



CITY OF KIRKLAND

Planning and Community Development Department
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033 425.587-3225
www.ci.kirkland.wa.us

MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager

From: Eric Shields, Planning Director
Nancy Cox, Development Review Manager

Date: February 17, 2011

Subject: North Kirkland Community Center Sign, File ZON11-00013

RECOMMENDATION

City Council considers the options for the electronic readerboard sign located at the North Kirkland Community Center (NKCC) and provide direction to staff. The sign consists of a lighted lower portion identifying the NKCC and an upper electronic readerboard.

BACKGROUND

Previous code amendments

In 2009 the Council approved code amendments to allow pedestal signs with a readerboard having electronic programming at fire stations and two high schools (Juanita and Lake Washington). In 2010 the Council approved code amendments to allow similar signs at fire stations in the annexation area after June 1, 2011. Also in 2010, the Council denied a request from Holy Spirit Lutheran Church for a code amendment to allow an electronic readerboard at the church.

Permitting

In 2010 the fire department submitted permits for the fire station signs to be built according to the new code. The signs came in under budget and an application was also submitted for a similar sign at the NKCC. The Planning Department approved the NKCC sign permit in error not catching that the code only applied to fire stations and not all government/community facilities. The error was not realized until the sign was installed. The sign is legal; only the operation of the electronic readerboard is an issue. Leaving the sign in place without operating the readerboard or with the readerboard portion removed are both allowed by the current code.

Council Review to-date

The issue was presented to the Public Safety Committee on January 20, 2011. The Public Safety Committee supported finding a way to legally allow the readerboard

element of the sign to remain in place. Council member Sternoff presented the issue to the full Council on February 1, 2011. The Council requested a report addressing options and implications of each option.

Function of the NKCC as a Disaster Support Facility

In the City's emergency plan the NKCC serves an important function as a Disaster Support Facility equipped with a permanent generator. It is located on an arterial – NE 124th Street – and is very accessible. Another similar support facility is the Peter Kirk Community Center, although it does not have a permanent generator.

Public Message Policy

The City is preparing a policy for the content of the messages on the fire station readerboards. The electronic readerboards are controlled over the internet (not at individual fire stations).

Options

1. Do not amend the code. Remove the electronic readerboard portion of the sign as soon as possible.

Implications: The electronic readerboard portion of the sign would be available for future use at a fire station. The estimated cost to remove the electronic readerboard portion is between \$3,000 and \$6,000.

2. Leave the sign in place with the electronic readerboard turned off while a code amendment process is undertaken. The code amendment process would consider adding the NKCC as a permissible location for the readerboard. If approved, messages displayed on the readerboard would be subject to the City's public message policy.

There are two ways to proceed with a code amendment:

- a. Add this issue to the identified work program code amendment project for consideration later this year. This project would be completed by the end of the year; or
- b. Bring an Interim Ordinance to the Council to allow the electronic readerboard; then follow-up with a code amendment later this year. By expressing the Council's approval first through an interim ordinance, the readerboard could be activated immediately. In addition, the code amendment could be added to a group of amendments involving corrections and minor changes not having significant policy implications. This group of amendments will be processed using "Process IVA" which involves a public hearing before the Planning Director rather than the Planning Commission. This project would be completed approximately 6 months after the Interim ordinance is passed.

Implications: The code amendment could be very targeted and handled in the same way as the amendments approved for the high schools and fire stations. The amendments were made to the applicable Use Zone Charts for the sites rather than generally to the sign chapter. Therefore, it would not be necessary to “open up” the sign chapter during the amendment process.

However, if the amendment is approved, other organizations might ask the Council whether they too could have readerboards with electronic programming. The Council has the discretion to consider this through future code amendments, but the City may not be amenable to these requests because the City cannot legally control the messages displayed on electronic readerboards for other organizations.

Staff is seeking direction from the Council on whether to implement Option 1, Option 2a or Option 2b.