated as off-premises signage. She stated that if favorable amenities are treated in a flexible manner; private interests should be too.

Misha Rabinowitch stated that he wished the differences between digital art and digital signage be clearly defined.

Tim Brown stated that he would like to see research conducted on cities that effectively phrase and regulate signage.

John Neal gave a presentation of the desired outcomes, outline, and timeline of the process.

Marjorie Kienle asked where the best practices research fits within the outline of the process.

John Neal answered that it would factor into the initial draft of the proposed sign regulations.

Pat Andrews questioned the unintended legal ramifications of following best practices.

John Neal clarified that the Supreme Court ruling ramifications were national in scope.

Tammara Tracy clarified that no 'best practice' currently exists that would eliminate all legal liability. She further stressed to the taskforce the importance of not only looking at the language of other cities regulations, but to also visually investigate what other cities do well and staff will craft language around such observations that will yield legal conformity.

Chris Iverson asked whether or not it would be beneficial to produce a foot-noted version of the new sign regulations for clarification.

Tammara Tracy states that such an idea would be discussed at the next meeting of the taskforce.

John Neal outlined the structure of how the taskforce will discuss detailed topics.

John Kisiel asked whether or not the PowerPoint presentations and other information will be made available. [Note: The PowerPoint presentation was sent to taskforce members after the meeting.]

Tammara Tracy stated that such materials will be made available.

An online survey was distributed to identify a date and time for the next taskforce meeting, but a common day/time was not discernible. Karen asked for people's reactions to a number of days and times. Tuesday evening and Friday mornings tended work for most. She suggested that we alternate between the two. She asked if the facilities at INRC were adequate and everyone agreed favorably. Someone suggested a non-downtown location occasionally to change our perspective; this was favorably met as long as it has adequate parking.

Karen stressed the importance of submitting ideas, informational materials, and examples to her and she would see that they were distributed to everyone.

The taskforce meeting was adjourned at 7:07 PM

Desired outcomes and Issues regarding Sign Regulations, as captured on-screen during the meeting

<i>Flexibility</i>	<i>Removal of illegal signs</i>
<i>Balance of interests, opinions and ideas</i>	<i>Consumers find new homes</i>
<i>Give and Take</i>	<i>Sign for residential subdivisions, keep</i>
<i>Consensus</i>	<i>Help businesses and keep beautiful</i>
<i>Impact upon Neighborhoods</i>	<i>Balance need</i>
<i>Understandable</i>	<i>Clarity, Small things matter</i>
<i>Enforceable</i>	<i>Appealing but effective for businesses</i>
<i>Modernize</i>	<i>Convention signage and address needs of tourists.</i>
<i>Flexibility in Monument and Pylon</i>	<i>Dark sky amendment (environmental reasons)</i>
<i>Clear and easy to understand</i>	<i>Guide to the ordinance FOR THE ORDINARY CITIZEN</i>
<i>Modernize, keep up with technology advances</i>	<i>Match signs to purpose of street: billboards on highways; big signs not on houses or in front</i>
<i>Clarity</i>	<i>Definitions: billboard vs on-premises – what is a billboard. 2003 amendment basically stopped construction of billboards – boards come down. Business needs to maintain inventory and offer services to customers. Fairness is sought.</i>
<i>Update to include technology advances</i>	<i>Placement issues between commercial and residences</i>
<i>Clarity for average person</i>	<i>Proliferation of digital particularly near residential</i>
<i>Balance for neighborhood and businesses</i>	<i>Businesses can't go to city; can the standards for deviation be raised</i>
<i>Protect neighborhoods, particularly along thoroughfares</i>	<i>Technology works both ways</i>
<i>Best practices for livable communities in USA</i>	<i>Real Estate signs (physical) really work</i>
<i>Signs to find where you are going but not clutter it up so you can't find</i>	<i>Compliance: business owners feel they are getting a shake down – fix one thing and then get nailed for several more.</i>
<i>Balance interests</i>	<i>CDB1 & 2 Upper level and lower level signs – the middle tenants need exterior signage</i>
<i>Clarity</i>	<i>RC guidelines vs RC standards</i>
<i>Works for entire community</i>	
<i>Understandable</i>	
<i>Look Beautiful to us and everyone</i>	
<i>Clarity</i>	
<i>Innovative solutions</i>	
<i>Human-scale</i>	
<i>Positive dialogue</i>	
<i>Constructive</i>	

Wayfinding signs – small signs pointing the way to go – hospital and medical offices need helper incidental signs

Clarity on why there are different signs standards

Build up the RC guidelines effort

Signs have to be clear; Signs in your face or repetitively are not welcome.

What works too many signs people won't read

What are other successful cities doing

Technology changes FAST. Ordinance needs to keep up; adaptable.

Penalties for violations. Too low; too slow. Needs to be a deterrent.

Billboards need to have permits or LNCU

Dark Sky supported

Mobile advertising. Need to address.

Billboards are economic development tool. Need to remove ban on digital billboards. Balance. Takedown old

Transit. Advertising on buses and shelters can help IndyGo

Special Events. It's a hodge-podge. Our convention biz is big; need to allow and coordinate

Digital billboards to be allowed. New technology can look better. Remove bad old signs.

Digital signs can actually limit over lighting; reduce waste

CBD1 News racks need to go away. Trade off with digital interfaces kiosks, etc. Banner program needs to be more flexible in terms of timing. Building wraps only for temporary. Need to expand.

Sunset billboards

Build to permit as issued. Illegal signs still up.

Pacers Bike share – how is that allowed – its desired but it seems not- need to allow flexibility.

Not reinvent the wheel - look at other cities