



Minutes City Council Issue Review Session May 17, 2007

Minutes of the Tempe City Council Issue Review Session held on Thursday, May 17, 2007, 6:00 p.m., in the City Council Chambers, Tempe City Hall, 31 E. Fifth Street, Tempe, Arizona.

COUNCIL PRESENT:

Mayor Hugh Hallman

Vice Mayor Hut Hutson

Councilmember P. Ben Arredondo

Councilmember Barbara J. Carter

Councilmember Shana Ellis

Councilmember Mark W. Mitchell

Councilmember Onnie Shekerjian

Mayor Hallman called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Call to the Audience

No one came forward to speak.

Commercial Code and Signage

INFORMATIONAL BACKGROUND available in City Clerk's Office.

DISCUSSION – Presenter: Development Services Manager Chris Anaradian

Chris Anaradian summarized that staff has recently considered flexibility and expanded allowances for two categories under the Zoning and Development Code, specifically temporary “way finding” signs and future development signs.

Mr. Anaradian continued that staff has participated in discussions with the Downtown Tempe Community (DTC) to examine the current code, a previous pilot program, and opportunities for a responsibly administered and regulated program for “way finding” signs in pedestrian-friendly areas. This program has currently looked at the central commercial district, but over time, it will also include Apache Boulevard. He asked for Council direction to advance this study into a draft program for “way finding” signage for pedestrian-oriented areas.

Councilmember Arredondo asked for clarification on “temporary.”

Mr. Anaradian responded that temporary means the sign is not attached to a structure, but is a standalone sign.

Mayor Hallman clarified that staff would like to look at a permanent sign code change that would allow temporary, moveable signs of a certain size in a pedestrian area.

Mr. Anaradian agreed and added in a more regulated way than in the past.

Councilmember Arredondo added that it would be important to work with the ADA staff to make sure there are no accessibility restrictions.

Councilmember Shekerjian stated that there are a lot of small businesses in Tempe that would like to have these kinds of signs available to them, such as small businesses in strip malls that might otherwise be passed over. She suggested looking at this not strictly for the downtown area, but citywide. It is important to be consistent throughout the City. It is also important that the signs would not be a hazard to pedestrians.

Mayor Hallman added that whatever permit might be issued should include an indemnity to the City and waivers of liability.

Councilmember Mitchell stated that it is important that we look at this in just the pedestrian-oriented and Transportation Overlay District (TOD) area. Council looked at the rewrite of the sign ordinance which talked about “way finding” signs two years ago. He suggested referring it to the Finance, Economy & Veterans Affairs Committee instead of Council revisiting the whole sign package.

Mayor Hallman understood Councilmember Mitchell's concern in having the City strewn with these kinds of signs on arterial streets, but in terms of strip malls, this would involve small “way finding” signs only useful within the strip mall itself. He would hold judgment until he saw staff's recommendations. This could be tested in the pedestrian-oriented areas in the downtown district and if it works, then made available to other areas. He would like to see figures on cost and how it would be applied in places outside the downtown district.

Councilmember Shekerjian would not support something like an a-frame on the street for a strip mall. There are strip malls, however, where some of the small businesses are hidden and the business owners would like to put a sign in front of their businesses on the sidewalk within the strip mall.

Mr. Anaradian continued with the category of future development signs. There will be tall buildings not only in the downtown, but also in the Elliot corridor and the ASU Research Park, in excess of 80 feet. The current 32 sq. ft. future development sign doesn't do an efficient job of educating the public about the development at and above the 80 feet mark. He summarized staff's interpretation of the existing code to create a program to allow banner signage on tall buildings.

Mayor Hallman added that this is similar to the horizontal signs to wrap development sites to educate the public, and provide some artistic elements as well.

Mr. Anaradian added that the construction signage program has been a tremendous success. This proposal would allow a continuation of the principles of the construction signage program when viewed from a distance. The same personnel would be reviewing both types of applications for consistency.

Councilmember Arredondo stated that it would limit the people we say we want on Mill Avenue. He agrees that the signage on the ground level around the site is good, but this would allow signage to go beyond the original idea.

Councilmember Shekerjian agreed that it is a different way of doing things, but there are a lot of changes taking place. It looks better to have wrappings, whether vertical or horizontal, informing people about what's going on. The two sign packages speak to the changes in Tempe and she thought it a good thing. This one speaks to the big developers, and the other package speaks to flexibility for the small business owners. The important thing is to be consistent throughout the City so someone in the downtown area doesn't have different rights than someone in a strip mall.

Mayor Hallman stated that he would suggest that this come forward on a temporary basis to see how it goes. Several years ago, Council had a vote on the sign package that was requested at Hayden Ferry Lakeside. It was a 6-1 vote, and he voted against it because the required variance substantially enlarged the amount of space that signs were allowed for even buildings of that nature and size. He was tired of having well-healed lawyers being paid lots of money by people who could afford it to come before Council and get their variances while other businesses could not afford to do that. He didn't like doing it on a variance-by-variance basis. This Council responded appropriately and rewrote the sign package to understand that buildings like those at Hayden Ferry Lakeside will require very different sign packages than our codes previously contemplated. He suggested not moving too quickly and rather doing this on a temporary basis.

Councilmember Mitchell clarified that the verbage on the signs can only pertain to the project and not advertising and that it would be temporary during the construction phase.

Mr. Anaradian agreed. There is still a strong principle underlying the entire sign code that bars off-premise advertising. Once the building looks finished on the outside, the signs go away.

Mayor Hallman summarized that these concepts need to be approved and then run the test. If it seems to work here, then find out what it would cost, what the concerns would be, and bring it back to Council to discuss whether it should be applied. If it doesn't work downtown, it won't work anywhere else.

CONSENSUS

- a. Regarding the temporary "way finding" signs, staff was directed to return to IRS on June 28th with recommendations in terms of the pedestrian-oriented area in the downtown district as the experimental area.
- b. Regarding the future development signs, staff was directed to move forward with the proposed concept and test on a temporary basis for one year.

Follow-up Responsibility: Chris Anaradian

Councilmember Ellis declared a conflict of interest and for Item #3 and left the table.

Non-Profit Funding Comparison Report from FY 06/07 to FY 07/08

INFORMATIONAL BACKGROUND available in City Clerk's Office.

DISCUSSION – Pressenter: Community Relations Manager Shelley Hearn

Mayor Hallman summarized that Council funded through a non-recurring line item additional expenditure money for TCC. Council had asked staff to present what it would cost to bring the agencies up to their prior funding level from FY 06/07. The total to bring agencies to their previous level is \$144,328, which is well under the cap of \$200,000. The funds have already gone through the TCC process, and if Council would like to move forward, the additional funds would come directly from the City with a note that this money is received under the same conditions as any original funds granted by TCC. That way the City can facilitate directly with the agencies.

Councilmember Arredondo was concerned with the six asterisked items that had been noted by the TCC as having stipulations to FY 07/08 funding. He felt the TCC should look at those items

Mayor Hallman clarified that Councilmember Arredondo's recommendation was to go forward with everything on the list except those asterisked items noted as Items #1 through #6. If the TCC wants to return with recommendations to clarify, they may do so.

CONSENSUS

Staff was directed to move forward with all listed items to be funded by Financial Services, with the exception of the asterisked items #1 through #6. Staff was directed to work with TCC and make a recommendation regarding the excluded asterisked items.

Follow-up Responsibility: Shelley Hearn

Councilmember Ellis returned to the table.

Sun Devil Stadium

This request, based on direction from the Mayor and City Council at the May 3rd City Council Meeting, is for referral to the Finance, Economy & Veterans Affairs and the Tourism and Amateur Sports Council Committees to explore ways the City can work with Arizona State University to generate revenue for the maintenance and renovation of Sun Devil Stadium.

DISCUSSION – Presenter: Community Relations Manager Shelley Hearn

Mayor Hallman summarized that this is a request for a referral to the Finance, Economy and Veterans Affairs Committee to examine the issue of how to assist ASU with financial issues for the stadium and to the Tourism and Amateur Sports Committee to examine ways in which the City might find events to take place in Sun Devil Stadium to generate revenue.

CONSENSUS

Referred to the Finance, Economy and Veterans Affairs Committee to examine ways to assist ASU with financial issues for the stadium, and to the Tourism and Amateur Sports Committee to examine ways in which the City might find events to be held in Sun Devil Stadium to generate revenue.

Follow-up Responsibility: Shelley Hearn

Formal Council Agenda Items

No agenda items were discussed.

Future Agenda Items

- Councilmember Mitchell requested that a discussion be agendaized to examine the neighborhood grants program and the extent to which there might be neighborhoods with additional needs or issues. Mayor Hallman added that in the interim, Ms. Hearn and Ms. Warner should meet with Councilmember Mitchell and if there are issues to address, the item will go forward, and if not, it will be withdrawn.

Mayor's Announcements/Manager's Announcements

None.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Jan Hort
City Clerk