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MEMO:

To: Sedro-Woolley Planning Commission
From: John Coleman
Planning Director
Date: January 19, 2021
Subject: Electronic Reader Boards in the Central Business District

ISSUE

The City Council requested that the Planning Commission review the current regulations on electronic reader boards in the Central Business District (CBD) and review possible amendments to the zoning code and/or design standards to permit such signs in certain areas.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION/HISTORY

Design review is required in the Central Business District for all new construction, alterations, demolition, or remodeling of existing buildings, and all exterior changes, including but not limited to change in paint color or materials, windows, awnings, permanent window signs, and all other signs (SWMC 15.44.020(A)). Thus, all signage in the CBD is subject to the Sedro-Woolley Design Standards and Guidelines manual (which is available here: https://www.ci.sedro-woolley.wa.us/Departments/Planning/Docs/Design_Standards_and_Guidlines.pdf).

Electronic reader boards (and internally illuminated manual reader boards) are not currently permitted in the CBD. Chapter 3 of the Sedro-Woolley Design Standards and Guidelines address electronic reader boards in Central Business District (CBD). At page 23, the Design Standards specifically state:

Flashing, animated, rotating, changing message signs and signs that combine a white background with internal illumination are specifically prohibited. Exposed neon illumination or shielded external illumination are accepted alternatives.

The City Council Planning Committee requested that the Planning Commission consider changes to allow electronic reader boards *in portions* of the CBD. In particular, the committee believes that electronic reader boards may not be appropriate in the historic downtown area along Metcalf Street. The committee left the discussion to the Planning Commission as to whether electronic reader boards should be allowed on intersecting streets such of Ferry Street, Woodworth Street and State Street (and how far down each street).

The committee also discussed the potential for more control over the brightness and animation of electronic reader boards. Currently there is only loose controls on those aspects of electronic reader boards (in areas where those signs area allowed).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the prohibition on electronic reader boards (ERBs) in the CBD is based in the unique challenge of regulating them and maintaining the safety and aesthetic standards in the historic downtown area. If new regulations are put in place to allow more ERBs in the CBD, there are two aspects that need to be addressed:

- Location in CBD where allowed; and
- Limits on brightness and animation.

Location

The Council Planning Committee indicated that it may be acceptable for ERBs in parts of the CBD. The Planning Commission should discuss the appropriate areas.

The committee specified a preference that ERBs still be precluded from an area along Metcalf Street. The Planning Commission should discuss which area this should include. For example, what length of Metcalf (south of Northern Street for example) should be included? Should a portion of State, Woodworth and/or Ferry Street also be excluded (one block in either direction of Metcalf on each of those streets, for example? One block in either direction on just Ferry and Woodworth, perhaps)? What about areas that are more residential in nature, such as Borseth Street or Gibson Street? Perhaps it will be less complicated to specify which streets area appropriate for ERBs? This avoids the unintended consequence of allowing ERBs on streets in the CBD that are currently residential. There are lots of ways to look at this issue, today's meeting will be an opportunity to look closely at the challenges and opportunities, then perhaps make some recommendations to review at a future public hearing. Changes to where ERBs may be located in the CBD will require amendments to the Design Standards manual and possibly the sign code (Chapter 17.44 SWMC) as well.

Brightness and animation

Bright, flashing and fast moving messages may be unnecessarily distracting and cause a safety hazard or just be unpleasant to passers-by. As mentioned above, there are not tight regulations in the current code limiting the intensity of the light emitted by the signs and flashing or fast moving images and text. The sign code has general criteria that are fairly subjective, thus are difficult to enforce. The underlined portions of SWMC 17.44.010(A) is the language currently in place to attempt to tone-down the intensity of message boards:

SWMC 17.44.010(A): No sign shall be erected or employed that:

1. Impairs scenic views or the appearance of the surrounding area;
2. Creates traffic hazards by blocking vision or causing excessive diversion of attention;
3. Is structurally incapable of withstanding stresses to which it is likely to be subjected;
4. Contains flashing or uncomfortably intense light;
5. Is designed to attract attention through mechanical or wind-generated movement; or
6. Is employed without consent of the property owner;
7. Is a festoon, banner, or pennant type sign.

Regardless of where ERBs are located, it makes sense to update the specific regulations on the intensity of the light emitted by the signs and flashing or fast moving images and text. Councilmember Kesti reviewed sign codes from several other jurisdictions and put suggested regulations on ERBs together in a document titled "Electronic Reader Board Proposal." That document is attached as Attachment 2. There are several good recommendations in that document

that the Planning Commission can use to develop revised sign regulations. Staff will be researching brightness levels, measured in nits, and will report findings to the Planning Commission.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Map of Central Business District

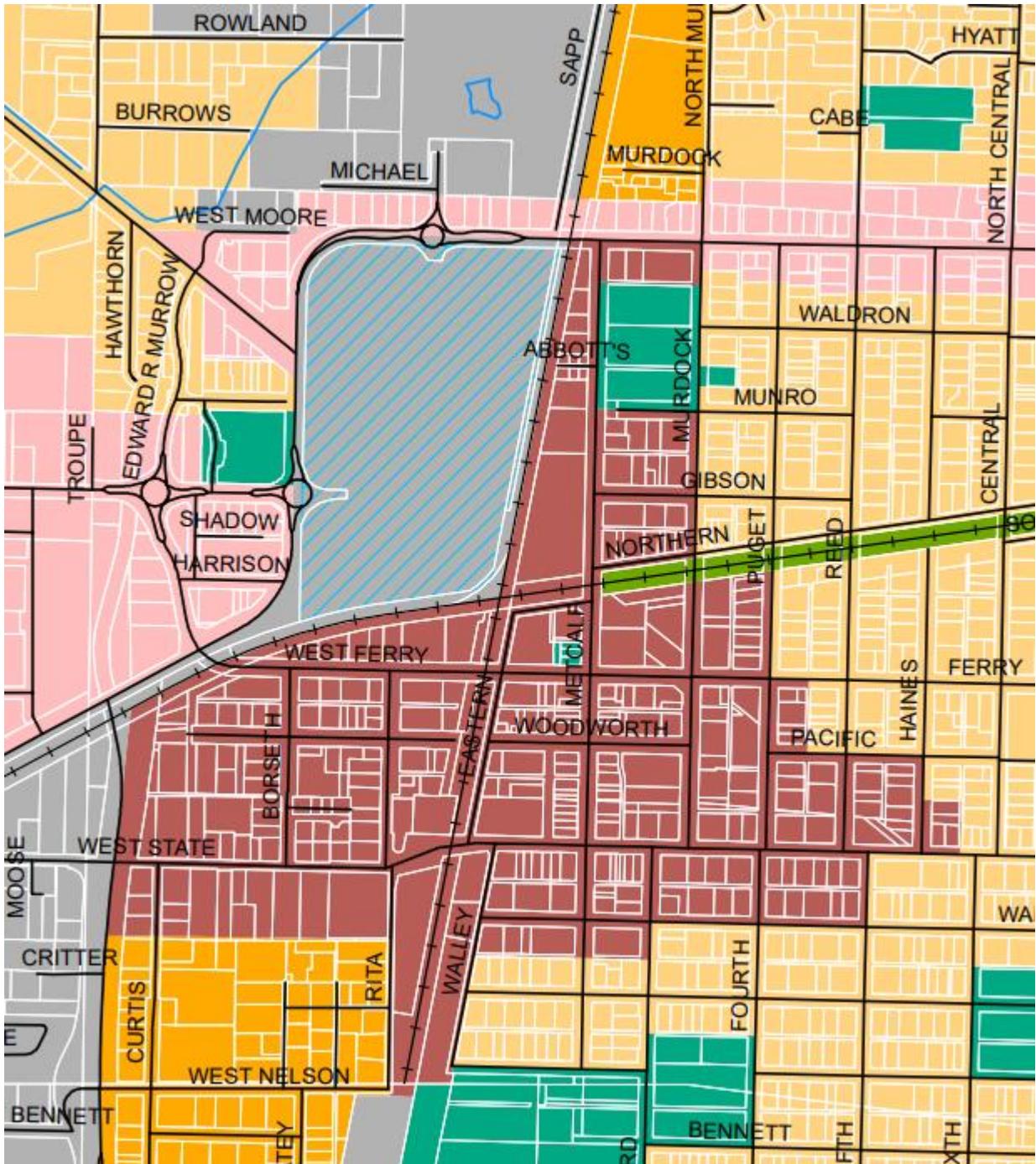
Attachment 2 – Electronic Reader Board Proposal from councilmember Kesti

RECOMMENDATIONS

Review the issue of electronic reader boards in the Central Business District and be prepared to propose amendments to the Design Standards and Zoning Code as necessary. No specific amendments are proposed at this time.

Attachment 1

Map of Central Business District



Attachment 2

Electronic Reader Board Proposal from councilmember Kesti

DEC 09 2020

Time: 12:08 pm
Initials: EAS

Electronic Readerboard Proposal

It is the goal of the City Council Planning Committee to allow businesses outside of the "Historic Downtown" area to update their readerboards giving them the convenience of modern technology while maintaining an esthetically appropriate look.

This proposal would require a designated "Historic Downtown" that would prohibit any use of Electronic Readerboard within that area.

The Historic Downtown area consists of any building that has a side on Metcalf street. For example: if you are on the corner of Metcalf and Ferry because your building has a side on Metcalf you are considered "Historic Downtown" and would not be eligible for an Electronic Readerboard.

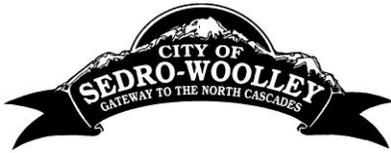
If your building is out of this designated area these would be the requirements for approval-

1. The electronic signs must be two color - a background color and a text color-must be part of a permanent "monument" sign and can only make up 50 percent of the area of the sign. The signs can have no animation, moving graphics, flashing and cannot scroll. They may only change once every six seconds. Neon colors are prohibited.
2. Digital signs shall include ambient light monitors that automatically adjust the brightness level of the sign based on ambient light conditions subject to the limits of subsections (3) and (4) of this section
3. The maximum brightness levels for digital signs shall not exceed 5,000 nits when measured from the sign face at its maximum brightness, during daylight hours.
4. The maximum brightness levels for digital signs shall not exceed 5000 nits when measured from the sign face at its maximum brightness, between sunset and sunrise, as those times are determined by the National weather Service.
5. The transition time between messages shall be completed in no more than six second.
6. A digital sign may comprise a portion of the total allowable sign face area allowed for advertising or business identification under this chapter.
7. Freestanding only and no mounting on building of any kind.
8. Maximum height of 20ft and the electronic readerboard is no more than 50 percent of the sign area.
9. Maintenance. Each sign shall be maintained in good visual and structural condition at all times including color integrity, and all parts and supports associated with the sign in accordance with its original approval by the City. Any repair to a sign shall be done using materials and design that are of equal or greater quality than the original sign.

ENFORCMENT would be covered under code enforcement ordinance number 1670-10

Rules would be strictly monitored and subjects not complying with the rules and regulations are subject to civil penalties and can be asked to remove sign by the Code Enforcement Officer.

A design review committee of either the planning department staff/commission or city council. Will need to review any sign application for approval. To make sure it meets the criteria listed above.



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MEMO:

To: Citizens Advisory Committee / Planning Commission

From: Katherine Weir,
Assistant Planner

Date: January 19, 2021

Subject: Shoreline Management Program Update – Periodic Review

ISSUE

The Washington State Shoreline Management Act (SMA) was enacted for the purpose of comprehensively managing and protecting the state's shorelines. The SMA (Chapters 90.58 RCW and 173-26 WAC) emphasizes accommodation of appropriate uses that require a shoreline location, protection of shoreline environmental resources and protection of the public's right to access and use the shorelines. The primary responsibility for administering the SMA is assigned to local governments through the mechanism of local shoreline master programs, adopted under guidelines established by Department of Ecology (Ecology).

Under the SMA, each city and county with shorelines of the state must prepare and adopt a Shoreline Master Program (SMP) that is based on state laws and rules but is tailored to the specific geographic, economic and environmental needs of the community. The SMP is essentially a combined comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and development permit system for shoreline-specific uses. The Skagit River is a shoreline of the state; therefore the City must have a SMP for the lands adjacent to the Skagit. The SMA requires each city and county to periodically review, and, if necessary, revise their SMP. The state legislature set a staggered schedule that alternates with similar reviews under the Growth Management Act. Cities located in Skagit County are required to complete a periodic review in 2020, but Ecology has extended that deadline to 2021. The City of Sedro-Woolley has obtained a grant from the Department of Ecology for the periodic review. Per the grant agreement, the periodic review must be complete by June 30, 2021.

Sedro-Woolley last adopted SMP documents in 2016 and is now beginning the Shoreline Master Program update process in accordance with State rules and guidelines for periodic review. There are few changes anticipated for the Shoreline Master Plan update. Likely changes will include updates to bring the SMP into compliance with changes to the RCW and the WAC, reformatting, and updating any information presented in the SMP that is outdated or no longer relevant.

Public participation is one of the driving forces behind the update process. To meet this end, **the Planning Commission will be acting as the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC)**. The CAC will hear comments from the public and make recommendations on the new SMP goals and guidelines. The 2020 *Public Participation Plan* (Exhibit A) explains the public participation plans for the update process. Please read through the below documents to learn more about the SMP, the update process and the City's shoreline area.

Today's meeting is the first step in engaging the community to help understand the current shoreline uses and set goals for future shoreline uses. This meeting is intended to help the CAC understand the SMP and their role in this periodic update. Please feel free to ask questions about the process as you prepare for the next steps. The next meeting will be a public hearing in which the public will be invited to give comments and feedback on proposed updates to the Shoreline Master Program.

The currently adopted SMP includes several supporting documents. Each of those are described below and a link to each current document is included. Most of these documents will be reviewed and updated if necessary, but revisions to all are not required. Ecology's rules state that there is no minimum requirement to comprehensively revise the Restoration Plan or the Shoreline Characterization and Analysis.

SMP

2016 Adopted Sedro-Woolley Shoreline Master Program (https://www.ci.sedro-woolley.wa.us/Departments/Planning/SMP/SMP_Ch_1-6_FINAL.pdf) – The SMP (or “Master Program”) consists of environmental designations for the shoreline segments and goals, policies, and regulations applicable to uses and modifications within the Shoreline Management Zone (SMZ – synonymous with shoreline jurisdiction). The SMP is based on state guidelines but tailored to the specific conditions and needs of the city of Sedro-Woolley. The majority of the updates for the ongoing periodic review are anticipated be to this document.

Restoration Plan – Appendix B to SMP (https://www.ci.sedro-woolley.wa.us/Departments/Planning/SMP/Appendix_B-Restoration_Plan_FINAL.pdf) – The Shoreline Management Act (Act) makes protection of shoreline environments an essential statewide goal, with an emphasis on maintenance, protection, restoration, and preservation. The Act requires local master programs include goals and policies for restoration of impaired shoreline ecological functions that are consistent with the principles embodied in WAC 173-26- 186(8)(c). Revisions to the Restoration Plan are not anticipated.

Shoreline Critical Area Regulations – Appendix C to SMP (https://www.ci.sedro-woolley.wa.us/Departments/Planning/SMP/Appendix_C-Critical_Areas_FINAL.pdf) – The shoreline critical area regulations are specific to the shoreline zone and are separate from the city's general critical areas ordinance. They apply to the shoreline jurisdiction and are considered part of the officially adopted SMP, along with the restoration plan. The Shoreline Critical Area Regulations may be updated if necessary for the 2020 periodic review.

SMP Supporting Documents

Public Participation Plan (https://www.ci.sedro-woolley.wa.us/Departments/Planning/SMP/Public_Participation%20Plan_FINAL.pdf) – The overall objectives of the Sedro-Woolley SMP Public Participation Plan are to identify potential stakeholders, invite their participation in the planning process and guide public participation efforts throughout the update process. The Public Participation Plan (PPP) for the 2020 update is formatted differently to reflect the limited scope of the 2020 update. The PPP has already been updated and is included as Exhibit A.

Shoreline Characterization and Analysis (https://www.ci.sedro-woolley.wa.us/Departments/Planning/SMP/Draft_Shoreline_Inventory_and_Characterization_Report_SMP_Appendix_A.pdf) – The Shoreline Characterization and Analysis describes existing conditions and characterize ecological functions in the shoreline jurisdiction. The assessment serves as the baseline against which the impacts of future development actions in the shoreline will be measured. Ecology's guidelines require that the City demonstrate that its updated SMP yields “no net loss” in shoreline ecological functions relative to the baseline due to its implementation. According to Ecology's list of streams based on the results of three USGS regional stream flow

studies, the Skagit River is the only jurisdictional stream in or adjacent to Sedro-Woolley. No other streams meet the 20 cubic feet per second (cfs) mean annual flow requirement, and there are no large lakes or marine waters in or adjacent to Sedro-Woolley. Revisions to the Shoreline Characterization and Analysis are not anticipated.

Strategy for Shoreline Use (https://www.ci.sedro-woolley.wa.us/Departments/Planning/SMP/Strategy_for_Shoreline_Use-Task%203-1.pdf) – This document was prepared during the last SMP update that started in August of 2011. The document contains the Strategies for Shoreline Uses, Public Access, Resource Protection and Restoration that were identified during the last SMP update. It is a draft document that was developed throughout the public participation process and is subject to continued public input.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Review the adopted and supporting documents for the Sedro-Woolley SMP in preparation for reviewing proposed updates. The CAC will hold future meetings to review proposed updates and receive public comments. Public input is an important aspect of the SMP update process.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit A – *2020 Public Participation Plan*

SHORELINE MASTER PROGRAM PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROPOSAL

The city of Sedro-Woolley anticipates few changes to their Shoreline Master Program through the periodic review. Likely changes will include updates to bring the SMP into compliance with changes to the RCW and the WAC, reformatting, and updating any information presented in the SMP that is outdated or no longer relevant. The city proposes a public participation plan that reflects the limited scope of changes to the overall SMP. The proposed public participation plan uses the Public Participation Spectrum as detailed in Chapter 6 of the SMP handbook.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	collaborate	Empower
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens and property owners • Sedro-Woolley Planning Commission and City Council • Nearby jurisdictions • Federal agencies • Tribal government • Community groups organizations • Environmental organizations and conservation groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All interested parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Commission • Sedro-Woolley City Council • General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Commission • General Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedro-Woolley City Council • WA Department of Ecology
Method of Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mail/post notices to inform all parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a 30 day comment window through standard notification process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a work session during a Planning Commission meeting • Hold a work session during a City Council meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a public hearing at planning commission for final review and recommendation of SMP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a Public Hearing at City Council for final review and adoption of SMP • Forward adopted SMP to Ecology
Public Participation Goals	To provide information to increase the public's understanding and encourage their participation.	To obtain feedback on analyses, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with these stakeholders throughout the process, and to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with these stakeholders in every aspect of the decision	To provide information necessary for making the final decision.