



City of Sebastopol
Incorporated 1902
Planning Department
7120 Bodega Avenue
Sebastopol, CA 95472
707-823-6167
707-823-1135 (Fax)
www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us

Email: ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org

APPROVED MINUTES

TREE/DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF August 19, 2020
4:00 P.M.

The notice of the meeting was posted on August 13, 2020.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD:

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Luthin called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M. and read a procedural statement.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present:	Ted Luthin, Chair Lars Langberg, Vice Chair Cary Bush, Board Member Ron Hari, Board Member
Absent:	Christine Level, Board Member (excused) Gregory Beale, Board Member (excused)
Staff:	Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director Alan Montes, Associate Planner

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 17, 2020

Board Member Bush made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted.

Board Member Hari seconded the motion.

The Board voted on the motion as follows:

AYES: Chair Luthin, Vice Chair Langberg, and Board Members Bush and Hari
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: Board Members Level and Beale

4. PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST:

Director Svanstrom updated the Board on the following:

- Recent and upcoming Council items.

- The County is interested in purchasing Sebastopol Inn as non-congregant, low income housing for those who are vulnerable to Covid-19 and then potentially afterwards for low income residents.
- Covid-19 updates pertaining to City offices, parks, and business support efforts.
- Possible changes to the City's Façade Improvement Program.
- Evacuation orders and area updates pertaining to the current fire crisis north of Armstrong Woods.

The Board asked questions of Director Svanstrom.

Vice Chair Langberg commented:

- The Hotel Sebastopol project has taken a 2-year hiatus on moving forward with any construction because their bank is not willing to finance the project at this point. Because of this, the developer has leased the site to Ned Kahn, a local sculptor who is world renowned, for two years and he will be installing sculpture on the site.

Director Svanstrom responded:

- Not aware of all those details.
- They are in the process of removing the fencing on the site and will be replacing it with a nicer looking fence.
- Mr. Kahn will be installing a temporary art exhibit there in the next few weeks or so.
- That will be coordinated with the Public Arts Committee and the mobile art app (which is a project that maps all of the outdoor and accessible public art, except for Florence Avenue due to how impacted the street is already, in Sebastopol which has been worked on by the Public Art Committee).
- Has been in discussion with Piazza Hospitality on promoting the installation by Mr. Kahn.

Board Member Hari commented:

- Works as a docent at Armstrong Woods.
- The last fire that went through Armstrong was in 1926.
- The fire started in Rio Nido and burned through Armstrong to the ocean without killing one redwood tree.
- Nobody put the fire out.
- History proves that the redwood trees will not be affected.

Chair Luthin thanked Director Svanstrom and Board Members Bush and Hari for the updates.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA: There were none.

Director Svanstrom confirmed that no written comment had been submitted either.

6. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: There were none.

7. PUBLIC HEARING:

- A. SIGN REVIEW & SIGN EXCEPTION – 840 Gravenstein Hwy No. – Project No. 2020-048** The project is requesting a sign review and sign exception to permit three internally illuminated wall signs.

Associate Planner Montes presented the staff report.

Board Member Bush commended staff on the report.

Chair Luthin asked for questions of staff.

There were none.

Chair Luthin asked if the applicant wished to make a presentation.

Kevin Jones with FASTSIGNS presented and was available for questions.

Chair Luthin asked for questions of Mr. Jones.

There were none.

Chair Luthin asked for Board deliberation.

Board Member Bush commented:

- The staff report outlined this well and it was really well presented by Associate Planner Montes.
- More inclined to follow the recommendation of staff.
- Would not want to set a precedent.

Board Member Hari commented:

- An existing bank does not need the signage or illumination compared to other businesses because they are not trying to attract somebody off the road.
- Illumination is for businesses that need to attract people and bring them in, not banks.
- Banks have an established customer base.

Vice Chair Langberg commented:

- Agreed with staff's analysis.
- The staff report is thorough and makes sense.
- The back elevation does not feel like it needs a sign.
- Would be curious to see this sign in a different style because it has an iconic internally lit stock to it in the brand.
- The design has a dated look and may not look very good if kept as-is and changing the way it is lit.
- The building is beautiful, and the sign should be completely redesigned.
- Happy with the way this has been presented by staff.

Chair Luthin commented:

- Concurred with fellow members of the Board.
- Remembers when this building first came to the Board and how the applicant stressed that this would be a landmark building for them.
- This is not a landmark signage solution.
- They need a signage and lighting solution that speaks to the building.
- The building itself is making a statement.
- Sticking plastic face lit retail letters on a building like this seems like a shame.
- This seems like a very big, missed opportunity.
- Suggested a sign that is halo lit or lit from the canopies above.
- There are a lot of lighting opportunities here to be had.
- The size is certainly appropriate.

- Some of the locations could be revised a little to get them to work within the composition of the building a bit better.
- Lighting could certainly work better.
- Concurred with Vice Chair Langberg on the back elevation not needing a sign.
- There will probably be graphics or a logo on the window or backdoor as well.
- Expressed agreeing with staff.
- Two signs are appropriate.
- The lighting needs some work.
- The size is fine.

The Board discussed process.

Chair Luthin volunteered to be the member of the Design Review Board that will review the halo lit illumination.

Chair Luthin made a motion to deny the Sign Exception and conditionally approve the Sign Permit with the following:

- The halo lit illumination shall be reviewed by a member of the Design Review Board prior.

Board Member Bush seconded the motion.

The Board voted on the motion as follows:

AYES: Chair Luthin, Vice Chair Langberg, and Board Members Bush and Hari

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Board Members Level and Beale

Chair Luthin commented that he looks forward to seeing the next iteration.

Mr. Jones thanked Associate Planner Montes for his guidance and accessibility throughout the process and thanked the Board for their time.

8. DISCUSSION ITEM:

A. ITEMS REQUIRING DRB REVIEW

Associate Planner Montes presented the staff report.

Director Svanstrom made additional remarks on the type of guidance staff is looking for.

Chair Luthin commented:

- Is there an informal way for staff to route an application to the Board if it is an application that staff is not sure of in terms of whether it should require Board review?

Director Svanstrom responded:

- Thanked Chair Luthin for his question.
- Staff cannot run an application by the entire Board because that would be a violation of the Brown Act as a sort of decision making outside of a public process.
- Staff can, however, discuss an item with the Chair, or Vice Chair if the Chair is not available, to get a read on it that way.

Chair Luthin commented:

- His gut feeling is that things like the patio at Crooked Goat, somebody modifying a fence, or somebody making alterations to auxiliary structures (not secondary or tertiary level structures) could and probably should be reviewed at staff level.
- Changes in architecture, storefront, and those sorts of things should trigger Design Review.

Board Member Bush commented:

- Begged to differ with Chair Luthin on that.
- Recalled Vice Chair Langberg's comments on the patio application for Crooked Goat but did not agree with that sentiment.
- He was glad that the Board got a chance to review the Crooked Goat patio application.
- Means no disrespect.
- Sitework has a strong relevance to architecture and it is important.

Chair Luthin commented:

- Understands Board Member Bush's comments on the Crooked Goat patio.
- This Design Review Board does not meet very often.
- He is happy to chime in on anything.
- The Board does not often have packed agendas and long meetings so the capacity to review items is there.

Board Member Bush commented:

- Staff has been very influential on what the Board sees and what it does not see.
- While he respects staff and their ability to make those decisions, there is a cutoff at some point.
- Does not want to be wasteful or disrespectful to a client's application, their money, and everyone's time.
- Understands that aspect of this process.
- Expressed concern about rogueness in general, especially when it comes to site design.

Chair Luthin commented:

- Concurred with Board Member Bush.
- If the applicant knows that they need to meet a certain level of review for the Design Review Board they might be motivated to bring a better, more thought out application than they would if they knew they were not going to be reviewed.

Director Svanstrom commented:

- If staff does not feel an application is consistent with our Design Review Guidelines the application will go before the Design Review Board.
- If an applicant changes their application in response to the City's Design Review Guidelines and it then complies, it may not need to go to the Design Review Board.
- Not advocating either way.
- Has seen applications that were done at staff level when they should have gone to the Board.
- Trying to gain a better understanding of how best to work with the Board on the applications that come through.

Board Member Hari commented:

- Can see both sides of this one.
- More than anything, we must use common sense.

- Some things are very appropriate for what the Board does.
- There are probably some others that are a total waste of the Board's time.
- Does not have a hardcore yes or no on this.
- Some things probably do not need the Board's approval or their time, even though the Board has plenty of time these days.

Board Member Bush commented:

- Cannot personally think of any Design Review Board meeting that he has attended that has been a waste of his time.
- Optimistic about the possibility of some new, less subjective design guidelines that may make these decisions and questions that the Board is asking themselves now a little bit more transparent.
- That is the nature and overall intent for creating less subjective guidelines.
- Looking forward to that in the future.

Chair Luthin and Vice Chair Langberg concurred with Board Member Bush's comments on looking forward to less subjective design guidelines.

Vice Chair Langberg commented:

- If the design guidelines are clear, well thought out, and innovative, what should and should not come to the Board should be made clearer.
- There are always going to be things that are a little hard to figure out which way they should go.
- Concurred with Board Member Bush's comments on site work being worth looking at.
- Elaborated on his opinion surrounding the Crooked Goat patio application.
- What Board Member Bush is saying is very important.
- Site work has huge implications and needs to be taken seriously.

Board Member Bush commented:

- He learns a lot from his colleagues, staff, and from the public as well when participating in these Design Review Board meetings.
- Did not think he would want to be doing this and yet, he has been doing it for a while now.
- Seeing the precedence supersede time after time, and the consistency through the Board has been an exciting process.
- The ability to agree to disagree is a great thing and it is part of this process and it is unique.

Vice Chair Langberg commented:

- Concurred with Board Member Bush on not having attended a Design Review Board meeting that was a waste of his time.
- 99% of the time it has not been a waste of time for the applicant either.
- The benefit of a project coming before the Board is very important and is not a lot, in terms of added time, in the big picture.

Board Member Bush commented that Board Member Langberg's comments were well said.

Board Member Hari commented:

- Wished to address his comment on items being a waste of the Board's time.
- Is a libertarian and hesitates when government gets too involved and tries to control everything.
- Sometimes it feels like we are losing our freedom to government regulations.

- Throwing more regulations and requirements on businesses in this town that are already suffering greatly does not seem like the right move.
- Businesses should be allowed to decide some things for themselves.
- Very proud to be a member of the Design Review Board.
- Does not want to get to a point where government controls everything.

Board Member Bush commented:

- Concurred with Board Member Hari's comments as well.
- Sees consistency as the precedent in this process.
- As a small business owner in Sebastopol, he has followed our signage guidelines and would expect others to do the same.
- We are in the process of rewriting our guidelines to be less subjective.
- It is important to play by the rules that others have.
- Agreed that less bureaucracy and putting money in the pockets of small businesses is exactly what needs to happen.

Chair Luthin thanked the Board for their dialog.

Director Svanstrom commented:

- This has been a feedback session.
- Everything that she has heard will be helpful for her and Associate Planner Montes in terms of providing guidance for projects, and smaller projects in particular, when making an assessment about whether or not they should be reviewed by the Board.
- Welcomes any additional comments the Board may have.
- Asked for feedback from the Board on the Façade Improvement Project and potential changes to how applications are handled.

Board Member Bush commented that he may be applying for a Façade Improvement grant and asked if he should recuse himself from commenting on proposed changes to the Façade Improvement Program.

Director Svanstrom responded that that would not constitute a conflict of interest at this point and provided further information on what is being considered in terms of changes.

The Board asked questions of staff.

Vice Chair Langberg commented:

- If the intent of the program is to support long-term improvements, it would seem to make sense for the Board to review those.
- Likes the idea of having the Board review a batch of applications on a quarterly basis.

Board Member Bush concurred with Vice Chair Langberg.

The Board was in consensus on being open to the idea of being involved in reviewing Façade Improvement Program applications.

The Board also remarked on the value of the program and the importance of it being offered.

Board Member Bush commented:

- Having reviewed the Façade Improvement Program application, it has requirements and they are reasonable and fair.

- Has been holding on to this application for a while as it will take time and effort to complete.

Director Svanstrom thanked the Board for their comments.

Associate Planner Montes summarized the consensus of the Board and invited the Board to make additional comments on potential changes to the program should they have them.

9. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Luthin adjourned the meeting at 04:56 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Tree/Design Review Board meeting will be held on September 02, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Kari Svanstrom
Planning Director