

MAIN STREET ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

CITY OF TAYLOR, TEXAS MAIN STREET ADVISORY BOARD

April 21, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ashley Doss, John McRae, Steve Truex, Erwin Stauffer, Jeff Snyder, Curie Humphreys, and Doug Moss

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Tom Yantis, Assistant City Manager; Colin Harrison, Assistant Director of Development Services; and Jan Harris, Main Street Manager

OTHERS PRESENT: Robert Bland, Bland's Jewelers; Stacy and Tay Campbell, Taylor Sporting Goods/Taylor Office Products; Bo Brasfield, Brasfield Real Estate; and Robert Garcia, Taylor City Councilman for District 4

- I. **CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARE A QUORUM:** Erwin Stauffer was nominated temporary Chairman for the meeting. He called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm with a quorum present.
- II. **CITIZENS COMMUNICATION:** No communication from the citizenry.
- III. **CONSENT AGENDA**
 1. **MOTION:** To approve the March 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes as presented. **J. McRAE / S. TRUEX/ UNANIMOUS**
 2. **MOTION:** To accept the March Financial Reports as presented. **S. TRUEX / D. MOSS / UNANIMOUS**
- IV. **REGULAR AGENDA: Review, Discuss and Consider Action:**
 1. **Main Street Manager's reports** – Ms. Harris presented the following reports to the board:
 - a. **Manager's Activity Report:** Ms. Harris reviewed the various meetings she attended in the course of her duties including TDA and Main Street meetings; meetings with the Chamber of Commerce and Public Arts Advisory Board; meetings with downtown stakeholders and departmental meetings.
 - b. **Downtown Property Report:** Ms. Harris reviewed the two reports indicating properties for sale and those for lease in the downtown district. She reported that only 2 spaces were available for lease in the McCrory-Timmerman-Titsworth buildings.
 - c. **Downtown Business Report:** Ms. Harris reported that Liberty's Consignments was relocating to Old Taylor High in the coming days.
 - d. **Board Member Attendance Report:** The attendance report was reviewed with the board and attendance was strongly encouraged at all meetings. Ms. Harris thanked the board members who attended the recent Board & Commission Training.
 - e. **Enhanced enforcement of no thru trucks:** Ms. Harris reported that the City Manager has requested input from the Main Street Advisory Board concerning the enhanced enforcement by Taylor Police Department of the No Thru Trucks Ordinance. As this item was not included in the published agenda, she was seeking direction from the board as to their wish to discuss this matter at length at the May 19, 2021 meeting. The board was supportive of continuing the enhanced enforcement once it was clarified that any trucks making deliveries within the downtown could continue to do so. Councilman Garcia noted that he had received communication from Taylor business owners who operated large trucks as a part of their business who wanted to be exempt from this no thru trucks order. The board was not inclined

to support this. This issue will be discussed at length at the May 19, 2021 meeting of the Main Street Advisory Board.

2. **Sign Variance Requests:** Colin Harrison addressed the board and showed a Power Point presentation describing the process the Development Services Department was following to ensure that signage in the downtown followed the Sign Ordinance and possessed a valid sign permit. He also provided the background and content for the Board's consideration of variances. Mr. Harrison then led the discussion regarding the following 6 variance requests:
 - a. **Consider a recommendation to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a sign variance request for 305 North Main Street:** This building houses both Taylor Office Products and Taylor Sporting Goods. The sign creating the need for a variance was the primary sign painted on the front façade of the building near the cornice. The width of the building dictates the square footage of signage allowed on the building's façade. 305 N. Main Street is 42' in width so the maximum allowable signage under the ordinance is 42 F². The current sign measures approximately 65 F². Business owners Tay and Stacy Campbell addressed the board regarding this sign and the issues which caused it to be installed without a permit. After discussion, the following recommendation was made: **MOTION: The Main Street Advisory Board recommends that the variance be upheld as the sign in question preserves the spirit and intent of the Ordinance and because changing the current sign would present a financial hardship to the owners. D. MOSS / J. McRAE / Unanimous**
 - b. **Consider a recommendation to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a sign variance for 202 North Main Street:** This building houses Brasfield Realty. The initial variance request was for three non-illuminated primary signs attached to the building's façade above the canopy one of which needs refurbishment. The building is 24' wide so the maximum allowable primary signage would be 24 F². The larger, centrally located sign measures 30" x 4' and the two smaller signs measure 4' x 77", thus exceeding the allowable square footage by 21 F². During discussion, business and property owner Bo Brasfield agreed to remove the 2 smaller signs and refurbish the central sign. This action would bring Mr. Brasfield into compliance with the current Sign Ordinance and eliminates the need for a variance. **MOTION: No action was required of the Main Street Advisory Board as the variance request was withdrawn by Mr. Brasfield.**
 - c. **Consider a recommendation to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a sign variance for 100 East 2nd Street:** Prior to discussion, Ms. Harris informed the board that MSAB member Ashley Doss is the applicant for this variance. Ms. Doss would speak as the business owner but would recuse herself from all discussion after the presentation and from the vote by the board. The building at 100 E. 2nd Street houses Frills. The variance request is for two pink LED neon signs inside the storefront windows. The current Sign Ordinance states that internally illuminated signs are not permitted. Ms. Doss discussed the positive impact the sign has had on her business. She reminded the board that neon is a traditional sign medium and was for a large part of the 20th Century. After discussion where Mr. Moss noted the number and variety of neon signs that once existed throughout downtown Taylor, the following recommendation was made: **MOTION: The Main Street Advisory Board recommends that the variance for 100 East 2nd Street be upheld. D. MOSS / S. TRUEX / UNANIMOUS WITH ASHLEY DOSS ABSTAINING FROM THE VOTE.**
 - d. **Consider a recommendation to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a sign variance for 201 North Main Street:** This building houses the Texas Beer Company. The variance request was for two existing internally illuminated signs inside the long window facing 2nd Street. The Sign Ordinance states that internally illuminated signs are not permitted. No one from the Texas Beer Company was present at the meeting. After discussion, the following recommendation was made: **MOTION: The Main Street Advisory Board recommends that the variance request be upheld as**

- the signage in question is financially beneficial to the business. The Board requests that the two signs be centered and hung within the windows. C. HUMPHREYS / A. DOSS / UNANIMOUS
- e. **Consider a recommendation to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a sign variance request for 304 North Main Street:** This building houses Bland's Jewelry. While Robert Bland was present at the beginning of the meeting, he left prior to the consideration of his variance request. The initial variance request was comprised of two parts. The first part concerned three internally illuminated signs in the storefront windows. The signs in the variance proposal included a flashing "OPEN" sign measuring 1'5" x 6". The second illuminated sign reads "ON SITE JEWELRY REPAIR" and measures 2'7" x 1'7". The third illuminated sign reads "CUSTOM JEWELRY" and measures 2'5" x 1'10". The total size of the illuminated signs is approximately 10 F². Prior to this meeting, Mr. Bland removed two of the internally illuminated signs so that only one internally illuminated "OPEN" sign remains. He has agreed not to reinstall those two signs. The second part of the variance request concerns an A-frame (sandwich board) sign. The ordinance required that sidewalk signs be properly anchored or weighted against the wind and that such signs be removed from the sidewalk when the business is closed. After discussion, the following recommendation was made: **MOTION: The Main Street Advisory Board recommends that the variance for both the single remaining illuminated sign and the A-frame sign be upheld with the following criteria: that the "OPEN" sign be constantly illuminated and not flash, and that the sidewalk sign be weighted.** D. MOSS / S. TRUEX / UNANIMOUS.
- f. **Consider a recommendation to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a sign variance request for 115 West 2nd Street:** This building houses Xchange Tavern owned by Jason Grace. Mr. Grace was not present at the meeting. The variance seeks to allow a proposed internally illuminated projecting sign comprised of a metal frame and acrylic faces with internal light bulbs in the shape of an "X". The proposed sign would measure 3' x 3'. The Sign Ordinance states that no internally illuminated signs are permitted. Discussion ensued with Doug Moss noting that the sign would be the brightest sign in the area and there was concern that it would be distracting to the surrounding area, pedestrians, and vehicular traffic. It was suggested that an externally illuminated sign would be a better fit for the Victorian style building. In addition, the sign as configured would not be legible as presented. After additional discussion, the following recommendation was made: **MOTION: The Main Street Advisory Board recommends that the variance request be denied. The MSAB is not in favor of having an internally illuminated projecting casement sign with acrylic faces in the downtown district.** D. MOSS / J. SNYDER / UNANIMOUS.

3. **Discuss and receive recommendations from the Main Street Advisory Board regarding downtown street improvements:** Assistant City Manager Tom Yantis made a presentation to the MSAB. The purpose of this agenda item is to discuss the City staff proposal for the use of bond funds for downtown streets. The City issued bonds in 2013 for improvements to downtown streets. There were not specific projects identified for the use of these bond funds. To date, the primary use of the downtown street bond funds has been for the reconstruction of 3rd Street associated with the Skate Park project and the installation of a pedestrian crossing on 4th Street associated with the Skate Park and Heritage Square projects. The City adopted a downtown master plan in 2015 that called for improvements to downtown streets to make the downtown more suitable for pedestrians and street-level businesses. In 2017, the City adopted a wayfinding sign plan to direct vehicles and pedestrians to and within downtown. In 2020, the City completed a landscape plan to rehabilitate all the downtown public planting beds.

Beginning in 2020, the City Council authorized the use of some of the downtown street bonds to implement pilot projects associated with the recommendations in the Downtown Master Plan. These projects included temporary curb extensions, plantings and painting/stripping along 2nd Street between Porter and Talbot. These projects demonstrate the concepts in the Downtown Master Plan.

Staff is recommending using additional bond funds to make permanent the improvements in the block of W. 2nd Street between Main and Talbot. This would include constructing new concrete curbs and sidewalks, installing barriers such as bollards to separate pedestrians from vehicles, creating tree wells to plant street streets, etc.

Based upon the cost of these improvements, Mr. Yantis noted that staff recommends using the remaining funds on three additional projects: 1) re-stripping all downtown streets to maximize on-street parking; 2) rehabilitating all the downtown planting beds with new plants and irrigations repairs; 3) beginning to implement the pedestrian wayfinding sign program.

Councilman Garcia emphasized the importance of road improvements as the cost of milling and repaving downtown streets rises about 10% per year. He mentioned the hope the City will work with the Railroad to improve the railroad station noting that having an improved Porter Street would be necessary once the transportations improvements were accomplished.

The MSAB discussed the proposal at length and emphasized that the funds available should be invested in the downtown spaces to reinforce it as a destination for residents and visitors. It was further discussed that rather than move to permanent improvements to the 2nd St block between Main and Talbot, that less expensive non-permanent improvements could build on what the City has already achieved with the first phase of the improvements. With that in mind, the following recommendation was made: **MOTION: That the priority of the 4 elements of downtown street improvements be shifted to the following: 1) Begin implementation of a wayfinding sign plan. 2) Implement landscape plan for downtown planting beds. 3) Re-stripe downtown streets to maximize downtown parking. 4) Implement improvements on West 2nd St between Main and Talbot. An additional item was added to the list presented by Staff: 5) Whatever funds remain after the first 4 items should be used to address future mass transit opportunities on Porter Street. D. MOSS / C. HUMPHREYS / UNANIMOUS.**

4. Discuss items for upcoming agendas:

- a. Election of officers
- b. Discussion of recommendation regarding enhanced enforcement of No Thru Truck Zone in downtown
- c. Discuss and make recommendations for changes, updates, additions to the current Sign Ordinance
- d. Review draft of Signage Design Guidelines packet
- e. Staff to present information on "OPEN" banners for businesses to use in lieu of electronic and illuminated "OPEN" signs.

V. ADJOURN: MOTION: The April meeting of the Main Street Advisory Board was declared adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted:


Jan Harris
Main Street Manager