

Town of Franklin



Design Review Commission

**Tuesday, March 12, 2024  
Meeting Minutes**

Mr. James Bartro called the above-captioned meeting to order this date at 7:00 PM, as a remote access virtual Zoom meeting. Members in attendance: Cassandra Bethoney, Andrew Pratt, Associate James Bartro. Members absent: Chair Sam Williams, Vice Chair Paul Lopez, Amy Adams. Also present: Maxine Kinhart, Administrative Staff.

As stated on the agenda, due to the continued concerns regarding the COVID-19 virus, this meeting will be conducted as a remote/virtual Design Review Commission meeting. In an effort to ensure citizen engagement and comply with open meeting law regulations, citizens will be able to dial into the meeting using the provided phone number, or citizens can participate by using the Zoom link provided on the agenda. This meeting was recorded.

Mr. Bartro stated that he has been authorized to vote and chair this meeting by the full-time chair, Sam Williams. He noted that the last item on the agenda, Autumn Hill Senior Village, will not present tonight; they will defer to the next meeting.

**1. Elliot Auto Supply dba FMP Motor Parts – 40 Kenwood Circle – Install signs for Factory Motor Parts.**

Ms. Heather Dudko of National Sign Corp. said this is for a new tenant called FMP, Factory Motor Parts. She said there was signage there before, but it was taken down. She said they would like to install a wall sign on the side elevation where there is an entrance; it is non-illuminated and 25 sq. ft. She said Sign 2 in the proposal are door vinyls. She said that Sign 3 is a non-illuminated wall sign on the front elevation and is 25 sq. ft. She said at the rear elevation is a 6 sq. ft. non-illuminated sign for customer pickup. Mr. Bartro said that is directional. Ms. Dudko said she is not sure if there is an entrance on the front elevation. Mr. Bartro said this is industrial office zone. He said it is not a street corner. He said it is 60 sq. ft. for one sign. Ms. Dudko said that she thought it might be a corner as they are a corner tenant, but not a corner street. Mr. Bartro said they try to keep it for an actual street corner. He said they can get a bigger sign as for one sign it is 60 sq. ft. Ms. Dudko said since the entrance is on the side, they want to have the storefront and the entrance both identified. Mr. Bartro said a directional on the building may be helpful to show which side of the building people need to go to. Ms. Bethoney said she is okay to have the corner sign as a directional if that allows to have acknowledgement of the business. Mr. Bartro noted the end of the building where the stairs are having a directional to the storefront. Discussion commenced on the current sign proposal. Ms. Dudko said that if they can only have the one sign for identification, if they were to do a second sign and call it directional, is there a size limit for that. Mr. Bartro said they do not usually limit the directional size. He said they usually try to eliminate as much branding and advertising as possible on the directional signs. Ms. Dudko asked if they could put their logo on the main entrance sign. Mr. Bartro said they would have that on the door graphics. She said she would have to ask the applicant what they prefer their main sign to be and come back.

**Motion:** To **Table** the sign package as submitted to the next meeting or a future meeting. Motioned by C. Bethoney. Seconded by A. Pratt. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Pratt-YES; Bartro-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

**2. Hunter Douglas by Blinds & Design – 456 West Central Street – Replace sign face of existing building sign cabinet and sign face of existing pylon.**

Mr. Adam Abelha of Signature Signs said they are looking for approval to replace existing building sign cabinet and sign face of existing pylon. He said this is a new tenant. He said they are only changing faces, there is nothing changing about the size. He reviewed the colors. Mr. Bartro said it is interesting that the current existing cabinet is oversized. He said his concern over the internally illuminated white-faced signs is that the Commission does try to enforce the signs are opaqued which he explained is so it does not cast bright white light onto the street. He provided examples of signs in town like this. Mr. Abelha said they will make sure this is the case. Ms. Bethoney asked that because the cabinet is existing, are they are going to allow for a larger size than currently allowed in the bylaw. Mr. Bartro said yes, that is how he will vote, and that is how it has been done in the past, and he noted the cost of replacing the entire cabinet. Mr. Abelha explained that when they go into different towns, there is usually this type of grandfathering for an existing cabinet. Mr. Bartro said his biggest concern was the white background. Ms. Bethoney asked about the illumination of the other signs. She asked if this is the only sign to be illuminated. Mr. Abelha said the pylon is illuminated and all the signs on the building are illuminated as well.

**Motion:** To **Approve** the sign package as submitted with the stipulation that the backing of the white face is opaqued. Motioned by C. Bethoney. Seconded by A. Pratt. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Pratt-YES; Bartro-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

**3. Aubuchon Hardware – 255 East Central Street – Replace Existing LED Channel letter sign, replace Pylon Sign Faces.**

Michelle, the manager of the store, said Aubuchon and Ace partnered recently. Mr. Bartro said in the past this has been treated as a corner because of the layout of the lot which is why it has the two signs. He said on a corner lot, they are usually allowed 90 sq. ft. across two signs. He said they are proposing 71.8 sq. ft. per sign. Michelle said the last one was 71.8 sq. ft. and this one is 71.4 sq. ft. She said there is one sign on the front of the building and the one facing the street would have to be replaced as well. She said a representative from Add-A-Sign was not attending the meeting. Mr. Bartro said they can keep one the size it is right now at 71.8 sq. ft. and the second sign smaller, but they both have to come in at the 90 sq. ft. combined, which is what is allowed at that property. He noted that if this is commercial business corridor district, it is actually 64 sq. ft. for the total for the two signs. He said the proposed signs are a little bit big. He explained that in this case, it is a whole new sign, so it will not be grandfathered. Michelle said if they cannot do that, maybe they will take down the Benjamin Moore logo and put the Ace logo there. Mr. Bartro said that may be the way to go. He said the building is large, and he does not like this anymore than they do. He said it is in the bylaw. Ms. Bethoney said she thinks it is Commercial II. She said it is a larger face. She said she wants to understand the ratio of sign to façade size. She asked for the sign company to mock that up so she can see what the sign that fits into the bylaw would look like. Mr. Bartro asked that when the sign company is working up the square footage of the sign, they are not including the negative space or the vinyl siding that can be seen through the sign in the square footage. He said on the Design Review webpage, there is a schedule of sign sizes and zoning districts. He noted this is 64 sq. ft. for two signs combined. He reiterated that the sign company should provide a mock-up of how the sign will look. Michelle noted that the store has already been there for eight years and asked how has it changed. Mr. Bartro said either the bylaw changed or maybe they had previously gone to the ZBA for a variance. Ms. Bethoney said it may be best to find out what the previous determination was. Mr. Bartro suggested Add-A-Sign come to the next Design Review meeting. He said

the pylon sign at the street is fine. He discussed that white-faced signs be opaqued in the back. He said make sure that is done for this sign. Mr. Bartro said the Commission could vote on the pylon sign, and the applicant could come back on the wall-mounted sign.

**Motion:** To **Approve** the pylon sign with the stipulation that the backing is opaqued and table the building signs for a future meeting. Motioned by C. Bethoney. Seconded by A. Pratt. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Pratt-YES; Bartro-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

**4. 7-Eleven – 20 West Central Street – Replace existing face on existing pylon sign with new polycarb face.**

Ms. Marie Mercier of Sign Design said 7-Eleven is changing their logo. They are looking to do a face replacement of the same size. She said it is a polycarb face with embossments. She said it is the same size; it is just a logo change. She said she does not have any notes if the sign is lit. She said she does not think the backing is going to be lit. Mr. Bartro said he is almost positive that cabinet is illuminated. If so, that is a stipulation that the white would have to be opaqued. Ms. Mercier agreed it was a lot of white to be lit. She said it was just the pylon. Mr. Bartro said this is replacing a sign in an existing cabinet. He said if they replace the cabinet, it would need to be a smaller cabinet. Ms. Mercier confirmed they are just looking to change out the faces. She said she realizes the backing needs to be opaqued. Ms. Bethoney explained that it is about 49 sq. ft. for the whole cabinet size. She said the requirement is 30. She said it is over by 19 sq. ft. She said in the previous design, the applicant had less white space. She asked if they could reduce the white space. Ms. Mercier said they are trying to get rid of the green; this is what they are doing for their new logo across the board. Ms. Bethoney said she is thinking about how to make the logo feel smaller in the space. She said it is almost maxing out the pole height of the cabinet. She said she likes the logo scaled down. Mr. Bartro said he does not know if there is a precedent for that. He said it would be good even if it were a color that matched the cabinet a little more around the border. Ms. Mercier said all she can do is go back and ask the client. Mr. Bartro said they are not going to make them replace the cabinet, but it is way oversized, so bringing down the size of the mass of it by cabinet colored outline on the panel would make it easier to live with as it is oversized.

**Motion:** To **Table** the sign package as submitted to a future meeting. Motioned by C. Bethoney. Seconded by A. Pratt. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Pratt-YES; Bartro-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

**5. Franklin Tire and Auto – 278 Pleasant Street Replace old awning add 2 signs on top of inspection garage and repair bay add 2 US Flags**

Mr. Ayman Souleiman, owner, addressed the Commission. Mr. Bartro said in this case, as the sign has already been installed on the building, Mr. Souleiman is trying to catch up and make sure the process is followed up on. Mr. Souleiman said he put in a new awning of the same size. Ms. Bethoney said she was concerned when she noticed the Complete Auto Care was a very large sign for the zone it is in. Mr. Bartro said it is Residential which is no more than 15 sq. ft. signage allowed. He said he thinks the answer is that that process for approval for this is through the ZBA as it goes through a variance. He said Mr. Souleiman can use the same application package and submit it to the ZBA. He said that given that it replaces existing signage, he thinks that the ZBA might not deny it, but he cannot speak for them. He said that to help Mr. Souleiman, the Commission could vote no tonight, and the no vote could be taken to the ZBA for a variance. He noted that the bylaws are on the Design Review Commission's webpage. He said that it can be put in the minutes that he does not have any issue with it. He said what we have had in the past is people come with signs that are distasteful and things like that. He does not think that is the problem here. He said it is purely throwing up the Complete Auto Care in particular just throws it so far out of what is allowed space-wise. He said that the canopy is 10 sq. ft. of signage. However, it is the building sign that is a challenge as it is very large. He said he thinks the applicant should take the

package to the ZBA. Ms. Bethoney discussed the sign that is currently up; she said she will let the ZBA decide.

**Motion:** To **Deny** the sign package as submitted. Motioned by C. Bethoney. Seconded by A. Pratt. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Pratt-YES; Bartro-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

**6. Autumn Hill Senior Village – 496 & 488 Summer Street – Newly constructed attached condominiums consisting of buildings of 2 units 3 units for 42 units.**

Mr. Bartro said this item is coming to a later meeting, so there is no action taken.

**GENERAL MATTERS**

**Approval of Minutes: February 13, 2024**

**Motion:** To **Approve** the February 13, 2024 Meeting Minutes. Motioned by C. Bethoney. Seconded by A. Pratt. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Pratt-YES; Bartro-ABSTAIN. Voted 2-0-1.

**Old Business**

Ms. Bethoney said previously they had talked about the Big Y sign and the illumination and Chair Sam Williams was supposed to talk to Building Commissioner Gus Brown about this. Ms. Kinhart said she does not know if that happened. Mr. Bartro said the older sign was very nice, it was replaced, and now it is very bright.

**New Business**

Ms. Bethoney reviewed that the previous New Business was that the Episcopal Church on Pleasant Street has an LED reader board under their sign that did not go through the process. Ms. Kinhart confirmed no one has reached out to her.

Ms. Bethoney said she was glad Franklin Tire and Auto came up as she had noticed the sign previously and had told Ms. Kinhart about it. Ms. Kinhart said Building Commissioner Gus Brown had the owner talk to her about the sign that had already been put up, and she did not think the owner quite understood the process.

**Motion:** To **Adjourn**. Motioned by C. Bethoney. Seconded by A. Pratt. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Pratt-YES; Bartro-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Judith Lizardi  
Recording Secretary