

Fort Collins Sign Code Early Input Session #2

January 13, 2017

Why update: maintain regionally exceptional aesthetics and character of the community; complaints re: brightness of EMCs.

Individual Meeting, 10am

Citizen:

Aesthetics matter

Watchdog of certain issues; sign code is one of the top 3. Other top 2 are electrical undergrounding and open space. Does not want to weaken the code.

Churchill: we shape the community (buildings) and the community shapes us.

What do we really have to do? Vs What do some want to do?

A city has to be egregious in order to be sued. Most businesses do not want to sue their city.

Mention death spiral of signage – origins of sign code in 1960s.

Complains against political campaigns that violate code – specifically signs in ROWs.

Advocates for fairness, aesthetics and timing (length of time). Not worried about content, more worried about aesthetics – size, duration etc.

My goal: what is the common good size? Not going to the least or the most. What is rationale? What makes sense?

Not a vested economic interest. Not own assets that require signs beyond political.

Avoid “government by and for business.” Stakeholders usually are the economically vested businesses. Governments exist for and by the people, to protect the public good. Businesses have resources to pursue and defend their own interests. Businesses get 95% of the attention. Capture theory: government regulators get captured by the very interests they have an interest in regulating. Asks that we avoid overly loosening to benefit private interests.

Start with the interest that we are hearing primarily from private vested interests.

Public meeting: less and less citizen involvement as the city gets bigger. Involvement comes down to NIMBY, or highly divisive social issues.

Safety aspect: distracted driving an increasing risk. Base case on public safety in the ROW.

Hopefully the consolidation of signs wouldn't result in a billboard-sized EMC.

Should a sign be placed in a landscaped area? Yes.

Use this opportunity to address ways to improve other aspects of signs: landscaping, distance between signs?

Temporary signs: Currently banners allow 20 additional days if opening new business.

Downtown signs should have a different aesthetic than other areas. Most signage downtown is nice.

Laws are written for the 10% of egregious abusers, to level the playing field of those with a competitive advantage. Should this be addressed in either the downtown plan or the sign code update?

Consultant: This is looking at sign code in terms of districts.

Group Meeting, 11am

Sign Contractor:

EMCs: careful of ill-matched comparisons (like RV World, Las Vegas). While FC requires smaller signs, they are closer to the ROW/viewers and can be bright. Need to come up with a rationale unit of measure for

Suggests that code is one of the most restrictive re: EMCs. Wants to allow businesses to share in a cost efficient way: images, brightness, size, # of colors. Comfortable where we are at, though we do not want to go backwards.

EMC enforcement: shipped with settings that meet city requirements. Customer can manipulate the nit levels. Some cheaper units does not indicate nit units/lumens.

Brightness levels: measurement spelled out in code. Use light (nit) reader for enforcement. Shut the sign off to take baseline reading (because of ambient light readings). Longmont requires a letter from sign company or owner that sign was installed to meet code, in part to underline the issue. Eye test tells you what is right, though that cannot be codified. Brightness level automatically reduces based on sunlight.

Resolution: as a community we agreed not to have high resolution signs. Effort not long ago to eliminate EMCs from the community. In order to retain them, the city agreed to limit to low resolution signs. Used to be 16 millimeters – that is most common, moving towards 12. Can be as low as 8. Cities require no less resolution than 16 mm.

Size: frame not included in 50% size. Some businesses want 100% EMC. Ventilation not an issue – many are front vented. Electric access, most are front access. Standardized sizes of manufactured EMCs should not drive code.

Color: strong interest in more than 2 colors.

Design: some clients want EMC on top. Others on bottom. Is there a preference? Don't want it to be addressed in code. Integration of EMC with cabinet (not separated)? Don't want it to be addressed in

code. What is the community preference on disintegration? Full cover on sides and top (Foothills) .
Foothills Mall – revised over 5 years, appealing results.

Balance the communicative interest of the property owner the community.

Zip track (interchangeable letter) signs – allowed in Code.

Schools not subject to Code; going LED.

Temporary signs: banners, A-frames, windows. Should banners be framed? Have not been successful in selling because city does not consider banners as permanent signs. If temporary sign is regulated only on timing? When should city regular timing.... Amount of time based on durability. Regulate timing based on election cycle / seasons?

Content: EMCs innovation is that are connected to the cloud rather than a data line.

What has been irritating?

- Nothing

- Pole covers. Added expense. Owners want the lowest cost cover, not as concerned with materials and look.

- little interest in pole signs except along freeways and agricultural corridors.

- length of time temporary signs can be up. Every business gets one temporary sign?

Sign must look associated with the building: base related to the architecture of the building.

Ground signs: get rewarded in City because gives larger area.

World Class: more LEDs. Character by district.

Wall-signs – see Miriam notes. Measuring frontage is better than measuring signable area.

Shape: up to 8 contiguous straight signs.

Restrictions on length of banners, a-frames. Example, A-frames legal downtown. Banner frames worth evaluating.

of lines: draft for 85% success – try not to overcomplicate. Requires more staff time.

Marijuana – because prohibited by Federal law how should local regulations address? City has the right to say no to certain MJ terms.

LED: if rewrite, add marque sign on Lincoln Center. Show community what a model LED sign should look like.

Machines that shake signs – not allowed, period. Human beings have constitutional rights and robots don't – do not count as off-premise signs. Use code to educate the why.

Public Involvement: Chamber of Commerce Legislative Affairs Committee meets every Friday. Available January 20 and throughout Jan and Feb except Feb 10.

Process: friendly staff; fast – in 30 minutes; astonishingly sweet; obtain permit at the counter (which is almost unheard of across the country); monitor signs on the building – saves time because do not have to provide photos of business. Do not change the process. For variances: first meeting 4 weeks out, sometimes can obtain decision in the meeting. Variance is a costly due to process. Important to hear both sides and find common ground rather than emphasizing appeals. Some staff lost job over the cost of defending onerous color requirements.

Wes: I'm going to need some time to get my head into this.

Sign Contractor:

We work in over 60 cities, and by far the City of Fort Collins is one of the best places to work. Not because of the sign code but because of the process: the City offers straightforward procedures and quick turnaround. That is extremely important to us. Other locations we work with require months to get a permit. A recent job in Longmont took 13 months. It can become so cumbersome that it is easier and cheaper to put up an illegal sign.

Projected signs: relax to allow a little more creativity. See Butterfly Café sign proposal. Parking garage only allowed to be 12" tall on a very large building. Armstrong Hotel sign now a landmark. Make it proportional to the size of the building.

Innovation: Buell Theatre has a special theatre district that allows any type of sign – only a few blocks. Theatre type signs. Art and sculpture mixed together.

EMCs: more than two colors. Most clients want full color.

EMCs on top: not look good, such as Mulberry Max / Safeway, The Ranch Events Complex sign

Window Plasma Screens: as price comes down it will become more popular.

Informational Displays / Kiosks: inside (malls) and outside.

Expressed interest in serving on ad hoc committee.

Signs above the Roofline: current prohibited. However, many cities have designated their roofline signs as landmarks. These can be quite distinctive and fit the architecture.

Setback lines: use the flow line rather than the property line. The property line can be significantly back from the ROW. Or measure from curb.

Zone Districts: we can work with these district standards, are sensitive to residential areas.

Opaque background: sometimes a trademark logo or color does not read well against opaque.

Sign Contractor

Fort Morgan much simpler than previous code

Off-premise: because in 10th circuit, can regulate on- and off-premise signs differently. Can be context-sensitive, such as adjacency to intersection; sight lines.

The irresponsible offenders offend a responsible industry.

EMC Brightness: 85% capacity @ day; 15% @ night. If foggy, reduced further.

EMC Resolution: high resolution can look as static as a printed sign. Need brightness and resolution standards. The higher the resolution, the higher quality it looks. High quality is a core value for the City... so why require low resolution signs?

EMC Color: not interested in 2-color billboards, would rather do static print – not cost effective. Full color highly sought after by customers. 2-color is worse than full color. Should be vetted in a public forum.

EMC Monitoring: Lamar will send their standards for nit readings and measurement protocols. They want other companies to follow their company's higher standards. Suggest that their standards exceed the City's current code. Code should speak to how EMCs are maintained/monitored: light readings, broken lights, off colors.

EMC dwell times: CDOT regulations are 4 sec. Weld Co 10 sec. Lamar uses 6 sec. Instantaneous transitions. Animation not appropriate for roadways, limit to pedestrian areas.

There are limited opportunities for mass advertising: declining newspapers, etc. EMC signs become a valuable asset, and can feature multiple companies within a single structure. Reduce sign pollution.

Dark sky – Lamar has collect research and can share.

Signs that are not legible (internal signs) from the property line are not regulated as a sign.

Lamar holds long-term land leases, owns some land with signs, and subleases signs on others' structures. Lamar manages FC bus stop, Transfort sign leases, not just billboards

Offered to bring EMC with DaVinci to public meeting

Grandfathered non-conforming billboards cannot be improved; only replacements in-kind.

Mature landscaping screens some signs.

Outreach: contact Board of Realtors, Business Associations.