



**MINUTES
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
TOWN OF WARRENTON
May 28, 2015
7:00 P.M.**

The regular meeting of the Town of Warrenton Architectural Review Board (ARB) convened on May 28, 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. Steve Wojcik, Mr. Jay Tucker, Mr. Carter Nevill, Dr. Carole Hertz and Mr. Jerry Wood. Ms. Sarah Sitterle, Director of Planning & Community Development, and Ms. Kate Gibson, Planner, represented staff.

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

Dr. Hertz made a motion to approve the minutes with no revisions, and Mr. Nevill seconded the motion and the motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Certificate of Appropriateness 15-9.** Erected wall sign at 41 Beckham Street, Scott Lewis, applicant.

Mr. Lewis addressed the group and stated the sign was block letter with Styrofoam and had been installed.

Ms. Gibson stated the applicant was seeking after-the-fact ARB approval for one wall sign and it could not be administratively approved because it had been installed.

Ms. Gibson stated the cinder-block garages, circa 1940-1950, at 41 Beckham Street are part of the vernacular commercial building at 50 South Third Street, and the building is a contributing

structure to the Historic District. The building was constructed by John R. Spilman in the 1900s, and it was originally known as Fletcher's Market. The property is zoned as Central Business District and wall signs must meet the height and size requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

Staff has found the erected wall sign in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance however, several signs on the façade do not appear to comply with the Zoning Ordinance and staff is working with the applicant to address these violations.

Ms. Gibson stated staff was leaving it to the Board's discretion in determining the appropriateness of the sign. If approved, sign and building permits are required.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated that Ms. Gibson stated the erected sign meets the Zoning Ordinance but not the Historic Guidelines.

Ms. Gibson stated that was correct and was leaving it to the Board's discretion.

Mr. Tucker asked if staff has the power to disapprove.

Ms. Sitterle stated not in this case because the sign had been installed.

Mr. Tucker asked if staff finds material not permitted under ARB Guidelines, can staff disapprove and require amendment or removal of the sign.

Ms. Sitterle stated yes but in this case, staff chose instead to come before the Board.

Mr. Tucker asked if the sign was made of foam plastic.

Mr. Lewis stated the material was not plastic just Styrofoam.

Mr. Tucker stated that Styrofoam is a plastic material and plastic signs are not permitted under the ARB Guidelines.

Mr. Lewis stated he did not know that.

Mr. Tucker stated he thought the Town would benefit from having a business in the vacant building and would like to see the ARB actively pursue helping Mr. Lewis with signage that is appropriate and will help promote his business in the Historic District, but that the Guidelines need to be followed.

Mr. Tucker asked Mr. Lewis if the BMP letters shown in the picture are the same as the Styrofoam sample provided.

Mr. Lewis stated yes.

Mr. Tucker asked if the letters were professionally manufactured or if Mr. Lewis made them.

Mr. Lewis indicated he made them.

Mr. Tucker stated that was another sticking point because there is a provision in the Ordinance that requires signs to be professionally made. He indicated that there are individuals that have the skills to construct a sign that would be considered professionally made even though he/she may not be in the sign business. This is something we can get around if the sign in fact meets all the other criteria of the Ordinance. Mr. Tucker stated that the sign was not consistent in the stroke width of the text, which made him question whether it was professionally made. Mr. Tucker stressed to Mr. Lewis that what he would like to do is have the ARB work with the applicant. He understood staff was currently working with the applicant, and said it makes it difficult for the ARB not knowing how the sign will interact to other signs that may be applied to the building.

Dr. Hertz stated she agreed with Mr. Tucker.

Mr. Wojcik stated he would like to have violations resolved before the Board votes and he concurred with Mr. Tucker.

Mr. Nevill stated he was in agreement with Mr. Tucker and would like to offer to the applicant ARB guidance as much as possible. He stated he agreed with the issues of the sign materials and it not being professionally made, and will refer to Mr. Lewis and allow for his creativity but the biggest issue is the material. Having the building occupied and promoting its history through auto sales and services is important, and there is tremendous opportunity for the applicant's business, the building and the Historic District. If you look at the period of the building, which was the grand era of American motoring, there is opportunity, without a tremendous amount of cost to the applicant, to take advantage of something that will promote his business and will benefit the Historic District. Mr. Nevill reiterated the offer to extend the hand of ARB to help the applicant design or provide guidance for something that would be appropriate and beneficial to his business. Mr. Nevill stated he was not at a point to recommend approval but his question to the Board was pending review, what to do with the current signage and the need for the applicant to advertise to promote his business. Mr. Nevill asked if it would be possible to grant a temporary extension that will allow the applicant to continue to advertise his business appropriately until appropriate signage is installed.

Ms. Sitterle stated that once the signage was discovered the applicant was asked to submit an application, which placed the violation on hold pending resolution. She indicated that staff is working with the applicant on the extra signage and signage has been removed as part of this process and everything is pending ARB approval. Ms. Sitterle stated staff is not in a position to have signs removed, and everything is on hold until a resolution is achieved.

Mr. Tucker stated that as he was reviewing this application he noted two banners and indicated that what the building lacks is a level of excitement, and that the building needs something to liven it up. Mr. Tucker stated that during his review he was trying to find a way to approve the banners. Mr. Tucker informed the applicant only public, government and religious organizations are allowed to put up flags, and the only thing the applicant would be allowed to have is an "OPEN" flag. Mr. Tucker suggested that the applicant look into having a flag that states "OPEN" as a way to let people know the business is there and add more character to the building. Mr. Tucker stated the BMP sign made out of Styrofoam is not under any time restrictions and can go on until all the issues are resolved because the applicant is not under any time pressure to have

the issues resolved and suggested to Mr. Lewis he find a supplier for these letters that appear to be professionally made.

Mr. Lewis stated he was a professional and had been making signs for many years.

Mr. Tucker stated that was fine, but the sign he saw on the building looks as if it was not professionally made and recommended to Mr. Lewis that he investigate other materials that are not plastic, because plastic is not allowed. He indicated if Mr. Lewis would work on finding appropriate material and the Town works administratively with him on the other sign issues then the ARB will have a big picture of the whole activity. Mr. Tucker asked Mr. Lewis if he was under any time constraints and if he was happy working with the current signage.

Mr. Lewis stated he was here to help the Town of Warrenton and offered to show the Board samples and asked about plastic material.

Mr. Tucker stated plastic material was not allowed.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated it was not allowed in the Historic District and his business is located in the Historic District.

Mr. Tucker stated that flags and banners are not allowed in the Historic District except for special events, and then it can be displayed on a temporary basis for 30 days.

Mr. Lewis asked if an American flag was allowed.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated the flag was a zoning issue not an ARB issue. The sign is an ARB issue, and she apologized to Mr. Lewis but the flag and signs are two separate issues and the ARB can only address the sign issue.

Mr. Lewis stated he was retired and a member of a BMW car club. He was approached about opening up a new club chapter because people were having difficulties getting repairs made on their BMWs. He thought he could help by opening up a new BMW club chapter, which would generate about \$2 million in revenue for the Town. The shop will repair cars for members of the car club, and club events will be held there two to three times a year.

Mr. Tucker stated that sounded great but that was not the purview of the ARB.

Mr. Wood stated that he understood Mr. Lewis is a business person but because his business is located in the Historic District there are special rules and regulations all businesses located in the Historic District have to follow. One of the issues he addressed was the height of the BMW sign, which should be a minimum of eight feet.

Ms. Sitterle stated it needed to be a minimum of eight feet off the ground.

Mr. Wood suggested that Mr. Lewis get with Town staff and come back to the ARB with a total plan that can be accepted, because he thinks what Mr. Lewis is proposing will be a great improvement for the building.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated that Mr. Lewis' sign would be acceptable if it were not made of Styrofoam but made of wood, for example. She stated that if the sign had been made of some other material it would meet the ARB Guidelines.

Mr. Tucker stated the revised sign would have to be presented to the ARB.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated that the Board had made approvals in the past with the condition that the sign be made of appropriate materials.

Mr. Wojcik suggested Mr. Lewis read the Town Sign Ordinance and the Administrative Approval Process so he can become familiar with the requirements and procedure.

Mr. Nevill stated that because this facility is a garage there should be some consideration as to what is appropriate for an auto repair/service business. He asked that staff take into consideration, if the Board agrees, the history of the building and that, within reason, certain considerations be made for the nature of the business that allows for advertising, as it would have been seen historically for an auto repair or service store. He stated he thought it would be appropriate for certain exceptions to be made within historic appropriateness.

Mr. Lewis stated he did not want any signs up there but he would like to have flags, and asked if he was being denied having any type of flag, and stated he would like more discussion.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated flags were a zoning issue and not under the purview of the ARB. She stated Ms. Sitterle and Ms. Gibson work on both zoning and ARB issues and could help him with both.

Before Mr. Tucker made a motion he asked Ms. Sitterle what avenues should be taken now that the application has come before the ARB. He asked if the Board refers the applicant back to staff to resolve these issues, does that clear the issue from the ARB agenda or would the applicant have to come back before the ARB for approval.

Ms. Sitterle stated it could be approved with conditions, that it is pending resolution of outstanding zoning issues and proper permitting that is required, or it can be tabled and the applicant can come back with additional information.

Mr. Tucker stated that the only reason it is before the ARB is because it was erected prior to staff having an application.

Ms. Sitterle stated that was correct and that was when additional signage issues were discovered.

Mr. Nevill asked if the Board tabled it, would it force it to come back to the Board and if it was denied would that start it from square one as a new application.

Ms. Sitterle stated if it is denied the applicant would have to reapply.

Mr. Tucker stated if the application is approved with the condition that all issues are resolved to

staff's satisfaction it would not come back. If staff cannot resolve all issues the application would come back before the Board.

Dr. Hertz stated the sign was not balanced.

Mr. Tucker stated that the sign was not at the level of BMW, Peugeot, and the club stature, and not of a level he presumes members of BMW, Mini Cooper and Peugeot club would want to represent them. His understanding is that there is a certain pride, and he does not see that pride in the construction of the sign and he would like to see that come about.

Mr. Tucker made a motion for Mr. Lewis to return to staff and resolve all issues and if all issues cannot be resolved, then Mr. Lewis is to return to the ARB at next month's meeting. He stated this motion is for approval based on the condition that all issues are resolved to the satisfaction of the Town staff.

Mr. Lewis asked if he should move his business to Stafford.

Dr. Wiedenfeld asked Mr. Tucker to restate his motion.

Mr. Tucker made a motion to approve COA 15-9 on the condition that all issues that staff is currently addressing are resolved with the Town staff and the material used for the construction of the sign fits within the Guidelines. Should this not be resolved with Town staff, the application will be tabled until next meeting.

Dr. Hertz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated to Mr. Lewis that his sign was approved on the condition that he worked with staff to resolve the other sign issues and used appropriate materials.

Mr. Lewis asked who staff was.

Dr. Wiedenfeld identified Ms. Sitterle and Ms. Gibson. She indicated there were also Zoning issues Mr. Lewis needed to address with staff.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated a request had been made to add to the agenda the sign for the Saint James' School, COA 15-12, which came in late and cannot be administratively approved. She noted that a representative could not attend and asked if there was a motion to add this to the agenda.

Mr. Nevill stated he could serve as a representative because his wife is a member of the Parents Association of School Board and he would abstain from voting. He indicated he was fully informed on this matter and could serve as proxy.

Dr. Hertz indicated she would have to recuse herself from voting because she was active in the church and a recent board member.

Mr. Wojcik made a motion to put COA15-12 on the agenda.

Mr. Tucker seconded the motion.

Mr. Tucker and Mr. Wojcik voted for the motion. Dr. Wiedenfeld voted against the motion.

Mr. Nevill stated he was acting on behalf of the Parents Association of St. James' Episcopal School. He stated his wife sits on the School Board as a voting member of the School Board. The application is for a new sign from parents of the first graduating class of fifth graders. He noted on the photograph that the current sign is wooden and sits low and they want something more representative of the growing school. The new sign would be made out of cedar plank and painted in a beige color similar to the building's color, with a light blue, royal blue, red and white color scheme to match the school. Mr. Nevill stated he did not know if the new sign would replace the current banner hanging on the front of the school but it is exempt from the banner Ordinance because it is a religious organization. The placement of the sign would be on the Beckham Street side, is a much-improved signage, and has approval from the church.

Mr. Tucker stated that he presumes this is coming before ARB because it has a total of six colors and staff could not approve.

Ms. Sitterle stated that was correct.

Dr. Hertz asked if the colors of the sign are representative of Episcopal Schools everywhere.

Mr. Nevill stated the logo on the sign is unique to the school but the colors are based on traditional Episcopal Church colors.

Mr. Nevill stated the school is willing to relocate the sign if the ARB recommends it.

Mr. Wojcik asked if the sign was eye level.

Mr. Nevill stated it was visible from Main Street and on the ground floor.

Mr. Wojcik stated it appeared to be an appropriate height for the Historic District.

Mr. Wood asked if the old sign would be removed.

Mr. Nevill stated yes.

Mr. Wood stated he had no issues.

Dr. Wiedenfeld asked if that was the main entrance to the school.

Mr. Nevill stated yes.

Dr. Wiedenfeld asked if there was a sign in the back.

Mr. Nevill stated there was a banner.

Mr. Wojcik made a motion to approve application COA 15-12 for the erected wall sign at 73 Culpeper Street.

Mr. Tucker seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

WORK SESSION

Ms. Gibson stated that since the last meeting of the ARB, staff had administratively approved COAP 15-10, Wall Sign for Walk by Faith at 19 N. Fifth Street.

Dr. Wiedenfeld asked if the Board had any comments to make relating to the Historic District Guidelines.

Mr. Tucker stated he was not in favor of staff approval of signage but in the case presented this evening, he found it to be appropriate.

Mr. Nevill stated he had some clarification from last month's meeting regarding some questions in his absence. There have been many signs coming before the Board, and his intent on offering guidance may not be something of the Board's purview but is something the Board should be involved with. As pointed out by Mr. Tucker and Dr. Hertz, there has been redundancy and lack of creativity, perhaps through the administrative process or lack of creativity among the applicants. The ARB should offer help and suggestions rather than just give guidelines. Rather than just giving guidelines and telling them what cannot be done, the Board should offer suggestions and examples that help spell out what the Board is looking for so that we do not have applicants confused as to what is expected. Mr. Nevill stated this is a bigger concept and he was not expecting a revision in the Guidelines. He suggested a partnership with the merchant association and a group of people involved, such as economic development, and putting together a standard of excellence for signs so that when a business is applying they know what the Town is looking for. He stated the BMP signage on an historic building is a tremendous opportunity to restore that to the 1940 to 1950 era look that keeps it historic and builds more interest in that building historically. He stated tonight's applicant went through a very difficult process, and when there is good signage everyone benefits.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated that the confusion on the part of the applicant was not because of staff. Staff did their part and provided him the information and guidelines.

Mr. Nevill stated this was no reflection on staff but a reflection of the businesses and sign companies.

Mr. Tucker stated he would encourage staff to be more proactive with what Mr. Nevill was referring to, by encouraging variety of more appropriate signs and being less fearful of upsetting someone. The way it is now it makes ARB become the bad guy when staff has an issue with something, and staff needs to be more proactive in inspiring the applicant to be creative rather than creating standard signs that the Board continues to see up and down Main Street.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated it is the job of ARB to be the bad person and staff is doing what they are expected to do.

Mr. Wood stated you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make the horse drink. In this case, you had something like that. Signage in the Historic District is very important, and in his opinion staff is doing it right.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated Mr. Nevill suggested a revision that makes it easy for applicants but she did not think the Board was at that point. She suggested that when members go to other Historic Districts, they take photos of creative signs they would like on Main Street, and in the future, the Board and staff could use them as examples. This can be done without a motion and votes. Provide the pictures to staff and to the Economic Development Director.

Dr. Wiedenfeld suggested to Ms. Sitterle that the Economic Development Director should attend a future ARB meeting and suggested an invitation be extended to her.

Mr. Tucker stated that he understands Mr. Nevill wants more creativity in signage and not lesser or more guidelines.

Dr. Hertz stated what she heard from Mr. Nevill was that he wants more clarity in the Guidelines and she agrees with him because there are many contradictions in the Guidelines that cause confusion for applicants, but she thinks creativity will open up problems because of the difficulty in defining creativity based on these guidelines.

Mr. Tucker stated creativity would be based on appropriateness, and if staff does not think it is appropriate then they pass it on to the Board. Staff's current determination of appropriateness is size and color.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated staff also considers shapes of signs.

Mr. Tucker stated he felt the Guidelines are very restrictive in terms of what the staff can review.

Ms. Sitterle stated staff is very careful in guiding applicants to meet the standards of the Ordinance and Guidelines, and as suggested by legal counsel, staff avoids first amendment content issues where it becomes a matter of taste and can become subjective and a very sticky area.

Mr. Tucker stated he did not care about sign content. He cares more about appropriateness of appearance and variety.

Mr. Nevill stated it was a first amendment issue and a slippery slope, and it is wise for staff to stay away from making judgment calls or decisions based on content. The Guidelines are open-ended, which allow the ARB to make some decisions in terms of content and allows more leeway for the Board. He stated he thought staff was wise to look strictly at the skeleton of the application, making sure it meets the Guidelines, and that the level of creativity and appropriateness in terms of business promotion and historical appropriateness is up to the applicant. His goal with the guideline is not to make it codified but merely a road map to set the standards, show what the Town wants, and encourage more creativity. He indicated he had been speaking with Molly Irish Pub about the idea that perhaps they put a sign on the side of their

building where there is vacant open space that could increase business promotion with proper appropriate historical wall painted signs and something creative. Hopefully more creative signage such as Little Pin Cushion Studio, Latitude, and other businesses that are using good graphic designs will encourage other businesses to follow. The guidelines would be more of a wish list rather than what has to happen. There are sign companies that are not putting their best effort forward and businesses lacking professional standard signage, as was evident this evening with the BMW signage. The better the Town presents its businesses the more successful we will be. We need to all work together and be a friend to the businesses instead of being perceived as an enemy.

Dr. Wiedenfeld stated that the new Economic Director would be extended an invitation to attend next month's meeting.

Mr. Tucker made motion to adjourn. Mr. Nevill seconded.

Meeting Adjourned 8:00 PM.

Minutes Submitted by
Dee Highnote