

# COUNCIL MINUTES

June 30, 2003

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on June 30, 2003 at 4:15 p.m.

## COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker  
Dennis Kavanaugh  
Rex Griswold  
Kyle Jones  
Janie Thom  
Claudia Walters  
Mike Whalen

## COUNCIL ABSENT

None

## OFFICERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson  
Debbie Spinner  
Barbara Jones

### 1. Review items on the agenda for the June 30, 2003 Regular Council Meeting.

All of the items on the agenda were reviewed among Council and staff and the following was noted:

Conflict of Interest declared: "I" (Hawker)

Items removed from the consent agenda: 9c

Items deleted from the consent agenda: P, 13.1.a

There was discussion regarding agenda item 13.1.a, as follows:

### 2. Further discussion and consideration of the following zoning ordinance changes:

#### a. Freeway landmark monument signs.

Zoning/Civil Hearing Administrator John Gendron stated that the proposed ordinance was the result of discussions staff held with auto and RV dealers, who identified several issues that would enhance their ability to market their products. He noted that an ordinance to lower the screening wall in the display area of auto dealerships is on the current consent agenda and a "Special Event Ordinance" regarding banners and balloons would be presented to Council within the next few months.

Mr. Gendron stated that both the General Development Committee and the Planning and Zoning Board recommended the proposed ordinance for approval, with the following stipulations: freeway landmark monument signs would be permitted in all zoning districts; the parcel would have to be at least 30 acres in size; the freeway monuments on the same side of the freeway would be spaced one-quarter mile between freeway monuments on the same side of the freeway; and freeway monuments would be located a minimum of 20 feet from the property line and any maximum height or area requirements would be determined on an individual case-by-case basis when reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Board and the Design Review Board. Mr. Gendron added that the Board of Adjustment approved the signs, as a part of the comprehensive sign plan presently required for all sign plans. He continued that the signs would display only the product brand or the development, such as Ford, Chevy or Oldsmobile, or in the case of a shopping mall, Dillard's or the specific store names, but the following would be prohibited: movable copy, electronic displays, animation, scrolling, crawling or moving parts, and the sign cannot be used as a billboard and the sign cannot be located offsite.

Mr. Gendron presented an example of a type of sign that would be a freeway landmark sign and explained that the 60-foot sign with product logos and a neon "Superstition Springs" logo was part of the Superstitions Springs Auto Park 1998 proposal that was not approved. Mr. Gendron noted that signs could be higher than 60 feet in order to be seen and the height of a particular sign would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Gendron identified 17 potential locations for signs along US. 60, but he indicated that not every location would be used for a sign. He noted that there are fewer locations along the 202 due to the limited possibility for commercial and industrial development in that area.

Mr. Gendron stated that staff was requesting direction from Council regarding the proposed ordinance.

b. Electronic message display signs.

Mr. Gendron stated that staff has received numerous requests from businesses regarding electronic message signs. He added that the proposed ordinance does not address these signs, which are prohibited in the sign ordinance that was adopted in 1974. Mr. Gendron advised that the only exceptions allowed in the ordinance are time and temperature signs such as those in front of banks. He noted that this technology has become reasonably priced and most of the new drug store locations request this type of changeable message sign.

Mr. Gendron explained that the ordinance recommended to the Council by the General Development Committee and by the Planning and Zoning Board would accomplish two things: changeable message signs would be allowed at night provided the message doesn't change more than once an hour to avoid any kind of flashing action; and the Board of Adjustment would allow a crawling or scrolling message through a special use process after holding a public hearing. He added that the proposed ordinance would not allow full animation as part of the sign package and stated that staff was seeking direction from Council on this subject.

Mayor Hawker said the subject of freeway landmark signs raised many questions, such as: height, location, and the number of signs. He added that questions could be raised relative to signs being allowed only on freeways and noted that many businesses prefer to install these

signs on main streets and major arterials. Mayor Hawker commented that the City could be accused of discriminating against businesses without access to 30 acres along the freeway.

Mayor Hawker stated that staff needed input from all members of the Council. He expressed the opinion that 17 freeway landmark monument signs along the Superstition Freeway would be excessive. He envisioned one or two signs designating the locations of regional malls in order to compete with Scottsdale and Tempe, but he was not sure how to determine which businesses were entitled to this type of signage. Mayor Hawker noted that other communities successfully advertise their car dealerships and malls and, if these signs were necessary in order for Mesa businesses to remain competitive, he would support the signage, but not 17 of them. Mayor Hawker noted that signs should be placed at a distance greater than one-quarter of a mile apart. He also stated that electronic message signs are a trend that the City should embrace. Mayor Hawker explained that the height and square footage of a sign was of a greater concern than the technology behind the sign. He expressed support for the use of electronic message boards as a tool businesses may use to market their products and services.

Councilmember Griswold stated that the issue of signs was being discussed due to the fact that car dealers in other communities have the signs and Mesa does not. He noted that a substantial amount of revenue is lost to other valley locations due to the fact that signs in Mesa are not at a sufficient height to be seen from the freeway. Councilmember Griswold also expressed the concern that staff identified 17 locations for signs. He anticipated that signs would be proposed for the Fiesta and Superstition Springs Malls. Councilmember Griswold noted that the requirement of 30 acres in one location was logical, but he would not want 12 signs lined up along the freeway and expressed surprise at the number of potential signs. He added that electronic message signs are the wave of the future and noted that most modern cities allow these types of signs.

Councilmember Jones recalled that discussion in the General Development Committee meeting indicated the apparent necessity for the signs, but he expressed the opinion that 17 signs were excessive.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson noted that Superstition Springs has two auto malls on the west side and one proposed for the east side. He added that the City of Mesa is anxious to encourage this type of business environment. Mr. Hutchinson expressed the opinion that at least three signs would be required in that area and added that flexibility would be required to serve the other destinations in the area.

Councilmember Jones stated that the number of signs would be difficult to determine, as the City does not want the area to appear cluttered. He expressed the opinion that electronic signage is definitely needed, but care should be taken to ensure that drivers are not distracted or that the sign is a "Las Vegas style" display.

Councilmember Walters expressed support for electronic signs and stated that she agreed with the provisions of the proposed ordinance. She added that although future modifications might be necessary, staff had presented a conservative and rational approach. Councilmember Walters questioned what would happen to the potential number of sites if the required acreage were increased or if the sign was in close proximity to an off ramp. She noted that many signs provide a service to the public, but she understood the concern about visual clutter as well.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the sign must be located where an arterial intersects with a freeway, such as Alma School, Dobson, Gilbert, etc.; that a parcel between Stapley and Mesa Drive without frontage at the arterial intersection was not eligible to have a sign; that several businesses could join forces for one sign; that the signs provide a service to the community; and that competition issues exist in terms of attracting high-end development to the City of Mesa.

Vice Mayor Kavanaugh stated that he opposed this recommendation in the General Development Committee for two reasons: the possible visual pollution and the number of sites available for signs. He noted that Council and staff may have auto dealers in mind when considering the proposed ordinance, but other businesses could propose signs that are not consistent with the intent of staff and Council. Vice Mayor Kavanaugh added that focusing on certain types of businesses at particular sites might result in the law of unintended consequences. He also noted that an important issue to consider is the opinion of residents along the freeways who may not want to reside in an area where the proposed sign towers are located. Vice Mayor Kavanaugh expressed the opinion that the current comprehensive sign plan did allow opportunities for sign packages in particular locations in a way that created less possibility for unintended consequences, and he restated his opposition to the proposed ordinance. He also expressed support for the utilization of electronic message signs.

Councilmember Whalen expressed the opinion that the market could not support 17 of the subject signs. He noted the importance of potential development in the 101/202 corridor, and suggested a north/south sign for the 101 and an east/west sign for the 202. Councilmember Whalen stated that he considered the signs to be important for future economic development. He suggested that height restrictions be handled on a case-by-case basis and said that the height allowed should just be sufficient for the sign to be visible. Councilmember Whalen also expressed support for electronic message boards.

Councilmember Thom stated that she approved of the electronic messaging concept and noted that the model shown to Council was tasteful and simple. She commented that the requirements listed for the freeway landmark monument signs seem to dictate that the signs would probably be placed a half-mile or a mile apart.

Mr. Gendron responded to Councilmember Thom's question regarding the process by stating that a sign permit would be required and both the Board of Adjustment and the Design Review Board would hold public hearings.

Councilmember Thom stated the opinion that the ordinance protects everyone, and she expressed support for both the freeway landmark monument and the electronic messaging ordinances.

Mayor Hawker confirmed that the Council did not support movable messages on the freeway landmark signs and requested that staff bring the ordinances back with changes for review by the Council.

### 3. Appointments to boards and committees.

Mayor Hawker recommended the following appointments to Boards and Committees:

Human Relations Advisory Board: Dr. Roberta Diaz

Self-Insurance Board of Trustees: Carol Michele Ferrante

It was moved by Vice Mayor Kavanaugh, seconded by Councilmember Walters, that the Council concur with the Mayor's recommendations and the appointments be confirmed.

Carried unanimously.

5. Hear reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

There were no reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

6 Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson stated that the meeting schedule is as follows:

Thursday, July 3, 2003, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Thursday, July 3, 2003, 9:00 a.m. – General Development Committee

Monday, July 7, 2003, TBA – Study Session

Monday, July 7, 2003, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

Thursday, July 10, 2003, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Monday, July 14, 2003, TBA – Study Session

Monday, July 14, 2003, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

7. Prescheduled public opinion appearances.

There were no prescheduled public opinion appearances.

8. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

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KENO HAWKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

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BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of June 2003. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

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BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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