

**City of Huron
Planning Commission/DRB
September 11, 2025- Work Session Meeting 5:00pm**

Code Amendment: Chapter 1129 Sign Code Regulations

Planning Commission/ DRB members in attendance: Sam Artino and Mark Cencer. Council Members in attendance: Joel Hagy.

Staff in attendance: Interim City Manager, Stuart Hamilton, and Planning & Zoning Manager, Christine Gibboney.

Also in attendance: Wendy E. Moeller, FAICP, Compass Point Planning

Ms. Gibboney thanked all for attending and recapped the main reason for the need to amend the current Signage Code which relates to compliance with freedom of speech issues and the litigious nature and cases relating to signage. Ms. Gibboney referenced the history to this point, explaining draft amendments were researched and prepared by Legal and the former Planning Director, reviewed at the Planning Commission level and supported by the Commission back in 2024, however, it was recommended by Legal that the city hire a consultant with expertise in this field to conduct a final review and prepare the amendment. It was noted that the current code, the 2024 draft amendment, and recent Ord. 2025-8 would all be reviewed by the consultant along with input from staff and the Commission.

Ms. Gibboney introduced Ms. Wendy Moeller of Compass Point Planning, at which time Ms. Moeller provided a brief background of her experience and work in other municipalities. Ms. Moeller reviewed the presentation (attached as part of the minutes). Items of note/discussion:

- The 2024 draft is a good starting point to work from, and the code will not need a huge overhaul.
- 2015 Supreme Court ruling of Reed vs Town of Gilbert; virtually made every sign ordinance in the US unconstitutional. Reviewed aspects and issues of the case explaining that the goal is working toward regulations that are content-neutral; one should not have to read the sign to identify it (example: instead of identifying signs like real estate, garage sales- these would be referenced as "temporary signs". City will need to focus on structure, size, location- this is easy with permanent signs, it will be temporary signage that will require more detail/thought. Councilman Hagy inquired about signage on private property with derogatory language, expletives, etc. Ms. Moeller noted the content of the temporary signage cannot be regulated as this falls under freedom of speech. The city can regulate size, probably not the number of signs. Mr. Hamilton commented that staff reviews commercial applications to verify compliance but noted the Design Review Board is still reviewing for appearance, colors, compatibility. Ms. Moeller noted this is something that was discussed with staff and there is a question as to whether this should continue. Discussion on whether the city should have the authority to look at colors and appearance.
- The topic of "Murals" is one that she will be discussing further with the city's Legal Counsel and staff. The current draft exempts murals from zoning regulations, she explained this can become a complicated issue with "public art". She noted some municipalities have an Arts Commission, but again there is risk when one mural is approved and another not. Other municipalities choose not to regulate painted wall murals in certain districts. She noted this is challenging topic and she will be working with Legal on this section.
- On-premises/Off-premises signage – SCOTUS allowed that a distinction between on versus off premising messaging is allowed.
- Temporary Signage- not a permanent installation, removeable without any tools. Discussion ensued on should there be a time limit on temporary signs, other regulations such as types, size, residential vs commercial. Ms. Moeller referenced several examples of regulations that could be included;

(Example: in some cities, businesses with an Electronic Message Center (EMC) are not allowed to also have temporary signs). Staff advised that no permits are required for these temporary signs currently, nor would staff recommend any. Staff would like to be more business friendly and are interested in having some type "special event" signage (type and time limit TBD) grand openings, annual customer appreciation week events, things like this. Ways to regulate this: special permit, sticker on signage. Ms. Moeller reviewed language that can be incorporated to define aspects of the types of signs that the city desires to be prohibited. Special event signage can include what the city is good with allowing. Staff also noted that they were fine with the following types of temporary signage: yard, banner, feather, and sidewalk signs (note: some of these are currently prohibited) but would not want a set time as there is no way to monitor this, the city should be able to request removal and/or remove any sign due to its deteriorating condition. It was noted that sidewalk signs would have to be regulated so as not block the public sidewalk. Ms. Moeller asked if the city is ok with balloon signs- these are not moving, they are stationary ballons, how about moving inflatables? The city can still limit size and number of these. Discussion ensued on stationary and non-stationary balloon signs. Consensus was against any type of moving inflatable signage.

- Electronic Message Center: ODOT regulations are more lenient than the current city code for the changing of message (ODOT is once every 8 seconds, City (4x every 24 hours) Ms. Moeller noted most businesses would not be interested in using them with these regulations, aside from gas stations. Ms. Moeller asked if the Commission/Council had concerns or a desire to prevent this type of signage. Ms. Gibboney referenced that the current code provides the Planning Commission the authority to consider, on a case-by-case basis, any impact to public safety when making their decisions. It was noted that there are very few EMC's existing, current locations are at gas stations, businesses along Route 2, a Church on Main Street, and the High School. Ms. Moeller advised of some considerations - distance requirements to residential areas (Example: 200' from any residential districts), limit to specific districts, static change, no animation, black background with the message being the only illuminated color. Mr. Cencer noted they can be distracting, adding that the Planning Commission has turned them down before and recapped the most recent case. He recommended tight, enforceable rules to be incorporated. Ms. Moeller noted applicants will always have the right to seek a variance. Mr. Hamilton raised concern with the multiple zoning districts abutting each other, Ms. Moeller acknowledged, noting distance restrictions-setbacks from residentially zoned property, size restrictions, etc. Discussion ensued on how most businesses are near residential. Ms. Moeller noted perhaps allowing a larger size that is not EMC, that may be an incentive? Digital signs were mentioned, Ms. Moeller advised these are more common in more urban areas, and some communities have chosen to prohibit them altogether. Ms. Moeller will work on language.
- Discussion on Staff vs Planning Commission approval for signage. If there are clear standards for signage, and staff confirms that a sign meets the criteria, it is common in other municipalities that staff approve of these rather than taking them to a PC/DRB meeting. Comments/Opinions? Ms. Gibboney referenced the current process, plan review performed by Zoning to ensure compliance (pursuant to code requirements), then the application is placed on the Planning Commission/DRB agenda for approval (which could be up to 30 days) before the meeting, and then the sign permit is issued. Ms. Gibboney noted staff would be fine with reviewing and approving applications at the Department level, with the exception perhaps of EMC signage. Mr. Hamilton asked if the Planning Commission would still want to see these considering staff would have already vetted for compliance and since signs are not to be read, is there a reason PC/DRB would need or want to review? Mr. Cencer added that these types of cases take no time at the PC level, noting that as far as the DRB criteria, it is so subjective. Gibboney referenced the current codes for Design Review regulations do speak to color, design being considered by the DRB, so this would need to be looked at. Mr. Hamilton

and Councilman Hagy reiterated the time span that applicants are subject to currently. Ms. Moeller suggested that perhaps EMC be Conditional Use requiring approval. Mr. Artino noted if the code language is clear, and anytime staff can make the decision, he is in support as he understands waiting for a meeting is difficult for a business. Mr. Hagy noted his support, explaining that eliminating the wait time for businesses would be welcomed. Mr. Artino suggested that staff report on signage approved, so the Commission is aware. Mr. Cencer supported that suggestion. Ms. Moeller will work up draft language with footnotes to include the ongoing questions/input.

- Menu Boards-Ms. Moeller explained the current draft includes sign & height regulations, but she asked if language was included in the code that these boards are to be behind the building or otherwise screened from view of the street – there would be no sign or height regulations. The point being to get them to locate them behind or screened. There were no objections to this suggestion.

Final comments

- Mr. Cencer noted that the more objective the code can be the better, so that we have clear rules and regulations to apply.
- Mr. Artino noted he would agree with Mr. Cencer, clear code language and regulations are needed.
- Ms. Moeller and Mr. Hamilton noted the most difficult signage language will be the temporary signs. Discussion on temporary signage in/on vehicles ensued- what type of signage is this considered, can it be regulated, what if it is a political sign? Ms. Moeller noted this is hard to enforce this type of sign, yes, it's a sign and it may be in the right-of-way, but it can be freedom of speech.

The work session meeting was adjourned at 6:17pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Gibboney
Planning & Zoning Dept.

Adopted: Dec 17, 2025