

Memo

To: Board Members
From: John R. Knight, Supervisor District I
Date: May 3, 2012
Re: Sign regulations/Consideration of a temporary moratorium

On April 12, 2011, the Development Services Department brought its proposed 2011-12 work plan to the Board of Supervisors for its approval. The department identified the zoning ordinance update, Housing Element, Land Development Manual, rare plant issues, and the TRPA Regional Plan Update as its priorities, given existing staffing and budget. Prior to that, in October, 2010, the Department recommended that the sign regulations, along with several other components of the zoning ordinance, be deferred from the comprehensive zoning ordinance update due to the legal complexities, time and expense involved in preparing new sign regulations. The Board, focused on updating those regulations that would most facilitate business development, agreed, and deferred the sign ordinance until after adoption of the rest of the comprehensive zoning ordinance update. This decision was carried over in July, 2011 when the Board directed staff to prepare a targeted general plan amendment to address housing, job creation, and retention of sales tax revenue. Sign regulations were not included in the package of actions being considered in the Land Use Policy Programmatic Update (the targeted General Plan Amendments, comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Update, and Traffic Demand modeling.)

Shortly after the Board made that decision, an applicant submitted three applications for large billboards along Highway 50 in Cameron Park and Shingle Springs. The Cameron Park design review committee commented extensively during the application process, because the Committee considered the applications inconsistent with aesthetic guidelines the Committee has been developing over the past few years. Last fall, members of the Committee asked that this Board consider imposing a moratorium on billboard applications while they finished their guidelines. Because this Board had established a work program for

Development Services that did not include an update to the sign ordinance, the Board concluded, at its September 13, 2011 meeting, that it would not pursue a moratorium at that time.

When the three billboard applications were heard by the Planning Commission and by this Board in February and March of this year, it was apparent that the community considers the approval of additional billboards to be a matter of great concern which could cause great harm to the scenic beauty of our County. This, combined with the various items that have appeared before our Board in the past several years involving other sign issues such as: the use of lighting, the use of moveable text such as LED signs, the appropriate amount, location, and appearance of on-site signage, complaints about illegal signs in the county right of way, and complaints about unpermitted "temporary" signs have led me to believe that signs have become a much more important issue in this County, and that the various concerns may not be adequately addressed by our current regulations.

Therefore, I believe we should discuss whether we want to reconsider the priorities that we gave to the Development Services Department, and seriously consider placing the development of comprehensive updated sign regulations at the top of their schedule. I recognize that this reorganization of the work plan has cost and staffing implications, but believe that the public has shown that the proliferation of signs along our highways is a matter of great concern. Therefore I would recommend that the Board take the following actions:

1. Direct Development Services staff return within 30 days, with a resolution of intent to amend the Zoning Ordinance to develop comprehensive sign regulations;
2. Direct Development Services and the County Administrative Office to prepare a budget and timeline for the completion of the sign regulations and bring that information to the Board within 30 days; and
3. Direct Development Services and County Counsel to return to the Board within 60 days with an interim ordinance, prepared and noticed pursuant to Government Code Section 65858(b), which would preclude the approval of any off-site advertising signs during the period that the County is developing its comprehensive sign regulations.