

BOARD OF TRUSTEES WORK SESSION
11004 Carpenter Street, Mokena, Illinois 60448
Monday, July 15, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Fleischer called the Board of Trustees work session to order at 6:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board of Trustees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The following Trustees were present:

Rob Dauphinais
Debbie Engler
Melissa Fedora
Terry G. Germany
George J. Metanias

Absent: Terence Smith

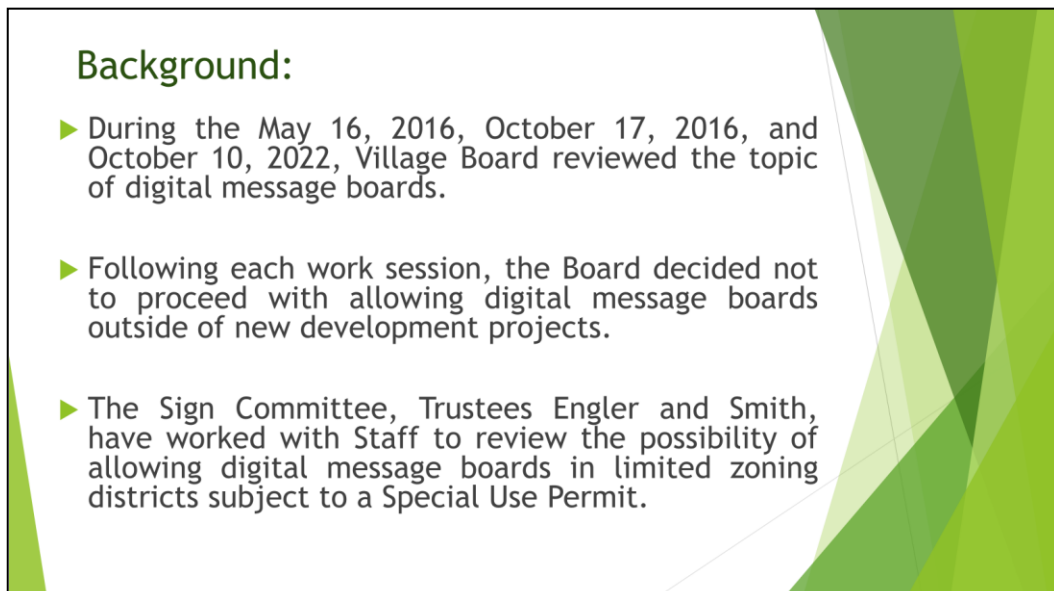
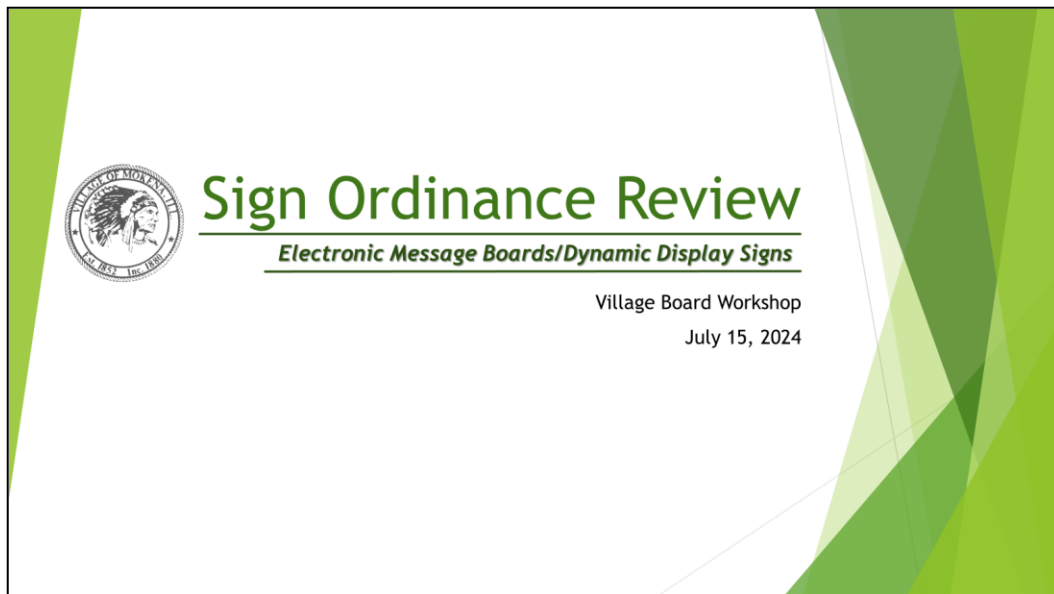
Also present were the following: Village Attorney/Human Resources Director Carl Buck; Assistant Community Development Director Krzysztof Kociolek; and Director of Public Works Jim Kulesa

Crystal Creek Townhomes, 191st Street and Revere Circle: Amendment to Planned Unit Development/Rezone Request

This item was tabled to be presented at a future work session.

Sign Committee Report – Digital Signs

Village Attorney/Human Resources Director Carl Buck presented the following item:



Pros of Allowing Digital Signs

- **Technological Advancement**: Adaptive signage allows easy graphics
- **Ease of Use**: Flexible and Dynamic Content
- **Timeliness of Information**: real-time, enhanced communication
- **Aesthetics**: Modern, clean appearance

Cons of Allowing Digital Signs

- ▶ Light Pollution: nighttime and residential areas affected
- ▶ Negative Appearance: visual clutter and over “commercialization”
- ▶ Location Concerns: who will want them next....

National View

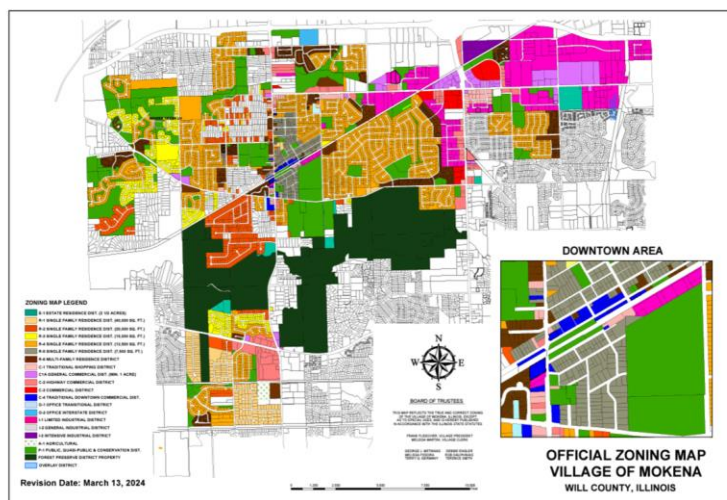
- ▶ Increased use across all governmental platforms (Schools, Libraries)
- ▶ Industry Guidelines: International Sign Association provides “best practices”
- ▶ Technological Advances: Energy Efficient and now “Smart” controlled

Neighboring Communities

- ▶ New Lenox: **Allowed** in commercial and industrial districts
- ▶ Frankfort: **Allowed** but limited and only by Special Use Permit
- ▶ Tinley Park: **Allowed** in commercial districts by Special Use Permit
- ▶ Orland Park: **Generally Prohibited**

Special Use Permit Recommended

- ▶ Controlled Implementation: Requires Public Hearing and Board Approval
- ▶ Zoning Restrictions:
 - ▶ C-2 Highway Commercial
 - ▶ P-1 Public Use
- ▶ Specific Brightness, Rate, and Designs Standards incorporated into Sign Code



Content-Neutrality

Local municipalities are limited to regulate the contents of the message itself, but they can regulate:

▶ Size

▶ Location

▶ Height

▶ Illumination Levels

▶ Quantity

▶ Movements/Animation

Questions for the Board

▶ Does the Board have questions or other suggestions for the Sign Committee?

▶ Does the Board support amending the Village Code to allow Digital Signs in the C-2 Highway Commercial District and P-1 Public District pursuant to a Special Use Permit?

Village Attorney/Human Resources Director Buck presented a Sign Committee report on the topic of electronic/digital signage within the Village of Mokena. As the Village continues to grow and modernize, the issue of incorporating electronic/digital signs has become increasingly relevant in planning and development discussions. Presently, the Village's sign ordinance only permits electronic/digital signs if a Special Use Permit (SUP) has been granted, mainly for locations along the I-80 interstate highway to minimize potential impacts on residential areas.

Village Attorney/Human Resources Director Buck highlighted the analysis conducted by the Sign Committee, which examined the potential benefits and drawbacks of allowing electronic/digital signs in the community.

He first discussed the pros of allowing electronic/digital signs. He noted that embracing electronic signage aligns with modern technological trends and showcases Mokena's commitment to staying current with digital innovations. Digital signs can be easily updated, allowing businesses and public entities to communicate timely and relevant information, such as special promotions, community events, or emergency alerts. Furthermore, businesses can change their messages without the need for physical modifications to their signs, reducing operational costs and efforts. The ability to display dynamic content, such as moving images and videos, can attract more attention than static signs, potentially boosting business visibility and engagement. Digital signs can provide immediate updates, crucial for conveying urgent messages or promotions that need to be communicated quickly. They also serve as effective tools for community engagement, providing real-time information about local news, weather updates, and traffic alerts. Additionally, well-designed digital signs can enhance the visual appeal of commercial areas, offering a sleek and modern look. They allow for a variety of design options and can be tailored to fit the aesthetic of different businesses and locations.

Village Attorney/Human Resources Director Buck then addressed the cons of allowing electronic/digital signs. Bright, constantly changing signs can contribute to light pollution, potentially disturbing nearby residents, especially in areas close to residential zones. The light

emitted from digital signs can disrupt the natural nighttime environment, affecting wildlife and the overall ambiance of the Village. There is also a concern that electronic signs could lead to a "Las Vegas Strip" effect, which may be seen as garish or out of character with Mokena's desired Village aesthetic. Excessive or poorly managed digital signage could contribute to visual clutter, detracting from the community's charm and scenic views. Signs located near homes could lead to complaints from residents about brightness and visual intrusion. Managing where and how these signs are allowed requires careful zoning considerations to balance commercial benefits with residential impacts.

Village Attorney/Human Resources Director Buck provided context by discussing national trends and industry standards related to electronic/digital signage. He noted that electronic signs have become increasingly prevalent across various sectors, driven by advances in technology and growing demand for dynamic communication tools. He explained that electronic signs are now commonly used in retail, hospitality, transportation, and municipal applications, providing an effective medium for engaging audiences with real-time updates and dynamic content. Many municipalities across the United States have adopted electronic signage in public spaces to disseminate information quickly and effectively, particularly for emergency alerts and community announcements. He mentioned that cities and towns regulate electronic signs differently, often balancing commercial interests with community aesthetics and residential concerns. Regulations typically address brightness, operational hours, and zoning restrictions. The International Sign Association (ISA) provides best practices for electronic signage, recommending standards for brightness, content management, and placement to minimize light pollution and aesthetic issues. Village Attorney/Human Resources Director Buck also highlighted technological advances such as modern LED signs being more energy-efficient than older technologies, reducing their environmental impact and operating costs, and the use of smart control systems for precise control over brightness and operational schedules.

Village Attorney/Human Resources Director Buck reviewed the policies of neighboring communities, including New Lenox, Frankfort, Tinley Park, and Orland Park, highlighting their approaches to regulating electronic/digital signage. He explained that New Lenox permits electronic signs in commercial and industrial districts, with restrictions on brightness and message duration to reduce potential nuisances but prohibits digital signs in residential areas to prevent light pollution and maintain neighborhood aesthetics. Frankfort allows digital signage primarily in business districts and along major highways, subject to approval through a permitting process, and enforces stringent standards for brightness, transition effects, and hours of operation, aiming to balance business needs with community impact. Tinley Park has designated areas where digital signs are permitted, focusing on commercial zones and avoiding residential neighborhoods, and businesses must obtain a permit for electronic signs to ensure compliance with local regulations and community impact considerations. Orland Park is most closely aligned with Mokena presently in that Orland Park Does not allow electronic signs except through development agreements meeting specific criteria.

Based on these considerations, the Sign Committee recommended a balanced approach to the issue. Specifically, they suggested continuing to regulate electronic/digital signs through the Special Use Permit process. This would allow for case-by-case evaluation, ensuring that each application is thoroughly reviewed for appropriateness and impact. They also recommended restricting the allowance of electronic signs to the C-2 Highway Commercial District and P-1 Public District, where the signs are less likely to impact residential areas and can cater to the needs of businesses along high-traffic corridors. Additionally, the Sign Committee proposed implementing strict guidelines on brightness levels and operating hours to mitigate light pollution and establishing design criteria to ensure that digital signs are aesthetically pleasing and complement the character of the Village.

Village Attorney/Human Resources Director Buck concluded his presentation by posing two questions to the Board for their deliberation: Does the Board have any other recommendations or questions for the Sign Committee? Does the Board support amending the Village Code to allow Electronic/Digital Signs in the C-2 Highway Commercial District and P-1 Public District pursuant to a Special Use Permit?

Discussion:

The overall consensus of the Board was to move forward in drafting an Ordinance Amendment that would align with the recommendations of the Sign Committee. Trustee Engler supported the prospect of amending the Village Code but wanted to limit the use to the suggested zoning

districts. Trustee Dauphinais stressed controlling the aesthetic look of the signs and wanted to ensure the signs would not negatively impact residential areas. Trustee Germany stressed masonry construction and supported amending the Village Code. Trustee Fedora also stressed Masonry construction and questioned whether other commercial areas should be included. The Board engaged in a discussion of the cost of such signs and determined that keeping the commercial area limited to C-2 was appropriate at this time. Trustee Metanias stressed that he did not want the “Las Vegas” strip to be created in Mokena, but that he supported moving forward. Mayor Fleischer thanked everyone for their comments and supported the consensus. The Sign Committee was asked to move forward with preparing a draft ordinance for review. Village Attorney/Human Resources Director Buck indicated that the Village may seek to join the International Sign Association to take advantage of the materials from that organization in preparing the draft ordinance which the Board supported.

Staff Reports

Director of Public Works Jim Kulesa updated the Board on the cleaning of the Bonness water tower. Director of Public Works Kulesa also informed the Board of the watermain break on Foxford Lane in the Tara Hills Subdivision and the NICOR gas repair that will be scheduled in the near future for Wolf Road and Front Street.

There being no further business to bring before the Mayor and Board of Trustees, Mayor Fleischer adjourned the work session at 6:50 p.m.