

**MINUTES
PIQUA CITY COMMISSION
WORK SESSION
Thursday, September 13, 2012
7:30 P.M.**

Piqua City Commission met in a Work Session at 7:30 P.M. in the Municipal Government Complex Commission Chambers located at 201 W. Water Street. Mayor Fess called the meeting to order. Also present were Commissioners Vogt, Martin, Terry, and Wilson. Absent: None.

Detached Sign Regulations

City Manager Huff stated this originated as a Sign Permit request, and the sign code would need to be revised or altered to allow this new sign. The Commissioners stated they would like to have more information regarding the reason for the requested changes in the code with the new sign.

City Planner Chris Schmiesing provided a brief background on the damaged sign and what the current Code regulations are regarding the new requested sign. The damaged sign was considered a nonconforming use since the adoption of the sign code updates in 2007. There are provisions in the Piqua zoning code that require a nonconforming sign to be brought into conformance with the current standards whenever the existing sign structure is to be altered or rebuilt, or as in this case damaged. The current adopted standards do not include provisions to allow a high rise pole sign up to 80 feet in height with a display area up to 200 square feet when the sign is located on the same lot as the use to which the sign is accessory, and when the lot is located within 1500 feet of the centerline of Interstate 75. The proposed Paul Sherry sign alterations as presented to do conform to the reference standards. The proposed sign structure is considered a billboard, and the Piqua Zoning Code prohibits billboards. The proposed Paul Sherry sign alterations, as presented, do not conform to the referenced standards, stated Mr. Schmiesing.

Mr. Schmiesing provided pictures of the current signage and the proposed sign, along with other large signs in the area such as Red Lobster, the Marathon Station, and Cracker Barrel. Mr. Schmiesing compared the sign regulations in the surrounding communities of Troy, Sidney, and Tipp City to the City of Piqua's sign regulations.

There was discussion regarding the previous sign, and the type of sign the current sign code would allow Mr. Sherry to replace the damaged sign with. Several questions were raised concerning the possibility of grandfathering the sign in, the use of LED lights, and using the same size and style as the damaged sign was.

Jim Sherry, Applicant explained he would like to go with a smaller sign as the current damaged sign is 1260 sq. ft. and the new proposed sign is less than half the current size at 601 sq. ft. However, the City Sign Code stated this is considered a billboard sign and is prohibited.

Law Director Stacy Wall gave a brief explanation on the reason for the current sign code regulations and stated the language would need to be revised to include the new sign.

City Manager Huff stated this would have to go back to the Planning Commission for their recommendation and then would come back to the City Commission for review. Mr. Schmiesing stated new language would have to be drafted for this type of sign to be considered as a Special Use. Mayor Fess stated the Commissioners are in agreement that they would like to see the sign installed but needs some direction on the language should be at this time. City Manager Huff stated that after the language is drafted it will be taken to the Planning Commission for recommendation and will start that process as soon as possible.

Mr. Sherry inquired if it would be possible for him to start work on the new sign, or to even order the new sign? Law Director Wall stated there has been a Stop Work Order issued at this time, and further stated she was not going to advise Mr. Sherry on this legal matter.

Mr. Schmiesing noted Sign Companies have completed studies on how large signs need to be to be seen from the interstate to be effective.

Mayor Fess stated the Commissioners all agreed to have new language written to be able to approve the new sign requested by Paul Sherry Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram & RV's at this time.

Code Enforcement (Presentation)

City Manager Huff explained he wanted to present the Commissioners with some of the new tools the City would be using with Code Enforcement issues.

Health & Sanitation Director Amy Welker gave a brief overview of the changes they are planning on implementing in code enforcement areas. Ms. Welker explained they have made a change in the philosophy and the goal is to assist the community in problem solving. Some of the problem areas are; Owner-Occupied Properties, Rental Properties, and Vacant or Abandoned Properties with over 100 properties in the city this summer. Nuisance and Property Maintenance issues are very important and the city is working to reduce these. The City is taking a holistic approach to this, with the long-term goal of getting to the root of the problem not just putting Band-Aids on the problem. Ms. Welker explained the City should not be involved with these types of issues property owners need to be responsible for their own properties. The plan is to cooperate with property owners, utilize Grants/Assistance programs such as Moving Ohio Forward, work with Partners (Safeguard) Land Banks, Housing Roundtables, Community Development programs such as ADOPT-A-Program, by supporting neighborhood Associations and by Stricter Enforcement. By working together on all of these areas the City hopes to improve the Community.

Ms. Welker went on to explain the Safeguard process, presenting a power point illustration on how it this information is being reviewed and the information is being shared by various organizations. This has been a very useful tool and they are receiving very good feedback on several of the properties they have listed so far.

Future tools will consist of possible Renter Education Programs, Tax Foreclosure Issues, Enhanced Communication Strategies, and Nuisance Animal/Pest Programs in the future, explained Ms. Welker. Pest problems are an issue, but the City does not have the resources to deal with pest problems at this time, but would like to include money in the 2013 Budget for this, stated Ms. Welker.

Mayor Fess stated she would like Ms. Welker to present her presentation to the Chamber of Commerce and other groups and service organizations if possible in the future to let them know what we are doing and what our limitations are.

City Manager Huff stated communication is very important in so many ways, and by taking pride in the Community and in the neighborhoods is a very good first step in the right direction.

Commissioner Wilson stated he does not think the City is being strict enough when property owners do not respond in a timely manner. Mr. Wilson asked Ms. Welker to outline the steps for requesting work to be completed and when the nice letters stop and we proceed with legal action. Ms. Welker gave a brief timeframe on this. At this time there are about 1000 houses in the community that are in need of paint at this time, but do not have the staff to enforce this.

Brad Boehringer, Mound Street inquired if it would be possible to make the renter/tenant responsible for some of the issues. Ms. Welker explained ultimately it is the property owner's responsibility according to the City code.

City Manager Huff explained he just wanted to share with the Commission some of what is being done and to show we are trying to make positive steps.

US 36 Corridor Beautification Project (Presentation)

City Manager Huff stated they would like to give a little more information on the Rt 36 Beautification Project.

City Planner Chris Schmiesing gave a brief overview of the project stating a Stakeholders meeting was held, operating with a \$437,000 budget, with construction beginning in 2013.

City Engineer Amy Havenar introduced John Edsell of Edsell & Associates.

John Edsell stated this has been a really good team effort on this project and are very pleased to be a part of this program.

Mr. Edsell gave a brief power point presentation showing the possible concept designs to be considered. Improvements to the slopes along Rt. 36 are one of the top priorities with the possibility of reducing the slopes for safety reasons, and to enhance the visual appearance of the businesses located along the corridor. Installing approximately 750 foot of lineal walls with plantings along the terraced walls. Pedestrian crossings at Center Court, Rt.36, and Scott Drive, with the development of rain gardens and swales in the medians, and increase the width of the sidewalks along Rt. 36.

There was a lengthy discussion of the proposed designs and the cost to complete the Phase I portion of the project. Commissioner Wilson stated as he understands this Phase I does not include the walls at this time. Commissioner Martin inquired to the type of trees that would be used. Mayor Fess voiced her concern about the maintenance of the slopes. Mr. Edsell explained.

Mayor Fess thanked Mr. Edsell for his very informative presentation.

Moved by Commissioner Vogt, seconded by Commissioner Martin, to adjourn from the Piqua City Commission Work Session at 9:00 P.M. Voice vote, Aye: Wilson, Fess, Vogt, and Terry. Nay: None. Motion carried unanimously.

LUCINDA L. FESS, MAYOR

PASSED: _____

ATTEST: _____
REBECCA J. COOL
CLERK OF COMMISSION