Roadway signage debate heats up in County Council
Bruce Smith/Eatonville Dispatch
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The on-going debate regarding the clutter of roadway signs may be coming to some kind of resolution.

Pierce County Councilmember Calvin Goings is attempting to broker a deal between advocates for the real estate industry who want minimal regulation of their new home signage, and residents who prefer to see the green beauty of Graham and not have the landscape marred by hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of real estate signs along with announcements from local contractors and lost-dog appeals.

“The situation has gotten out of hand,” Councilmember Roger Bush admits. “The question is what to do about it. The real estate market is in a slump, so what can we do that is reasonable to help that industry?”

Bush agrees with Goings that Pierce County once had stringent laws against excessive roadway signage, but the ordinances were not enforced and the County, particularly in the Graham area, saw an explosion of real estate signs.

“I bet there were some intersections in Graham that had a hundred signs in them,” Bush said.

About a year ago, the Council responded to mounting community pressure and authorized the Department of Public Works, backed by a specific $75,000 allotment of money, to conduct a sign-removal campaign.

However, a few months ago, apparently bowing to counter-pressure from the realtors, the Council withdrew the $75,000 from the DPW budget, and the sign removal program stopped.

“The Republican majority on the Council caved-in to pressure from the industry,” Goings said. “Essentially, they are willing to let things go back to the bad-old-days.”

A quick glance around the intersection of Meridian and 224th confirms that speculation.

Hence, Goings has proposed a two-prong approach to the signage issue.

First, he suggests that all businesses and realtors be allowed to post a temporary “A-frame” sign outside their place of business or home for sale whenever the shop is open for business or a real estate agent is on the premises of a house for sale.

These A-frame signs are commonly called “sandwich board signs,” and according to Jeff Cox, Deputy Legal Counsel, their size will be limited to a maximum of six square feet per face, and stand no greater than three-feet high.

In addition, two, “directional,” off-premises real estate signs will be allowed on roadways, outside of their right-of-ways. They will be limited to four square-feet in size, with a maximum of 42 inches in height, which is significantly smaller than many signs currently pointing the way to new housing developments.

Goings also suggests the creation of community “kiosks,” which would be established at important intersections, and serve to give general directions to both developments and public buildings, such as libraries and post offices.

Cox said theses kiosks would be no more than eight feet high and approximately three-four feet in diameter, and that the exact nature of them and location would be determined by a study group from the DPW, who will report back to the Council by the end of the year.

This sign proposal package goes to the Council’s Community Development Committee July 14 for review, and will be heard by the full Council on July 29.

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