



# MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Mayor and Members of the City Council

**FROM:** Rich Olson, City Manager  
Paul Fredette, Public Utilities Director

**DATE:** June 23, 2016

**REF:** Discussion – Street Name Signs

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***BACKGROUND:***

During the City Council Work Session of April 25, 2016, replacement of the City's street name signs, which are 4 x 4 wood post signs (some concrete) that are about four foot tall and painted white with black lettering, was discussed by staff in response to an earlier request by Councilman King. These street name signs are predominantly found in the downtown sections of Elizabeth City.

During that meeting, staff advised the Council that this type of street name sign is not practical and is very high maintenance. Our existing signs of this type are near the end of their useful life.

Further, these type street name signs should be replaced with signs that are compliant with the latest edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) published by the Federal Highway Administration and/or local addendums published by the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

***ANALYSIS:***

During the April 25<sup>th</sup> Work Session, the Council was advised that the current MUTCD standard for street name signs requires that the first letter of each word in the street name be at least 6 inches tall followed by lowercase letters at least 4 ½ inches tall. The street name is to be retroreflective for easy identification at night or in the dark.

Also during the discussion, the City Council inquired about the possibility of using alternate background colors for street name signs. In addition to the standard of a green background, MUTCD allows for background colors of blue, brown or white.

The Council further inquired if the City could use different colored signs to designate the four City Wards. Beyond the impractical application of the use of color coordinated signs to designate Wards within the City, MUTCD says that alternate background colors for the signs should only be applied to designate streets that are under the jurisdiction of different highway agencies. In Elizabeth

City, jurisdiction is shared by City streets, private streets and NC Department of Transportation roads and highways.

The final inquiry of the City Council was to determine if an insignia or logo could be placed on the street name sign. MUTCD does allow an insignia or logo to be placed on the sign after the name of the street. Staff is of the opinion that a Voting Ward designation would not be impractical; however if the City Council feels it would be beneficial or practical to have the City's logo on the sign, staff has received preliminary cost estimates of \$12 per sign. This cost includes lengthening the sign plate by six inches and applying the logo to both sides of the sign.

There are approximately 400 of the 4 x 4 wood post signs in the City that should be replaced. During the last discussion, the estimated cost of the new street name signs was \$80. A revised estimate for the sign is \$120. Cost changes are primarily due to compliant material to make the sign 'retroreflective' to meet MUTCD specifications, as well as the additional cost for the City Logo.

To replace the estimated 400 wood post signs with the new compliant street sign will cost the city about \$48,000. All new street sign posts will be restricted to the street name sign, stop signs and yield signs, as may be appropriate or required for the particular intersection.

In prior year budgets, \$10,000 was allocated to sign maintenance. This year, the budget includes \$15,000 for street sign maintenance. Staff believes that the current budget will allow for the replacement of all the wood street name signs in the City over the next four to five fiscal years.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

By motion, direct the City Manager to begin replacement of all the wood post street name signs with MUTCD compliant street name signs - within the constraints of the City's Budget and a target completion date of four years.

RCO/vdw