

From: JT

Date: Thu, 25 Jun 2009 23:30:38 -0500

Subject: FW: Reminder - community meetings on Digital Off-Premises Signs

I went to the meeting Wednesday night. The attachments are two of the handouts they provided. I met Rod Sanchez, Director of the Planning and Development Services Department, and some of his staff. Andrew Spurgin, one of those, gave the very good briefing you see here. As you read through it and you have questions, you may send them to Mr. Spurgin at Andrew.Spurgin@sanantonio.gov.

Chuck Saxer, president of Northside Neighborhoods for Organized Development, NNOD (<http://www.nnod.org/index.html>), was there and gave a resounding solid voice of no, we don't want any digital billboards. (He was videotaped by WOAI and may have been on the Wednesday night news – is WOAI owned by Clear Channel.) There was one individual who said he liked them. I suspect he worked for Clear Channel but I am trying to find out for sure.

Questions that I left with them were:

1. Since the city does have authority over the on premises digital signs they must know how many there are. They don't, or at least the ones at the meeting didn't know.
2. Of the annual inspection of each billboard, is there a public record. There is but you have to ask them for it.
3. There is a 10 second dwell time and no more than one second transition for the images. Where did these numbers come from, that is, how were these numbers selected?
4. The signs cannot resemble a warning or danger signal. Did they make this up or is there some DOT, ASTM, etc., technical guidance directing this?
5. Visual effects between displays, such as in Power Point presentations, is animation and should be prohibited.
6. The city may impose Amber alerts (for up to three hours) or other emergency information such as collapsed bridge or disaster traffic instructions. Are the sign companies compensated for this obvious loss of revenue from his other customers and is there a city budget for this kind of payment? Will there be a limit to how many times in a period the city can "take over"?
7. The staff is to prepare a report to go to the city council. Is there a Human Factors Engineer on staff or consultation for this study?
8. State law should prohibit such signs as distractions to drivers and their safety.
9. San Antonio should wait for safety studies to be completed before completing a report for the city council.
10. Safety studies should be double blind technical objective studies, not some subjective guesswork by people not versed in highway safety, statistics, human factors engineering, etc.

Additionally, no mention has been made of any national safety study of digital signs. It seems obvious that it on par with cell phone usage or maybe worse.

No mention has been made about the staff's motivation in performing this study. They seem enthusiastic about the process and being staff have their jobs as their vested interest – what else would they be doing.

There are four sign companies that were involved in the take down-put up trade. Only Clear Channel and Lamar participated. Does this mean that no other entrepreneur may ever start up a digital billboard company since he/she doesn't have anything to trade? There seems to be no allowance for that, meaning two companies will never have competition except from each other and Clear Channel clearly has, and will always have, the advantage. I'd invite the SEC to look into that except they seem to be inept and corrupt too.

Have a great day. I hope this has helped you understand.