



**MINUTES
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE
SOLVANG PLANNING COMMISSION AND
DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
THURSDAY MARCH 13, 2025**

Special Meeting - 6:00 PM

6:00 PM – SPECIAL JOINT MEETING

PLANNING COMMISSION AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Williams called a Special Joint Meeting of the Design Review Committee and the Planning Commission to order at 6:04 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chamber, 1644 Oak Street, Solvang, California.

ROLL CALL

Design Review Committee
Members Present:

Melissa Bates, Charlene Goetz, Jennifer Johnson,
Vice Chair Richard Boyd and Chair Esther Jacobsen Bates

Planning Commissioners
Present:

Aaron Petersen, Brandon Sparks-Gillis, William Zigler,
Chair Jack Williams

Absent:

Vice Chair Kief Adler

Staff:

Assistant City Attorney David Fleishman,
City Manager, Randy Murphy, Planning Manager Rafael Castillo,
Assistant Planner Lisa Scherman

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Planning Commissioner Zigler led in the Salute to the Flag.

1. DISCUSSION

- a. Discussion and possible direction regarding modification to Title 11, Zoning Ordinance Section 11-10-A, Design District Overlay and Chapter 13, Sign Ordinance

Planning Manager Castillo narrated a PowerPoint presentation regarding modification to Title 11, Zoning Ordinance Section 11-10-A, Design District Overlay and Chapter 13, Sign Ordinance; introduced the Signs and Designs Workshop; explained it is a participatory workshop and provided information as to how the public can participate, respond to questions live, and engage in exercises.

Discussion followed regarding options in terms of objective design standards, the need to become more objective in the commercial zones, starting with objective standards to help guide applicants, ensuring fair treatment and an equitable approach, keeping R3 in the Design District but with a carve out for new structures.

Planning Manager Castillo continued with the presentation and obtaining input from the public regarding signs which are and are not compliant with the City’s Design Guidelines or Sign Code and discussed replacing the Design Guidelines with a Design Handbook.

Discussion followed regarding maintaining the guidelines until the objective standards are in place, starting by developing a color palette that represents the Old World, including checklists and templates, making it visually appealing and making the handbook easy to read.

Discussion continued regarding ensuring more opportunities for community input, involving local architects and designers and improving communication with the public.

Planning Manager Castillo discussed A-frame signs.

Tracy Beard, Chamber of Commerce spoke in support of A-frame signs.

There were no other public comments.

Discussion followed regarding the possibility of allowing A-frame signs, ways of designing and regulating A-frame signs, way-finding signs, allowing A-frames on private property with guidelines regarding look and time, considering securing the sign on windy days, allowing signs in a planter, distinguishing between private and public property, regulating time, place and manner, including stipulation of things allowed and those prohibited and ensuring there is no proliferation of A-frame signs in the City.

Planning Manager Castillo summarized the discussion to allow for A-frame signs on private property only and maintain no A-frame signs on public rights-of-way.

Planning Commission Chair Williams suggested specifying the maximum distance from the entrance to a business.

Discussion followed regarding enforcement, making landlords ultimately responsible and liable for violations.

City Attorney Fleishman listed methods of enforcement available to the City; reported his office tries to enforce at the lowest possible level and noted the City is not in it for the money, but rather to make the code enforceable.

Discussion followed regarding wanting everyone to comply and be successful.

City Manager Murphy agreed some of these ideas are worth exploring and talked about the need for a code update.

Planning Manager Castillo discussed temporary signs, including banner signs, and reviewed responses from the public.

Discussion followed regarding current codes in place, setting time, location and size limits.

Tracy Beard talked about the City changing its tone in terms of how it feels about business; noted this is about how the City treats its customers and spoke about the importance being fair and consistent. She added that Code Enforcement should be a "teaching" moment.

Planning Manager Castillo talked about taking an educational approach.

Discussion followed regarding the importance of good communication, temporary signs for special events.

Planning Manager Castillo confirmed the group opposes feather flags and asked staff to revise the temporary signs ordinance to add flexibility, but keep it at a time, place, manner.

Discussion followed regarding regulating how many temporary sign opportunities (occasions) a business has during a year, leveling the playing field, content based regulations and setting specifications in terms of reasonable time, manner and place.

Discussion continued regarding allowing larger signs, depending on the location or on linear square footage, looking at colors and fonts, lighted signs and specifying the lumens, temperature, color and brightness and addressing relocated signs.

Mayor Brown thanked the Planning Commission and DRC for protecting Solvang's brand; spoke about having to deal with State mandates and expressed his appreciation for their service to the City.

Planning Manager Castillo addressed next steps; noted the idea is to get direction to go; discussed review by City Council and additional opportunities for input and thanked everyone for participating.

2. ADJOURNMENT: 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Rafael Castillo
Planning Manager