



C I T Y O F
RENO
Memorandum

DATE: May 14, 2025
TO: Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Jackie Bryant, City Manager
FROM: Lauren Knox, Senior Planner
DEPT: Development Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jackie Bryant".

SUBJECT: TXT23-00002 (Sign Regulations) Planning Commission Recommendation

At the May 21, 2025 City Council meeting, Council will be discussing an ordinance introduction for a text amendment to Title 18 relating to sign regulations (TXT23-00002). The Planning Commission hearing on this item was held on May 8, 2025. Staff are providing the Council with the Planning Commission's recommendation and feedback ahead of the May 21, 2025 Council meeting.

During the May 8, 2025 Planning Commission meeting, there were no concerns or discussion regarding most of the proposed amendments, aside from the digital school sign allowance and regulations. Planning Commission ultimately recommended that Council approve of the text amendment by ordinance with their recommendations. There was no consensus among the digital school sign regulation recommendations. Each Commissioner provided their recommendation and feedback individually and a summary of each Commissioner's comments are as follows. Additionally, towards the end of this memorandum, staff attempts to generally summarize the Planning Commission's recommendation:

Commissioner Velto

- Supportive of the text amendment and how it has been framed. With regards to concerns over attention and distracted driving, he would assume if this were an issue, there would be more information or data regarding these sorts of accidents or fatalities related to this type of signage and if that were a concern he would want to see the data. Attention grabbing is the point, and he described the 8-second rule in communications stating that you can observe and acknowledge the message in 8-seconds, so the timeframe seems appropriate. Stated it was important that parents stay informed and that there were concessions made and pragmatic solutions. Also wants administrators to have some

discretion to get around any sort of longer timeframe for more rapid communication needs for emergencies.

Commissioner Williams

- Mimics Commissioner Velto's recommendations. Would have appreciated more data regarding distracted driving, recognizing that 99% of distracted driving is not reported and that the stats we see are very skewed. Schools can be dense in residential areas and expressed concerns regarding exiting with signs flashing and added distractions. Appreciates the amount of work but wants to express concern and deeper thought at the Council level on when and where digital signs exist with schools. Acknowledged that it seemed off that the City of Reno is the outlier in this allowance because we do not allow schools to have digital signs. Believes there is a path to allowing the digital school signs, but the decision makers above the Planning Commission can take a greater look at the signage around schools.

Commissioner Rohrmeier

- Supports everything about the proposed text amendment, except the regulations around school illuminated signs. Stated that schools are doing everything they can to keep screens out of schools. Expressed concerns over off-site sponsorship type signage that currently exists at schools. Would vote against the sign ordinance only for the illuminated school sign issue.

Commissioner Villanueva

- Mimics Commissioner Rohrmeier's recommendations but can support school signs with proper regulations in place. Stated that we do need to be considerate of the neighborhoods. Public, private, and charter schools are becoming more prevalent and if they are each allowed a sign, we need to be cognizant of that reality and number of potential future digital school signs. Thinks it is appropriate to consider some of the Scenic Nevada recommendations. Does not think an 8-second flip time is needed, as schools are not marketing, but they are still attempting to get information out.

Commissioner Del Villar

- Expressed concerns regarding proximity to crosswalks and the potential number of signs each school can have and the cumulative effect of multiple signs being allowed. Stated that this could impact neighborhoods but recognizes the importance of messaging. Expressed concerns over safety. Stated that Council may want to consider stronger regulations to mitigate the concerns.

Commissioner Becerra

- Supports the latest iteration of proposed changes, particularly for the non-school sign regulations. Appreciates the public feedback. Expressed concerns over digital signage for schools, not because of due diligence, but fundamental question of "why" needs to be

answered preferably with safety and science research to back it. Desires more information to help future self and anyone else understand how we came to this decision and the best way to do that is clearly defined and that we understand motivational reasoning behind the “why.” Also thinks it is important to offer some exceptions to some level of specificity as well.

Commission Giacomini

- Mentioned that we may want to consider the allowance of different standards for digital school signs based on adjacent functional roadway classification, as signage on a busier street may allow for different regulations than a sign on a residential road but was not opposed to what is proposed currently. Also stated that concerns about traffic safety will be difficult for staff to address because there is not a lot of research on what a school sign does for safety in various areas. Understands the concern but acknowledges that it would be a tough ask for staff to base their decision on research that is not out there.

Commissioners Williams, Becerra, Villanueva

- Also questioned the necessity of the sign being operational until 10 p.m. and when school is not in session.

Staff attempted to summarize the Planning Commission’s recommendations for Council to consider when reviewing the draft ordinance as follows:

- Consider the potential for distracted driving and attention going to signage
- Consider including sign distancing from crosswalks to help reduce the potential for distracted driving causing pedestrian safety issues.
- Consider adding exception language regarding emergencies and the ability to change messaging quickly.
- Consider the potential for multiple signs on a street due to multiple schools.
- Consider incorporating some of the recommendations from Scenic Nevada.
- Consider reviewing the content change times allowance of 8-seconds. Some of the Commissioners were okay with 8-second content change times, and others were concerned about the 8-second content change time being too quick and causing more distracted driving.
- Consider defining a clear “why” we want these signs, and whether the motivation and reasoning outweighs the distraction and safety concerns.
- Consider the necessity for having the signs be on from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and while school is not in session.
- Consider adjacent roadway classification to justify more or less stringent regulations. For example, a school on a busy roadway that may be adjacent to commercial businesses should be allowed brighter or larger signage than a sign being located on a residential street.

To summarize, the Planning Commission ultimately recommended approval of the ordinance with their recommendations, as stated above. At the May 21, 2025 Council meeting, staff will bring this feedback forward along with potential proposed changes to the ordinance to address recommendations received.