

Permanent Sign Provisions

Present: Stephen Walker, Manager of Compliance & Enforcement,
David Brouse, By-Law Enforcement Officer
Diane Trottier, Secretary to the Mgr of Compliance & Enforcement
Mr. Norm Coutu, Ernie's Signs
Marc Pomerleau, Modern Neon Signs
John Grandmaison, Modern Neon Signs
Danny McCourt
David Petryna, Representing Arrow Signs, Outdoor Exposure & Sign City

Steve Walker made introductions and explained the intent of the meeting.

Currently all permanent signs are regulated by the six Zoning By-laws from the 1983 series, and the one Zoning By-law from 1995

He explained that the Draft Zoning By-law deletes all provisions regarding signage. The regulation of signage is intended to be addressed through a new Sign By-Law passed under the Municipal Act.

All provisions from the 1983 series will be upgraded to those contained with the 1995 by-law and along with public input and consultation with other municipalities a report will be drafted and presented to Council.

Norm Coutu had two issues. 1) Pylons are too small. They are only permitted 15 sq. m. Have to go through the Committee of Adjustment as you are only allowed 15 sq. m. where, 25 sq m. would be better. Most cities don't count both sides, would like a total of 25 sq m which would alleviate going to Committee of Adjustment and 2 months of delay. Some applicants also have the extra lawyer fees. It is his understanding that the billboards stay the same.

2) Fascia signs on buildings, by-law allows enough, but can only put your name on one side of the building. New by-law should allow same main use fascia sign on other sides of buildings as well in Commercial zones.

Dave explained all we did was take the 1983 zoning requirements from the former outlying area municipalities up to 1995 zoning requirements across the board. Norm agrees it's a good idea.

If an area is highly concentrated with tenants, like a mall, more fascia signs are normally required. Even at 1.2 sq m per 1 metre of frontage of property, there doesn't seem to be enough signage available. Valley East sign regulations are smaller, and therefore owners had to come in for minor variance to increase the total sign area allowed on the property. This amendment to the sign by-law will give more room for signs in the former municipalities.

Norm was concerned about small mall properties with lots of tenants, pie shape frontages, and small frontage lots. Can't do anything for smaller frontages? Dave said with regards to pylons all municipalities always consider the frontage. Depending on the frontage of the property which would still include all types of signs on the property, tenants may still not be able to have signs.

John Grandmaison, agrees with Norm that pylons should be larger. The Valley East Industrial Park only allows 65 sq m per side. He feels that 80 sq. m per side would be better – will this be across the board? Dave said the amended by-law would be 80 sq/m per side across the City

Has a problem with pylon signs being grandfathered in. Results in lost sales because a sign may have fallen down or needs to be refurbished and needs a minor variance. The same size should be allowed to be replaced because you may have to relocate the sign due to widen the road. It should not be up to the property owner to have to pay to relocate his sign because of changes the City has made to the road.

John suggests that 100 sq ft a side should be normal, C of A has allowed as big as 150 sq ft per side in some cases after a minor variance is approved. Usually allowed once they have proven their case. Takes time for minor variance and 90 percent of the time it is approved.

Rio Can Centre as an example, corporate accounts, new signs pushed 300 sq. ft. Dave reiterated that the pylon on Barrydowne Rd., Mr. Franzini's property, the sign is almost on the sidewalk. The by-law states now that if it is removed from the property, a new pylon sign would have to meet the present setbacks and size restrictions. John felt that is unfair.

Dave explained that in 1978 sign permits started, the size of these signs previously put up would be grandfathered. Dave clarified advertising signs, lawfully erected or displayed are allowed under this by-law. If the sign is not altered, and the sign is maintained, or rearranged, the sign remains legal non-conforming. If the sign is rectangular shaped, then that's the way it should stay. Sign area is counted if you want to add cladding to the bottom of a pylon sign. Anything over 21" is considered sign area. John asked if it could be replaced, can he use it as sign space. Dave answered yes, if the area has already been counted as sign area.

Dave stated that the Toyota pylon sign had lettering but was very specific in location of the lettering due to the Minor Variance conditions. The By-law says if the pylon is 15 sq m in area you can write anywhere you want. If it is an old pylon sign you can use it even if it is monolith sign type. The way the by-law reads now is If you change the structure you must have permit. Even a legal non-conforming sign must have a permit.

Marc Pomerleau asked if we would give the client more flexibility to increase the size of the pylon sign, add a reader board, which would eliminate the clutter of the portable sign on the same property. Dave stated that this would end up being a larger pylon sign. If you have a mall, with 4-5 tenants, they could put everything on the sign without the portable sign. In many cases the Minor Variance allows reader board but insists that all portable signs must be removed from the property as a condition of approval. This would be a reason to have the larger sign, to eliminate the portable sign. Some municipalities will allow 25% of the exterior facer of a building to be covered with fascia signs ... but they still take the frontage of the property and determine what size of pylon would be allowed. Problem with a large pylon sign is that the size of the pylon sign may take area away from the fascia signs allowed on the building.

Dave Petryna , wants to provide customers with opportunities to advertise and take their message out to their customers. He does not want to clutter the City with signs. National and Provincial companies have defined sign size standards used by corporate Sudbury business with their counterparts. His concern is how to fit these normal standards into our by-law.

His main concern is how the by-law deals with legal non conforming signs.

There are too many restrictions. One product is advertising sign, most cases, in existence for so long, and are grandfathered. If they have to change the face, want to be able to maintain without changing size, the City should not restrict them servicing their customers. If purpose is to integrate the by-laws then he concurs with this. If there is other intentions that he's unaware of he would like this disclosed this evening. Distance of (advertising) signs – 300 metres between signs, on highway ok, driving at 100 k/m but on a 50 or 60/km highway, such as a business section, not right that the first customer who applies gets a sign permit . It's understandable that there shouldn't be a sign every 20 m. .It's nicer to dress up a sign with cladding. By-law should allow brick as opposed to steel poles and not be counted as sign area. Cladding should not be counted as footage as well, same as an awning sign. A 50 x 10 ft awning sign, where there is just a few feet of signage City should only count the lettering, not the entire area of the awning.

Need more By-law Officers to process sign applications. Sometimes it takes a while to receive approval. Vacant land – should no longer be a sign, most billboards should go on vacant land. Most clients are from people that do not use their land for building. Is the definition of “abandoned sign” only considered if on vacant land? Check by-law. Biggest thing is legal non conforming, should be consistent, if the sign is down, should be able to maintain it, Mr. Petryna asked if the Zoning by-laws are on the web as he is still using the hard copies.

Dave stated that the purpose of the 2007-250 sign by-law was for temporary signs. If putting up portable sign, you need a permit. Banners and posters are included in this by-law. Permanent sign regulations would be moved into this existing by-law, hence this public hearing. The legal non-conforming status of any sign is in the existing 2007-250 sign by-law, under section 9 (Existing signs). The definition was quoted from the by-law. The Municipal Act also states that existing signage must remain, having respect for the fact they've (signs) been there for years and should not have to be removed. Purpose of section is to allow owner to preserve, restore, repair broken parts, etc. ... Dave Petryna can check the wording and let us know if he agrees.

Schedules are confusing because planners have changed the zoning throughout the City. Downtown Core was C8 now C6. Just like it was before, the sign by-law will be linked to the new zoning by-law. The new amended sign by-law will allow anyone to go on the schedule (via internet or hard copy) and can see what type of sign is allowed and what isn't on a property. At present, you are looking through zoning maps and each zoning by-law for the former area municipalities and determine what type of sign and where a sign can be located on a property.

Dave stated that the 300 m separation of bill board signs is from the old MTO regulations. The zoning by-laws copied this portion into their text and sign regulations. For example, in an industrial zone in town where they put up advertising sign and it's 60 m apart from any other existing advertising pylon. Yes Dave (Petryna) is correct. Should we look at removing the 300 metre separation from bill board signs in town?

Dave stated that the cladding of a pylon sign under the definition in the zoning by-law and the new sign by-law states that if the pylon face is more than 21 inches it is counted as sign area. Once the property is sold the new owner may add additional signage onto the cladded area to include phone, etc. This is why the by-law includes the area of the cladding as sign area. Will put in the notes from tonight that your request is to allow cladding but not include as sign area .

Dave Petryna , cladding only approves the aesthetic of the sign. If you look at any national sign, brand name / logo goes at the top, very seldom run advertising for the brand at the bottom. An example of this is the Holiday Inn sign is huge, brand at the top.

Dave Brouse explained that Cambrian Ford, Driver's Ed sign, was added to the cladded area and told to take it off. People will add signage to the cladded area if it is there. As for awnings, any brand new awning permit has the entire awning face counted as sign area. This way sign companies and owners can replace the entire awning or just the sign letters without purchasing a new sign permit. It is easier to re-skin it and a permit is not required. If you sell an entire awning with one word, new tenant comes in for a name change or change the colour and requires a new permit. Just like walls signs, the fascia box is paid for with the initial sign permit and then the owner or sign company can just slide the name out and put another one in and it is already paid for. Is this a good thing. DP stated not financial thing, limit of space.

Dave asked if it was better to go with the just measuring the letters on the awnings? Dave Petryna stated he prefers to calculate what is used as signage. No other persons in the meeting stated what they preferred. Dave Petryna stated that he heard in the development of the amended by-law that when he changes a sign face, he will need a permit. Dave said doesn't know where this comes from, it is not in any by-law.

Dave Petryna mentioned that vacant land – definition in amended by-law – example of an old gas station closed, pylon not being used, left there, should be able to force someone to take it down. Vacant land is a great location for advertising sign. Businesses use is actually a business sign. That's why they are assessed and pay taxes on each sign. DB thought the sign becomes vacant, but it's the property that becomes vacant. Definition for abandoned sign should be checked. DB – how long do we leave an abandoned sign – before it's removed from property?

John Grandmaison – what if you put up a deck with an awning, with nothing on it, DB not a sign as long as there is no sign face.

Everything stays the same downtown. Highway Commercial is just commercial

Mr. Coutu stated that the skirt and base on a pylon sign are nice, looks naked on a pole. DB – all issues have been raised already, maybe we can look into allowing a skirt or cladded area but no signage can go below a 4ft marked area on the skirt?

DP – if you only count for the area of the sign that has the most ground sign it takes up sign area - just the business id and logo on the cladding underneath. If you don't count that area you will not have to increase the size of a ground sign, good portion of it is the decorative . Most municipalities don't count cladding.

Coutu – still need larger sign area for logo.

DB – traffic have a lot to say about the monolith signs – site line issues, hard to pull out of an entrance safely

Coutu – side street is maybe a problem

Petryna – ground signs were not permitted in side yard or back yard, was corrected by Dave stated that this is not correct, set back and sight triangles restrictions only.

Judith Park Kelly representing Ward 12, Uptown CANN is working with the Heritage Committee and are looking at erecting signs, the size of No Parking Signs – was informed would not be part of this by-law. She also wanted to know about tourist signs. Dave directed her to the tourism section fo the City for information.

Angela Gillmore representing Downtown Village wanted to know if the sandwich board signs would be addressed in this by-law and was informed that they are included in By-Law #2007-250, whereas they have to be in front of the business, 2 m from the door and only erected during business hours.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.