

# TOWN OF ST. GERMAIN

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OFFICE OF THE CLERK

P.O. BOX 7

ST. GERMAIN, WISCONSIN 54558

[www.townofstgermain.org](http://www.townofstgermain.org)

## MINUTES PUBLIC HEARING PROPOSED SIGN ORDINANCE: JUNE 15, 2010

**Call to Order: Town Chairman, Peggy Nimz, called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.** Ms. Nimz noted that this was a duly called meeting in accordance with the Wisconsin Open Meeting Law. The meeting was duly posted and published.

**Board Members Present:** Peggy Nimz, Fred Radtke, John Vojta, and Walt Camp. There were 21 other people in attendance.

Ms. Nimz turned the meeting over to John Vojta, Planning & Zoning Committee chairman. Mr. Vojta opened the floor to discussion.

Bill Doerr asked whether the ordinance was an off-premise sign ordinance or an on-premise sign ordinance. He felt that it was worded poorly and was not clear. Mr. Doerr stated that the preamble already states that the ordinance is an off-premise sign ordinance, but he felt that “off-premise” should also be added to the title in line 3. Mr. Doerr felt that a #9 should be added to line 156 stating, “on-premise signs do not require a permit under the provisions of this ordinance. He also felt that a section “k” should be added to line 331 stating that the ordinance “does not apply to on-premise signs. Mr. Doerr felt that the wording, as it is now, is confusing.

Tom Christensen, chairman of the sign sub-committee, noted that the committee left out “off-premise” because this is the only sign ordinance that there is. An on-premise sign ordinance may be considered at a later date. David Weber added that this ordinance is not designed for on-premise signs. The committee was mandated to draft an off-premise sign ordinance.

Mary Platner said that the committee had also been concerned about realty signs. They are placed on a property that is for sale and, therefore, are technically an on-premise sign. So, the committee didn’t want to call the ordinance an off-premise sign ordinance.

Bill Doerr asked if the ordinance only applied to new signs or signs that are well maintained and with a message. He also said that the ordinance does not work for both “off” and “on” premise signs. Tom Christensen said that an inventory will be taken and new permits will be issued. Mary Platner noted that all existing signs had been permitted as structures under the town’s zoning ordinance.

Kalisa Nampel asked what prompted the ordinance in the first place. She wanted to know what had happened to make the committee concerned about the well-being and safety on the town. John Vojta stated that the ordinance would allow the town to have signs that it wanted. Tom Christensen said that property values could fall if the roads were cluttered with signs. He also said that there were no statistics. These were just opinions. A safety issue might be if a sign blocked the line of sight. David Weber said that some of the language was from the ordinance from other towns and from a template. John Vojta also said that the ordinance accepts the current signs, but that the town wanted to be proactive for the future. Marion Janssen noted that the billboards along Hwy. 155 are not under D.O.T. regulations. She felt that is what prompted a sign ordinance.

Tina Doerr asked if the permit fees would be collected yearly. Tom Christensen said that the committee felt that fees were necessary to gain revenues to enforce the ordinance. Money would be needed to remove unused signs, conduct an inventory, and possible litigation. The rates could always be changed. Wally Geist added that the state has fee requirements. Bill Doerr asked why he should have to pay to take care of someone else’s sign. Tom Christensen said that the fee is not for on-premise signs. Marion Janssen stated that the town needed a way to control the signs. Wally Geist said that the low fee was pro-business.

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Mary Platner said that currently there is a \$75 charge for a structure permit for a sign. The \$10 fee in the proposed ordinance would be for maintenance. Ms. Nimz stressed that the fee is for off-premise signs only.

Bill Doerr asked if the background and message on a sign could be changed without getting a new permit. Line 249 doesn't address those changes. Tom Christensen admitted that portions of the ordinance needed to be clearer. Mr. Vojta stated that sometimes the actual owner of a sign is not known. The application only names the person with the message.

Richard Gern, former committee member, brought up lines 169-170. He felt that a sign of 160 sq. ft. was too big. Mr. Gern also said that some of the committee members wanted the maximum sign size to be 128 sq. ft. Mr. Gern also felt that lines 176-178 allowing 32 sq. ft. signs on town roads needed to be changed. He felt that commercial signs should be on commercial property. Dave Tikalsky said that he was not in favor of the ordinance at all. He felt that 160 sq. ft. was not big enough and wanted to know how the committee came up with the limit of four billboard signs on either side of Hwy. 155. Mr. Tikalsky also felt that a fee study should have been done. He also asked who applies for the permit, the owner of the sign or the person delivering the message. David Weber thought that the person responsible for the structure should pay the fee.

Kalisa Nampel asked if there was going to be an on-premise sign ordinance. John Vojta said that it has been discussed.

Mary Platner handed out a sheet with a summary of off-premise sign ordinances in other Vilas County towns and all of Oneida County. She thought that the maximum size for a sign should be 128 sq. ft. and that they should only be in the Community & Highway Business District and the Downtown Business District. Ms. Platner also thought that section D, lines 176-177 should be changed from all other town and county roads to all other town and county roads except for roads bordering residential zoning districts. Bibs Resort signs would be grandfathered. Tom Christensen asked how the town could allow signs only for certain businesses. He also said that the town couldn't look at towns that don't have businesses, such as Cloverland. Bill Doerr said that if people can convince someone to allow a sign on their property, that there would probably not be that many. Ms. Platner also thought that maybe there could be a limit on the distance a sign can be from the business. Wally Geist mentioned that signs generate taxes.

Kalisa Nampel asked if signs had to follow D.O.T. rules. They do on Hwy. 70, but not on Hwy. 155. Oneida County also has a sign ordinance. Judy Best wanted to know why there are six pages of definitions.

Tom Christensen read from a letter dated June 14, 2010 from the St. Germain Chamber of Commerce and the St. Germain Board of Directors. It stated that at the St. Germain chamber of Commerce quarterly membership dinner meeting held on Tuesday, June 1, 2010, a resolution was passed unanimously to support the draft off-premise sign ordinance dated 5/5/2010 governing Off-Premise signs as presented by town sign chairman Tom Christensen. In addition the next day the "St. Germain Chamber of Commerce Board resolved to support the same draft off-premise sign ordinance which will be proposed on June 15, 2010 at the public hearing".

Ms. Nimz stated that the town board would not be making a decision tonight. Mr. Radtke added that this is the first public hearing that he has attended where there is dialog back and forth. Usually, the people present testimony, but the governing body does not respond. He also thanked everyone for coming. Mr. Radtke said that he agreed with some of Mr. Doerr's suggestions. He asked why there was no fee amount in the ordinance. He also thought that a 4 x 8 sign on a town road was probably too big. Mr. Radtke also thought that the board should look into Ms. Platner suggestions concerning the zoning districts. He also asked if the P & Z committee had recommended to send the ordinance to the town board.

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Mr. Camp thought that in line 108 the lighting should not be restricted. He also said that it was confusing as to how the number of signs along Hwy. 155 had been determined. Tom Christensen said that the signs along Hwy. 155 had been measured and categorized. In order for there to be a new billboard sign on the west side of Hwy. 155, one sign would have to come down. There is room for one more on the east side of the road. Wally Geist added that the density of signs had determined the number of signs. David Weber said that the committee had used D.O.T. guidance to figure the number of signs. Tom Christensen said that for a sign less than 49 sq. ft. in area, there had to be at least 1/10 mi. between signs except at the entrance to a town road. In line 205, the permit fee may vary. Tom Christensen said that the wording was meant to be flexible to allow for changes. Mr. Camp asked if we should distinguish between directional and advertising signs. Mr. Christensen noted that line 149 mentions directional signs.

Mr. Camp thought that the ordinance should be sent back to the Planning & Zoning Committee to discuss all of the suggestions. Mr. Radtke thought that if the bigger signs along Hwy. 155 were limited, why weren't the smaller ones.

Mr. Vojta said that he didn't want the ordinance to come back to the P & Z committee. He wanted it sent to the town board for the changes. Mr. Camp stated that as a member of the P & Z committee to his knowledge the committee has not reviewed the draft of the ordinance since it has come back from the attorney. Bill Doerr thought that the changes would work until an on-premise sign ordinance comes up. David Weber said that he thought that when that happens that there should be two separate ordinances.

Mr. Vojta listed ownership, size, who does the filing, and fees as the important issues to be discussed. Ms. Nimz said that she thought that the ordinance should be sent back to the sub-committee to discuss the changes. Tom Christensen said that the town board members should make list of what they think should be changed. Ms. Nimz ended the meeting by saying that the changes would be discussed at the regular town board meeting.

**Adjournment:** Motion Vojta seconded Radtke that the public hearing be adjourned. Meeting adjourned 8:40 P.M.

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Town Clerk

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Chairman

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Member

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Member

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