

VILLAGE OF NORTH UTICA
248 W. Canal St.
North Utica, IL 61373

Meeting of the Village Board of Trustees
And the Planning Commission
For a Joint Meeting
April 28, 2022
www.utica-il.gov

AGENDA

- I. **6:00 PM** Call to Order
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Roll Call
 - 1.) Village Board of Trustees
 - 2.) Planning Commission
- IV. General Discussion regarding Chapter 15; Signs within the Village of North Utica Code
- V. Planning Commission Meeting Minutes: 03-24-2022
- VI. Old Business / New Business
- VII. Public Comment
- VIII. Adjournment

POSTED 04-26-22

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MINUTES

At 6:10 pm the Joint Meeting of the Village Board of Trustees and Planning Commission was called to Order by Village President David Stewart who then led the Pledge of Allegiance. Village Clerk Laurie Gbur recorded the meeting attendance. Present at the meeting were Trustees John Schweickert, Debbie Krizel, Nate Holland, Mary Pawlak, Kylie Mattioda and Jim Schrader. Also Present were Planning Commission Members Doug Gift, Dennis Hamilton, Warren Munson, Andy Skoog and Chairman Tom Guttilla. Members Mike Brown and Bill Zens were absent from the meeting. Also present for the meeting was Village Attorney Herb Klein, Village Engineer Kevin Heitz, Public Works Director / Zoning Enforcement Officer Curt Spayer, Director of Village Affairs Jamie Turczyn and Police Chief Rodney Damron.

Village President: At 6:12 pm, Mayor Stewart provided a brief summary regarding the Public Hearing for the proposed review of the Village of North Utica Sign Ordinance. The current Ordinance was adopted in 2004. At this time, Mayor Stewart has assigned the task of reviewing the Sign Ordinance as part of the Village performing an extensive review of several areas within the Village's Zoning Ordinance. Zoning Enforcement Officer Spayer has provided a list containing several areas of the Sign Ordinance that he would like reviewed and further clarified. The list included the following:

- Regulations for Offsite Signage – Business Signage Off Premises
- Review of the Size and Number of A-Frame Signs Permitted per Business / on a Property
- Review the Number of Wall-Mounted Signs Permitted per Business
- Regulations for Single Pole Banner-Style Signs that are not currently covered in Ordinance
- Regulations for Billboard Signs – Including Size and Number permitted in the Village
- Regulations for Wall Signage created by Individual Letters (Ex. Village Administrative Building)

Several of these areas are either not addressed in the current Sign Ordinance or they require clarification. Mayor Stewart stated that considerations to permitting certain business signage or requiring a Variance for such needs to be discussed and further clarified, or added to the Sign Ordinance.

Discussion was held regarding off premises / offsite signage. Businesses would like to have the opportunity to have an additional sign off premises, advertising their business and identifying their location in the Village.

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Chairman Guttilla asked if the signs that would be off of the businesses' premises are meant to be temporary or permanent.

Attorney Klein stated that temporary signage is meant to represent temporary events, while an off-premises sign being discussed are permanent signs meant to be placed on a different property to direct visitors to a businesses' location in the Village. Temporary event signs allow for a sign to be placed 30 days prior to an event and removed 2 days after an event. These signs are meant to advertise events in the community such as craft shows, festivals, wine events and auctions.

Trustee Krizel provided an example of a current off-premises sign that is representing Bruce & Ollies. The sign has not been permitted; our current Sign Ordinance does not allow for off-premises signage. It has been placed on a property located along Rt. 178 near Illinois Valley Fence & Pool. Currently, if a business has installed an off-premise sign, a notice is served to the business informing them that they will need to remove the sign.

Member Gift asked if the Village could consider a single large billboard style sign to allow several businesses to advertise on it in a single off-site location rather than having individual signs everywhere throughout the Village.

Mayor Stewart stated that the Village has been looking at different ideas for the installation of a billboard sign. Currently if every business is allowed one off-premise sign, the Village would have signs throughout the entire Rt. 178 corridor.

Member Munson asked if the Village could consider a large sign that would provide the Village website so that visitors could access the information referencing all of the North Utica businesses in a single website.

Mayor Stewart stated that the Village does have a large billboard sign along I-80 with the Village website, however it is hard for people passing by so fast while watching the traffic to be able to make note of the website.

Discussion was held among the group regarding zoning districts that would potentially allow an off-premise sign. Off premise signs are not permitted in the C1 and C2 zoning districts. Discussion also continued among the group regarding the distance allowed between signs, size and number of signs, improved and unimproved property. It was noted that the off-premise sign installed on property owned by I.V. Fence and Pool is on an improved lot, but the sign looks as if it is representing a business that is located on that property. The content was changed on the sign; that was installed to represent the former business that was located on the property. That business closed and the sign remained on the property. Now that sign has been modified to represent a business that is located on Mill St.; Bruce & Ollies.

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Member Munson asked if the business had received a permit to put up the sign.

Mayor Stewart answered, “No; a permit would not have been granted because the sign is an off-premise sign.”

Attorney Klein stated that in the current Ordinance, an advertising sign, used to advertise a business that is not located on that specific property, is only allowed in the C-3 and I-2 Zoning Districts and only after being granted a Special Use.

Trustee Krizel stated that it is the businesses’ responsibility to check with the Village and then review the Ordinances to determine what they would be allowed to do or what would require a Special Use. Trustee Pawlak agreed.

Members of the Planning Commission and Board agreed that further review is needed to determine whether to amend the Ordinance to allow off-premise signage on improved lots or to leave the current regulations in place.

Discussion was then held regarding A-Frame signs.

Trustee Krizel stated that currently there are no A-Frame signs allowed. The committee had discussed allowing one A-Frame sign per business in the C-1 District and maybe an additional A-Frame sign in the C-2 District where the properties are larger. In the C-1 District, ADA requirements are a concern with allowing the A-Frame signs and the Village wants to maintain the ability for people to get into and out of businesses easily.

Zoning Enforcement Officer Spayer asked about allowing two A-Frame signs on properties in the C-2 District. Some businesses are located on a corner property and would like an A-Frame sign on both sides facing traffic.

Trustee Schrader stated that in the C-2 District the A-Frame signs would not need to be on the sidewalk but rather off of the public sidewalk in the grass.

Trustee Pawlak stated that allowing every business on Mill St. to have an A-Frame sign would be a lot to add to the sidewalks.

Discussion continued regarding allowing a single A-Frame sign per business in each Commercial District. The group also agreed that all A-Frame signs must be taken in at the end of each business day.

Discussion was then held regarding wall-mounted signs.

Trustee Krizel stated that currently there is one wall-mounted sign allowed per business.

Attorney Klein stated that if a property is located on a corner lot, one wall-mounted sign is permitted on each side of the building fronting a public street.

Engineer Heitz also stated that all wall-mounted signs must be mounted to the building. The Village currently does not allow a sign or logo to be painted on the wall of the buildings.

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Trustee Schweickert asked if a Special Use could be granted to a business that wanted to paint a logo or design on their building.

Attorney Klein reminded the group that the Village also has a Downtown Design Ordinance regulating the C-1 Zoning District. A business could Petition the Village to consider a Variance to permit them to add a painted design or logo on their building.

Mayor Stewart added, "A few years back, the Village was approached by a building owner that was considering a mural on the side of their building. They did not move forward with that, but it was something that was briefly discussed."

Trustee Pawlak stated that she had received some negative comments about the mural that was painted on the shipping container located on the Bier Garten property.

Mayor Stewart stated that he had been receiving many compliments about the mural, although it is more of an abstract art piece.

Trustee Mattioda asked if a Special Use was granted to the business to allow them to paint the mural.

Mayor Stewart stated that when the design of the Bier Garten was being proposed, they did go through a Public Hearing and the Village was aware that an abstract mural would be painted on the shipping container as part of their design.

Attorney Klein stated that a Special Use would be necessary to paint a building in the commercial Districts in the Village. The Village also has the Downtown Design Ordinance in place in the C-1 District.

Discussion was then held regarding Banners and Single-Pole Flags.

Trustee Krizel stated that currently they are not regulated in the Sign Ordinance.

Attorney Klein stated that a Banner, ie., a cloth attached to a pole, is meant to be a temporary advertisement of a business that will be opening. This is meant to advertise a business while they are awaiting their permanent sign. They are not meant to remain as freestanding advertisements for a business. They are currently allowed as a temporary sign for up to 90 days while they are waiting for their permanent signage to be installed for their business.

Mayor Stewart stated that he has received complaints about the many Single-Pole Flags that are being used; the Flags create a distraction and they create an issue for traffic by impeding the vision of an entrance into intersections and oncoming traffic.

The group agreed that if the Banners and Single-Pole Flags are meant to be temporary while waiting for permanent signage, the permitted timeline should be reduced to 60 days. All other Single-Pole Flags will not be permitted in the Village. This includes those that state, 'Open' or advertise sales or products.

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Discussion was then held regarding Billboard Signs.

Trustee Krizel stated that Billboards are not appropriate for the downtown area, but would be fine in the area in the Commercial C-3 Highway District.

Member Gift stated that in his opinion, Billboards look terrible. A better idea would be to phase out the advertising Billboards in exchange for something that Welcomes visitors to the Village.

Mayor Stewart stated that there are a few that are grandfathered in. They include the Billboard sign located on the Car Wash property and the Billboard located on the Southeast corner of Rt. 6 and Rt. 178 (Fike Property). It was also noted that the Billboard located across from Grand Bear Lodge is not in the Village. Mayor Stewart also stated that if the content is changed on the Billboards, the owner would have to come in to the Village to seek a Special Use, however until that time, the signs are grandfathered in as they were there before the Village Sign Ordinance was adopted.

After much discussion, the group had agreed that Billboard Signs would not be allowed in the Villages' C-1 and C-2 Zoning Districts.

Discussion was then held regarding Wall Signs created by installing individual letters on a building. An example of this is the lettering located on the new Village Administrative Building. The application of letters to create a business name or building name on a building is not currently in the Villages' Sign Ordinance.

Trustee Schrader stated that if the Village adds this to the Sign Ordinance, it should require a Special Use.

Mayor Stewart reminded the group that the Bickerman Building and the Lodi Building both have letters on the buildings that indicate the building / business name; this was approved along with their Special Use. Mayor Stewart also agreed that the application of letters on a building should require a Special Use.

Mayor Stewart asked, "What if a business wants both the application of the letters as well as another sign?"

Trustee Krizel stated that the application of the letters on a building should be considered one sign.

Engineer Heitz stated that the application of the letters is considered to be signage, including in the requirements of remaining within the allowed size base on the square footage of the building wall.

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The group agreed that the application of individual letters to a building would constitute one sign for the business.

Attorney Klein stated that the Villages' Sign Ordinance allows for a wall sign and one awning, one canopy or one marquee sign permitted per establishment. Businesses located in the C-2, C-3 I-1 and I-2 Zoning Districts are permitted a free-standing sign; square footage and distance regulations apply.

Discussion was then held regarding LED (illuminated) Signs.

The Village currently has an LED Sign located at the Utica Police Department. Another is also located at the Utica Fire Department. These signs are generally used to advertise events being held in the Village.

Currently, illumination is regulated in the Villages' Sign Ordinance. No flashing or blinking lights are allowed and illumination must not create a hazard for traffic visibility.

Chairman Guttilla asked if the LED Signs can be used to advertise local businesses.

Mayor Stewart stated that the Village has considered this as an option; renting out commercial advertising space.

The group agreed that LED (illuminated – changeable copy) Signs should require a Special Use.

With no additional discussion regarding the Villages' Sign Ordinance, Mayor Stewart asked that the Planning Commission review the Ordinance. A Public Hearing will be held on Thursday, May 26, 2022 at 6 pm, to further discuss and consider possible recommendations to the Village Board regarding amendments to the Village of North Utica Sign Ordinance.

Minutes: It was motioned by Member Skoog, seconded by Member Hamilton to approve the Minutes from the March 24, 2022 Planning Commission meeting as presented.

All in Favor

Motion Carried

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Old Business / New Business:

Mayor Stewart provided a brief update on the Rebuild Downtown & Mainstreet Grant Application for the Mill St. Mini Shops Project. The DCEO was supposed to award the Grants in April, however that timeline has been changed. They will now review the applications and award the Grants at the end of May. If the Village is awarded the Grant, this later timeline does push back the possibility of being able to do the project and get the shops leased and open for this season; this may push us back to Spring 2023. But we do believe that we have a very strong application and a good chance at being awarded the Grant and we are looking forward to those announcements.

Member Munson then stated that the Village is working hard to update the Sign Ordinance however, there are several properties in the community that look to be in a sad state. There is debris, trash and clutter along with some weeds and tall grass on a few properties.

Mayor Stewart stated that the Village does have a Vacant and Abandoned Property Ordinance and a Nuisance Ordinance in place that is providing us with a path to serve notice and allow some enforcement to be able to bring some properties into compliance. Chief Damron has been working on a few of these properties.

Public Comment: NONE

With no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:31 pm. Motioned by Member Munson, seconded by Member Skoog.

All in Favor

Motion Carried

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie A. Gbur
Village Clerk