

ITEM	10
MANAGER'S REPORT NO.	68
COUNCIL MEETING	1980 11 03

RE: LETTER FROM SIGN-O-LITE PLASTICS LIMITED  
2771 SIMPSON ROAD, RICHMOND, B.C. V6X 2R2  
ELECTRONIC MESSAGE CENTER SIGN

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The following report from the Director of Planning is in response to a letter from Mr. Michael J. Armitage, Vice President of Sign-O-Lite Plastics Limited, which appears on the agenda for the November 03 meeting of Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the recommendation of the Director of Planning be adopted.

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TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER	1980 OCTOBER 29
FROM: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING	OUR FILE: 02.230
SUBJECT: LETTER FROM SIGN-O-LITE PLASTICS LIMITED	
ELECTRONIC MESSAGE CENTER SIGN	

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RECOMMENDATION

THAT a copy of this report be sent to Mr. M.J. Armitage, Vice-President and General Manager, Sign-O-Lite Plastics Limited, 2771 Simpson Road, Richmond, B.C. V6X 2R2

SUMMARY

Council in 1980 July received a report dealing with this subject which outlined the reasons that kinetic moving message displays which contain flashing light sources are not permitted in this Municipality. At Council's request, further research is being done on new technology as it relates to current and projected sign types. A moving message center constitutes a flashing sign, and flashing signs are specifically prohibited. The By-law does make specific provision for allowance of a particular type of public service (alternating time and temperature) sign as an exception to this rule. The By-law does not permit animated signs. Sign-O-Lite Plastics Limited was informed in 1980 April that their application for 1895 Willington Avenue could not be approved, and it is not recommended that the Sign By-law be amended to permit the introduction of this type of flashing sign as it would create a new source of visual distraction where traffic safety and environmental considerations indicate the need for maintaining the control that is already in place.

REPORT

Appearing on the Council Agenda for 1980 November 03 is a letter from Mr. M.J. Armitage referring to the subject of electronic moving message signs and requesting that the Burnaby Sign By-law be amended to permit electronically controlled message centers.

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Council will recall that it received a report on the subject of this type of sign, and in particular Sign-O-Lite's application for Preliminary Plan Approval for such a sign at 1895 Willingdon Avenue on 1980 July 21 (Item No. 10, Manager's Report No. 8). The report concluded that this type of visual display could not be approved under the Sign By-law, and that the By-law's prohibition of flashing signs of this type is totally consistent with its intent.

Council on that occasion adopted the recommendation of the report that a copy be sent to Sign-O-Lite Plastics Limited, and requested that some further research be conducted into the matter of animated and computerized signs.

Staff are researching the matter and seeking information from outside sources as to recent and projected technological change in the sign display industry, and this will be the subject of a report to Council within the next six weeks.

In response to Mr. Armitage's current letter, however, the following information applies. We will attempt not to repeat the discussion given in our earlier report, except as is necessary to answer specific points made by Mr. Armitage in his latest letter.

Mr. Armitage asks two particular questions and raises a number of points which are commented on as follows:

Question No. 1 - What is the intent of the By-law vis-a-vis "flashing signs"?

- Mr. Armitage states that the by-law's intent is simply to control signs that turn on and off in order to attract attention, and that it was not intended for the regulation of "electronic message centers".
- An outline of the intent of the Sign By-law was included on Page 3 of the previous report to Council on July 21. The By-law's intent to prohibit flashing signs cannot be inferred to be limited to signs which simply turn on and off, but rather the definition makes reference to an illuminated sign "which contains flashing lights or exhibits noticeable changes in light intensity". The prohibition of signs which fit this description is not therefore limited to a prohibition simply of signs that turn on and off, but rather to signs which have elements that change in light intensity or flash on any basis, whether a regulated, or periodic or random fashion.
- It is noteworthy that Mr. Armitage acknowledges that alternating time and temperature signs are of the same family as a message center, but that they have been "specifically exempted" from the classification of flashing signs. In this point Mr. Armitage is correct: this demonstrates the point that it is the By-law's intent to prohibit that family of sign, but to specifically exempt from the general prohibition the particular case of an alternating digital time and temperature (i.e. public service) sign only.

Question No. 2 - What exactly is an "animated" sign?

- Mr. Armitage states that if a message center is a flashing sign, then he cannot think of what kind of sign an animated sign would be.
- As noted in the previous report to Council the Sign By-law defines animated signs in order to prohibit them in this Municipality, not to permit them. Animated signs are not specifically permitted under any circumstances in the By-law, and signs that are not specifically permitted in the By-law are prohibited under Section 5.1(8).

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-For information, however, a sign might be animated by means other than through the inclusion of flashing lights, such as by moving mechanical parts which oscillate, revolve, or otherwise change its appearance in time.

ADDITIONAL POINTS MADE

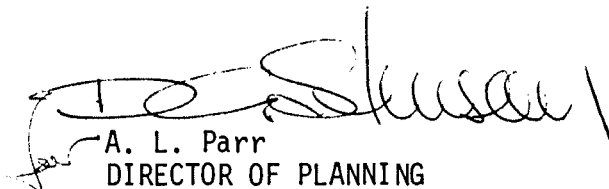
Mr. Armitage expresses concern about the "time lag involved in our customer being allowed to have this sign". In fact, Sign-O-Lite Plastics was advised in writing on 1980 April 08 that the proposed sign could not be allowed. As noted in the previous report to Council the sign is not only of a non-conforming type, but also in the case of the property at 1895 Willingdon Avenue, the maximum permitted number of signs already exists on the property, and as the introduction of an additional sign would cause the maximum sign density to be exceeded, this additional sign could not be approved.

Mr. Armitage suggests the message center display type of sign was not even contemplated when the Sign By-law was drafted. This is not a correct assumption, as alpha-numeric displays with moving messages were in fact quite common in 1972: moving message displays were quite popular in many cities at that time and local examples included the Air Canada display and the Vancouver Sun display in downtown Vancouver. While the latest technology controls the flashing lights by electronic means, the earlier examples used electro-mechanical switching to accomplish the kinetic effect of the display, giving the same general manifestation: lights flashing on and off (or alternatively, light sources exhibiting noticeable changes in light intensity) so as to give the impression of a moving image, whereby a message advanced across the display or changed from time to time.

The Sign By-law that has been adopted in Burnaby reflects standards which are considered appropriate for this community and the visual character that is desired to be preserved. As noted previously, the introduction of the Sign By-law report submitted to Council in 1971 March made the following statement under the caption "Proposed Standards":

"Under the proposed by-law regulations, billboards, rotating signs or flashing signs are not permitted. None of these types of signs are considered necessary to effectively convey a visual advertising message. Further, they attract attention to a degree to where they present an intrusion into surrounding areas as well as a hazard on heavily travelled thoroughfares".

It is considered that it is increasingly important to maintain sign control in a Municipality which is experiencing increasing traffic volumes and attendant accident potential, and that it would be deleterious to the public interest to amend the Sign By-law in a way which would begin to permit distracting kinetic displays utilizing flashing lights.

  
A. L. Parr  
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING

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