



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH PLANNING BOARD

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Approved 11/5/13

Planning Board Meeting Minutes October 1, 2013

Members Present: Michelle Gillespie, Rick Leif, Leslie Harrison, George Pember, Theresa Capobianco

Others Present: Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Fred Lonardo, Zoning Enforcement Officer/Inspector of Buildings; John Fouracre, UniSign; Ande Lockwood, Craftworks; Kathleen & David Tendlak, Amy Poretsky

Mr. Leif called the meeting to order @ 7 pm.

2014 Annual Town Meeting Discussion Re: Zoning Bylaw Amendments

The Board reviewed a revised draft version of Ms. Joubert's document entitled "Proposed Amendments for 2014 Annual Town Meeting" that included suggested changes by Ms. Capobianco. Ms. Joubert noted the original document had been sent to the Board by email last week.

Proposed Sign Amendments

Section 7-09-040G(1) Types of Signs

(a) Downtown Business District:

[1] Lot with one (1) or two (2) tenants:

- [a] Freestanding sign: one (1) freestanding sign; **size not to exceed thirty-two (32) sq. ft.**, height not to exceed ten (10) feet as measured from the ground to the highest point of the sign or twelve (12) feet to the top of the sign structure. The freestanding sign shall indicate the name(s) of tenant(s) of the facility, in a fixed manner, and may have **an additional sixteen (16) sq. ft. of** space for changeable copy message.

[2] Lot with three (3) or more tenants.

- [a] Freestanding sign: one (1) freestanding sign for each ten (10) tenants; **size not to exceed forty (40) sq. ft.**, height not to exceed ten (10) feet as measured from the ground to the highest point of the sign or twelve (12) feet to the top of the sign structure. The freestanding sign shall indicate the name of the facility in a fixed manner, and may include space for listing of individual tenants, **and may have an additional twenty (20) sq. ft. of space for** ~~or~~ changeable copy message. When more than one (1) freestanding sign on a lot, there shall be not less than fifty (50) feet between signs and no sign shall be located so as to obstruct the viewing of any other sign.

(b) **Business East, Business West, and Business South Districts.**

[1] Lot with one (1) or two (2) tenants.

[a] Freestanding sign: one (1) freestanding sign, **size not to exceed thirty-two (32) sq. ft. in area**, height not to exceed ten (10) feet as measured from the ground to the highest point of the sign or twelve (12) feet to the top of the sign structure. The freestanding sign shall indicate the name(s) of the tenant(s), in a fixed manner, and may have **an additional sixteen (16) sq. ft. of space** for changeable-copy message.

[2] Lot with three (3) or more tenants.

[a] Freestanding sign: one (1) freestanding sign for each ten (10) tenants located on the lot; **size not to exceed fifty (50) sq. ft.**, height not to exceed ten (10) feet as measured from the ground to the highest point of the sign or twelve (12) feet to the top of the sign structure. The freestanding sign shall indicate the name of the facility in a fixed manner and may have space for listings of individual tenants **and may have an additional twenty-five (25) sq. ft. of space for** ~~or~~ changeable-copy message. When there is more than one (1) freestanding sign on a lot, there shall be not less than fifty (50) feet between signs, and no sign shall be located to obstruct the viewing of any other sign.

(c) **Highway Business District.**

[1] Lot with one (1) or two (2) tenants.

[a] Freestanding sign. Not more than one (1) freestanding sign, **size not to exceed one hundred (100) sq. ft.**, height not to exceed twenty (20) feet as measured from the ground to the highest point of the sign. The freestanding sign shall indicate the name(s) of the tenant(s), in a fixed manner, and may have **an additional fifty (50) sq. ft. of space** for changeable-copy message.

[2] Lot with three (3) or more tenants.

[a] Freestanding sign. Not more than one (1) freestanding sign for each ten (10) tenants located on the lot; **size not to exceed one hundred (100) sq. ft.**, height not to exceed twenty (20) feet as measured from the ground to the highest point of the sign. The freestanding sign shall indicate the name of the facility in a fixed manner and may have space for listings of individual tenants **and may have an additional fifty (50) sq. ft. of space for** ~~or~~ changeable-copy message. When there is more than one (1) freestanding sign on a lot, there shall be not less than fifty (50) feet between signs, and no sign shall be located to obstruct the viewing of any other sign.

Section 7-09-040H - Signs in the Industrial District

(3) Freestanding signs. Freestanding signs shall not exceed twenty (20) feet in height measured from the ground to the highest point of the sign or sign structure, and **shall not exceed forty-two (42) sq. ft. in area. An additional 20 sq. ft may be added for changeable copy message.**

All present discussed where the additional space for changeable messages should be on the freestanding sign. Since the name of the business being advertised is most always on the major portion of the sign, it was agreed the additional sign space for changeable messages should be on the bottom of the fixed free-standing sign.

In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Lonardo stated whatever freestanding signs exist today would be pre-existing and nonconforming. However, if the size of the sign was proposed to be changed, it would have to meet current zoning regulations.

Section 7-09-040G(3) – Temporary Signs

- (3) Temporary signs. Signs for the purpose of announcing a special day or event and not to exist more than **ninety (90)** ~~forty five (45)~~ days per calendar year shall be permitted. One (1) exterior movable sign, **excluding sandwich boards**, shall be limited to fifteen (15) sq. ft. One (1) temporary sign shall be permitted for each freestanding sign as permitted by this section. Temporary signs shall be placed a minimum distance of thirty (30) feet apart from each other. Temporary signs affixed to the inside of a window shall not exceed thirty (30) percent of the window area of the storefront. Except for temporary signs advertising a real estate open house, **to place a temporary sign on property other than that which is being advertised, the Applicant must have written permission from the landowner. Real estate open house signs must be placed only upon private property, with permission of the land owner, and must be removed within 12 hours of placement.**

A lengthy discussion was held regarding the number of days a temporary sign would be allowed to exist for the purpose of announcing a special day or event. Time frames suggested included 90 days, 60 days, 56 days and the current 45-day time frame. The 90-day time frame was thought to be helpful to small businesses, but some also thought a sign up for 90 days is practically a permanent sign. The 56-day time frame would allow business owners to plan their advertising year, and would give them 2 weeks per quarter to advertise, if they so desired. One member suggested the current 45-day time frame is sufficient.

Business owner Ande Lockwood, Craftworks, stated there are very few small businesses that would have a temporary sign up for 90 days straight, but rather would pick and choose those days throughout the year. Both she and Mr. Fouracre agreed they would be very happy if 90 days were allowed.

Three board members favored 56 days per year, along with requiring the applicant to get a permit from the Board of Selectmen for more than 56 days. Two members favored 90 days.

Section 7-09-040G(2)(a) Location, Freestanding Sign

(2) Location

- (a) Freestanding Sign: **A freestanding sign shall be permitted only when erected on the property which is advertised**, and no portion of the sign shall be located within the airspace above any other abutting property.

The Board discussed the location requirement for freestanding signs and temporary signs that states they will only be allowed on the property which is being advertised. Changes were suggested that allow a temporary sign to be on property other than the property it is advertising if the Applicant has written permission from the landowner to do so. In addition, the words “private property” were suggested to be removed so the requirement for real estate open house signs would be that they must be placed in a

location for which they have permission from the land owner, and must be removed within 12 hours of placement.

Ms. Joubert stated proposed language for freestanding signs could require permission from the landlord and a permit from the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to put up a sign for property other than on the premises. However, with temporary signs, this could result in a line of signs on Route 20, which is what the town wants to avoid. Regarding temporary real estate open house signs, which are different from other temporary signs in that they are directional signs, it was suggested board members might want to meet with the Board of Selectmen to present their case that the real estate profession is different because they work on Sundays.

It was noted signs for non-profit organizations do not need a permit, temporary or otherwise, however the current bylaw says it needs to be on the premises of the event.

Mr. Leif stated it is appropriate for the Board of Selectmen to be the permit granting authority in this case because they are the first ones to get complaints about signs.

The Board decided to continue the discussion on off-premises signs to the first meeting in November and Ms. Joubert will check out what other towns do about this. In the meantime, Ms. Joubert will revise the "Proposed Amendments for 2014 Annual Town Meeting" document with the changes from tonight's meeting.

Solar Bylaw

The Board held a brief discussion on solar farms (solar photovoltaic installations) and reviewed examples of text and use tables from the State, and the towns of Shrewsbury and Westborough. They discussed locating large-scale installations in certain districts and how they would be permitted. The members agreed that installations on industrial land abutting a residential district would have to have regulations requiring they be a certain distance away from residential property lines and/or residential dwellings. They also agreed they would not want to restrict/limit small installations for residential and commercial use. It was noted that the solar farm petition to be heard at Special Town Meeting on October 28th could be amended on Town Meeting floor if it includes restricting small installations for residential and commercial uses.

Approval of Minutes

The Board voted to approve the minutes of July 2, 2013 and September 26, 2013. They also voted to approve the Executive Session minutes of September 26, 2013, and to release the Executive Session minutes of September 10, 2013 and September 26, 2013

The meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debbie Grampietro
Board Secretary

