

Town of Franklin



Design Review Commission

**Tuesday, December 7, 2021
Meeting Minutes,**

Chair 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: Chair James Bartro, Vice Chair Sam Williams, Venkata Sompally. Members absent: Gerald Wood, Mark Fitzgerald, Associate Chris Baryluk. 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. Dean College – 137 School Street– Replace existing sign

Mr. Cam Afonso of Signs by Cam, on behalf of the applicant, addressed the Commission. He stated that the sign will be identical to what is there; however, the Dean College information and colors will be used. There will be no changes to the existing lighting.

Motion: To **Approve** the sign package as submitted. Motioned by S. Williams. Seconded by V. Sompally. Roll Call Vote: Sompally-YES; Williams-YES; Bartro-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

2. Vogue Nails & Spa – 385 West Central Street- install a set of internally lit channel letters

Ms. Vy Nguyen of CT Signs & Graphics, on behalf of the applicant, addressed the Commission. She stated that they are proposing a set of internally lit channel letters. The maximum height of the lettering is 24” with a width of 12’ across for the façade of the business. There is also a proposed panel change on the pylon to update the name of the business. Chair Bartro stated that the channel letters on the building are within the size parameters. He noted that the attachment method was included. He asked about the plate going into the pylon. He said that in moving forward, from a light spillage perspective, the Commission is trying to encourage anyone who proposes a white background sign to not do that. However, if it has to be done that way to go along with the business’s logo, the white should be opaqued. Ms. Nguyen stated that she understood. Chair Bartro stated that he has concerns with this pylon in general. He stated that he would like to speak with Building Commissioner Gus Brown on this. He does not think that Liquor World came before the Commission when they swapped out their sign.

Motion: To **Approve** the sign package as submitted with the stipulation that the panel going into the pylon uses an opaque white background to limit light transmittance. Motioned by S. Williams. Seconded by V. Sompally. Roll Call Vote: Sompally-YES; Williams-YES; Bartro-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

General Matters

Chair Bartro reiterated that he does not believe the Liquor World sign came before the Commission. Building Commissioner Gus Brown confirmed that it did not. Chair Bartro noted that the sign is huge, and it spills a lot of light. Mr. Brown stated that he would either send a letter or stop by.

Approval of Minutes: November 2, 2021 and November 16, 2021

Chair Bartro stated that he was not present at the November 16th meeting. He noted that there is an action item in the November 2nd minutes that he is to follow up with two perspective new Design Review Commission members. He stated that he sent emails to them; however, he has not heard back. He will follow up. He stated that there is one associate opening and soon there will be a full time opening. He noted that he will reach out to Commission member Mark Fitzgerald and let him know that if it is his intent to resign, he must submit a letter of resignation.

Motion: To **Approve** the November 2, 2021 Meeting Minutes as presented. Motioned by S. Williams. Seconded by V. Sompally. Roll Call Vote: Sompally-YES; Williams-YES; Bartro-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

Mr. Williams stated that in looking back at the November 16th meeting when he was conducting the meeting as Vice Chair, he noted that although it looked fine, the façade of the building was not voted on. He noted that the minutes are correct as written.

Motion: To **Approve** the November 16, 2021 Meeting Minutes as presented. Motioned by S. Williams. Seconded by V. Sompally. Roll Call Vote: Sompally-YES; Williams-YES; Bartro-ABSTAIN. Voted 2-0-1.

Approval of 2022 Meeting Dates

Ms. Kinhart noted that there is not a second December 2022 meeting date on this list. Chair Bartro stated that he would be fine with adding another date in December 2022. Discussion commenced as to adding another meeting date; December 20, 2022, was suggested.

Motion: To **Approve** the 2022 Meeting Dates as presented with the addition of a December 20, 2022 meeting. Motioned by S. Williams. Seconded by V. Sompally. Roll Call Vote: Sompally-YES; Williams-YES; Bartro-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

DRC Discussion: Sign Tech Attachment 10 Addendum (Revised November 2, 2021)

Chair Bartro reviewed that at the November 16, 2021, meeting, the Design Review Commission reviewed and edited a matrix regarding the Sign Tech Attachment 10 Addendum. The purpose of the document was to get to a set of desired outcomes. He noted that the Commission wants to maintain safety, keep things beautiful, and help people find things. He stated that this document discusses new sign technologies for which the Commission wants to future-proof the bylaws. Secondly, the Commission wants to capture areas where there is too much ambiguity. He stated that Director of Planning and Community Development Bryan Taberner and Building Commissioner Gus Brown are in attendance at the meeting to discuss this agenda item.

Mr. Brown stated that he and Mr. Taberner have discussed this item. He agreed the purpose is to bring the Town into the realm of making the bylaw so it is future-proof. He stated that there is not anything in the bylaw that talks about LED, LCD, and analog. He questioned that with new technology, what does it do regarding distraction. Chair Bartro noted that Commission member Mark Fitzgerald started this discussion years ago. He reviewed the new desired outcome column on the matrix. He stated that the language is to create a desired outcome or intent. He reviewed some of the points provided in the matrix.

Mr. Taberner stated that he reviewed the matrix. He explained that right now in the bylaw an applicant cannot have an LED, LCD, or a moving sign. He stated that if the Design Review Commission wants any of those things, let's talk about them. Or, if the Commission wants to keep them limited, let's talk about that. He stated that in some windows currently, there are some analog signs. He stated that when a business comes forward and does not state that they are going to put up such signs and then they do, the Town should be calling them on that.

He stated that LEDs and LCDs need to be regulated just like other signs. If the Commission wants these different technologies to be allowed, this would be a zoning change which would have to go through the zoning amendment process. He stated that he wants to know exactly what the Commission wants. Chair Bartro discussed the downtown building Bamboo House. He stated that they took a clock down and installed a sign. He wants to make sure that during sign installations, the applicant is aware of the building façade. Mr. Brown stated that he thinks there is plywood on the façade at this time which is not a good look.

Chair Bartro reviewed each item in the matrix. He discussed LED Displays and LCD/Plasma Display Screens and noted the comment is the same for both. He stated the Commission recognizes business owners want to do this. However, the Commission wants to make sure it is still a sign, and there are size limitations. He noted that such signs can be strobing, flashing, and making noise and can create distractions. Mr. Taberner stated that the intent of items such as small TVs at a gas station is that when a person is on the property the business gets the attention of the customer. He stated that type of TV which cannot really be seen from the street is not really a sign as regulated under the bylaw. He explained that if the Commission wants to regulate what the business can put on a screen, the Commission has to be careful as the small TVs are not considered signs. However, a larger screen in a shop window would be considered a sign as it can be seen from the street or sidewalk. He noted that anything the Commission writes up, the Town Attorney will review.

Chair Bartro discussed Individual Letter and Analog Reader Boards. He stated that there are ways outside of the bylaw to handle this. He explained that with individual letters, the intent is to leave the building façade in good shape when the job is done. He noted that analog reader boards are easily vandalized to change the intent of the sign; however, he does not have a good solution for this. Mr. Williams noted that he thinks there are only about three of these in town; he does not see it as a huge issue and has not seen them vandalized. He suggested things that are put in the reader boards should be kept relevant to the business. Chair Bartro stated that the items in the matrix should be reviewed again by the Commission and prioritized, and possibly a few items may be stricken.

Regarding blade signs, Chair Bartro stated that the concerns that were brought up by the Commission would probably be best handled by the Building Commissioner. For example, the Acapulco's sign is still hanging over the building, but it is in disrepair. In that case, it is more of an enforcement conversation. Chair Bartro stated that regarding pylons/monuments, the Commission has had many conversations that there is one pylon per property. However, the Commission has many cases where a property wants many pylons or monuments; sometimes it makes sense to allow more than one. Mr. Williams said that this is where the Commission can run into trouble regarding free standing signs with multiple establishments on the same property. For example, there are many establishments in Franklin Village, but it is one property. Chair Bartro stated that there is ambiguity in the word establishment, specifically when someone wants to add a second sign. He asked, what is a reasonable guideline to establish—linear square feet of frontage, overall building square footage, or other. He noted that the intent is to make sure the signs remain good looking and informative while not having massive signs on the front of buildings. Mr. Williams stated that for wall signs, it could be simplified if every building has 1 sq. ft. of sign for every foot of frontage. He noted that the new Starbucks has a street face and a parking lot face. He asked if the parking lot counted as frontage regarding signs. Mr. Taberner stated that wall signs are intended to go in the front façade of the building. Chair Bartro discussed factory building redevelopments and stated that the Commission is looking for something to cover those scenarios. For instance, what if it was once a one business building and now it is a five-business building. How does the Commission work with that signage? Mr. Taberner stated that they could add a section into the bylaw to go into more detail about multi establishments within one building. Chair Bartro stated that they are trying to give clarity to the items that the Commission sees the most.

Chair Bartro noted two situations that he has thought about that were not put on the matrix: requiring opaque background on a white backlit sign and requiring two-footed pylons instead of a single-footed pylon. Mr. Taberner read aloud the section of the bylaw requiring opaque background on a white backlit sign. Mr. Brown and Mr. Williams confirmed that the bylaw already requires two-footed pylons. Chair Bartro stated the Commission has some more work to do on the matrix; he appreciates the feedback. Mr. Taberner stated that if a

person can see a sign when going by it, that is a sign. If it cannot be seen from off site, then it is not an advertising sign. He discussed that there is a fine line if the Commission has the authority to say no to a sign; internal site signage is different from the signage the Commission is supposed to be regulating.

Chair Bartro noted that he saw that the temporary sign at Stop & Shop Plaza was removed. Mr. Williams noted the lights were fixed on the sign, as well. Mr. Brown stated that their enforcement has been stepped up quite a bit.

Motion to Adjourn by S. Williams. Seconded by V. Sompally. Roll Call Vote: Sompally-YES; Williams-YES; Bartro-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary