

Special Meeting
Mount Holly City Council
September 23, 1994

The City Council held a special meeting on September 23, 1994 at 7:00 P.M., for the purpose of discussing sign regulations. Members present were Mayor Pro Tem Bob Jessen, Councilmembers R. L. Duke, Phyllis Harris, Michael Helms, Jim Hope and Archie Small. Also present were City Phil Ponder and Planning and Zoning Administrator Gary Roberts.

Mayor Pro Tem Jessen called the meeting to order and read the following prepared statement:

Comments concerning statements made by some
Zoning Board members in minutes dated 9/6/94.

Some members of the Zoning Board have a problem distinguishing between the responsibilities of those appointed and those elected to serve our community. The Zoning Board's purpose is to rule on matters of compliance with city ordinances. The purpose of the City Council is to set the policy under which the city functions, and this means that we establish the rules that govern the city and over which the Zoning Board enforces compliance.

For these members to suggest it is wrong to bring in thoughts of the business community only demonstrates the type of pompous, better than thou attitude that underscores why citizens believe we don't listen and thus have lost faith in the process. To the contrary, perhaps their contributions should have been sought at the beginning of the process. Who, better than they to suggest what are reasonable controls over their businesses. To suggest that business leaders would be self-serving does not hold up in light of the product they delivered for consideration.

I agree that the Zoning Board spent many months and hours working on the sign ordinance revision they delivered for approval. I would also agree that this council has woefully drug its feet on this same issue -- to the detriment of our community and to the frustration of city staff entrusted with enforcement of our regulations.

The fact of the matter is that effort alone does not always guarantee success. The original purpose of revisiting the sign ordinance was because our existing ordinance was out of date, unwieldy, and generally unfriendly to the end-users. Our sign ordinance needed to be simpler, easier to understand and "user friendly" to avoid the confusion and frustration created by the present law.

After months of serious hard work by the Zoning Board, the Council was presented a new ordinance that was somewhat of an improvement. Yet it was still a laborious, confusing, frustrating, bureaucratic document -- certainly far from "user-friendly."

Not satisfied with what was presented, the Council, therefore, took a different direction to see what surfaced. To suggest that this decision was "a farce" tells me that some have lost sight of their purpose.

Perhaps the community would be much better served if we put egos on the shelf and remember that our purpose, whether appointed or elected, is to serve the citizens of Mount Holly and quit worrying about who gets the credit for the outcome.

Mayor Pro Tem Jessen indicated that there were three points of view to consider: 1. the ordinance developed by the Planning and Zoning Commission; 2. the ordinance developed by the committee of business people appointed by the Council to study the matter; and 3. written comments provided by the self-appointed Revitalization Committee.

Mr. Hostetler of the Revitalization Committee was given an opportunity to review his concerns about the issue of signs. Mr. Hostetler's comments focused upon clarification needed in the ordinance developed by the business committee and the need to protect the future appearance of the community. Mr. Hostetler indicated that his group had the support of the Local Area Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Jessen made the following comments concerning the ordinance proposed by the business committee: 1. concerned that there were no permitting requirements; 2. limited setback guidelines; 3. no guidelines regarding interior signs and changeable copy signs. Mr. Jessen concluded by saying that he was opposed to billboards and wanted any ordinance to include a statement of intent and be "user friendly."

Councilmember Hope indicated that there were numerous perspectives regarding signs and that it was important to choose a format and to pursue completion of the ordinance.

Councilmember Small indicated that he was opposed to new billboards and signs in residential areas.

Councilmember Helms expressed his desire to have staff prepare a summary of all three positions noting areas of agreement and disagreement. City Manager Ponder indicated

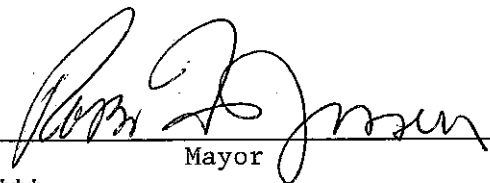
that staff could prepare such a summary or Council could contract with a consultant to lead them through the revision process. Councilmember Hope expressed the opinion that contracting with a consultant would simply be shifting responsibility.

The City Manager was instructed to prepare a document comparing and contrasting the various versions and opinions about new sign regulations and to have this document prepared by October 6, 1994.

Upon motion of Councilmember Duke, seconded by Councilmember Small, and unanimously carried, the workshop was continued until Thursday, October 6th.



City Clerk



Mayor
