

I suppose you are all wondering what is going on at City Hall with the “sign ordinance”. I really wanted to talk about the new paving and bicycle lanes on Smith Street, but evidently there is some discussion needed from the City updating its sign ordinance.

First of all, as just mentioned, we have an old, outdated sign ordinance that has been on the books for many years. It has been suggested that this is new and we are trying to create unnecessary restrictions on the citizens and business people of this community. I just talked with the staff at Indiana Association of Cities and Towns to verify a hunch, and they are certain there is not a 3rd class city in Indiana that does not have a sign ordinance as a part of their zoning ordinance. (I’m sure there are a few smaller towns that don’t).

I was recently in Myrtle Beach for our annual family trip. You talk about “Signs, Signs, Everywhere a Sign.” It seem like on the “Grand Strand” there is no restriction on size, color, shape, frequency, style etc. Heck, there was even a guy in a gold, faceless spandex outfit out on the curbstone exhorting the busy vacationing traffic to pull right in and sell their gold! (more about the gold-guy later). They all must feel that having no restrictions on signage is important for their community, so it has become their standard.

A few hundred miles south on that same stretch of beach is Hilton Head. I’ve been told that their sign restrictions are so stringent, it makes it difficult to find a drugstore or grocery. Their minimalist philosophy of signage is what they feel represents their community standard.

Which brings us back home. As I mentioned above, our current sign ordinance is vague and ineffective. We are trying to simplify the current ordinance. We have actually made the policy less restrictive than the current one by incorporating suggestions that were given at our first two sign ordinance public meetings of the

Plan Commission. It is a very daunting task to simplify a sign ordinance. Every example is different. Other than logo signs, I have never seen the combination size, color, height, material duplicated on a sign. There are also multiple uses for all of those different signs.

Recently, Goshen had trouble with itinerant merchants coming into the city. One in particular was dressed as a “gold-guy.” That human sign interfered with traffic, did not have a specific business location, and was doing business like a gypsy. Their council had no problem placing restrictions on human signs.

I certainly don't want to awaken from a dream where I am being pummeled by Wally the Penguin, the KFC Chicken, or Ronald McDonald, because they had to hang up their suits. I don't want blow-up Godzilla or the Cardinal Center Duck to smother my family. I also don't want to take the call when bikini clad models become human signs.

Do you think we should work together to find our community standard and move on? There will be a third public meeting on July 9th at 7:00. I very much appreciate those who have taken their time to inform themselves of the issues, attend our work sessions, and engage in the discussion. We will take as much time as we need to develop a solution that represents a community standard. To that end, we need community input.