

**Ad-Hoc Sign Bylaw Review Committee Meeting**  
**February 16, 2012 ~ 7:30pm**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, Town Hall**

**Attending:**

Members: Jeff Cohen, John McCulloch, Lisa Mustapich, Mark Siegenthaler, Ralph Zazula and Karen Kenney

Others: Chris Laskey-Code Enforcement Liaison

Absent: Kevin Latady

7:35 pm: Meeting called to order.

The committee reviewed the minutes from the January 12 meeting. John McCulloch offered clarification on the spelling of his last name and phone number. There were no other comments or corrections. There was a motion by Mustapich to approve the amended minutes, seconded by McCulloch. The amended minutes were unanimously approved.

Jeff Cohen noted that he received the invitation to join the Google share site send by Ralph Zazula. Jeff thanked Ralph for posting the email he sent the committee, which included comments the ZBA received in 2009 from Pam Brown and Jim O'Neill, noting their thoughts for improving the Sign Bylaw. He also informed the committee that the ZBA would be offering edits to the bylaw, based on their experiences, to provide clarification on some of the ambiguous language. Their comments were expected at the end of February.

Chris Laskey asked if the group wanted to post edits to the Sign Bylaws on the share site following each meeting? The group agreed to post the edits to the site and then discussed the logistics and how to manage the edits. Ralph asked Chris if he knew the guest password to the Town website. **ACTION:** Chris said he would have it for the next meeting. **ACTION:** Ralph said he could make edits to the bylaw at the meetings as they were discussed and post them to the share site, along with links to various referenced websites.

Jeff Cohen stated the meeting would pick up where the last meeting left off, using the agenda from the January 12 meeting. The discussion turned to non-commercial signs.

The committee discussed providing a definition for non-commercial signs in the bylaws. **ACTION:** Chris Laskey would research definitions for non-commercial signs. The group discussed the similarity between non-commercial signs and political signs and whether or not revisions should be made to Section 40.6 .D regarding the time limitations political signs. The committee agreed that Section 40.6.D should be revised to add Non-commercial signs to the paragraph and change the timeframe for displaying the signs to not more than 30-days in a calendar year, with no link to an election date. The group also agreed that non-commercial signs should not require a permit. The group also discussed whether to include "community service signs" in the definition of non-commercial signs.

The committee discussed the question of granting the ZBA more discretion in considering dimensional relief from the bylaw, which would require changing the Sign Bylaw to be part of the Zoning Bylaw, instead of its present inclusion in the General Bylaws. Lisa Mustapich noted she had a conversation with Jim O'Neill, who expressed his opposition to granting the ZBA such discretion because of the ever-changing makeup of the Board members; it would be difficult to maintain discretionary consistency. The committee members agreed. The members decided that it would be more sensible to revise the bylaw to give the ZBA more discretion by providing specific relief from requirements, typically dimensional relief, in the places where it is warranted.

The committee discussed the types of signs they like in other towns and the sign bylaws in those other cities/towns (Medford, Concord) and believed Kevin Latady offered at the first meeting to gather some other sign bylaws for the group to review. **ACTION:** Chris Laskey was asked to follow-up with Kevin via email to see if he's gathered any other towns' sign bylaws.

The committee discussed illumination under Article 40.5, Section 3 – Hours. The committee agreed that if a business is normally open during the hours of 11 P.M. and 6 A.M. it should be allowed to illuminate its sign(s) to identify itself as open for business. The committee discussed the definition of overspill. The committee agreed to edit the paragraph to read as follows: “No sign shall be illuminated between the hours of 11:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M. Illumination shall be permitted at establishments that are normally open to the public during those hours, and the requirements of Section 1, Overspill, are met. Such element shall be permitted only as required to identify the entrance(s) of the establishment and to facilitate the safe access or egress.”

The committee discussed real estate signs in various parts of town and noted that there should be different size signs permitted, depending on the location. The committee looked at the zoning map and commented on some real estate signs that have been observed throughout town. Larger signs would be appropriate on Middlesex Turnpike and Crosby Drive, but not necessarily Great Road. Vehicular speed limit and location are factors in determining size. **ACTION:** Karen Kenney said she would contact local realtors to see if they could offer input as to the sizes of real estate signs typically installed in Bedford and other towns to assist the committee in determining appropriate real estate sign sizes by-zone.

The committee discussed revamping Article 40.4, Section 5(B) to provide missing dimensional criteria for signs in Industrial Zones. The committee agreed revisions were necessary and that it made sense to state specific dimensional requirements for each zone, rather than to keep referring back to other zones for requirements. No decisions were made regarding specific dimensional revisions/requirements. More discussion will follow at subsequent meetings.

The committee discussed the issue of "grand fathering" signs. Should this be looked at? Should be set a time frame and then have the businesses have to comply with the current Sign Bi-Law. More discussion will follow at subsequent meetings.

The committee discussed permitting more than one freestanding sign on a lot in Business, Commercial and/or Industrial zones, and the factors to evaluate when considering whether to grant more than one freestanding sign: number of entrances to the site; corner lots, distance between driveways. The committee believed that permitting more than one freestanding sign should be granted by special permit, on a case-by-case basis. More discussion will follow at subsequent meetings.

Karen Kenney noted that some members (businesses) of the Chamber of Commerce are interested in attending a committee meeting to express their thoughts. The committee discussed ways to document the progress it was making and how to seek public input. The committee agreed to develop a timeline for involving the public, perhaps with public workshop. The Google shared site was suggested as the vehicle for documenting the committee's progress, and using links from the Town website would allow the public to access the share site. Here is the link to recent survey that Chamber sent out to member and non-member to give their input about the sign bi-law in Bedford.

Karen Kenney encouraged committee members to visit the new, Bedford business development site [www.bedfordisbusiness.com](http://www.bedfordisbusiness.com), which is an offshoot of the Chamber of Commerce. The reason for this other website is be a site that potential businesses to see what Bedford has to offer. New material is being added often the site.

Jeff Cohen noted the next meeting is scheduled for March 19 at 7:30.

9:40 pm: Meeting adjourned. Mustapich moved to adjourn. McCulloch seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.