



CITY OF WINTER GARDEN

CITY COMMISSION SIGNAGE AND BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES

August 24, 2009

A **WORKSHOP** of the Winter Garden City Commission was called to order by Mayor Rees at 5:32 p.m. at City Hall, 300 West Plant Street, Winter Garden, Florida and the Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Present: Mayor John Rees, Commissioners Harold L. Bouler, H. Gerald Jowers

Absent: Commissioners Bob Buchanan and Colin Sharman

Also Present: City Manager Mike Bollhoefer, City Attorney Kurt Ardaman, City Clerk Kathy Golden, Police Chief George Brennan, Fire Chief John Williamson, Finance Director Robin Hayes, Public Services Director Don Cochran, Assistant Public Services Director Mike Kelley, City Planner Ed Williams, Community Development Director Tim Wilson, Building Official Skip Lukert, Recreation Director Jay Conn, Information Technology Director Bob Reilly, Economic Development Director Dolores Key, Senior Business Analysts Nicole Stout and Marc Hutchinson, Controller Brian Strobeck, Human Resources Supervisor Peggy Carpenter, and Community Relations Manager Andrea Vaughn

City Manager Bollhoefer stated that Community Development Director Wilson will give the presentation on signs which is probably one of the most difficult and controversial issues dealt with in municipal and county governments. Staff is trying to find a balance between what is good for businesses and what will make the City look good. He has been approached from two sides; one side states the rules are too stringent and the other side states the rules are not stringent enough. Staff is not presenting a drafted ordinance. Instead, we are making a presentation to show the direction staff is looking at and after Mr. Wilson's presentation staff would like to receive direction from the City Commission to aid staff in drafting an ordinance.

A. **Discussion and review of possible changes to the City's sign ordinance**

Mr. Wilson stated that he is presenting a summarization (*see attached Exhibit A*) and a photo gallery of common sign types (*see attached Exhibit B*). At this point, staff is trying to keep this project as graphic and picture oriented as they can without specific text at this point. Mr. Wilson proceeded to make his presentation on the areas of the sign code in Chapter 102 that need updating and the types of signs that may need modification. He noted that most of the sign code has been in effect for over 20 years. In part, what has driven the need to address our current sign code has been the Fowler Grove project, the comprehensive plan, redevelopment, downtown, and State Road 50.

Mr. Wilson noted that staff believes there are four distinguishable areas within Winter Garden; highway commercial, Fowlers Grove Village, traditional downtown, and small office/retail.

City Manager Bollhoefer pointed out that the example provided of the City of Sanford's pedestrian level (*way finding*) signs shows what a nice job they have done. He suggested including provisions that allows historical signs. The merchants have expressed that they need the "sandwich" type advertising boards; he believes they have a place, but there needs to be guidelines.

In closing, Mr. Wilson stated that for the past six months staff has been doing the research to make this presentation. He asked for the City Commission's input and direction, and a possible schedule.

Mr. Bollhoefer commented that the current sign code requires someone to look in multiple locations in order to find all of the different sign rules. It is also very difficult to enforce so it does need to be rewritten.

Mayor Rees asked about vehicles used as signs. Mr. Wilson replied that stationary advertising vehicles can be addressed as part of this process.

Commissioner Jowers noted that he has served on the City Commission twice and the first sign code was probably established in 1986. Since then the sign code has become more and more restrictive on the merchants. As a business owner, he needs his signage and shared that his sign on State Road 50 cannot be reinstalled until after the construction is done. Signage is critical and suggested that the City of Winter Garden not copy signage in other cities but create our own identity that will do us some good.

City Manager Bollhoefer emphasized that staff is looking for a good balance.

Commissioner Jowers suggested letting the merchants form a committee so they can tell the Commission what they want. Mr. Bollhoefer noted the other side of the issue is the residents who have to look at the signs; so it is truly finding a balance between the merchants and residents. Commissioner Jowers suggested letting them look at it as a team from both sides.

Mayor Rees referred to the presentation that there are three or four distinct areas; Fowlers Grove, the historic downtown area, and State Road 50 and asked about the possibility of having a representative from each group, including the residential areas form a committee. He noted there are some issues with having too many signs on a building and he has no problem with a committee being formed.

Mr. Wilson clarified that staff has been working with two committees; one is for the State Road 50 overlay sign standards and a workshop will be scheduled with the City Commission (*he was unable to complete his statement*).

Commissioner Jowers suggested some possible groups to serve on a committee that could come up with a solution instead of the City Commission.

Commissioner Boulter confirmed that public hearings would be held before a decision is made.

Mr. Bollhoefer reiterated that the code is too restrictive and hard to enforce. He is not sure that forming a committee is the most effective way and suggested ongoing workshops as a possibility. The downtown area and State Road 50 merchants each have different issues and suggested that those issues be discussed within their work groups in as many workshops as the need. This information would then be combined and brought back to the City Commission for their input. The goal is not to have a more restrictive code but have a code that the City can live with and enforce.

Commissioner Jowers shared that a three-foot median is being installed on State Road 50 and there are is an issue with the predetermined curb cuts. Business owners are already losing business and the Florida Department of Transportation will not listen to them. The merchants need their signage.

Mr. Bollhoefer stated that he believes during the two years of construction on State Road 50 there will need to be special rules. The City will need to allow more signage for some of the businesses on State Road 50.

Mayor Rees stated that he agrees that these issues need to be discussed separately with each group. This concept will generate more participation and something better will come out of it.

Mr. Bollhoefer stated that the direction he believes the City Commission wants staff to go in is to have more community meetings, meet with those affected, do more research, and come back to the City Commission with additional information. This is the direction staff will take. *(No objections were noted.)*

B. **Public Comments** – There were none.

C. **Proposed 2009/2010 Budget**

City Manager Bollhoefer recognized Finance Director Hayes to give a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed budget (*see attached Exhibit C*). He asked the City Commission to please see him or Ms. Hayes with any budget questions.

Finance Director Hayes noted that currently, the higher proposed millage rate of 3.8546 ranks Winter Garden tenth or the third lowest millage rate in Orange County. Mr. Bollhoefer noted that even going to the higher roll back rate, the City of Winter Garden would still be at the lower end when it comes to tax rates in Orange County.

Mayor Rees asked the City Manger if he could provide a copy of the budgeted percentages, by category (*operating expenditures by function*) of cities similar to our size. Mr. Bollhoefer responded yes. He noted that it is typical in government that public safety generally runs at 50 percent of the budget. What gets tricky whenever comparing budgets, is analyzing what they include as general government. Staff can make adjustments to make better sense of the comparison.

Ms. Hayes stated that the City maintains a low debt burden and in 2011 staff hopes to start rolling off the State Revolving Fund (SRF) debt. Other debt items are shown on page 15 of the proposed budget book. Our millage rate is one of the lowest in the county. The City continues to provide levels of service that define our community as well as increasing some of the services to the community.

In closing, Mr. Bollhoefer noted that the fund balance has been utilized for our larger projects which will take the City's fund balance down to approximately \$4.2 million; \$1 million of that is restricted to only be used within the Building Department. This brings our fund balance down to a level of about 15 percent, which would be the lowest level in that past 20 – 30 years and it starts to make him nervous at that level. Cities our size want their fund balance at 30 percent. Whenever the City's fund balance gets to this point, it makes the City very vulnerable. He stated that in tough economic times the fund balance can be brought down to as low as 20 percent and still feel comfortable. However, staff is going to be taking a closer look at the budget to see what can be put off until the City is in a better fund balance position. He is convinced that taking the right steps now, being frugal, and taking correct actions in the long term will put the City in great shape. He is looking at long term ways to reduce our costs. Winter Garden is still in better shape than most government agencies but if we want to continue to stay in better shape, we have to make smart and prudent financial decisions. The good news is that we do have several properties that once they are sold will bring our fund balance up to a nice safe level. It is not the time sell them. He stated that he will be sending out a chart regarding where the City stands with our fund balance.

The workshop adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

APPROVED:

_____/S/_____
MAYOR PRO-TEM H. GERALD JOWERS

ATTEST:

_____/S/_____
City Clerk Kathy Golden, CMC