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Office of the City Clerk

**Ronald D. Leonhardt**  
City Clerk

**Jim Owczarski**  
Deputy City Clerk

City Hall Room, Room 205  
200 E. Wells Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

January 15, 2008.

Jeffrey J. Mantes  
Department of Public Works  
841 North Broadway Avenue, Room 501  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Commissioner Mantes:

As you are aware, automatic changeable message signs are currently regulated by section 295-407-3-c of the Code of Ordinances. This section provides uniform regulations for on- and off-premise automatic changeable message signs, and generally addresses the frequency of the change of message, calculation of display area, and requires that signs be static in nature. This section does not, nor does any other section of the Code, include regulations which specifically address the recently emergent technology of changeable message LED billboards (often referred to as *electronic* or *digital billboards*). The technological differences between these signs and traditional static billboards are significant, and equally significant are the potential impacts that these LED billboards have on the health, safety and well being of the City.

As directed by Common Council File 060300, passed by the Common Council December 12, 2006, the Department of Public works issued a report in July, 2007, entitled "*Changeable Message LED Billboards – Test Period Observations and Findings – January, 2007 through June, 2007*," which provided an assessment of the concerns related to operation of changeable message LED billboards and included a number of recommendations. These related to visual impact of billboard placement, message duration, sign content, display brightness and regulation

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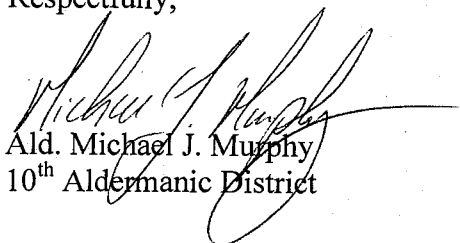
of billboards. Referring to a recent amendment to the Code which provided for a frequency of 30 seconds for signs which primarily face the freeway (from 60 seconds, amended through CCFN 060300) and proposed future changes, the report stated:

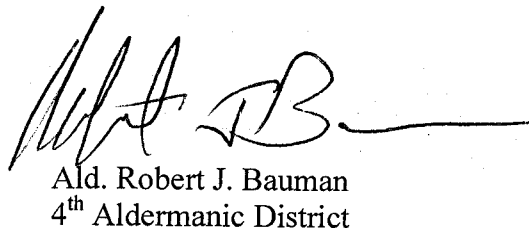
*"While we (the Department of Public Works) believe that the current 60 second duration for all changeable message signs is the preferred alternative for message duration, we recommend that a minimum message duration no less than 30 seconds be included in any regulations to be implemented for changeable message signs" (p. 11).*

As the Code does not provide regulations for changeable message LED billboards, nor does it speak for the potential impacts they have on the health, safety and well-being of the City, we request that the Department of Public Works further elaborate in writing its concerns relating to changeable message LED billboards. We also request that the department elaborate why it does not support a change in the Code that would allow for a minimum frequency of 6 seconds, or any less than 30 seconds, and what frequency the department recommends.

As this matter is currently before the Common Council, your timely attention is requested.

Respectfully,

  
Ald. Michael J. Murphy  
10<sup>th</sup> Aldermanic District

  
Ald. Robert J. Bauman  
4<sup>th</sup> Aldermanic District

c: Jeff Polenske  
Bob Bryson