

Council not considering electronic sign changes

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DOWNERS GROVE – The Downers Grove Village Council has indicated it has no desire to revisit an issue that would allow electronic signs at Community High School District 99 schools any time soon.

The decision came during the council's Oct. 6 meeting, when Commissioner Bill White brought up the topic at the end of the meeting.

In February, the Village Council decided not to allow an exemption for parcels zoned INP-2 to have electronic signs. The INP-2 zoning district was designed to accommodate development of properties larger than 4 acres for public, civic and institutional use.

If the amendment to the zoning ordinance had been approved, both Downers Grove North and South high schools would have been able to install electronic signs once the schools were rezoned.

At the Oct. 6 meeting, the council heard the first reading on proposals

to rezone the North and South high schools to the INP-2 classification from residential zoning. Those proposals likely will come up for a vote at the council's Oct. 13 meeting.

When the new council was elected in April, there were discussions about the possibility of the ordinance being amended to allow electronic signs at the high schools, White said.

White brought up the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Ariz.* In that decision, the Supreme Court ruled that allowing certain entities to be exempt from signs regulations while banning the signs elsewhere is a First Amendment violation on the basis of banning free speech.

White said this interpretation would mean allowing an exemption for electronic signs at one location would then open the door for electronic signs to be everywhere in the village, based on this ruling.

White said he would be in favor of allowing the high schools to have electronic signs but wants to see how this decision would impact the sign ordinance.

"It appears what I want to do would be unconstitutional," he said.

White introduced a motion at the meeting to direct village staff not to spend any time working on amendments to the electronic sign ordinance.

Mayor Martin Tully said village staff is not working on any electronic sign ordinance issues, so to pass an ordinance telling them to continue not doing that would be counterproductive.

White withdrew his motion, and the council simply talked about whether or not they were in favor of holding off on any work on the electronic sign ordinance.

Tully agreed with White's analysis and called the Supreme Court ruling a "tectonic shift" in the way signs are addressed and discussed in the village.

The council previously said one of its top priorities for the next two years is to revisit the sign ordinance.

Commissioner David Olsen said he felt the item should still be put to a vote as a motion so there is a clear record of the council's desire not to move forward with electronic sign discussion at this time.