

**Quality of Life Committee**  
Seven Corners Special Study

January 8, 2013

---

In attendance:

Kim Cook  
Mike Cook  
Kay Cooper  
Maria Flores  
Carol Turner  
Nancy Vorona

Staff:

Mike Congleton  
Elisa Lueck  
Jay Rauschenbach

Guest speaker:

David Versel

**Sign information and presentation – David Versel**

Mr. Versel shared information on his experiences on the Route 1 corridor dealing with illegal sign issues. He noted that his work has centered on flag signs and banners.

He began by driving up and down Route 1; documented with photos; put issues into matrix; and e-mailed to Mike Congleton. He also followed-up by meeting with OCR and Code staff, who in turn sent field staff out to further investigate the issue. Additionally, Code staff sent out a letter to those in violation (with blessing of Lee District and Mount Vernon District Supervisors). Mr. Versel noted that although the letters resulted in many businesses removing their illegal signs, new businesses have invariably cropped up, and so the issue continues. As a result, he recommends viewing this as an ongoing effort. Mr. Versel also noted that in his mind, the signs are not the problem, but are rather a symptom of the problem. As they see new businesses coming in through revitalization, they are not seeing as much of this violation of code.

Kay noted that there should be an article in the Post about illegal signage to educate the public that they are in violation of codes.

Mike noted that there are two types of penalties for sign infractions:

1. Civil penalty (\$200 fine 1st occurrence; \$500 fine 2<sup>nd</sup> occurrence). This is a one-time penalty.
2. Injunctive relief – bill of complaint is issued and it goes through Circuit Court. The restriction against illegal signs then runs with the land and stays forever; for subsequent violations, the judge may opt to issue fines.

Mike reiterated that any complaints regarding signs can be sent to him, for follow-up by the office of code compliance, as enforcement of code violations are complaint-driven.

Mr. Versel noted that in his work dealing with illegal signs, he has encountered two obstacles

1. Fines are not large enough
2. Business community/Chamber of Commerce did not like their stand; they took great offense and viewed it as anti-business

Committee noted that Susan Epstein was supposed to be going out and reporting back to the committee on signs. Mike Congleton indicated that he will follow-up.

Committee expressed a desire to know how many fines have been imposed for illegal signs. Want to know # of violations, as well as total dollar value of fines assessed. Mike Congleton to follow-up.

Mike Congleton noted that he is trying to rewrite Zoning Ordinance to make all violations of Zoning Ordinance liable for civil penalties (currently not all are).

Mr. Versel noted that education and enforcement are key to solving the illegal sign issue. Additionally, the County must do a better job of going to chain businesses and letting them know about County guidelines on signs.

Committee asked Mr. Versel for his thoughts/recommendations based on his work on this issue to date. Mr. Versel to send to Elisa for transmittal to Committee.

#### **Code Enforcement 101 – Mike Congleton**

Committee agreed to review PowerPoint that Mike had prepared and come prepared to view the PowerPoint and learn more about this issue from Mike at the February meeting.

#### **Future of Willston site**

Committee had many questions regarding the future of the Willston property. They would like clarification on the timeframe, process, and substance of the Willston property issue.

Nancy questioned that since the Quality of Life committee has to deal with short-term issues, is the Task Force going to be working on the Willston issue?

Aaron Frank joined the discussion.

He noted that he currently understands the deadline for Willston building to come into compliance is 2014, but it may be extended (does not know extension date).

No decisions on future of property have been reached

Keeping in the forefront services and programs currently going on at Willston

Can't comment on outreach process, as we are not at that point yet

Working on this at a very early stage, and discussing preliminarily what may happen to physical building and how to retain services

Elisa gave her business card to committee members from Willston who had been invited to meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Cook, and told them to write with any questions and/or feedback.

#### ***Discussed additional recommendations***

Additional lighting around soccer field

Crosswalk/bridge is dark and dangerous

## Homework

Committee appointed leads for each of the draft recommendations. Each lead will draft recommendation language and circulate to other group members within the next week. Leads are as follows:

Review of sign regulations: Nancy (note this recommendation may be re-written after mike's presentation at February meeting)

Off-site sign collection program: Nancy

Develop litter control program: Kay

7 corners chamber of commerce: Nancy

(Committee deleted recommendation around secondary road maintenance funding)

Alternative ground treatments: Carol (crosswalks are to be added to this recommendation)

Develop alternative uses for Willston: Kim/Maria

Develop strategies to reduce panhandlers: Kay (loitering is to be added to this recommendation)

Develop strategies to improve maintenance of bus stops/shelters: Carol

Develop strategies to improve maintenance/safety of pedestrian bridge: Kim/Maria

Trees/plantings (new recommendation): Kay

## Additional Items:

Mike Congleton will get details on March joint meeting and share with Committee.

Kay Cooper requested the number of units of public housing (to include Section 8 housing as well as any other public and private low-income):

- In Seven Corners area
- In Mason District
- In all of Fairfax County

Figures for all of these areas are needed in order to be able to make comparisons.

Mike Congleton to confirm with Liz Hagg what the Task Force is doing to engage large business owners/developers as part of this study.

**Next meeting: February 12 ~ 7:00 p.m. (note changed to 6:30 after meeting)**