

APPROVED JUNE 8, 2016

**CITY OF EDMONDS
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES**

May 25, 2016

Chair Lovell called the meeting of the Edmonds Planning Board to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Public Safety Complex, 250 – 5th Avenue North.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Philip Lovell, Chair
Carreen Rubenkönig, Vice Chair
Matthew Cheung
Alicia Crank
Nathan Monroe
Daniel Robles
Valerie Stewart

STAFF PRESENT

Rob Chave, Planning Division Manager
Kernen Lien, Senior Planner
Jerry Bevington, Video Recorder
Karin Noyes, Recorder

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Todd Cloutier (excused)
Samuel Kleven (Student Representative)

READING/APPROVAL OF MINUTES

BOARD MEMBER CHEUNG MOVED THAT THE MINUTES OF MAY 11, 2016 BE APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. BOARD MEMBER MONROE SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AGENDA

The agenda was accepted as presented.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

No one in the audience indicated a desire to comment during this portion of the meeting.

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTOR REPORT TO PLANNING BOARD

Chair Lovell referred the Board to the written report that was provided by the Development Services Director.

Board Member Monroe asked when the Board would receive an update on the Highway 99 Subarea Plan. Chair Lovell noted that the item is identified as “pending” on the Board’s Extended Agenda, but no specific dates have been identified. Mr. Chave reported that there was a public open house on the Highway 99 Subarea Plan last week. At this time, the consultant and staff are sifting through the comments received to prepare a summary report, which can be forwarded to the Planning Board.

PUBLIC HEARING ON POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO THE EDMONDS SIGN CODE

Mr. Chave reviewed that the City Council requested that the Board provide recommendations concerning temporary portable signs in the downtown area. The focus of the hearing is to gather input on three options dealing with temporary signs. In addition to the amendments regarding temporary signs, the draft amendments also address a number of other minor clarifications and code language updates and issues. He emphasized that the Board has not singled out any of the three options as preferred, and they are interested in hearing from citizens and business owners regarding their preferences. The Planning Board will consider the public input as they formulate a recommendation for the City Council. He noted that the code language for the three options refers to temporary signs in the downtown as “pedestrian signs.” He reviewed the three options as follows:

- **Option 1** would ban pedestrian signs such as A-frames. The Board has received public comment that the signs are an eyesore, block sidewalks, etc. Option 1 is a simple solution. If pedestrian signs are not allowed, then there is no need for regulations to govern them.
- **Option 2** is a variation of the existing code, which considers pedestrian signs in the downtown to be temporary signs that are only allowed for a total of 60 days per calendar year. The 60-days can be spread out, such as once per week or focused around particular sales events. Option 2 would continue this practice, but add a new requirement for a low-cost permit so that the 60 days can be tracked and to ensure that signs are ADA compliant. Based on the existing code, these types of signs cannot be placed off of the property, and Option 2 would not change the requirement. However, Option 2 would specify where the signs can be placed and limit them to one pedestrian sign per street front, which could potentially equate to one pedestrian sign per business.
- **Option 3** would permit pedestrian signs as permanent signs, so the 60-day limit would no longer apply. It would also include specific conditions on duration (only during business hours), placement (close to the building or curb, and only one in front of the store), and how many (only one per store front). Some have commented that pedestrian signs are supplemental signage that is important for businesses, and a number of businesses use them on a regular basis. Option 3 recognizes the importance of pedestrian signs, but places restrictions on them. For example, only one would be allowed per store rather than one for each business in a building.

Mr. Chave summarized neither Option 2 or Option 3 would allow pedestrian signs to be located away from the property, which is consistent with the existing code. That means that signs could not be placed on the corner to direct pedestrians to a business down the street. Because a permit would be required, the enforcement mechanisms would be clearer.

Mr. Chave said that the Board is interested in the public’s reaction to the three alternatives, particularly the benefits of each one. They have heard why prohibiting pedestrian signs would be a good thing, and they have received some commentary about why some business think they are important.

Mr. Chave said there are also a number of proposed amendments that are not tied to pedestrian signs. These are intended to clean up and update the code language based on staff’s working knowledge of the code. For example:

- Directional signs are not specifically addressed in the code, and a proposed amendment would allow directional signs and not count them as part of the overall signage allowed for a business.
- The code specifies when illuminated text is allowed, and a proposed amendment would clarify that logos can be illuminated, as well.
- A proposed amendment clarifies that sign height is tied to the building and not what the original grade might have been.
- The existing code considers monument signs on very short poles to be pole signs. For all practical purposes these are monument signs, and a proposed amendment will make this clarification.
- The roof is the natural place for a sign on a one-story building with a mansard roof because there is no room on buildings with the storefront windows. A proposed amendment would clarify this exception for one-story buildings.
- A proposed amendment would codify what has long been the practice for calculating sign area, which provides a strong incentive for letter signs. Rather than drawing a rectangle around the entire area the letters are applied to, sign area would be calculated by measuring the actual letters. This allows the letters to be larger.

- Currently, the Architectural Design Board (ADB) can grant modifications that are tied specifically to a site. Because there are a number of unique architectural features associated with buildings in the downtown, and strictly following the code may require that these features be covered up. A proposed amendment would allow flexibility for the ADB to consider other solutions put forth by property owners. The amendment would not result in more signage, but there would be more flexibility as to how the signs can be arranged on the building.

Although he did not attend the Board's last meeting (May 11th) where the sign code was discussed, he read the minutes and met with Vice Chair Rubenkönig to review the Board's discussion. He summarized that the Planning Board's discussion has focused on the following:

1. Pedestrian signs must adhere to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
2. The Board heard a lot of feedback about the issue of clutter. Citizens have expressed concern that there are too many signs and they are being used in locations that are not adjacent to the businesses. Although pedestrian signs are currently limited to just the downtown commercial zones, the sign type if used prolifically in other commercial areas of the City, too.
3. The Board is interested in providing adequate guidelines in the code to allow for fair administration of the regulations. It is also important that the regulations can be easily understood by citizens, business owners, and staff.

Mr. Chave reported that the consultant the City hired to review the Sign Code has identified a number of sections that need to be clarified, particularly with respect to the size and configuration of signs on buildings. In addition, it has also been discussed that there are many other ways to advertise a business via social media such as Yelp, Google searches, etc. However, the real purpose of tonight's discussion is to hear from the public about the pros and cons of each of the options for regulating pedestrian signs in the downtown. After the Board forwards its recommendation to the City Council, the City Council will study the issue further and invite additional public comment before a final decision is made.

Chair Lovell reviewed the rules and procedures for the public hearing and then opened the hearing.

Kimberly Koenig, Edmonds, said she owns a business at 542 Main Street. Her background is in advertising, and she spent 20 years in advertising before opening her small business. Because her business is located above the fountain and not in the core business district, signage is a challenge. Sidewalk signage is extremely important to the success of her business, as it draws in foot traffic. She hears daily that people did not know her business was there until they saw her sign. Her business would suffer if pedestrian signs are no longer allowed. Temporary is an important way to communicate sales and special events. She voiced concern that Option 2 would significantly limit the use of pedestrian signs to advertise special events, such as the Fire Station Open House or downtown merchant events that are done as a group. Without temporary signage, advertising these events would be challenging.

Ms. Koenig suggested the Board consider an Option 4, which would allow pedestrian signs are permanent signs with some restrictions. She understands the importance of having a cohesive look, adhering to sign code rules, and maintaining ADA compliance. She suggested the City consider a universal sign design that would allow business to add their own images but maintain a cohesive look. Lastly, she commented that advertising via social media works for special events, but it does not bring in foot traffic. People walking downtown do not know her store is there until they see the pedestrian sign.

Vice Chair Rubenkönig asked if Ms. Koenig was referring to pedestrian signage when talking about a universal, cohesive look, and Ms. Koenig answered affirmatively. Vice Chair Rubenkönig asked if Ms. Koenig was referring to a specific sign when talking about bringing in foot traffic. Ms. Koenig answered that she has been using an A-frame sign that is placed next to a tree to advertise her business. In light of the proposed sign code changes, she has been trying other methods of signage that is closer to the building. However, they have not been successful because her building is set back off the street.

Pam Stuller, Walnut Street Coffee, said she is fortunate to have a great clientele, and she no longer needs A-frame signs to advertise her business. However, she is tucked in on Walnut Street off the beaten path and putting a sign at the corner of 5th and Walnut was instrumental in establishing her business. She voiced concern that the proposed sign code amendments would no longer allow signs to be placed off-premise. She also pointed out that her building is unique, and the current code does not allow signs above the roof line. That means her sign was limited to just two feet in height, and she had to modify her round logo to be an oval in order to maximize her sign space. From a marketing perspective, she is lucky she didn't fail

because the brand logo is typically instrumental to a business. It would be great if the sign code were flexible enough to address these unique situations.

Robert Boehlke, Edmonds, said he is the owner of Housewares on Main Street, as the newly-elected president of the Edmonds Downtown Alliance (ED). He said he is also a member of Ed's Environment Committee, which is conducting a preliminary study of street amenities, and gathering information about A-frame signs is a part of the study. He said ED understands that the Board has defined three pedestrian sign options for consideration, and they are seeking additional input. The Environmental Committee has examined pedestrian signage as it relates to economic vitality, but also as to how the sign types impact the rights of the public to use and enjoy the sidewalks. Safety is an issue for the general public, and an additional concern for those with mobility and visual impairments. He said the purpose of his comments is to discuss the pros and cons of A-frame signage and offer some suggestions for additional or alternative sign options.

Mr. Boehlke explained that because A-frame signs occupy public space, the stakeholders involved are business owners who may feel that the signs are their most important means of advertising and pedestrians who use the sidewalks. Most pedestrians that the committee has talked to want the sidewalks to be free of visual clutter and freestanding obstacles, and some even feel that A-frame signs should be banned. Others don't have strong feelings about the subject either way, but they are concerned about the growing quantity of signs placed on the sidewalks and wonder if there are any regulations for limiting their size and quantity. He shared a summary of the pros and cons the committee has gathered over the past month as follows:

Pros (input gathered primarily from business owners):

- A-frame signs are seen by some business owners as an important, and in some cases, the only street level marketing tool available to them. This is especially the case for those businesses that are not located on 5th Avenue or Main Street. Other business owners have said that they do not particularly like A-frames but they do not see any alternatives that are available for communicating specific messages about their businesses to pedestrians.
- Pedestrian signage is needed because, typically, wall-mounted signs placed high above eye level are not seen by pedestrian traffic walking below them. Buildings without overhead canopies do not offer a place for "blade signs," making A-frames the only eye-level option for placing a message perpendicular to, and thus readily visible to, traffic flow.
- A-frames offer businesses the opportunity to announce special offers and events.
- Businesses located off the beaten path have found A-frame signs to be effective in drawing attention to their place of business. One reported that they have documented an increase in sales when this type of sign is on the street and a decrease when it is not.

Cons (input gathered primarily from pedestrians):

- They can create visual distraction and obstruct pathways, especially on smaller sidewalks, reducing the quality of the walking experience and affecting the easy flow of pedestrian traffic.
- There is no control of materials, one was made with heavy metal and had sharp edges.
- Too many occupy the street corners, making it difficult to cross the street.
- Some are not designed to withstand winds and blow over on the sidewalk and/or into the street.
- Some are placed too close to the curb so you can't open your car door.
- A-frames advertising a condo in Firdale Village are brought into town and left out overnight.
- It is difficult to navigate around them with a baby carriage or stroller.
- It is difficult to push a wheel chair around them, especially when sidewalks are also cordoned off for restaurant eating areas.
- A-frames are starting to creep back, is there no limit to them?
- A-frames serve a function, but are difficult to control.

Mr. Boehlke summarized that the subject of A-frame signs seems to elicit passionate and diverse opinions, and the committee has also noticed the challenges involved for the City when attempting to secure a consistent and fair approach to pursuing breaches of A-frame regulations as stated in the existing sign code. He explained that the issues of visual and physical clutter, as well as concern for public safety, are the reasons the committee began to seek other options. While the committee does not recommend that A-frames be banned, the thought is that, given additional choices, there will be an incentive for

businesses to choose something more appropriate to their needs and more appealing to the customer that they are trying to attract (pedestrians). Although the initial options are preliminary, the committee has identified a couple of ideas that look promising:

- A. One idea is that each business, especially those located on side streets and at the edges of the downtown core, would be given the opportunity to have a removable sign hung from a permanent directional post and panel structure, which would be strategically placed at the street corners out of the pedestrian path. This sign type would be designed to be compatible with the existing historic light standard in downtown or become part of the “family of sign” types that the City has recently installed around town.
- B. Another alternative to A-frame signs for street businesses is to offer changeable mini-projecting signs about the size of a small A-frame sign. These would be doubled sided and attached to the building. They would be similar to A-frame signs in the sense that the message would be perpendicular to pedestrian traffic and changeable; but unlike A-frame signs, they would not impede pedestrian traffic.
- C. Because stanchion signs typically take up 50% less sidewalk space than A-frame signs, they would be an excellent alternative. Also, at the ADA ideal height of 5 feet above grade, they would be less of a tripping hazard than the 3-foot A-frame signs.
- D. An additional pedestrian level sign option should be made available for businesses located on the second floor. One idea would be to allow a building-mounted sign at their entry door. This option would be attached to the wall of their building and would be limited in size and quantity.

Mr. Boehlke concluded his remarks by proposing that a long-term solution be developed providing a framework of wayfinding and informational signs with a cohesive, attractive and standardized framework within which each business may present their personalized message. He summarized that the most successful solution will have the support of both businesses and the walking public. The goal should be to make the town visually inviting and pedestrian friendly and to maximize the ability of small businesses to community with and attract customers.

Judy Salinas, Edmonds, said she is the owner of Glazed and Amazed in Edmonds at 514 Main Street. She currently has a professionally-made A-frame sign that is located next to her window and changed up on a regular basis. However, the sign is only out during business hours. She said the A-frame sign helps people find her business, and she uses it to advertise special events. She voiced support for Option 3 and questioned how staff would control the 60-day limit proposed in Option 2. She summarized that small business struggle to stay in business so anything that can help them get the word out and get people to stop in is important. She said her business has been located in downtown Edmonds for 11 years, and it would be a huge disservice to her business to prohibit pedestrian signs altogether. Her business has an awning, which makes it difficult to see the name of her business other than the A-frame sign.

Board Member Monroe asked if Ms. Salinas has considered the option of using a blade sign to advertise her business. Ms. Salinas answered that she has a small blade sign, but it does not allow her to advertise events.

Debbie Rosenfelt, Edmonds, said she has lived in the City since 2001 and has been a business owner (Snap Fitness) since February 27, 2008. She said she is very blessed to have her business located at the corner of 5th Avenue and Walnut Street, since she is able to place a sign on the corner without blocking pedestrian traffic. She explained that she always asks new customers how they learned about her business, and 95% of them indicated that they drove by and saw her sign out front. She commented that visibility is very important. When people drive down 5th Avenue and stop at the light, her sign near the corner is very easy for people to see. The sign is used to advertise personal training and classes. The sign on the building is just general, and the A-frame sign advertises that the business is more than a gym.

Ms. Rosenfelt recalled that at the last meeting, it was suggested that businesses use window signs to advertise. She tested this option out and found that members of the club took down the signs because they wanted to be able to see out the window while they were using the equipment. Also, when cars park on the street in front of the business, they block the view of the signs. She emphasized that it is imperative for business to have signs that are visible at eye level.

Vice Chair Rubenkönig asked Ms. Rosenfelt to describe her pedestrian sign. Ms. Rosenfelt said it is a stand-up sign with a sand base so it doesn't blow over. The sign can be changed up with professional inserts. Vice Chair Rubenkönig observed that the sign would best fit the description of a stanchion sign.

Board Member Monroe asked how clutter could be addressed at the corner. Ms. Rosenfelt said there are four corners at the intersection, and her business is the only one that uses the location now. She noted that her building is located at the corner, so the sign would actually be considered on-premise. The mixed use building has commercial on the ground floor and residential above. Signs would have to be located next to the street rather than on the sidewalk since there is a garden area on both sides of 5th and Walnut.

Joan Archer, said she has owned Aria Studio Gallery on Main Street for 15 years. She is also a member of the Downtown Edmonds Merchants Association (DEMA) and ED. She agreed with the concerns raised by the previous speakers, and her overall thought is that A-frame signs make businesses more visible. She said she puts out an A-frame sign on occasion, and it is very helpful in attracting customers to her business. It is located next to the building and is just visible from the fountain, but it does not disrupt pedestrian access. While other methods of advertising are good, it is important to keep in mind that downtown businesses have a number of other expenses: ED, Artwalk, and increased business taxes. She expressed her belief that A-frame signs have their place, but they should not be allowed to impair access or cause major issues. They should also be limited in size.

Ms. Archer questioned why pedestrian signs are being discussed as a problem, except perhaps clutter. On the other hand, businesses are an integral part of the community, and they bring people to Edmonds. There are already a number of nit-picky requirements that businesses must deal with. While some restrictions are necessary, the City should be careful before placing additional requirements on businesses.

Denise Schwind, Edmonds, said she has been a resident of the City for 26 years and owns PUR Skin Clinic in downtown Edmonds. She commented that she has actually learned about many of the businesses in the downtown because of the pedestrian signs on the street. She said that when new patients come in, she asks how they learned about the clinic. Most were referred by existing patients, but 35% came in after seeing the A-frame sign on the street. Prohibiting pedestrian signs would impact her business and the ability for it to grow in Edmonds. She said her business is located in front of a bus stop, which inhibits visibility of her building sign. She has a small pedestrian sign on the sidewalk, and people walking by see the sign and come into her business. The sign does not impede pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

Vice Chair Rubenkönig asked why kind of pedestrian sign Ms. Schwind uses, and she replied that it is an A-frame sign that is only out during business hours.

Randy Hutchens, Edmonds, said he has been a resident of Edmonds for 68 years. He lives and works in downtown Edmonds, and is the owner of SnoKing Signs. He commented that numerous good ideas have been put forward by the business owners. He said he reviewed the sign code and found it to be confusing. He suggested that it should be written as bullet points that identify exactly what is and is not allowed. He suggested that perhaps the preferred option could be a combination of Options 2 and 3, which would require a low-cost permit, but consider the pedestrian signs permanent. He felt this approach could be enforced by using a sticker that obtained via the permit and placed on the actual sign. He said there are a variety of pedestrian sign types, and the code language should not specifically out any one type. A combination of Options 2 and 3 would eliminate the 60-day limitation so people would no longer need to stress over how many days a sign is out, and the low-cost permit would make enforcement easy. He said he likes Option 2 because it specifically identifies where the signs can be located. He felt that pedestrian signs should be allowed, but only during business hours.

Natalie Shippen, Edmonds, commented that the proliferation of temporary commercial signs on streets of the bowl is recent and began four years ago when spots of signs began to appear here and there. Edmonds now looks as though it has an advancing case of the measles. The owners of the "spots" claim that they are necessary because, for some reason or another, their businesses aren't visible enough. However, none of these owners claim that their visibility problem developed after they purchased or leased their properties. The potential problem already existed. Business, itself cautions that the first rule for a successful business is location, location, location. If local merchants chose the wrong location, that is their responsibility. Adjusting the sign code to accommodate private misjudgments is not the role of a city council. If an owner is certain that he is being wronged, his remedy is the Hearing Examiner, not the ADB as has been suggested.

Ms. Shippen said that, so far, no one argues that temporary commercial signs embellish the appearance of Edmonds. Reducing the attractiveness of a pleasing residential community on a gamble that ugly commercial signs will attract more customers to a business would be a poor decision. It sacrifices a public value and the public gets nothing in return. The acceptance of more and permanent commercial street signs, as recommended in Options 2 and 3, would be a step backwards in Edmonds' history. The Planning Board should choose Option 1. She encouraged them to keep the existing code, with amendments that prohibit all temporary commercial signs through Edmonds except for 60 consecutive days one-time only for grand opening events. Prohibited signs would include A-frames, sandwich boards, stanchions, banners, streamers, posters, clusters of lights, flags, pennants, and balloons. The simplest and best way to regulate temporary commercial signs is to not allow them except for one business opening period.

Ms. Shippen suggested that Edmonds examine the purpose of the sign code. The City's current sign code is dishonest for those who oppose signs, as well as those who use them for business purposes. As an example, she read from the City of Carmel, California's sign code, which states that, *"This chapter establishes standards and guidelines to preserve and enhance the appearance of the community as a place in which to live and work. These standards and guidelines ensure that signage is used as identification and not as advertisement or a notice-attracting device. Furthermore, these standards prevent an excessive number of signs, avoid visual clutter and eliminate hazards to pedestrians and motorists brought about by distracting signs."*

Don Hall, Edmonds, said he and his wife have been merchants in downtown Edmonds for 20 years, and they have used A-frame signs to advertise their business. They used to have two, and now use just one because they did not feel it was appropriate to have one at the corner, too. Their current A-frame sign is next to the store and is used as part of the front display. He commented that A-frame signs can be very attractive, and if businesses use imagination, the signs can excite those who see them. He pointed out that prohibiting pedestrian signs has not worked well in other areas of Edmonds because, as mentioned, they are all over the City when they are really only allowed in the downtown. He also questioned how Options 2 and 3 would be enforced. The City only has one Code Enforcement Officer, and he is not available on weekends. He noted that on weekends, particularly during the summer months, there are numerous signs around the fountain advertising special events. He suggested that blight is more of an issue with these signs than the signs that are placed on the sidewalk by local merchants. He agreed that the pedestrian signs should be located in front of the businesses and should only be out during business hours. However, A-frame signs are very visible to people driving down the street. He said he has a blade sign, but it is not highly visible to passing cars because it is blocked by the awning. Without the A-frame sign, drivers would have to look up to identify his business, but A-frame signs can be placed at eye level so they are easier for people to see.

Mr. Hall said he would like the Board to figure out a way to make the sign code enforceable. He suggested that the existing code, if enforced properly, would work well with just a few small tweaks. He recommended that pedestrian signs should be considered permanent rather than limited to 60 days. He commented that most business owners do not have a clear understanding of the City's current sign code requirements and how they are applied. He suggested that Option 3 would be a good approach, along with education and enforcement.

Chair Lovell asked if there was anyone in the audience who has a business outside of the downtown business district, and none raised their hands. Chair Lovell asked if all those present had reviewed the three options currently on the table, and all indicated affirmatively. Chair Lovell summarized that a few citizens comment on the pros and cons and indicated which option he/she preferred, but he is perplexed that few alternative solutions were presented.

THE PUBLIC PORTION OF THE HEARING WAS CLOSED.

Chair Lovell announced that the Board would continue its discussion about the sign code at their next meeting. At that time, they will consider the public input and formulate a recommendation to the City Council. Mr. Chave explained that code amendments are legislative actions, which do not have as stringent of requirements as quasi-judicial actions. He invited Board members and citizens to continue to submit their comments and suggestions to the City. Those that are received by Thursday, June 2nd will be included in the Board's June 8th meeting packet for consideration. He emphasized that the Board's continued discussion on June 8th is not scheduled as a public hearing, but members of the public would have the opportunity to provide oral comments during the "General Public Comment" portion of the meeting.

APPROVED

LAND DIVISION CODE UPDATE

Mr. Chave reported that staff has been reviewing the subdivision code, in particular the work provided by the consultant. At some point, the consultant (Makers) will be present to walk the Board through the proposed code changes. The work is in progress, but it is complicated and staff is very business with permitting as well. Staff will provide an update on the process on June 22nd, but the public hearing will be scheduled at a later date.

CONTINUED BOARD DISCUSSION ON POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO THE EDMONDS SIGN CODE

Chair Lovell encouraged the Board Members to recall the public comments that have been provided to date and review the meeting minutes in preparation for their continued discussion on June 8th. He advised the Board of his discussion with Council President Johnson, in which she indicated that the City Council would like to hear from the Board regarding the sign code amendments soon. They are particularly interested in hearing the Board's feedback regarding the pros and cons of each of the alternatives. However, he said he is not prepared to make a recommendation at this time. He needs more time to review the information that has been presented to date.

Vice Chair Rubenkönig said she would like to hear the Board Members' thoughts on the issues that were raised during the public hearing, particularly those that the Board has not previously considered. For example:

- An individual talked about how, particularly on weekends, the corners around the foundation are cluttered by out-of-town exhibitors and not so much by the local merchants. She hadn't heard before that some of the clutter is created by those who are not store merchants in Edmonds.
- An individual suggested that the City consider a uniform and cohesive look for pedestrian signs in the downtown. However, she can't recall if the individual was referencing only A-frame signs only.
- The Board has discussed stanchion signs as an alternative type of pedestrian sign, and one individual commented that her stanchion-type sign stands five feet tall and has a smaller profile than an A-frame sign.
- The discussion to date has been focused on the pedestrian experience, and they haven't discussed how important it is for a business's sign package to be visible to cars. The Board has repeatedly heard that signs on the buildings are not visible to drivers, and neither are blade signs. Pedestrian signs are vital for this purpose.

Board Member Robles said Mr. Boelke's comments, which were collected from business owners and pedestrians on the street, were particularly insightful in identifying the community needs. The sign maker's comments (Mr. Hutchens) were also helpful. Board Member Monroe said there appears to be significant value to the signs, and right now the value is going all to the business owners. He referred to the "green dot" concept that was suggested earlier by Board Member Robles and asked if the intent is to allow businesses to bid for the sign locations.

Board Member Robles expressed his belief that if the sign code cannot fit on one page, then there should not be a sign code or there should not be signs. Perhaps they could use a simple approach that allows pedestrian signs up to three square feet in the downtown, and then allow the business owners to figure out how to use the signs. He expressed his belief that the "green dot" approach would give a point of compromise by identifying exactly how many signs there can be in the downtown, and then the City could then let the community manage how the signs will be used.

Board Member Cheung asked if it would be possible to solicit feedback from the Board Members regarding their preferred option. He said it would be helpful for him to understand which option each Board Member prefers and why. Mr. Chave answered that the Board cannot do a straw poll outside of the meeting, but they can offer their opinions and provide additional feedback to staff, and staff can email the information to each of the Board Members. For example, the Board Members could weigh in on which option they prefer as a baseline for the discussion, what are the pros and cons of each of the options, and the public suggestions that they want to pursue. One concept the Board could pursue would be directional posts with interchangeable signs. Perhaps there could be strategic locations for public-funded signs at the corners where businesses would be allowed to hand directional signs for their businesses. This would partially eliminate the need for off-

premise A-frame signs to direct people to businesses down the street. Another idea would be to encourage blade signs not just under canopies, but projecting out from the businesses with opportunities for changeable information. The location would be permanent, but the information could be changed to fit a business's purpose.

Mr. Chave emphasized that the comments provided by the Board via email would become part of the record and would be referenced by the Board at their next meeting. The Board voiced general support for this approach.

Vice Chair Rubenkönig said it is not difficult for her to identify the pros and cons of each of the options, but it is more difficult for her to identify a specific option as preferred at this time. Board Member Cheung agreed that the pros and cons are clear, but the bigger thing is deciding whether the pros are more important than the cons and visaversa. The discussion should focus on the vision for Edmonds and what is valued more. On one side, pedestrian signs provide a benefit to the businesses in the form of advertising; but they also result in visual clutter. At some point the Board will have to decide if they care more about protecting the commercial business than they care about maintaining the nice, quiet street. Some see Edmonds as a residential community and others as a business community. He suggested that the Board should narrow the discussion down to one option soon, so that they can begin to focus on the specific pros and cons.

Board Member Stewart said she appreciates the list provided by Vice Chair Rubenkönig of the things the Board had not thought of before. She said that if the Board decides to move forward with Option 2, she likes the sticker idea that was suggested by Mr. Hutchens. She agreed with Board Member Cheung that the issue is somewhat subjective. What is clutter to one person may be pleasing to another. She said she visited Town of Winslow last weekend and took pictures of the main street looking to the west. She submitted the pictures to staff to distribute to the Board. She explained that Winslow is an example of an upscale community where there is character in the way signs are done. Some are artistic and some are not, and there are different shapes, sizes and positions. While she found this approach aesthetically pleasing, it might bother others. She suggested that Edmonds has the same problem as Winslow in directing pedestrians to the businesses that are not located on the main streets. She also agreed with Board Member Cheung that the Board should narrow their discussion down to one of the options, and she would prefer Option 3 over Option 2.

Chair Lovell said he has always thought of the downtown as a walkable business district, and he never considered that drivers would be looking for a business based on A-frame sign on the sidewalk. He suggested that this would be inconsistent with what the City is trying to achieve for its downtown.

Chair Lovell cautioned against creating specific sign guidelines that apply only to the BD zones and not to the other commercial zones in the City. He noted that, although not allowed by the current code, businesses in these other commercial zones also use pedestrian signs. Mr. Chave agreed and suggested that the problem is more of an enforcement issue. At this time, code enforcement is compliant driven, and perhaps the Board could include in its recommendation and request that the City enforce the sign code more stringently.

Board Member Crank observed that the overall tone of those who spoke during the hearing was defensive, and it seems that the business owners did not feel that the Board was trying to mitigate the situation as opposed to viewing pedestrian signs as vital to businesses. She said her sense is that pedestrian signs are important to the vitality of the businesses, and business owners are concerned that the Board will prohibit their use. She cautioned the Board to address the issue from a community standpoint in which the businesses and the citizens work together to come up with an amenable solution as opposed to prohibit the signs altogether. She commented that although the Board has had a lot of discussion about the pros and cons of pedestrian signs, their comments appear to be third party rather than their observations as visitors to the downtown. She said she would love to hear from her fellow Board Members regarding their experiences in the downtown, particularly related to signage.

Board Member Crank also agreed that the Board should narrow their discussion down to a preferred option, and she would support Option 3 as a good place to start. She asked how many buildings in the downtown have multiple businesses within a single storefront. This would be important to information to have if the Board decides to continue forward with Option 3, which would limit pedestrian signs to one per storefront. Mr. Chave said there are a number of buildings that have office space behind the retail space. He noted one situation where a monument sign has been provided by the building owner with space for individual businesses to advertise, but not all of the businesses in the building have taken advantage of this opportunity. This is likely because the panels are costly and small, and A-frame signs provide more advertising space. He

cautioned that if the City were to allow one pedestrian sign per business, the proliferation of signs could become problematic. He emphasized that, as currently proposed, Option 3 would limit pedestrian signs to one per storefront. He reminded the Board that Mr. Boehlke from ED provided a number of ideas that the Board could consider. He also recalled that several business owners indicated that they use pedestrian signs to advertise special events, and they believe this is the only form of alternative signage that will work for that purpose. Several business owners also voiced concern that their businesses are not located on the main streets, and signs are needed to direct people to their locations. Perhaps another sign type, such as a directional post with interchangeable signs could be used to resolve this problem. He also reminded the Board that the City has been accepted to partner with Western Washington University during the next academic year, and projects on the list include working with ED and the City's Economic Development Department to identify a wayfinding sign program, as well as program for mobile devices that would allow businesses to advertise the services and products they offer, as well as special events. He summarized that there are multiple ways to achieve some of the things that the pedestrian signs are used for today, but a one-size-fits all approach will not likely work.

Board Member Crank asked if there are enough storefronts with multiple business that Option 3 would be a significant problem. Mr. Chave answered that the term "storefront" may need to be better defined, and the code would need to be more specific that the business with the storefront would be allowed the sign, and the businesses behind would have to use other signage options or negotiate with the owner of the storefront business to use a portion of the pedestrian sign.

Vice Chair Rubenkönig referred to the letter the Board received from the Ed's Environment Committee, which suggests that the ADB be given the authority to address special circumstances. She said it was her understanding that this discretionary authority is currently given to the Director. Mr. Chave said there is a provision in the current code that allows business owners to go to the ADB if they want to modify the sign standards, but the criteria is only related to the site. The letter suggests that building design is also an important factor and the City should allow some flexibility to address these special circumstances, as well.

Vice Chair Rubenkönig said that, prior to serving on the Planning Board, she also served on the ADB for seven years. At that time, the ADB reviewed signs, buildings colors and other aesthetic factors of a building but they were not allowed to use personal preference as the basis for their decisions. They could only consider whether or not the proposal was consistent with the code requirements. Along that same line, she believes her responsibility, as a Planning Board Member, is to listen to the citizens but not necessarily address her own personal preferences. Her intent is to listen and do what she can to provide the City Council with a reasonable approach to the issue. People have much invested in the issue of signs, and she has not yet decided on a position she can recommend and encourage. She said she has shopped in downtown Edmonds for 30 years, and she has seen all kinds of signage and marketing strategies, but her taste for what is attractive will probably not have any bearing in her decision.

Mr. Chave said he did not get the impression that those who spoke during the hearing were defensive. They were trying to do exactly what the agenda item asked them to do. The Planning Board is seeking input on the various options, and they want to know what the public likes and dislikes about each one. Those who spoke did not seem threatened or put upon in any way.

Board Member Crank clarified that she was asking the Board Members to share their personal experiences, and not necessarily their personal opinions. She would like to hear their observations as they have walked down Main Street and other streets in the downtown business district. She is not asking them to offer judgment, but just hear what they noticed as they visited the downtown.

Chair Lovell reminded the Board of Ms. Shippen's previous comment that referred the Board to the sign code from the City of Mountlake Terrace. He also reminded the Board that they agreed to send their ideas and priorities relative to the sign code to Ms. Cunningham so they can be distributed to the Board Members in preparation for their continued discussion on June 8th.

Board Member Cheung said he is not opposed to Board Members using their personal experiences or opinions when making recommendations to the City Council. They are not elected officials, and they were appointed to give their different points of view and represent the community. The Board is not making any binding decisions; they are simply giving the City Council a recommendation that gives voice to certain demographics and trying to convey what the public has said. He said he loves the downtown area. Edmonds is not just a residential community. There is also a ferry terminal and a thriving business area,

and he wants to do as much as he can to support the business community. He said he would rather see A-frame signs advertising thriving businesses, than for-lease or going out of business signs advertising empty space.

Vice Chair Rubenkönig asked if staff would be able to put the comments provided by the Board into draft language that the Board can consider at their next meeting and forward a recommendation to the City Council. Mr. Chave answered that staff will provide some reaction to the hearing and some additional suggestions for what might be included in the code language. The next step would be for the Board to dive into the details and identify the features they want to see in the recommended code language. This would enable staff to prepare draft code language for the Board to review prior to forwarding a recommendation to the City Council. Hopefully, the Board can reach a consensus on a preferred option at their next meeting. The preferred option could then be brought back in draft code format for the Board to take final action on.

REVIEW OF EXTENDED AGENDA

Chair Lovell announced that in addition to a public hearing on a proposed rezone of property from Open Space (OS) to Single Family Residential (RS-8), the Board will also continue their discussion on the sign code on June 8th. The June 22nd meeting agenda will include an update on the Land Division Code and the Highway 99 Subarea Plan.

PLANNING BOARD CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Lovell did not provide any additional comments.

PLANNING BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

The Board meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

APPROVED