

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners met in special session on Monday, February 11, 2008, at 5:15pm in the Board Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, 348 South Main Street, Sparta, North Carolina. The purpose of this meeting is to have discussions about the proposed off-site sign control ordinance.

Present: Chair Ken Richardson, Vice-Chair Warren Taylor, Commissioner Randy Miller, Commissioner Doug Murphy, Commissioner Milly Richardson, County Manager Don Adams, and Clerk to the Board Karen Evans.

Chair Ken Richardson called the meeting to order at 5:18pm.

County Manager Don Adams explained the purpose of this meeting regarding the ordinance including his conversations with the Commissioners individually. He stated he needed direction from the Board. He talked about items for the Board to consider.

Commissioner Warren Taylor talked about originally his concern was big billboard signs. He further talked about sizes of big signs and the permitting process.

County Manager Don Adams explained that there are two different issues.

Commissioner Doug Murphy talked about the sizes of the signs. He stated that the ordinance was a lot of work. He talked about the Board needs to decide if all signs are going to be looked at.

Commissioner Randy Miller stated that he thinks the Board should have thought it through more before giving it to the Planning Board. He said the Board needs to direct them a little better.

Commissioner Milly Richardson agreed with Commissioner Miller and stated in the future the Board should be more specific about the Board's intention.

Chair Ken Richardson stated that he doesn't disagree that this is a good ordinance, but he thinks the County should only regulate larger signs.

County Manager Don Adams stated that the two boards aren't going to agree on everything. He further stated that the Planning Board did what was asked but any ordinance will be reviewed by the Commissioners and the public. He asked the Board which way they want to proceed.

Commissioner Milly Richardson pointed out that addressing immediate concerns now but the smaller signs will be a concern later. She said to do it now while it is in front of the Board.

Chair Ken Richardson asked about on premise or off-premise.

County Manager Don Adams stated this applies to only off-site signs.

Chair Ken Richardson talked about probably 1/3 of signs would be regulated by this.

The Board of Commissioners talked about the requirements of the ordinance.

County Manager Don Adams stated that he wants the Commissioners to understand the prohibitions in the ordinance. He reviewed the prohibitions.

Commissioner Milly Richardson talked about how tourism and ascetics is coming into play here and will become more so.

Chair Ken Richardson talked about there are two different ordinances.

County Manager Don Adams explained the differences in the two versions of the ordinance. He provided the Board copies of the revised ordinance.

Commissioner Doug Murphy stated that he doesn't see this as a negative

process because this is a way that information gets decided.

County Manager Don Adams talked about the revised version is not what the Planning Board recommended. He reviewed the two ordinances; signs exempted, signs prohibited, off-site advertising regulations, sign maintenance, nonconforming signs including registering nonconforming signs. He explained that there isn't any permitting in this ordinance. He stated that the remainder of the ordinance deals with things like administration, enforcement, appeals, penalties, definitions and variances. He stated that it is up to this Board to look at a comprehensive version or another version.

Chair Ken Richardson stated that he has received a few calls from people about putting notices on trees. He gave examples.

County Manager Don Adams read a portion of the ordinance that states signs constructed or maintained upon trees are prohibited. He stated this is in both ordinances.

Commissioner Milly Richardson and County Manager Don Adams discussed that the permitting process is gone from the revised version. She asked if there is no permit then how will the County know when signs appear. He explained that it would be by what the staff sees or what the public sees. They discussed the workload for the Planning Department.

Commissioner Doug Murphy asked how someone knows when a sign was put up without a permitting process.

County Manager Don Adams explained the process under the revised ordinance.

Commissioner Doug Murphy talked about the need to be very clear on the permitting process.

County Manager Don Adams stated that he doesn't think there will be more time spent on this ordinance than the other ordinance. He further stated that there are more regulations on the other ordinance. He talked about the pros and cons to the permitting process. He said that he wants this Board to tell him what to do. He stated that the revised ordinance can't be above 128 square feet, lighted, obstructing views or within certain distances to certain structures.

Commissioner Doug Murphy asked someone to clarify whether seasonal off-site temporary signs are prohibited. He gave an example of choose and cut signs.

County Manager Don Adams says it is as it is written.

Commissioner Milly Richardson read a portion of the ordinance saying it is exempted.

County Manager Don Adams stated that needs to be clearer.

Chair Ken Richardson asked the Board which ordinance they want to look at.

Commissioner Warren Taylor stated that it sounds like the majority is in favor of the original document.

Commissioner Milly Richardson stated that if everyone feels like we can have an ordinance without permitting, she doesn't have problems with the revised ordinance.

Chair Ken Richardson stated that he is not in favor of permitting.

Planner Kathy Murphy stated that she is in favor of permitting as a way of enforcing it.

Commissioner Milly Richardson gave an example of signs without permits.

County Manager Don Adams explained that the County is going to be dealing with people who didn't get a permit.

Commissioner Randy Miller asked if a sign was built without a permit and if it meets the guidelines can someone just pay for a permit and go on. He asked how this is going to be enforced.

County Manager Don Adams stated that if the sign falls in the scope of the ordinance, then the permitting process would be followed in his opinion.

Commissioner Warren Taylor asked the Chair to call for a vote on which ordinance.

County Manager Don Adams talked about the permitting process.

Chair Ken Richardson asked if the County Manager could combine both ordinances.

Commissioner Warren Taylor talked about the need to decide which version the Board is holding the public hearing about so everyone won't be talking about both versions.

The Board talked about the revised ordinance with the permitting process.

Chair Ken Richardson stated that if the Board agrees with 90% of the revised ordinance, then the issue about permitting can be decided next week.

County Manager Don Adams stated that he can put the permitting back in.

Commissioner Doug Murphy asked does the Board have to decide now because he would like to review the revised ordinance before making a decision.

County Manager Don Adams stated that he will put the permitting process back in the revised ordinance. He talked about after the public hearing; the Board will have to decide which ordinance to go with or to go with neither ordinance.

Being no further business, Commissioner Warren Taylor made a motion to adjourn at 6:05pm. Commissioner Milly Richardson seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

Attest:

Ken Richardson
Chairman