



*"THE MARITIME CITY"*

**Minutes for Gig Harbor Planning Commission  
Open Public Hearing  
Thursday, July 17, 2025 at 5:30 P.M.  
Council Chambers**

**Call to Order/Roll Call**

Vice Chair Burcar called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Commissioners Martin, Nasseh, and Tessicini were present. Commissioners Jordan and Snodgrass were excused.

Staff: Community Development Director, Eric Baker and Planning Technician, Michelle Thomas.

**Approval of Minutes**

**Motion:** Move to approve minutes from July 1, 2025 (Tessicini/Martin)

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

**Agenda Items**

**Amendments to GHMC 17.80 Sign Code** Proposal to amend language in Gig Harbor Municipal Code 17.80 - Sign Code. Community Development Director Baker continued the discussion of the amendment.

**Public Comment** No public comment

**Recommendation**

**Motion:** Recommend approval of the June 12th staff draft, entitled sign code implementation issues and potential resolutions. (Martin/Tessicini)

**Amendment Motion:** Recommend amendment with staff recommendation to strike the final sentence in the definition of the sign code. (Tessicini/Martin)

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

**Amendment Motion:** Recommend approval of staff's recommended changes to page 3 of the Sign Code Planning Commission Recommendation Matrix and Planning Commission's recommendation that the sign code in its entirety receive a full review as a future phase of the code development. (Nasseh/Martin)

**Vote:** Unanimously approved

**Vote:** Approval of main motion with amendments: Unanimously approved.

**Other Business**

Next meeting will be Thursday, August 7, 2025 staff will be introducing Development Code Phase 1 for Commission review

**Adjournment** 6:16 p.m.

*Michelle Thomas*

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Michelle Thomas  
Planning Technician

## SIGN CODE UPDATE – PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION MATRIX – 7/17/25

Code Topic	Issue	Review	Staff Recommendation	PC Recommendation
Sign Definition - Exemptions	Proposed definition includes exemptions which are also covered in GHMC 17.080.010. B – Scope.	<p>Draft code:</p> <p><u>40. “Sign” means any device, structure, fixture, placard, surface, awning, banner, balloon or thing using graphics, lights, symbols and/or written copy designed, used or displayed for the purpose of advertising, informing, identifying, attracting attention to, or promoting the interest of any person, institution, business, event, product, goods or services; provided, that the same is visible from a street, way, sidewalk, or parking area open to the public. Excluded are official traffic signs or signals, public notices, and governmental flags.</u></p>	<p>Exemptions should be solely located in GHMC 17.080.010.B – Scope. Remove final sentence of draft code definition as these are already included in this section of code (shown below).</p> <p>B. Scope. This chapter shall not regulate traffic and directional signs installed by a governmental entity; signs not readable from a public right-of-way or waterway; interior signs placed more than three feet behind a window or opening of a building unless within an enclosed display window; national flags; flags of a political subdivision; legal notices required by law; historic site plaques; gravestones; structures intended for a separate use, such as phone booths; or sign graphics or symbols painted directly onto or flush-mounted magnetically onto a motor vehicle operating in the normal course of business.</p>	<p>Recommend approval of the revised definition with the Exclusions removed.</p> <p><u>40. “Sign” means any device, structure, fixture, placard, surface, awning, banner, balloon or thing using graphics, lights, symbols and/or written copy designed, used or displayed for the purpose of advertising, informing, identifying, attracting attention to, or promoting the interest of any person, institution, business, event, product, goods or services; provided, that the same is visible from a street, way, sidewalk, or parking area open to the public.</u></p>

Code Topic	Issue	Review	Staff Recommendation	PC Recommendation
Sign Definition – Murals/Public Art	Concerns that murals and public art may be considered a sign and limited by code requirements	Proposed definition applies only to things “ <u>advertising, informing, identifying, attracting attention to, or promoting the interest of any person, institution, business, event, product, goods or services...</u> ” Murals or art that do not include logos, names or other elements are not included.	<p>After thorough legal review, staff does not recommend a language change as most murals and art of concern would not meet the definition.</p> <p>As was previously noted by the Planning Commission, any code specific to public art/murals would be extremely subjective and create issues for consistent and objective staff review.</p>	<p>Recommend no changes regarding murals or public art.</p> <p>The proposed definition as recommended above would exclude these graphics unless they are advertising, informing, identifying, attracting attention to, or promoting the interest of any person, institution, business, event, product, goods or services.</p> <p>General art would not meet this definition thus would not be regulated by this chapter.</p>

Code Topic	Issue	Review	Staff Recommendation	PC Recommendation
Sign Definition - Flags	Concerns that flags supporting sports teams or academic institutions may be limited by code requirements in both size and height from ground.	<p>Flags are included and unless exempted under GHMC 17.080.010. B – Scope would be limited to 6 square feet in size on private property which is less than many flags sold for sports teams, etc.</p> <p>Per recent federal court ruling, sign codes must be “content neutral” so identifying certain non-governmental signs as exempt based on what they say is a slippery slope.</p>	<p>No change is recommended by staff regarding size. Sports team and other flags are currently allowed but would just be limited in size. In permitted sizes are commonly available.</p> <p>As for height, staff recommends the following amendments to GHMC 17.80.110.B:</p> <p>3. Temporary signs in a residential temporary sign area shall not exceed six feet in height from the ground when displayed <u>unless connected to a legally-established flagpole</u> and shall be limited as follows:...</p> <p>4. Temporary signs in a nonresidential temporary sign area shall not exceed three feet in height from the ground when displayed <u>unless connected to a legally-established flagpole</u> and shall be limited as follows:...</p>	<p>Recommend revisions allowing temporary signs attached to a legally-established flagpole to exceed the height requirements of 17.80.110.B.</p> <p><i>GHMC 17.80.110.B:</i></p> <p>3. <i>Temporary signs in a residential temporary sign area shall not exceed six feet in height from the ground when displayed <u>unless connected to a legally-established flagpole</u> and shall be limited as follows:...</i></p> <p>4. <i>Temporary signs in a nonresidential temporary sign area shall not exceed three feet in height from the ground when displayed <u>unless connected to a legally-established flagpole</u> and shall be limited as follows:...</i></p> <p>Sign height is still limited by the height requirements of its zone per existing code.</p>

<b>Code Topic</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Review</b>	<b>Staff Recommendation</b>	<b>PC Recommendation</b>
Temporary Sign Requirements – Right-of-Way	Permit application and installation requirements are extremely detailed, impacting staff workload and applicant effort.	Public comment raised questions regarding the application of temporary sign permit process.	The application process in code (GHMC 17.80.110.3) is relatively brief and straightforward. Staff would recommend reviewing our internal process but not reflect that in code to avoid regular required revisions.	Recommend no changes to code but do recommend internal review of permitting process and enforcement to streamline applications, installation and enforcement.
Future Sign Code Review and Revision	The Code needs a full review for consistency with new federal ruling, stat requirements and community interests.	The Sign Code has not been fully reviewed since 2017 and there are potential improvements and clarifications that would be valuable.	A review of Sign Code would be valuable (as would many other sections of Code), but is a time-consuming effort that would need significant staff focus and public outreach. The current work plan is full through the end of 2026. If directed by Council, sign code could be reviewed in 2027.	Recommend near-term holistic review of sign code to address permit requirements, limitations and other issues with temporary and permanent signs in the community.