



# VILLAGE OF ORLAND PARK

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## Department Requested Action

**File Number: 2010-0045**

**Agenda Date: 4/21/2014**

**Version: 6**

**Status: IN COMMITTEE  
/COMMISSION**

**In Control: Development Services & Planning Committee**

**File Type: MOTION**

**Agenda Number: 6.**

### Title/Name/Summary

Electronic Sign - Discussion

### History

On October 21, 2013, the Development Services & Planning Committee discussed a possible code change to allow for electronic message boards in the Village of Orland Park. This item has been discussed a number of times before the Village Board of Trustees, including on October 2, 2013 when the item was sent back to committee for further follow-up and discussion. At the October 21, 2013 meeting (reference attached minutes) there was not a consensus to move forward on initiating a code change to allow electronic message boards. Now that the LaGrange Road improvement project is well underway, the Mayor has requested that this be re-reviewed for consideration, as many businesses are in the process of finalizing their new permanent signage.

Below is the exact staff report from the October 21, 2013 Development Services & Planning Committee meeting.

### OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

The Land Development Code currently prohibits electronic signs except for those that statically display date, time and/or temperature. The Committee has discussed amending the Code to allow electronic signs in the past, in 2010, and last month. Electronic signs are becoming more common, especially for certain uses, such as the display of gasoline pricing. This report includes a review of electronic signs and draft code revisions to permit electronic signs.

This item was discussed at the September 16 Development Services and Planning Committee and at the October 2 Village Board meeting. The Village Board referred the item back to the Committee for further discussion.

### ELECTRONIC SIGNS

Regulation of electronic signs ranges from full prohibition (similar to Orland Park's current code) to encouragement (used in some municipalities' entertainment areas). There are numerous regulatory aspects to consider when reviewing electronic sign proposals including sign type, location, placement and spacing, area, copy permitted, brightness, animation and more.

### NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES

May be no closer than 1,000 lineal feet to any other electronic message board display.  
May be no closer than 350 feet to a residential dwelling.  
Must comply with IDOT requirements for outdoor advertising.

Oakbrook: Prohibited. Gasoline price signs could be electronic if approved through a Special Use process.

Oakbrook Terrace: Highly Limited. Permitted only for time/temperature/date and for highway advertising signs. Highway advertising signs are only permitted along Route 83.

Glenview: Prohibited except for gasoline. Gasoline prices only may be electronic to a maximum of 500 nits. Government signs are exempt from sign requirements.

Evanston: Highly Limited. Permitted only for time and temperature. Length of information cycle shall not be shorter than (3) seconds...and not be repeated at intervals that are short enough to cause the effect of a flashing signs. Sign must also be equipped with photosensitive equipment to automatically adjust brightness and contrast to the ambient outdoor illumination. This includes adjusting the sign luminance to sunny and cloudy daylight conditions.

### **ELECTRONIC SIGN BRIGHTNESS**

Several questions regarding 'NIT's' were presented at the October 2, 2013 Board of Trustees meeting. The luminance that a sign gives off is measured in 'NITS.' A sign that is illuminated via an external source is measured in 'footcandles'.

To provide some comparison, conventional daylight projects between 5,000 and 7,000 NITs while conventional lit billboards typically measure in around 100 NITs at night.

Two industry groups that provide recommendations on acceptable nits for outdoors signs are the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) and the Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA).

The following excerpt from the American Planning Associations PAS report on Electronic Signs & Billboards provides some additional explanation:

*Proposed limits on sign brightness have caused much debate. Research provided by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) states that drivers should be subjected to points of brightness no greater than 40 times the average brightness level of their general surroundings; this proportion is known as the contrast ratio. "As roadway lighting and automobile headlights provide ambient nighttime lighting levels of about one nit, this implies signage should appear no brighter than about 40 nits" (Luginbuhl, 2010, p.1). Surprisingly, the IESNA's own recommendations for signage luminance suggest limits between 250-1400 nits—greatly exceeding their stated maximum contrast ratio of 40:1.*

*The OAAA, has deemed 300-350 nits an acceptable level of night brightness.*

The following summaries highlight how neighboring communities regulate electronic signs.

**Flossmoor:** Limited permissions. Electronic signs are permitted on larger size commercial lots on regional/ arterial roadways (Governor's Highway, Vollmer etc.) but not in the older parts of town. There are regulations on size (60 square feet) and brightness (NITS). There are no time prescriptions for changing copy.

**Frankfort:** Prohibited.

**Homer Glen:** Electronic signs appear integrated into the existing Code. The electronic sign is permitted, but it must fit within existing Code regulations, specifications and requirements with special consideration given only to the fact that it is electronic.

**Mokena:** Prohibited. There are a number of electronic signs in Mokena, but these are grandfathered through annexation agreements.

**Palos Heights:** Attempted to contact, code unavailable at this time.

**Palos Park:** Allows electronic signs in limited capacities. Temporary electronic signs may not have any flashing, scrolling/tracking etc. Permanent electronic signs can have changing copy but must meet NITS. There is no time prescription for changing copy. Electronic signs are not allowed on pole signs, they must be ground signs (no grandfathering). Advertising via electronic signs can only be done via ground signs. Walls signs may be electronic signs but they are only for the business name.

**Tinley Park:** Allows electronic signs Village-wide. On monument signs, 20% elevation area can be electronic. Issue they are dealing with: electronic signs not uniform in size. Monument signs have specific dimensions (10 feet tall) but some have been allowed to be bigger. As a result, some electronic signs are bigger than others (bigger monument sign means bigger area that makes up 20%). No time prescriptions for message frequency, no light control. Some electronic signs have PSA abilities and share Village information (community festivals etc.). Mandated gas stations to change price displays to electronic (20 square feet) within 3 years of Code change to allow electronic gas price display.

**Arlington Heights:** Prohibited.

**Northbrook:** Permitted for:

Public Service Signs

Industrial and Institutional buildings subject to a Special Use Permit and with the following regulations:

May display multi-color images and text but cannot change faster than once every ten seconds.

Must only be on from 7AM to 11PM.

Images must be for products or services provided.

Must have landscaping around the base.

*However, their guidance is based on the use of the IEEE standard for light trespass (IESNA-TM-11-00), when, for reasons of traffic safety and glare in drivers' eyes, it should have been based on IEEE's standard for roadway sign lighting (IESNA RP-19-01). Traditionally floodlit static billboards rarely exceed 100 nits; experts on both driver distraction and light pollution recommended that, as a means of compromise, the new technologies should not exceed this value. In many areas, including Philadelphia, brightness levels are currently unregulated, and many manufacturers publicize their signs' capabilities to reach up to 11,000 nits.*

Regulating the maximum number of NITs is important to ensure that the electronic sign blends in with conventional signs and does not appear overly bright or glaring. Draft sign code amendments presented to the Committee in 2010 included NIT limits of 350 at night and 1000 during the day. After a review of the literature, those limits were reduced to 200 at night and 1000 during the day, as included in the 2013 Committee and Board staff reports. The Illinois Coalition for Responsible Outdoor Lighting recommends NIT limits of 150 at night and 5000 during sunny days. Most conventionally lit existing billboards measure in at approximately 100 NITs. The NIT levels can be adjusted in any draft code changes in order to meet the policy goals set forth by the Village Board.

### **EXISTING MESSAGE BOARD**

Since the Board meeting, Village staff have inventoried existing signs on Harlem Avenue, Wolf Road, 159th Street, 143rd Street and LaGrange Road. There are approximately 56 existing manual message boards along these corridors. Some of them are on existing non-conforming signs.

### **DRAFT CODE AMENDMENTS**

If the Land Development Code were to be revised to allow electronic signs where message boards are currently permitted, the following regulations would apply. Some of the regulations below have been strengthened based on comments made by the Village Board. Areas of revision are noted in 'red.'

1. Two violations within a twelve month period will result in a thirty day suspension from using the electronic message board. **If a third violation in a twelve month period is issued, the sign owner must remove the electronic message board and restore the sign or replace the electronic message board with a manual message board. The electronic message board must be removed and restored within 30 days of the third violation or owner will be fined \$500/day.** A citation will be issued for the first violation, followed by a fine of \$500 for each subsequent offense within the twelve month period.
2. Electronic message board only allowed on the area of commercial signs currently permitted for manual message boards, which is 25% of the sign face. The sign face area permitted for each property is based on lineal square feet, up to the following maximums:
3. Buildings under 350,000 square feet  
40 square feet sign face permitted. 10 square feet permitted for electronic message

board.

4. Buildings between 350,000-500,000 square feet (Lakeview Plaza). 100 square feet sign face permitted. Per existing code, 25 square feet is permitted for electronic message board (unless a multi-tenant sign is used - then no electronic message board is permitted).
5. Buildings over 500,000 square feet (Orland Park Place Mall and Orland Square Mall). 150 square feet sign face permitted. Per existing code, 37.5 square feet permitted for electronic message board (unless a multi-tenant sign is used - then no electronic message board is permitted). **The code would be revised to limit the total area of an electronic message board to 25 feet.**
6. Electronic message boards would not be permitted for multi-tenant signs or office signs. Essentially, electronic message boards would only be allowed for retail/commercial buildings. It is important to note that Orland Park's zoning districts often permit commercial retail and office in the same building, so there may be some occasions where an office occupies a previous commercial space that already has an electronic sign.
7. Electronic message boards will not be permitted on existing nonconforming signs. A new sign must be constructed to current Codes in order to install an electronic message board.
- 8. If a property installs an electronic message board, no window electronic message board will be permitted. The Code currently does not regulate interior electronic signage that is located behind the window.**
9. The message board cannot be above the primary sign.
10. Sign copy may only be changed once every 24 hours. The message change must be instantaneous-no fading, flashing, or running script.
11. A default mechanism is required to freeze the sign in one position if a malfunction occurs.
12. Sign copy must be static and may not be scrolling, flashing or in any way animated.
13. Only text and numbers are permitted. Illustrations, graphics and images are prohibited.
14. The maximum number of lines for copy is three.
15. Background is required to be black and copy may be white or yellow only.
16. Luminance

Night NIT: 50-150

Daylight NIT: 1,000 (in sunny conditions)

All signs required to have a censor that automatically lowers light output in accordance with atmospheric conditions, including sunny versus cloudy daylight conditions.

17. Only one electronic message board will be permitted per property. Under current Code, some properties are able to have more than one message board based on lineal feet of property.

#### **ADDITIONAL REGULATORY OPTIONS**

In addition to the above regulations, the below items offer additional levels of regulation that may be written into the Code depending on the policy direction set by the Board of Trustees.

A. Minimum required spacing between signs. Some communities set minimum distances between electronic signs in order to prevent a clustered appearance. Distance limitations will also limit, by default, the number of properties eligible for an electronic sign.

B. Requirement of solar operated sign. Electronic signs, by nature, use more electricity than conventional signs. Requiring solar powered signs helps contribute to a greener environment.

C. Aesthetic improvements including but not limited to, masonry based signs (ie enclosed by brick) and/or additional landscaping.

D. Standards for the height of lettering based on the speed limit of the road to ensure consistent visibility.

E. Limited to geographic areas, like Lagrange Road, Harlem, and 159th Street, for example, rather than on all commercial properties. Permitting electronic signs along only major commercial corridors would maintain the more residential character of other, more localized, neighborhood centers.

F. Limit or prohibit electronic signs near residential areas or for properties that abut residential areas. Language that emphasizes that electronic signs must obey current light trespass regulations.

G. Limit the time of day that the sign can be operational. Some communities require both electronic and conventional sign lighting to be turned off between 11PM and 7AM.

#### **COMPARABLES**

The attached photographs show other electronic signs and compare them to the proposed code amendments.

Any changes to the sign section of the Land Development Code will have to be brought through the public hearing process. This item is for discussion only.

**Recommended Action/Motion**  
This item is for discussion only.