

Wilmington Planning Commission

Meeting Minutes

Monday July 13, 2020 at 4 p.m. by Zoom

**Open Meeting**

Cheryl opened the meeting at 4:00 PM

In attendance: Tom Consolino, Cheryl LaFlamme, John Lebron, Meg Staloff, Angela Yakovleff, Mike Tuller, Zoning Administrator, Scott Tucker, Town Manager (by phone)

Visitors: Nicki Steel, Gretchen Havreluk, Shelley Park

**Possible Additions to the Agenda**

None

**Public Comment**

None

**Approve Minutes from June 8, 2020**

Cheryl moved to approve the minutes of June 8, 2020.

John Seconded

Approve: Cheryl, John, Meg, Angela

Opposed: none

Abstain: Tom

**Continue Discussion on Zoning Ordinance Article VIII**

Cheryl wonders if we should change the ordinance or keep the wording as is? She reminded that town buildings are exempt from following this.

Gretchen doesn't think it's fair to business owners that the ordinance doesn't apply to Town buildings.

John thinks it's OK as it stands.

Cheryl asked if the 70%/30% ratio of window covering is acceptable? Should we define "window?"

Nicki summarized what she heard from the last meeting. She likes the idea of putting up signs for upcoming events without getting approval from the Design Review Board. These are only up for a short period of time.

Meg said window signs are defined in Article 10. We may want to reference this. She thinks the ordinance should be written for clarity, simplicity and ease of use, especially in the present climate.

Cheryl said that this discussion first was put on the agenda when Mike came to the job.

She asked Nicki if she recalls the earlier wording of the ordinance.

Shelley noted Manchester has similar language in their sign ordinance.

Mike said Manchester has a 25% coverage threshold, but the language is much more explicit.

Meg said the Manchester ordinance addressed permanent signage versus non-permanent signage in terms of permitting. She suggested we add, "temporary signs or displays shall be exempt." She shared wording from Manchester's ordinance, "...permanent, stenciled or otherwise affixed." She noted we also have to be sensitive to signs being content neutral. Section 822J addresses short term signs.

Cheryl feels it's not the time to come down on businesses.

Shelley suggested Mike remind businesses that may be in violation of the ordinance what the expectations are and review the ordinance with them.

Angela said Mike has done this with several businesses and they have had no problem.

Scott thinks the section is outdated. Presently most signs are about advertising.

Shelley is in favor of the present ordinance. She understands it is beyond aesthetics. She feels we need to think about messages that our youth are getting with promotion of tobacco, alcohol and other substances.

Nicki thinks in the downtown especially, signage should be reviewed and enforced. "Windows should be windows."

Tom wondered how signs such as the Rotary sign on the corner are approved. Scott approved this one.

Nicki suggested drafting new wording and putting it aside until it's easier for businesses to look at a draft of a new ordinance.

Cheryl polled the commissioners to see where we want to go from here.

Meg said if the intent is to create more clarity then we need to clean up the wording. We can then create a draft to bring to the business community.

Angela thinks we should clarify the wording and write a draft to present at a later date.

John said we should clarify, work on better, clearer wording, clear up "contiguous," and bring some business owners in. We could propose temporary changes similar to the dining exemption.

Tom agrees with John.

Cheryl thinks we should leave it as it stands. It is easy to enforce. People may not be aware of the requirements. We can't tell people what to change, only make them aware of any violation.

Nicki questioned signs that are temporary, but are advertising an event that is being held at a place other than the business where it is advertised and the intended meaning of wording in the present ordinance, "public way or public road?"

Scott thinks the code isn't well described. We need to engage business owners and community members.

Shelley is willing to try drafting some wording that addresses her concerns.

Gretchen is opposed to asking for attendance at a meeting for the next six months.

Mike wonders if we should be enforcing the ordinance right now when business owners are trying to reopen?

Cheryl has lists of what the Planning Commission wants to address. We could put these together in a "lump package" before asking for a hearing. She will make a list of these items for the Commission to look at and discuss.

Meg will work on drafting new language is she has a list of our concerns.

-what is exempt from permitting with limits

-how to determine 30%

-change from window display to window sign

**Old Business**

None

**Adjournment**

John made a motion to adjourn at 5:30 PM. Meg seconded.

Approve: Tom, Cheryl, John, Meg, Angela

Opposed: none

Next Meeting – July 27, 2020 4:00 PM