

Tacoma Billboard Community Working Group

Summary for Meeting 4

Monday, November 3, 2014, 4:00-6:00 P.M

Center for Urban Waters, 326 East D Street

Working Group Members Attending:					
Andy Mordhorst		Sharon Winters	x	Evette Mason	x
Doug Schafer	x	Ray Velkers	x	Rusty George	x
Tricia DeOme	x	Steve Wamback	x	Pete Grignon	x
Nick Fedaiay	x	Pam Guinn	x	Eric Jackson	x
Jill Jensen		Mike Luinstra	x	Rose Mednick	x
Dale Cope	x	Dale Reed	x	Tony Powell	x
Working Group Member Alternates Attending (* -- in audience):					
<i>*John Thurlow</i>	x	<i>*Al Ralston</i>	x	<i>*Dalton Gittens</i>	x
<i>*Petr Wangoe</i>	x	<i>*Chris Beale</i>	x		
City Representatives, Staff, & Support Team Attending:					
Brian Boudet	x	Elizabeth Pauli	x		
John Griffith	x	Karen Reed	x		
John Harrington	x	Michelle Regan	x		
Guest Speakers attending: Mark Starnes, Kathleen Deacon, Myron Liable					

Facilitator Karen Reed welcomed the group and asked the group members to introduce themselves and offer their most recent recommendations for books or films.

The CWG members were asked to review the summary of Meeting 3 and offer revisions if needed. Doug Schafer requested some corrections regarding statements on the second page and offered a revision that provided more specificity. The minutes were approved with the recommended changes.

Ms. Reed referred to a letter in the meeting packets from Martha Lantz, the Deputy City Attorney for the City of Tacoma. Ms. Lantz offers recommendations to the group on how to best comply with the Open Public Meeting Act and the Public Records Act. Ms. Reed asked the group if there were any questions regarding the legal brief, there were none.

Pam Guinn and Mike Luinstra began their presentation focusing on the view of billboard owners and advertisers. Mr. Luinstra began by introducing Kathleen Deacon with Jayray Advertising and Mark Starnes with the South Puget Sound/Tacoma Boys & Girls Clubs. Ms. Deacon spoke on how she was inspired to pursue a career in advertising by a billboard from the "Admit it Tacoma, You're Beautiful" campaign. She moved on to comment on two of the main strengths of billboards compared to other advertising mediums. First, they allow intensely focused localized marketing that helps local organizations thrive. Second, though many people are not online yet, everyone is on the highways. She mentioned some of the organizations that would not be able to effectively get their message across without billboards. Speaking to the cost of billboards, she added that you can scale easily with

billboards, buying only one or blanketing the market. Billboards would allow you to be visible with a flexible budget, she added.

Mark Starnes, President and CEO of the Boys & Girls Club of South Puget Sound, spoke of his time working with the oldest Boys & Girls Club in the state of Washington. Speaking on how the Boys & Girls Club has used billboards, Mr. Starnes commented that they need to keep their fees low and do a lot of fundraising to cover operating costs. Fundraising requires you to get your name out. Since using billboards, the Boys & Girls Club brand recognition has doubled. Boys & Girls Club is now the top recognized brand for youth development, having gone from helping 1,000 to 1,600 kids in the Tacoma area. Mr. Luinstra thanked the guests and asked if there were any questions from the group members.

Nick Fedaiy asked Ms. Deacon what percentage of the billboards worked on were local as opposed to outside of Tacoma. She answered that all of them were local.

Mr. Fedaiy asked Mr. Starnes for detail on how many billboards were used in the Boys & Girls Club campaign. Mr. Starnes answered that they used around 20 billboards for three months at a time. Mr. Fedaiy asked how many of the 20 were in Tacoma and Mr. Luinstra answered that they were placed throughout Pierce County and as far as Bremerton, but most of the billboards were local.

Doug Schafer asked Ms. Deacon if Mayor Strickland had worked for her organization. Ms. Deacon responded that in the past she had.

Dale Cope asked if the Boys & Girls Club competed with the YMCA. Mr. Starnes replied that he felt they complimented each other and that while the YMCA was heavily funded by fees, the Boys & Girls Club had to raise most of its money.

Dale Cope asked if Mr. Starnes had any discussion with members of the Boys & Girls Club or with the greater community as to the negative impacts of signage. Mr. Starnes said that there had not been any discussions and added that he preferred to let members of the club form their own opinions. There was some further discussion as to impact of signage in the community.

Rose Mednick commented on the importance of signage to the vitality of a business, noting a business without signage is a sign of no business.

Pam Guinn and Mike Luinstra of Clear Channel Outdoors narrated a PowerPoint presentation for the group introduced the Benefits of Billboards presentation. The presentation addressed the value of billboards to local businesses, community groups and the local economy, the small percentage of total signage in the community represented by billboards, amortization and MAP-21, Clear Channel's commitment to the Tacoma community and their desire to find a collaborative solution.

Doug Schafer commented that that the original owners of Tacoma's billboards sold to Clear Channel after the time that the amortization period had begun per the 1997 city codes. Clear Channel would have known at the time that the amortization process was in place. Pam Guinn responded that Clear Channel had indeed purchased the billboards with a full understanding that the amortization period was underway, and that CCO did not believe amortization to be a successful regulatory strategy.

Dale Cope commented that he felt that the presentation was focusing on branding and constituents, but not mentioning the opinion of the general population of Tacoma. He asked if Clear Channel had done surveys of the community and expressed skepticism of the motives behind community outreach. Mr.

Luinstra responded, stating that he is a member of the Tacoma community and that Clear Channel does care about Tacoma and wants its businesses to grow.

Ray Velkers commented that if billboards are less than 10% of the signage overall, then they were talking about 10% of the problem. He added that they shouldn't blame Clear Channel for issues of overall signage.

Sharon Winters, noting that the Clear Channel presentation had a lot of focus local business and nonprofits, asked for a count on what proportion of billboards advertisers in Tacoma are local businesses and which are nonprofit. Pam Guinn responded that 155 businesses advertise with Clear Channel and at any time two thirds of them are local. The remaining third includes businesses that are local to the state. She added that they typically used nonprofits to fill gaps in advertising which makes it difficult to quantify as a percentage. Tricia DeOme commented that she had done an informal survey in 2011. She recalled that around 20% of the billboards were pure local advertising, adding that most were plumbing. She offered to bring in the specific data. There was some discussion on what constitutes a local business.

Mike Luinstra commented on the lack of local advertisers on television giving the recent Seahawks game as an example, stating that he only saw two ads for local businesses.

Eric Jackson commented on how, for a media designer, outdoor advertising offers a unique challenge and cited some of the advertisements that had won awards. He commented that billboards can change attitudes in local communities, that billboards can be thought provoking and memorable and that he had seen the impact first hand. The impacts of billboards aren't all about negatives like sign pollution.

Rose Mednick commented that she didn't want to see Tacoma become like Lakewood, where it has become too difficult to put a sign up and advertisers are being driven away.

Nick Fediy asked if Clear Channel had any billboards in Tacoma before the 10 year amortization period. Mike Luinstra explained that Clear Channel had acquired the billboards from Lamar, which had acquired them from Sun Media and that Clear Channel had not had a billboard presence in Tacoma at that time.

Tricia DeOme asked for specifics on the costs for billboard advertising, noting that the Boys & Girls club had purchased 20 for \$100,000. Mike Luinstra answered that many issues like location and product size and type determine cost and that the information is proprietary.

Ms. DeOme commented that on-site signage has to be brighter to compete with billboards, so it should still be relevant to the discussion.

Doug Schafer commented that the referenced study about the role of Billboards in the economy was from 2000 and was dated given that online and other forms of advertising have become more relevant. He continued with a comment about the amortization being upheld in a 1961 Supreme Court Case. Myron Liable, Vice President for State, Local and Regulatory Affairs for the Outdoor Advertising Association of America attending the meeting in the audience, responded that the court case had preceded the passage of the federal Highway Beautification Act by several years and his view is that the statute is clear that there must be cash compensation. Karen Reed asked the group to table the discussion of amortization for a future meeting.

John Harrington introduced the City of Tacoma's Billboard Community Working Group website that included meeting records, statistics, and a billboard web map. He demonstrated the billboard web map, which includes a street view link to show the photos of specific billboards. He demonstrated the additional layers available, including zoning and street classifications. He also demonstrated the WSDOT functional classification map, which showed the MAP 21 roads as a red line.

Mr. Harrington began a slide show presentation starting with an overview of MAP 21, explaining the current scope of the regulations as applied to Interstate highways, limited access state highways and uncontrolled access state highways. The number of billboards on MAP 21 routes added to the National Highway System within Tacoma was 182 faces and 97 structures. Mike Luinstra asked for clarification on the number and if it was an overall total. Mr. Harrington specified that it was the number added in 2012. He noted WSDOT will be issuing rules in April 2015 for how it will regulate these new routes.

John Harrington referred to the handout from the previous meeting, explaining how it shows the changes in city billboard regulations over time. The most important change was the 1997 determination that non-compliant billboards were non-conforming and would be need to be removed after 10 years through an amortization provision. In 2012, an amendment had limited billboards to 2 faces per structure and specified that the structures could not project above an adjacent building. He observed that the trend is towards increasing restrictions.

Steve Wamback asked if it is correct that under the present code, only one billboard is in code compliance. Mr. Harrington confirmed that was correct.

Tricia DeOme asked for information on whether any action was taken against non-conforming billboards in the past. Mr. Harrington responded that he wrote letters informing Clear Channel that their billboards were not in compliance. There was some discussion of what the enforcement process was and what it takes to move to a more active enforcement. Tricia DeOme had some additional questions about the enforcement process. John Harrington commented that the enforcement route tends to be more along the lines of an administrative strategy and that it is unusual to get to the stage where fines are issued.

Eric Jackson asked if there are currently any beautification districts in Tacoma. Mr. Harrington responded that there are numerous areas designated with similar purposes to a beautification area. For example, there are some historic districts where there are some billboards present near historic assets. He added that there are also five billboards in a conservation district.

John Harrington noted that the large chart showing the history of billboard regulations in Tacoma omitted the settlement agreement between 1997 and 2012. The agreement was in another part of the packet.

Karen Reed gave an overview of the homework assignment. It has 3 questions: Where should billboards be allowed and not allowed? What factors other than location are most important? Are there any factors in the codes that are not important? Members should refer to the hand-out on zoning/inventory/regulation handout. Brian Boudet commented that members were not required to become zoning experts and could use their own descriptions or definitions of zones. Karen Reed requested the homework assignment be completed by Monday, November 10.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10pm.