

# Minutes of the Joint Key West Historic Architectural Review Commission and Key West Planning Board Signage Workshop held on March 28, 2013

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| <b>Call Meeting To Order</b>   |  |
| HARC Chairman Rudy Molinet called the March 28, 2013 Signage Workshop to order at <b>6:05 pm</b> at Old City Hall, at 510 Greene Street, Key West. |  |
| <b>Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag</b>  |  |
| <b>Introductions Roll Call</b>   |  |
|  | <p>HARC Commissioners present include: Theo Glorie, Maggie Gutierrez, Michael Miller, Patrick Wright, Vice Chairman Donna Bosold, and Chairman Rudy Molinet.</p> <p>Planning Board members present include: James Gilleran, Sam Holland, and Vice Chairman Tim Root.</p> <p>Also, present from City staff: Assistant City Attorney Ron Ramsingh, Planning Director Don Craig, Historic Perseveration Planner Enid Torregrosa, and Recording Secretary Jo Bennett.</p>  |
| <b>Presentation from Chair – Objectives and Goals</b>  |  |
|  | <p>Mr. Molinet opened the meeting thanking everyone for their attendance and outlined the objectives and goals for the meeting. Mr. Molinet explained the current issues and what will be happening beginning with this Workshop and moving through the various steps necessary to make changes to the current Sign Ordinance. Mr. Molinet encouraged everyone to share their thoughts and comments concerning the much needed changes. Mr. Molinet turned over the meeting to Historic Perseveration Planner Enid Torregrosa.</p>   |
| <b>Presentation of historic photos of commercial corridors with specific views on signs and existing conditions.</b>                               |  |
|  | <p>Ms. Torregrosa presented a photo array she developed using old photos verse the current day photos reviewing the differences. Ms. Torregrosa reviewed each of the topics below taking time for both Public Comments/Input and Board Member/Commissions Comments/Input.</p>  |
| <b>Discussion of sign issues:</b>  |  |
| <b>1</b>   | <b>Business vs. brand sign</b>   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are two types of signs that are often used in business, the business sign which has the name of the establishment and all support information related to it and brand signs- which are incidental signs that are used to attract the attention into the premises.</li><li>• Our actual Sign Ordinance and Guidelines do not recognize any difference between those two types of signs.</li><li>• By not having specific regulations that differentiate those types of signs our major visual clutter problem comes with brand signs which dominate the pedestrian experience in our commercial corridors, and particularly on Duval and Greene Streets.</li><li>• It is staff's opinion that there should be recognition between these two types of signs and different ways to regulate them.</li></ul> |
| <b>2</b>   | <b>Number of signs per business</b>  |
|  | <b>a) Limiting to number of signs as stated in actual Ordinance</b>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The actual Ordinance under Chapter 114 on the Land Development Regulations includes specific regulations for the Historic District. Among those regulations the number of signs is limited to two (2) signs for businesses and three (3) for a business located on a street corner. A business shall be determined by</li></ul>  |

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|  | <p>its business tax receipt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By using business tax receipts one establishment located on a corner lot can have "X" amount of business taxes receipts, as an example liquors, pharmacy, retail and the city cannot deny the amount of a maximum of 9 signs for that particular business. It is Staff's opinion that this language should be reviewed.</li> <li>The limitation of number of signs allows a business that occupies an entire frontage be treated the same way as a business that only occupies half or less than a whole frontage of a building. This limitation also promotes visual signage clutter, particularly on buildings where there is more than one tenant.</li> </ul> |                               |  |
|  |  |                               |  |
|  | <b>b) Limiting signs to frontage lineal feet 1 lineal foot = one square feet of signage</b>  |                               |  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is Staffs opinion that signs should be proportionate to the building's facade. A limitation of signs by square footage by calculating the actual front facade's lineal feet of a business will make signs more proportionate and in scale with the building and will be a fair way to promote advertisement; the more frontage a business has the more square footage of advertisement it gets. Still, location of signs as well as their proportions must be regulated under the guidelines.</li> </ul>   |                               |  |
|  |  |                               |  |
|  | <b>Public and Board Input for item #1 and #2</b>   |                               |  |
|  | <b>Name</b>  | <b>Board/Business/Address</b> | <b>Comments</b>  |
|  | Craig Wynn   | World of Beer                 | Mr. Wynn stated that he has an issue with the actual square footage verse the linear square footage of the building. Mr. Wynn asked that it actual square footage is considered in any determination for signage.  |
|  | Ed Johnston  | Signs Unlimited               | Mr. Johnston asked if signs are allowed in an alley ways. Ms. Torregrosa responded that at this point the Ordinance does not differentiate where signs can be placed. Mr. Johnston stated that he has been in the sign field about 17 years. Mr. Johnston stated that his experience is that other areas of the country have addressed the signage issue with specific guidelines and outlined the numerous ways other areas have addressed signage. Mr. Johnston questioned just what HARC is trying to preserve or maybe it is just trying to prevent clutter. Mr. Johnston suggested a group get together to determine what type of signage would be appropriate by specific areas. Mr. Johnston suggested that maybe the answer is a standard sign hanging sign over the door along with a frontage sign (based on linear square feet) above the window. Mr. Johnston added that the 12" lettering needs to be addressed that at time larger lettering is appropriate. Mr. Johnston stated that coming up with something easy to follow for all the sign companies and business owners is essential. Mr. Johnston conclude stating that he has no concrete answers but would be willing to assist in any way needed. |

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|          | Tim Root  | Planning Board Vice Chair | Mr. Root stated that it is going to be difficult to determine one standard. Mr. Root drew attention to the buildings at Key West Bight that have four (4) sides and the need to signage to address. Mr. Root concluded stating that he does not think there is going to be a one-size fits all solution.  |
|          | Capt. Rob Page  |                           | Capt. Page drew attention to the need to make sure that signage is evolving and changing due to the fact that people are changing. Mr. Page noted that safety needs to be taken into account.   |
|          | Carl Reid   | Southernmost Signs        | Mr. Reid stated that before you can make changes you need to understand what is already there. Mr. Reid questioned the differences between the Guidelines and the Ordinances. Mr. Reid also questioned the fact that HARC is now charging fees, which means they are being charged for something they may not be allowed to have.   |
|          | Rudy Molinet  | HARC Chair                | Mr. Molinet responded to Mr. Reid's comments stating that Mr. Reid's comments are exactly why this meeting is being held. Mr. Molinet stated that one of the goals of the meeting is to make appropriate changes to insure the Ordinances and the Guidelines are not in conflict with each other. Mr. Molinet suggested would be a good to develop a clear concise book/pamphlet available online to be used by the applicants that would explain everything due to the fact that it gets frustrating for the applicant and the Board with all the different rules. Mr. Molinet stated that he feels that the Guidelines leave room for flexibility with signs. |
|          | Michael Miller  | HARC Commissioner         | Mr. Miller stated that he appreciates Mr. Reid comments but he thinks Guidelines are a good thing and that they allow for some flexibility. Mr. Miller stated that some things are hard to define. Mr. Miller stated that he feels we need but Guidelines and Ordinances.   |
|          | Tim Root  | Planning Board Vice Chair | Mr. Root stated that owners like to relate the time period of the building with the signs. Mr. Root stated that he thinks that new buildings should not have historic "looking" signs. Mr. Root concluded stating that he thinks Guidelines are good.   |
|          | Ron Ramsingh  | Assistant City Attorney   | Mr. Ramsingh responded to one of the speakers questioning Guidelines and Ordinance stating that Guidelines are incorporated into the LDRs.  |
|          |   |                           |   |
|          |   |                           |   |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Creating new districts for Commercial areas for different sign regulations</b> |                           |   |
|          | <b>a) Entertainment District- Lower Duval, up to Truman Avenue</b>                |                           |   |

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| <b>b) Traditional Commercial District- Upper Duval, Truman Avenue, Greene Street, Front Street, Upper White Street, Key West Bight</b>   |                |                               |   |
|  |                |                               |   |
| <b>c) Peripheral Commercial/ Residential District- Eaton Street, Whitehead Street, Caroline Street, Simonton Street, Fleming Street, Southard Street, Petronia Street, United Street</b>   |                |                               |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The HARC Commission in several occasions has discussed the need for recognition of our Commercial Corridors. Today Commercial Corridors in Old Town distinguishes from one to another; a distinction that can be traced through history. Duval Street used to have mixed used two story buildings, where commercial use was on the first floor and residential use on the second. Frame vernacular and Victorian single family homes were also built along the street as well as hotels. Duval Street is a pure commercial corridor, with re-adapted homes serving as commercial structures.</li> <li>The Planning Department staff has studied each Commercial Corridor in the Historic District and has drafted an Overlay District. This proposed draft took into consideration not only the actual characteristics of each urban block but also its historic transformation. As promoted by HARC members staff is recommending three signage corridor districts; the Entertainment District, the Traditional Commercial District, and the Peripheral Commercial/ Residential District.</li> <li>The proposed Entertainment District comprises Lower Duval Street- from the waterfront up to Truman Avenue and will extend to one building on each side of a street intersection. This district has always been a vibrant area, where neon signs have been captured in photos since the 1930's. Specific guidelines should be drafted as to colors and lighting type and lighting intensity.</li> <li>The proposed Traditional Commercial District is a less vivid district that Lower Duval Street. The Key West Bight, Hotel Corridors and structures with less intense commercial use comprises this district. Upper Duval Street, Upper White Street and the north portion of the Commercial core of the Historic District are included in this proposed district. Signs in these areas should be harmonious to the urban fabric.</li> <li>The proposed Peripheral Commercial Residential District comprises areas where businesses are surrounded or are too close to residential areas. The businesses in this proposed district will have signs that cannot detract from the residential character. Highly ornate and extreme illuminated signs may not be appropriate in this district.</li> </ul> |                |                               |   |
|  |                |                               |   |
| <b>Public and Board Input for item #3</b>  |                |                               |   |
|  | <b>Name</b>    | <b>Board/Business/Address</b> | <b>Comments</b>   |
|  | Scott McCollum | Key West Sign Company         | Mr. McCollum stated that he thinks the new plan took it too far. Mr. McCollum agrees with more advertisement for Duval Street but he doesn't think that they should be restricted signage in different areas. Mr. McCollum stated that if the sign companies had a uniformed set of Ordinances or criteria that they could use to tell their customers what signage could be used. Mr. McCollum stated that he thinks it would be easier for the sign companies if there was just one (1) set of rules and that for them to have to look at a |

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|  |                |                    | map to determine what signage could be used would be a problem. Mr. McCollum also stated that standardizing hanging signs would be difficult because of the building differences around town causing some buildings not to have the eight (8) foot clearance required. Mr. McCollum stated that he thinks standardization for all business is needed. Mr. McCollum starts to address the issue of what materials should be used for signs. Most materials can be disguised to look as if they are following Guidelines and Ordinances  |
|  | Craig Wynn     | World of Beer      | Mr. Wynn stated that he wants the revitalization of Greene Street since he owns a business that is not in the proposed entertainment section. Mr. Wynn stated that pedestrian traffic is important to all businesses. Mr. Wynn stated that he wants to see more people going down Greene Street and feels that appropriate signage with illumination is needed.  |
|  | Capt. Rob Page |                    | Capt. Page stated that he thinks we need more large signs such as the A&B sign that would direct people to an area.  |
|  | Ed Johnston    | Signs Unlimited    | Mr. Johnston stated that he agrees with Mr. Wynn because he can look at the same perspective as a business owner. Mr. Johnston stated he feels that we are a tourist destination and we should be able to attract business but we can't if we do not take care of the business owner's needs. Mr. Johnston stated that business owners like Mr. Wynn need to be able to attract people from Duval Street. Mr. Johnston stated that if a business does not have enough lighting from their sign then it hurts the business and the Key West economy. Mr. Johnston added that he thinks the business owners should have a little bit more leniency, not turning Key West into Vegas but lighted signs are needed at night to attract business. |
|  | Michael Miller | HARC Commissioner  | Mr. Miller stated he wanted to respond to Mr. Johnston's comments. Mr. Miller stated that he feels that the success of a business is not determined by how "loud" a sign "shouts" but the type of merchandise being sold and the reputation of the business along with the actual architecture of the building.  |
|  | Carl Reid      | Southernmost Signs | Mr. Reid stated that he likes the concept but one (1) of the things that he would like to add is that in over 25 years of being in the sign business in Key West he hasn't heard that much complaining from neighbors of the issue of how bright a sign is. Mr. Reid added that he has done a lot of neon signs down Greene Street and it was fine. Mr.  |

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|          |   |                         | Reid stated that he thinks that there should be some research done in different areas to see which signs will work and which signs won't. Mr. Reid stated that he thinks Greene Street should be able to have lighted signs. Mr. Reid concluded stating that he believes that business owners do take the architecture of the buildings into consideration when drawing up their designs or ideas for a sign.                |
|          | Dave Ball   | Southernmost Signs      | Mr. Ball stated that he likes the idea but his issue is he feels that it is giving the businesses that already have a lot of foot traffic an easier way to attract business while making it more difficult for business without a lot of current foot traffic by limiting their signage. Mr. Ball stated that he thinks the concept will hurt the businesses that are farther away from the proposed Entertainment District. |
|          | Enid Torregrosa   | HARC Planner            | Ms. Torregrosa asked if Greene Street should be included in the Entertainment District.  |
|          | Rudy Molinet  | HARC Chair              | Mr. Molinet asked for a show of hands in response to Mr. Torregrosa's question. A majority of the attendees raised their hands   |
|          | Theo Glorie   | HARC Commissioner       | Mr. Glorie asked if Front Street shouldn't be included as well.  |
|          | Rudy Molinet  | HARC Chair              | Mr. Molinet responded to Mr. Glories question stating that he would rather not try to iron everything out during this session. Mr. Molinet summarized that from the responses it appears the attendees agree with moving forward with ironing out the concept. Mr. Molinet asked Jim Young, Code Compliance Manager if he thinks the concept would be manageable.  |
|          | Jim Young   | Code Compliance Manager | Mr. Young stated that his team would be able to enforce an Ordinance which details the concept.  |
|          |   |                         |  |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Materials for signage</b>  |                         |  |
|          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historical signs in Old Town used to be made in aluminum and in wood. In the past years new materials for signs include PVC, Composite, Aluminum composite and a variety of man-made plastics and resins. Digital prints attached to man-made boards is the most cost effective and fastest way to manufacture a sign. Cost is the primary reason to select non-traditional materials for signage.</li> <li>The importance on material selection should be towards the visual quality of the final product. The historic district must have back good quality and creative signs.</li> </ul> |                         |  |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Lighting for signage- Neon, LED, external</b>  |                         |  |
|          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional lighting in signs in Old Town included exposed neon tubes and goose neck lamps. Today there are available LED lights which are energy efficient and can create various effects depending on its use, but LED signs and lights can be extremely bright making a sign too overpower. Neon signs can also</li> </ul>  |                         |  |

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|          | <p>be seen in our street, particularly on windows as brands advertisements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type of lights on signage must take into consideration the location, the age, the architecture of the building and whether the facade has been altered through time; a building may have built on a specific year but the actual facade may not have the architectural attributes it originally had.</li> </ul>  |                               |   |
|          |   |                               |   |
|          | <b>Public and Board Input for item #4 and item #5</b>   |                               |   |
|          | <b>Name</b>   | <b>Board/Business/Address</b> | <b>Comments</b>   |
|          | Scott McCollum  | Key West Sign Company         | Mr. McCollum reminded everyone that the sign business is evolving and that there are signage materials on the market now that are difficult to differentiate them from wood.  |
|          | Theo Glorie   | HARC Commissioner             | Mr. Glorie stated that maybe it would be easier to make a list of materials that are not allowed in the Historic District and a list that would be approved. Mr. Glorie added that maybe we need to make a short list of prohibited signs.  |
|          | Rudy Molinet  | HARC Chair                    | Mr. Molinet noted to Mr. Glorie that prohibited signs is item #7 on the agenda.   |
|          | Craig Wynn  | World of Beer                 | Mr. Wynn stated that his personal view on signage materials and elimination is that it is adding to the effect of the sign. Mr. Wynn stated that there are some materials that help add to a sign. Mr. Wynn stated that signs are marketing, a way to generate trial. Mr. Wynn added that he agrees that a sign shouldn't detract from the Historical District. Mr. Wynn stated that a wooden sign does not help at all at night and will not achieve the desired end result. |
|          | Carl Reid   | Southernmost Signs            | Mr. Reid reminded the attendees that he hasn't heard that much complaining from neighbors of the issue of how bright a sign are. Mr. Reid added that he thinks the sign companies should be allowed to utilize the newer technology where appropriate.  |
|          |   |                               |   |
|          |   |                               |   |
| <b>6</b> | <b>New and revised definitions</b>  |                               |   |
|          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is staff's opinion that the definitions found in the LDR's particularly under Chapter 114 lacks of many adequate and accurate terms. Revisions to the existing definitions will update them and will bring new definitions that are more in keeping with actual trends and technology.</li> <li>As an example of problems in current definitions the LDR's have 2 definitions for signage and the HARC guidelines have a short version of one of those definitions.</li> <li>Having current definitions that have up-to date terms will make the regulation process more efficient and will reduce the need to make interpretations of what type of signage someone is <u>proposing</u>.</li> </ul> |                               |   |
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| <b>7</b>                  | <b>Prohibited Signs</b>  |                               |  |
|                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ordinance includes eleven type of signs that are prohibited in the Historic District;               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Animated signs</li> <li>2. Banners including fringed and pennant string banners, except with the permission of the City Commission.</li> <li>3. Bus bench signs</li> <li>4. Interior illuminated signs</li> <li>5. Plastic signs</li> <li>6. Portable signs</li> <li>7. Roof signs</li> <li>8. Signs painted directly on the exterior wall of a building, unless deemed historically appropriate by HARC</li> <li>9. Snipe signs</li> <li>10. Temporary window signs</li> <li>11. Poster board signs</li> </ol> </li> <li>Will this list be changed?</li> </ul> |                               |  |
| <b>8</b>                  | <b>Transition from existing Ordinance to a new Ordinance</b>   |                               |  |
|                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If a new Ordinance is adopted there should be a transition period. Many HARC Commissioners have expressed that three years after adoption is a fair time to make all actual signs compliant, if they are not.</li> <li>Removal of signs once a business ends operation.</li> <li>Review legal aspects of grandfather clauses, if they are any.</li> </ul>   |                               |  |
|                           | <b>Public and Board Input</b>  |                               |  |
|                           | <b>Name</b>  | <b>Board/Business/Address</b> | <b>Comments</b>  |
|                           | Ed Johnston  | Signs Unlimited               | Mr. Johnston reminded everyone that replacing signs can be costly. Mr. Johnston suggested that we will need to Grandfather in the existing signs.  |
|                           | Ron Ramsingh   | Assistant City Attorney       | Mr. Ramsingh stated that if someone has a sign that has been approved through the proper channels then they are protected.   |
|                           | Don Craig  | Planning Director             | Mr. Craig stated that there are communities that have dealt with the sign issue on a sliding scale. The more you invest in a sign the longer you get to keep it but location does come into consideration but a business who spends \$20,000 on a sign might have a longer compliance compared to a business with a small simple plastic sign. Mr. Craig added that certain cities have done that by doing the legal research and changing some parts of the Ordinance but it was by option if you don't you will face what the city's face. |
|                           | Capt. Rob Page   |                               | Capt. Page suggested that insurance companies should be consulted in an effort to insure that signs are compliant with their needs.  |
|                           |  |                               |  |
| <b>General Discussion</b> |  |                               |  |



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|                    | <p>Michael Miller (HARC Commissioner) proposed the creation of a Citizens' Task Force to work with all discussed items. Mr. Miller suggested that this suggested Task Force should consist of Sign makers, business owners and at least one (1) member from the HARC Commission and the Planning Board. Mr. Miller suggested monthly meetings and a timeframe of 90 days once organized. He asked general public present for volunteers. The attendees were asked to notify Staff if they are interested in being a member of the Signage Task Force.</p> <p>Lois Songer suggested that the Task Force develop a list of definitions which are much needed. Ms. Songer added that it is important to determine what is a sign and what is not a sign. Ms. Songer stated that defining what is a proper sign from a Brand signs and banners. Ms. Songer added that we need to stop all the unnecessary clutter of sandwich boards on sidewalks and other items on the City right-of-way. Ms. Songer stated that a definition of visual clutter with examples is needed. Ms. Songer offered to help with a Task Force.</p> <p>Jim Young (Code Compliance Manager) stated that he agrees there is a need for list of definitions. Mr. Young added that this would be very helpful for his department. Mr. Young outlined the number of sign related complaints that have been received over the last year and stated that the inconsistency with the definitions add to his team's frustrations when addressing these complaints. Mr. Young volunteered to serve on the Task Force.</p> <p>Ron Ramsignh stated that the Task Force would need to be created by the City Commission. Mr. Molinet volunteered to call Commissioner Johnston to discuss the request for a Task Force to be created and ask her to sponsor the resolution to create one.</p> |
|                    |   |
| <b>Adjournment</b> |   |
|                    | <p><b>Actions/Motions:</b></p> <p>Chairman Molinet adjourned the meeting at <b>7:40 pm.</b></p>   |

**Submitted by,**

*Jo Bennett*

**Administrative Coordinator  
Planning Department**