



# DANE COUNTY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

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**TO:** Dane County Zoning & Land Regulation (ZLR) Committee  
Town Clerks, Supervisors & Planning Commissioners  
County Executive Joe Parisi  
All Other Interested Parties

**FROM:** Pamela Andros, AICP, Senior Planner

**DATE:** March 21, 2017

**RE:** Staff review of Sub. 1 to Ordinance Amendment (OA) #83, 2016  
Regarding Electronic Signs

**CC:** Dane County Towns Association

*This memo describes Ordinance Amendment 83, 2016, regarding electronic signs. To assist town and county officials in decision making, the Planning Division prepares written descriptions of each proposed amendment to land use and development related ordinances. The Zoning & Land Regulation (ZLR) Committee will hold a public hearing on OA 83 on Tuesday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Please direct any questions to me at 261-9780, or by email at [andros@countyofdane.com](mailto:andros@countyofdane.com).*

## **I. BACKGROUND**

### *Existing ordinance*

Currently, as stated in Section 10.72(9), electronic signs are permitted in the A-B Agriculture-business, B-1 Local Business, C-1 Commercial, C-2 Commercial, EXP-1 Exposition, M-1 Industrial zoning districts. The current ordinance defines electronic signs as “an advertising sign whose message may be changed by electronic process”. Ground signs must be setback either 42 feet from the right-of-way or 100 feet from the centerline of a Class A highway, whichever is greater.

### *Motivation for the amendment*

Seeking the convenience of being able to easily and remotely change messages, the Perry Lutheran Church wishes to convert their existing sign into an electronic sign. The current sign is located approximately 45 feet from the centerline of State Highway 78, and is considered a legal non-conforming (a.k.a “grandfathered”) sign. Their sign proposal conflicts with the zoning ordinance in two ways. First, electronic signs are not allowed in the A-1EX Exclusive Agricultural district, and second, the setback requirement for a new sign is 42 feet from the centerline of a Class A highway.

**The ZLR Committee Public Hearing on Sub 1 to OA #83, 2016 will be March 28, 2017.  
Town action on the OA is due to the county zoning office by April 27<sup>th</sup> 2017.**

## **II. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED CHANGES**

Unlike the original ordinance amendment #83, Sub. 1 does not change the zoning districts in which electronic signs are allowed. Instead it modernizes the definition of electronic sign [Article 2], adds control over the brightness of electronic signs by defining a unit of measure for intensity of light [Article 3], and for clarity, updates the definition of vision clearance triangle [Article 4].

Design requirements are updated in Article 6. Standards for illumination of signs is modernized and includes controls for external source of light, the angle of light, glare, and prohibits flashing, moving, reflecting or changing light sources. Electronic message sign design is defined controlling for sign types, frequency of changing messages, sets maximum brightness, and adds procedures for sign malfunction. Electronic off-premise advertising (billboard) signs are prohibited.

The other key change from the current ordinance is the repeal of the current set back regulations, and combining new set back rules with locational regulation [ Article 7, Section 10.77]. These updated set back rules are more fitting to rural settings, and complementary to common sign designs, especially ground signs.

## **III. ANALYSIS**

This ordinance amendment provides needed modernization of the definition of electronic signs and the manner in which their design and functioning is regulated. It also improves set back rules for signs by making them more clear and more useful for the most common types of signs desired.

## **IV. TOWN ACTION REQUIRED BY APRIL 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2017**

As amendments to chapter 10, town action is required on Sub. 1 to OA 83 within 30 days of the county zoning committee public hearing, which is scheduled for Tuesday, March 28, 2017. Towns should submit their action reports on the amendments to the county zoning office by Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. Action reports may be submitted by hardcopy, fax (608-267-1540), or electronically via the online Town Board Action Report form available here: [http://www.countyofdane.com/plandev/Town\\_Information.aspx](http://www.countyofdane.com/plandev/Town_Information.aspx).

If you have questions, please contact me (phone: 608-261-9780; email: [andros@countyofdane.com](mailto:andros@countyofdane.com)).