

MEMORANDUM

TO: Karen Vasquez

FROM: Deborah Albert

DATE: March 7, 2017

CC: Gabriela Acurio, Steve Cover, Bob Duffy, Claude Williamson

SUBJECT: Status of BID sign regulations requests included on CPHD work plan

The following summarizes Zoning Ordinance regulations and pending Planning Division work plan items related to requests outlined in a memo from the Rosslyn, Ballston and Crystal City BIDs. AED has posed the following questions to CPHD in order to prepare responses to these requests:

1. What is the 'baseline' on these issues – i.e. what are we already doing or have planned?
2. What – if anything – do you foresee being in staff's FY18 work plan?

In summary (details are provided below):

- One request (retail sign area) is currently included in the 2017-18 work plan;
- A second request (non-commercial "wayfinding" signs) is already addressed in the Zoning Ordinance through 1) an amendment adopted in June 2016 that allows the County Manager to place non-commercial signs in the public right-of-way, subject to County Board approval; and 2) through existing regulations, that allocate sign area on a property-wide basis, allowing it to be distributed between commercial and non-commercial signs (on private property), among allowed sign types, as desired by the property owner.
- Other requests for commercial sign area revisions are not anticipated to be included in the 2017-18 work plan.

Request #1: “Commercial signage”

2017-18 Planning Division Work Plan item (in progress): Staff is currently working on an amendment that would revise calculation of sign area in commercial/mixed-use districts, as a function of amount of retail tenant frontage (second-story, plaza or park) that is not counted under current regulations. This amendment would be applicable in selected commercial/mixed-use districts on a County-wide basis. Anticipated schedule is as follows:

- March 14: ZOCO
- March 22 (TBD): NVBIA/NAIOP
- March: other outreach, as determined appropriate
- April or May, 2017: County Board Request to Advertise
- May or June, 2017: Planning Commission recommendation and County Board consideration of amendments

The following are **not** included in the 2017-18 work plan:

- Additional sign area for internal mall businesses or other businesses with no external frontage
- Additional sign types in commercial/mixed-use districts
- Special sign regulations applicable only to BIDs or other defined commercial/mixed-use areas
- Additional allowances for temporary commercial signs. Creativity and placemaking through signs is both allowed and encouraged for all signs under the current regulations, as the sign regulations cover only sign location, sign size and sign type – they do not cover content or design.

Request #2: “Non Commercial Signage (Wayfinding)”

On June 18, 2017, the County Board adopted amendments to allow “sign systems” in the public right-of-way (§13.9.2). This provision, previously limited to banners, is now broadly applicable to all sign types, as determined appropriate by the County. **The provision could allow, for example, noncommercial wayfinding signs in the public right-of-way.** Applicability, purpose, requirements and approval process, as articulated in the staff report

(http://arlington.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=3151&meta_id=145270#Page=5 under the “*Other changes to policy*” heading), are summarized below.

Applicability

- The provision is applicable only to signs in the public ROW and only in areas where there are adopted sector, area or revitalization plans, or on Arlington School Board properties.
- The signs allowed under this provision are owned by the County, but may be sponsored or maintained by, for example, BIDs, or other entities as determined by the County.
- County Board approval is required. **The applicant requesting County Board approval of sign system is the County Manager (staff).**

Purpose

- Sign systems have been used in the past to attach banners to street light poles on Columbia Pike, and in Rosslyn and Crystal City, to identify neighborhoods, sponsored and maintained by the respective BID/Partnership organization.
- **The County could use this provision to erect noncommercial wayfinding signs, for example, and could include sponsorship/maintenance agreements from BIDs.**

Requirements

- All sign types are allowed under this provision, as determined appropriate by the County Manager for a particular location. Sign types may include banners, freestanding signs, for example, and a range of other sign types.
- **Content of the signs is limited to noncommercial content only.**
- An application is required, and timelines are the same as for other zoning applications requiring approval by the County Board. The applicant is the County (has been AED in the past, who has worked with interested BIDs to propose/design/maintain sign systems).

Process

- **Any entity wishing to propose/sponsor a sign system must work with County staff, to propose that staff request approval from the County Board to install a sign system.**
- **County Board approval of a request results in authorization from the County Board for the County Manager to install a sign system.**
- The ordinance approving the signs regulates the specific size, location and physical characteristics of the signs.

County agencies reviewing the application may include: AED, CPHD, DES (and other, as appropriate, depending on location and characteristics of proposed signs).