



**MINUTES
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
TOWN OF WARRENTON
October 22, 2015
7:00 P.M.**

The regular meeting of the Town of Warrenton Architectural Review Board (ARB) convened on October 22, 2015 at 7:00 PM in the Municipal Building.

Dr. Melissa Wiedenfeld, Chair, called the meeting to order and a quorum was determined. The following members were present: Mr. Jay Tucker, Mr. Steve Wojcik, Mr. Carter Nevill, and Mr. Jerry Wood, Town Council Representative. Ms. Sarah Sitterle, Director of Planning & Community Development represented staff. Dr. Carole Hertz was absent.

Purpose Statement

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated the Purpose of the Architectural Review Board; Statement of Qualifications of Architectural Review Board to be: The Board makes a decision on applications in order to preserve the character of the Historic District of the Town of Warrenton on behalf of the Town of Warrenton. Decisions of the Board are based upon the Historic Guidelines and a decision for each application is made based upon its own merits. Those decisions do not constitute precedence for any future decisions.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Wojcik made a motion to approve the minutes with no revisions, Mr. Tucker seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

- A. Certificate of Appropriateness 15-15 for kitchen addition at Paradise, 158 Winchester Street.** Dr. Wiedenfeld stated that this application was reviewed originally two months ago and had since been tabled. Currently, the applicant proposes to extend the screen porch behind the east wing of the house to accommodate a kitchen. There are changes from the original application. Dr. Wiedenfeld asked Ms. Sitterle if she had any comments on the matter. Ms. Sitterle stated she did not. Mr. Norton and Mr. Shepherd, the architects for the project, spoke to the board and stated that it is proposed to extend the existing back porch to double the depth in order to add a kitchen. We propose to reuse the details and make new brackets for matching column details. In this application, we propose to use lap siding between the columns. There is vertical bead board there now of different sizes which will be removed in three days, leave only one bay, and then we will add five bays. It seemed appropriate to us to do the addition in wood siding to match the house as opposed to

recreating the bead boarding siding and all the louvers, etc. There is scroll work on top of three of the louvers on the back and we believe they were on the porch originally. It is proposed to reuse them between the columns on the back side of the addition. The existing porch had a hip roof over it, there wasn't a continuous shed roof across it, so we are coming out with a new hip so there is consistency with the details around the perimeter, the heights will match and so forth.

Ms. Sitterle stated the following revisions were made on page 82 of the material provided to the Board.

New text has been added and underscored in the paragraph identified as Window Signs and now states *They are painted or applied directly on the inside or outside of the store window, though application on the inside of the glass is encouraged. Window signs are usually at eye level and are especially suited to businesses such as restaurants where window displays are not prominent. Glazed doors may also have lettering. Painted or applied window signs usually are visible to motorists and pedestrians across the street.*

Ms. Sitterle identified change in paragraph number 2 to include or applied. Revision now states *A solid painted or applied background behind lettering should be avoided because it destroys the transparency of the storefront.*

Chairman Wiedenfeld asked the Board members if there was any discussion relating to the revisions outlined by Ms. Sitterle.

Mr. Tucker indicated he had no comments relating to those revisions. There were other text that stated graphics and logos will be limited to two square feet measured horizontally and vertically at its widest point. Mr. Tucker stated horizontally and vertical are measured in linear distance. He recommended revisions be made to state graphics and logos be no greater than two feet in width or height.

Mr. Wojcik stated two square feet is achieved by measuring the widest and tallest portion and figuring out the square footage. He stated if there was an irregular shaped sign, it would be difficult to determine the square footage and the intent was to make it as easy as possible. He stated he was open to changing it.

Mr. Tucker stated that a 4 inch by 72-inch sign would be acceptable if it did not exceed 244 inches and it was not an attempt to limit the width and height of the sign, but simply a way to limit the area of the sign, but the current wording did not define the intent.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated her understanding and interpretation was the same as Mr. Wojcik.

Dr. Wiedenfeld asked Mr. Tucker if he would like to reword the segment and bring it back to the Board at next month's meeting.

Mr. Tucker stated if Mr. Wojcik's interpretation was correct in that the wording needed to state the area would be limited to two square feet and not specify how measurements are determined.

Mr. Nevill stated the question to be determined is whether the two square feet is the material itself or the space the sign will be utilizing.

Mr. Tucker suggested clarification by simply stating graphics and logos will be limited to two square feet in area and if there are questions, staff or the Board will measure.

Mr. Wood asked Ms. Sitterle if she would be the one encouraging that application be placed on the inside of the glass.

Ms. Sitterle stated that the suggestion would be made to applicants.

Mr. Wood stated that all signs on the County office building are on the outside.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated that most window signs in Town are applied on the outside and very few are on the inside, and the Board had discussed allowing applicants enough latitude to make choices.

Mr. Nevill stated in his opinion the wording was clear, the preference is for the sign to be on the inside but discretion is up to the applicant and does not give the Board reason to vote up or down for the application.

Mr. Nevill stated that he agreed the two foot measurement needed further clarification but before revisions or amendments were made to the guidelines, research needed to be done before a decision was made.

Dr. Wiedenfeld asked if there was any more discussion on the revisions presented by Ms. Sitterle.

Dr. Wiedenfeld asked for a motion. There was no motion.

B. Amendment to the Architectural Review Board Administrative Criteria for Signs. The proposed amendment is to provide for administrative approval of one window sign. Applicants would have a choice between administrative approval for a wall sign or window sign. Window signs are calculated as part of the allowable wall signage area per Article 6-2.1.6 of the Zoning Ordinance and as referenced in the Warrenton Historic District Guidelines.

Ms. Sitterle stated this revision would provide clarification and flexibility if an applicant has either a wall or window sign they want to have installed sooner than what the traditional timeframe for ARB review would provide. What is being proposed is that window signs and wall signs can be administratively approved if they do not exceed the required criteria per Article 6-2.1.6 of the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed revision will also be more helpful for staff in providing guidance in this area.

Mr. Tucker expressed concern for the administrative approval criteria creating a monotony of signs and sign brackets and no unique signs being installed and felt the Board should be concerned too.

Mr. Wojcik stated this was an option for applicants to follow if they wanted to expedite having their signs approved and installed, but before they can be approved, they must meet the requirements of the guidelines.

Mr. Nevill stated the administrative approval allows many types of graphic designs and variations. Limitations of interesting designs are not a reflection of the guidelines or administrative approval process but rather a lack of creativity coming from sign companies and businesses. He stated he had no problem with the guidelines but he did have problems with the monotony of signs. However, he did not see that happening because of the guidelines, and called to the Board's attention the Little Pin Cushion Studio business sign as an example of a good graphic design that followed the guidelines

accordingly and was administratively approved.

Mr. Wood stated he had no problem with the administrative approval process because it was established to help merchants, but he felt follow-up should be done to assure signs are consistent to the guidelines.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated this would have to go to Town Council. A member could make a motion to vote on Item B. Amendment to the Architectural Review Board Administrative Criteria for Signs, or the Board can delay the vote until the next meeting so that both amendments go at one time to the Town Council.

Mr. Nevill made a motion to approve Item B, Amendment to the Architectural Review Board Administrative Criteria of window signs inclusion to wall signs as part of the administrative approval as written and presented to ARB.

Mr. Wojcik stated that earlier it had been recommended paragraph 2, on page two be revised and asked if it would be better to make all the changes and vote on everything at once and make one submission to the Town Council.

Mr. Tucker suggested the Board make one set of changes and present them as one package to the Town Council.

Mr. Nevill retracted his motion.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated that concluded the New Business.

Work Session

A. Review of Warrenton Historic District Guidelines

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated the revisions for window signs reflected in red were acceptable. She stated that Mr. Tucker had stated the second amendment to the sign criteria would provide an opportunity for the applicant to choose either one window or one wall sign to be administratively approved. The Board would need to vote on the language that is to be used in the guidelines. She indicated there was a discrepancy noted by Mr. Nevill who does not see this as a problem. She asked Mr. Wojcik if he had a recommendation for changes on item B.

Mr. Wojcik had no strong preference on any aspects of the administrative approval process or changing to either a wall or window sign because he felt the same design would be used for both, and approval or lack of approval would be the same. Mr. Wojcik stated he agreed with the recommended change Mr. Tucker suggested on page two, relating to the measurement of the two-foot area.

Mr. Nevill stated he understood where the confusion was coming from, but he understood how the document read in that it implies that the design has to fit within the two square feet area from the widest and tallest point.

Mr. Tucker stated the wording horizontally and vertically should be removed to alleviate any confusion.

All Board members agreed to the recommended change.

Mr. Tucker stated the proposed revision relating to administrative approval does not matter if it is wall or window.

Dr. Widenfeld indicated there were three changes to be voted on at the next month's meeting.

Mr. Tucker stated the draft allows administrative approval for a 20 square foot wall sign and he expressed concern over the size and affects to the streetscape.

Mr. Nevill stated size was determined by the percentage of wall space it will take up, which in essence is allowable for larger building but reduced for smaller building, in order to meet the criteria.

Mr. Tucker stated the size is arbitrary and not relative to the area.

Mr. Nevill stated the guidelines outline the percentages of space allowed and there are safeguards within the guidelines. The administrative approval follows the historic guidelines.

Mr. Tucker stated in his opinion a twenty square foot sign is large and excluded from the Board's review, regardless of the size of the building.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated staff would not approve if it did not fit within the guidelines. If staff had questions or perceived something as a potential problem, they can bring it to the Board for review and decision.

Mr. Nevill stated staff may determine a sign be approved by the ARB regardless if the sign meets the criteria. He said he understood Mr. Tucker's point relating to the affects signs have on the streetscape and it is a concern. However, the larger area is allowed in order to keep the administrative approval standard and allow large buildings to have that access. He did not want the Board to find itself in a position where the applicant decides they prefer not to go before the ARB and seek administrative approval and then the Town ends up with a sign disproportionately small. Most people want their signs to fit in and if staff has questions or feel it is not meeting the standard then it would come before the Board.

Mr. Tucker asked Ms. Sitterle if she had any reluctance in turning down an application of less than 20 square feet she felt the sign needed ARB review approval.

Ms. Sitterle read a segment of the administrative approval process which states *prior to approval staff will conduct research and visit the site to evaluate the subject property, as well as to its context, to determine if the proposed signage is appropriate. Signs that are out of proportion or scale with contiguous signs on the block will be referred to the ARB for their review and approval.*

Mr. Tucker asked Ms. Sitterle if staff had ever turned down a sign.

Ms. Sitterle stated there had not been a situation or opportunity to bring an administrative approval application to the ARB.

Mr. Tucker asked how often it had happened or if it had ever happened.

Ms. Sitterle stated staff has not received an application that has not met the criteria and to date no one has been turned down.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated that staff guides the applicant and helps them make the right selection so their signs follow within the guidelines and can be administratively approved and it would be unusual for Ms. Sitterle to turn the applicant down after she had helped them.

Mr. Tucker stated he was not being critical but wanted to know how meaningful this set of criteria was. If no one is turned down, is it possible that the criterion is too broad.

Mr. Wojcik stated that he was on the Board when the administrative process was created, and that at the time, the Board had the opposite problem of being bogged down with signs. The administrative approval process was the Board's way to get signs approved. The motivation was to develop a fast track and eliminate the backlog and it appears Mr. Tucker's suggestions would cause a backlog again. At the time, the Board developed the process and applicants were required to follow the administrative rules. However, if an applicant wanted to be creative and have an unusually large sign, unusual colors, or something computer generated they would have to come before the Board. Mr. Wojcik stated he would not like to see all signs coming back to the ARB for approval.

Mr. Tucker stated he was expressing his professional opinion. If consensus of the Board is that everything is okay with administrative approval for that size of sign, so be it.

Dr. Wiedenfeld recommended that all the changes be voted on at the next month's ARB meeting. The Board can consider size and administrative approval by looking at the Zoning Ordinance and having another discussion later. This is an on-going process and she recommended that the Board conduct some research of the Zoning Ordinance. She stated the Board would like staff to make this change (page 2) and revisit the other two changes at next month's ARB meeting during the work session.

Mr. Wojcik asked what the motivation was for having a size of twenty square feet because page 3 of the draft criteria and standards for signs stated *administrative approval of one wall sign is limited to twenty (20) square feet in area*. He stated the text was not bolded or underlined which is not a change but a revision to make it consistent with page 3.

Ms. Sitterle stated that was not a change.

Mr. Tucker shared some photographs of outside vinyl signs to illustrate what happens to their appearance due to poor maintenance. Mr. Tucker stated the current Ordinance does not outline maintenance requirements for vinyl signs but the Board needed to address this.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated this was problematic.

Mr. Tucker shared a picture of a hanging fabric sign that he thought was not allowed and he did not know who was enforcing the sign requirements, but then he read the Ordinance and realized it was a temporary sign advertising an event and is acceptable but it did not come before the ARB.

Ms. Sitterle stated temporary signs must be approved. Staff cannot be everywhere and unless a complaint comes forward, there are times staff does not have a way of knowing where all violations are occurring.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated that in the past the ARB would be the eyes not the staff because members of the Board either live or work in the historic district and have reported to the town.

Mr. Tucker stated he was not implying staff is responsible for catching these but the Ordinance should have a provision for maintenance requirements.

Mr. Nevill stated that the guidelines require properties be maintained including all aspects and the Zoning Ordinance requires that buildings be maintained. His understanding of all aspects would be paint, brick mortar, woodwork to everything else involved with the building including the signs. He noted that opens other issues; when looking at the state of other buildings in the historic district, some are in a state of deterioration or construction and cornices and facades of buildings are in terrible condition. He noted that the sign condition is minor in comparison. The Zoning Ordinance does require buildings be maintained properly and if the Board wanted to start enforcing, discussions with staff and Town Council needed to be held. However, until there is a more functioning Partnership for Warrenton with the ability to gain grants and funding for maintenance through the Main Street Program and helping businesses, the Board needs have a more helpful approach as opposed to punitive and imposing fines.

Mr. Tucker stated he was not suggesting fines but applying vinyl letter on the inside of the glass would preclude deterioration.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated that if there are questions on protocol or a member wants to add something to the work session a vote will be held on topics to be discussed. She asked if members wanted to add anything else.

Mr. Nevill stated he shared Mr.Tucker's concerns relating to sign maintenance but believed a more positive role should be taken and was the best way to move forward.

Mr. Tucker stated now was the time to discuss it not when an applicant comes forward.

Mr. Tucker made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Nevill seconded the motion. All members voted in favor and none voted against the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Ms. Kate Gibson was introduced as a new member of Town staff who will be attending ARB meetings in the future on Ms. Sitterle's behalf.

Minutes Submitted by
Dee Highnote