

Brown County Lighting Ordinance Amended

Executive Summary

Nov 12, 2024

The commissioners on a vote of 2 to 1, passed a change to a sign ordinance on Nov 6, 2024 that allows for internally lit signs and signs with electronic messaging.

The Area Plan Commissioner (APC) at their meeting on Aug 27, 2024, recommended the request for a change be tabled (7-0) pending the receipt of additional information. At their next meeting, on Sept 24, 2024, with no new information presented, they voted 6-0 NOT to recommend approval. The 7th member was not able to attend but informed the APC via email that she agreed with the recommendation, not to recommend approval.

The APC's concerns were with the vague language and the fact they did not know how it could be enforced. They were not necessarily against Lit Signs. They conducted a survey where the majority of those surveyed opposed the change. The APC also recommended that the topic be included in the community discussions on developing a new comprehensive county plan.

The change regarding allowing electronic messaging was never discussed. This idea was introduced by the Brown County Music Center in 2018, was opposed and dropped.

The Commissioner held three meetings. The first was on Oct 2, with one commissioner (Ron Sanders) indicating he would be voting No. At the second meeting (Oct 16), Commissioners Pittman stated he did not read the information provided by the APC and would take time to review. At the third meeting on Nov 6, Pittman made a statement out of context, that the APC was not necessarily opposed to LIT signs as his justification, ignoring the other concerns that supported the APC's decision to recommend a NO vote.

Commissioner Sanders also recommended that the given that Pittman and Wolpert's term of office ends in December, that they should allow the new commissioners in January to consider the change.

The change was started when an RV Park was erroneously granted a permit for an internal LIT sign. Once they bought the sign, they were then told the permit was issued in error. Commissioner Wolpert took the action to sponsor a "special exception" which was rescinded after community backlash. He then sponsored the change to the ordinance.

Timeline and background information on the issue at the following:

- Commissioner Meeting Notes, Nov 6, 2024, 2:00 p.m. Amendment to Sign Ordinance
- How do you challenge an ordinance: What is a "stay of enforcement?"