

Town of Franklin



Design Review Commission

Tuesday, March 26, 2024
Meeting Minutes

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

1. Aubuchon Hardware – 255 East Central Street – Replace existing LED channel letter sign.

Mr. Timothy Grautski from Add-A-Sign and Mr. Michael Mattson, marketing director for the Aubuchon Company, addressed the Design Review Commission. Mr. Grautski said they originally proposed about 73 sq. ft. based on what was currently on the building. He said he misunderstood the inspector who said they could replace existing same size. He said they learned they could only replace 64 sq. ft. He said they resubmitted another proof for 64 sq. ft. to Ms. Kinhart. Chair Williams said he is looking at the newly submitted sign for 63.9 sq. ft. Chair Williams showed the proposed signage. Ms. Bethoney confirmed the location of this sign. Mr. Grautski said there is currently one sign. He said he spoke to the building inspector who said this is treated as a corner lot and allowed 64 sq. ft. Ms. Bethoney said she appreciates the legwork they went through to be in compliance.

Motion: To **Approve** the sign package. Motioned by P. Lopez. Seconded by C. Bethoney. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES; Williams-YES. Voted 4-0-0.

2. 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.

Chair Williams said their MA state inspection sign is out of the Commission's purview. Mr. Ayman Souleiman, owner, addressed the Commission and reviewed the size of the sign. Mr. Lopez said the original was 29 sq. ft., and they are cutting it down to just under 15 sq. ft. Mr. Souleiman said yes. Mr. Lopez said the rule was a little more complicated than expected which he reviewed. Chair Williams said the awning already existed there; so, it is almost like a repair. Ms. Bethoney asked for the reasoning to have the Auto Care sign. Mr. Souleiman explained that it is not just a tire repair shop, and the sign will show they do everything. Ms. Bethoney asked if the Commission can ask if they can require a special permit. Discussion commenced if that would be Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals. Chair Williams said that the applicant was here once before, and he made an attempt to clean it up for the Commission. Mr. Lopez said he is assuming this is a business that is operating, so it is fine to have 15 sq.

ft. He thinks the special permit would be for the business itself. Ms. Bethoney questioned if the business has a special permit to operate in that location. Mr. Lopez reviewed that it must have been allowed at one time. Ms. Bethoney said he makes a good point that it is there and operating. Chair Williams said that is fair to say.

Motion: To **Approve** the awning sign and the Auto Care sign with the stipulation that the Auto Care sign is one-half the size of the submitted size and not to exceed 15 sq. ft. Motioned by P. Lopez. Seconded by A. Adams. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-NO; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES; Williams-YES. Voted 3-1-0.

3. Mac City – 13 West Central Street – Awning sign.

Mr. Batra said this is the existing sign, and the building department told him to get a permit for this. Chair Williams said it is like a banner attached to the awning and then they have the sign in the window and the signage in the other windows. Mr. Batra said the big sign is 6 ft. x 2 ft. He said the awning size is a little over 8 ft. Chair Williams said that is under the allowable. Mr. Lopez said it was the downtown commercial district, so it is 10 sq. ft. allowable. He said the signs on the glass are 6 sq. ft. which these are certainly over. Ms. Bethoney said the Commission cannot make assumptions about the dimensions; the dimensions need to be provided to us, and the sign needs to be of a higher quality. She said you can see it coming off the edges; it is not wearing well. Mr. Batra said it has been closed for the last five months, and it was fine when he closed it. Chair Williams confirmed that the Commission needs the dimensions in order to provide feedback. He said the applicant may need to reduce the size of the signage. He suggested they table the submission. He said the next Commission meeting is April 9. He said what the Commission wants in the submission is to show the dimensions for all the signage, awning, and window area. Mr. Lopez explained the requirements of the rule. He noted a variance can be pursued through the Zoning Board of Appeals. Ms. Bethoney said if the applicant plans to pursue a variance, then the Commission should deny which would allow the applicant go to the ZBA. Ms. Kinhart confirmed that if the application was denied and then the applicant did not go before the ZBA, the applicant could come back to the Commission with the signage and the dimensions. Discussion commenced on tabling or denying the submission.

Motion: To **Table** the submission until April 9, 2024, provided the Commission gets the requested information. Motioned by P. Lopez. Seconded by A. Adams. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES; Williams-YES. Voted 4-0-0.

4. Bank of America – 273 East Central Street – Replace signage on kiosk building.

Ms. Carolyn Parker representing Bank of America addressed the Commission. She reviewed the location of the sign. She said Bank of America has changed the colors. She said all the signs are being reduced slightly. She said the signs are illuminated. Ms. Bethoney noted that the submission shows that the night view is opaqued. Ms. Parker noted the dimensions on the submission show that the sign was reduced slightly. Chair Williams said this was good on size.

Motion: To **Approve** the sign package as submitted. Motioned by P. Lopez. Seconded by C. Bethoney. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES; Williams-YES. Voted 4-0-0.

5. 110 East Central St., Franklin, MA 02038 – 110 East Central Street – Update façade and parking lot and construct proposed addition.

Mr. Brad Chaffee showed the plans and reviewed the project. He noted the existing house. He said the project is for a three story, 20-unit apartment building with affordable units and a commercial component in it. He said it is a mixed-use building. He reviewed the colors and style which were shown on the plans.

He noted other buildings on Central Street that he has done. He explained the design, features, siding, aluminum awnings, windows, and provided colors including vintage wood cedar, wood tones, whites, and some gray-blue. He said when they have a tenant, they will return to the Commission for signage. He said the parking will be in the rear. He said they have been approved by the Conservation Commission and are now before the Planning Board. He showed and explained the provided landscape plan and lighting plan. Chair Williams asked about the cedar color siding and confirmed it was on the bus depot. Mr. Chaffee explained that the building steps down three feet in the middle of the building and they bumped out the front to go with the road. Chair Williams asked about the parking in the back and how close it was to the neighbors. Mr. Chaffee noted an elevation change of about 20 ft. and noted there is a lot of woods still there; he said maybe 100 ft. Ms. Bethoney asked about Conservation Commission's comments. Mr. Chaffee reviewed that they did not have a lot of concern about the trees back there. He said they talked about protection of the wetlands down gradient. He said they increased their erosion controls. He reviewed the existing conditions and said they were expanding the parking lot in the back. He pointed out on the plans where the parking lot would be expanded and discussed the current vegetation. He noted there is some groundcover that the Conservation Commission requested in the conditions; he said he has not gotten the Order of Conditions yet.

Chair Williams asked if a fence was going in. Mr. Chaffee said there is a guardrail going in and a 4 ft. high privacy fence for headlights. He said that is on the site plan. He said it would be a white privacy fence. He said the fence was directly on the wall. He reviewed that for the wall, they were going to use Redi-Rock. Ms. Bethoney asked about the plantings in the front. Mr. Chaffee explained retaining wall 1 and retaining wall 2 are landscaping walls of about 2 ft., and they are stone. He said he would like to maybe put boxwoods or gentle plantings along that. He said it would be a commercial type stonewall. Ms. Bethoney said they should try to incorporate pollinator species plantings. She said the caliper is pretty small, and it would take 40 years for those to grow up and be big trees; she urged the applicant to get a little beefier caliper such as 3.5 in. She said they would not cost that much more. Mr. Chaffee said he was okay with that, no problem. Ms. Bethoney suggested some flowering plants in the front to set it off. Ms. Bethoney and Mr. Chaffee discussed the wall height and wall composition.

Mr. Lopez said the façade was a nice modern look; the houses around it are smaller. He said he was slightly hesitant at the appearance as it is not a New England town building, it is like a nice city. He said he was not necessarily opposed to it, but he wanted to throw it out there. Chair Williams discussed the façade and the elements to it. He said there was a rhythm to it that makes sense to him. He said it is more modern than some people would appreciate it. He said that there is a nice aesthetic to it that some other projects in town lack. He reviewed the New England look and the look of the proposed building. Mr. Chaffee shared his screen and showed a rendering of the area down the street which showed the houses. He pointed out that they were all gable-facing homes. He noted the thought that went into developing the design of the proposed project.

Motion: To **Recommend** the landscape plan with the stipulation to consider a slightly larger caliper on the trees and to consider shrub or herbaceous plantings that are native or oriented toward pollinators. Motioned by C. Bethoney. Seconded by P. Lopez. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES; Williams-YES. Voted 4-0-0.

Ms. Bethoney asked if there was any property signage. Mr. Chaffee said they would come back to the Commission with any signage.

Motion: To **Recommend** the lighting plan as submitted. Motioned by C. Bethoney. Seconded by P. Lopez. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES; Williams-YES. Voted 4-0-0.

Chair Williams asked if there is a dumpster or any HVAC equipment on the ground. Mr. Chaffee said the dumpster is on the rear right of the site. He reviewed the location of the fire access lane and the dumpster. He said they will probably end up putting the HVAC on the rear roof and you will not see it at all. He reviewed the ADA spots. He said this plan does not show the extra spot that was added. He said two are required, and they added a third.

Motion: To **Recommend** the overall site plan with the stipulation that a white vinyl fence at least 4 ft. high, or similar, is added to the retaining wall. Motioned by S. Williams. Seconded by C. Bethoney. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES; Williams-YES. Voted 4-0-0.

Motion: To **Recommend** the façade as submitted. Motioned by P. Lopez. Seconded by C. Bethoney. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES; Williams-YES. Voted 4-0-0.

GENERAL MATTERS

Ms. Kinhart stated that members can still vote on the minutes as long as they have read the minutes and agree with them.

Approval of Minutes: March 12, 2024

Motion: To **Approve** the March 12, 2024 Meeting Minutes. Motioned by C. Bethoney. Seconded by P. Lopez. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES; Williams-YES. Voted 4-0-0.

Old Business

Chair Williams said there were a few non-compliant signs spoken about at previous meetings; he thinks those have been addressed by Building Commission Gus Brown.

New Business

Chair Williams spoke about a sign for a new dinner that has not come before the Commission; he will alert Mr. Brown.

Motion: To **Adjourn**. Motioned by C. Bethoney. Seconded by A. Adams. Roll Call Vote: Bethoney-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES; Williams-YES. Voted 4-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary