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APPROVED MINUTES

TREE/DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF October 07, 2020
4:00 P.M.

The notice of the meeting was posted on October 01, 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 (not excused)
Staff:	Alan Montes, Associate Planner

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: September 16, 2020

Vice Chair Langberg 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:

Associate Planner Montes updated the Board on the following:

- Updates to the Façade Improvement Program.
- Recent and upcoming Council items.
- Upcoming items for the Design Review Board.

- Covid-19 updates, including a support for artists effort by the Public Arts Committee.
- Public Art project update.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Well, you guys probably do not know even the history about the project, it was the Public Arts Committee's first commission. It has been in process for four years based on feedback from Caltrans. The budget went as high as the sculpture did because it was a visual problem for traffic. Mr. Kahn was just about to throw in the towel on it and then he came up with an interesting alternative that feels like it should be approvable and a lot cheaper and easier to do. So, it was great to see that it would be very cool.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Awesome.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

He is also installing art at the Hotel Sebastopol site, which is a separate thing. Mr. Kahn has approval and agreement with the hotel owners to install sculptures that we will get to look at for the next year or two.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Can I ask, who is paying for all this? Is this City funded, where does the money come from?

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Well, the Highway 12 bridge piece was commissioned by the Public Arts Committee so that is being funded by the Public Art Fund which comes from development funds. If a project exceeds a certain construction cost, then the client/owner is obligated to pay a percentage to our committee or do their own version of some public art piece. But in the case of Mr. Kahn the City granted him a chunk of money, and then he has funders that will help him pay for some of the additional costs. Those funders are also helping fund the one at the Hotel Sebastopol site.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Where does the public art money come from, taxes or what?

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

If you have a development project in the city, if you wanted to build a commercial building downtown somewhere, and then if you don't put public art as part of your own design, you'd have to pay 1% of your construction costs to the Public Art Fund and then the Public Arts Committee gets to spend it on public art.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Okay.

Cary Bush, Board Member

I recall there being a design competition that Mr. Kahn won some years back. Is this the same project, was that from the Public Arts Committee?

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Yeah. So that was one, and we have done a second one. Both were RFP processes and Mr. Kahn was selected for the first one. That was before my time on the Committee and it is still going on.

Ted Luthin, Chair

That is great.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Yeah.

Ted Luthin, Chair

All right.

Associate Planner Montes update continued:

- The addition of parklets along Main Street.
- CIP updates: one item that will be happening is repaving throughout the city.
- Upcoming items for the Planning Commission, which includes discussion of the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) at their meeting on October 27.
- The Woodmark project on Bodega Avenue will be back before the Board for Preliminary Review on Wednesday, October 21. This item was initially reviewed by the Board in December and some revisions have been made to it since then.

The Board asked clarifying questions of Associate Planner Montes.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Great. Thank you very much for that.

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

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

7. PUBLIC HEARING:

A. DESIGN REVIEW – 704 Robinson Road – Project No. 2020-055 This is a request for a Design Review permit to construct a 51 sq. ft. addition to the rear of an existing residence, located at 704 Robinson Road.

Associate Planner Montes presented the staff report.

The Board had no questions for staff.

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

The applicant did not make a presentation but was available for questions.

The Board had no questions of the applicant.

Chair Luthin asked if members of the public wished to comment on this item.

There were none.

Chair Luthin asked for Board deliberation.

Ted Luthin, Chair

This seems like a straightforward thing. I like Associate Planner Montes' comment about matching building materials, I think it makes sense.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I would actually disagree with that given the location of the addition as it is completely at the back of the whole Two Acre Wood site. If the applicant wants to paint it purple, that is okay with me.

Applicant

I like that idea. I am going to be painting anyway.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I agree. I see no objection to this whatsoever.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Okay. Yeah, I feel the same way. If you want to remove that condition, I am okay with removing that as well. Board Member Bush is giving it the thumbs up. Does someone want to throw a motion on the on the table to approve this as submitted?

Applicant

Does that mean that I do not have to do the matching stucco?

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yeah, that is what everybody is nodding about and giving the thumbs up to. I think we are considering approving it just as you submitted.

Applicant

Okay, I think it does say that it will have matching stucco. But if I do not have to do that, that would be nice.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

If your HOA is okay with it, that would be the only concern.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I think your only concern there is your neighbors. If your neighbors do not object, that would be the only problem there.

Applicant

Nobody is going to be able to even see it. That sounds good.

Ted Luthin, Chair

All right.

Vice Chair Langberg made a motion to approve this application as submitted.

Board Member Bush seconded the motion.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Any further discussion?

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

Is this striking condition of approval number three (3), which is the one requiring the paint and finish to match the existing building?

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Yes.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Correct.

Alan Montes, Associate Planner

Okay.

Ted Luthin, Chair

All right. So, we have a motion by Vice Chair Langberg and second by Board Member Bush. I don't think there's any further discussion.

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

Ted Luthin, Chair

The motion passes, the application has been approved.

Applicant

Thank you.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Congrats.

- B. SIGN PROGRAM AND SIGN EXCEPTION – 231 Petaluma Avenue – Project No. 2020-037** This is a Sign Program and Sign Exception application for 231 Petaluma Avenue, a three-tenant commercial building between the Feed Store and CVS.

Associate Planner Montes presented the staff report.

The Board asked questions of Associate Planner Montes and the applicant.

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

Representatives of the applicant presented and were available for questions.

The Board asked questions of the applicants.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Luthin asked if members of the public wished to speak on this item.

There were none.

Chair Luthin spoke on process and invited Board deliberation.

Chair Luthin asked to hear from the Board on the first item as listed in the staff report which was the language regarding the vertical placement of the signs.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I could see where there might be descenders, and little doodads and things on a logo that might make you want to shift it one way or the other so I think requiring that language sounds reasonable to me.

Cary Bush, Board Member

I would agree.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I would agree.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I would agree.

Ted Luthin, Chair

The Board is in consensus on that as a recommendation to the Council. The next item is regarding the number of signs.

Alan Montes

Part of this is kind of tying back into the findings for an exception, which if it is alright, I can just read this off quick. So, it's any one of the three findings; 1) the exception will allow a unique sign of exceptional design or style that will enhance the area or building or that will be visible; 2) the exception will allow a sign that is more consistent with the architecture and development of the site or site context or is appropriate given the nature of the business; or 3) the granting of the exception will not constitute the granting of a special privilege inconsistent with the sign limitations upon other properties in the same vicinity and zoning district. One of those findings must be met to allow the third signs.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I think you were saying that the one that closely matches or is closest to being a finding for this is the exception that is consistent with the architecture and development of the site in that we do have this freestanding building that is somewhat unique to our downtown, a lot of our downtown buildings either have one facade or a corner like Screaming Mimi's there. I think that finding could be used to apply to this circumstance. How does everybody feel about three signs on a building like this one which has three frontages?

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I think three signs is one sign too many. This property was developed more suburban than any of us would have liked to see. There is even, as far as I can remember, the potential that a building could be infilled between these two buildings that exist on site sometime in the future. So, the site planning could change to try and accommodate a more urban look in the future. The main facade to the west certainly deserves a sign, and the fact that Abbott is a street that runs next to the building means a sign could go on that side. If you haven't found Peets' coffee, or whatever goes there next, by driving around the building you're out of luck, you should get out of your car and find the entrance to the building.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yeah, I tend to agree with that. I think two is typical on sign codes. We have got two city streets and a large parking lot, so I don't see a real compelling reason to grant an exception.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Will there be an entrance on the east facade? Because I know there is mechanical on the north side and trash enclosures. Would be granting an exception for that particular location? If yes, that doesn't seem to make much sense.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yeah.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I think there's a door on the east and the north.

Cary Bush, Board Member

You're right. That's correct. Because Peet's did have an entry to the north. And I can't recall if they had a sign there or not.

Ted Luthin, Chair

No, they just had a sign on the west and the south.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

The photos on pages 9 and 10 showed pretty well.

Cary Bush, Board Member

It was on page 22 of 36. That's tricky, it wouldn't make much sense architecturally to have signage wrapping the building, as Vice Chair Langberg mentioned.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yeah, that means that from almost any vantage point you are going to see at least two of the same tenant signs.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Right.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Correct.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I think on this one, I will go with less is more.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Okay.

Ted Luthin, Chair

On that one we are recommending sticking with the two sign limit. Item number 3 asks if the sign program should establish a minimum sign height. I cannot see any real compelling reason to do that. Does anybody have a comment?

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

No.

Cary Bush, Board Member

No, I think I'd go with staff's recommendations on that one.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Okay, so we are not compelled to have a minimum. Number 4 asks whether the proposed illumination is appropriate, or if a range of Kelvin should be allowed. I think my feeling is that 2700 is getting very warm. I think there is a general desire for warm colored lighting in town, which I do not have a problem with, the thing would be consistency, so you don't have a 5000 sign next to a 3000 sign. The important thing would be to pick a number or a fairly tight range of numbers. If we want warm white, then a range of 2700 to 3000 would be good. If we want cool light, then let's pick something in the 5000 range, but it seems like the Council would want to approve a range that is going to get a consistent color of light.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

We just did the Rite Aid sign and we gave it a range of 3200 or 3500 Kelvin.

Cary Bush, Board Member

Yeah, exactly.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Something like that, yeah.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I think that's good. It's consistent with our own findings or precedents. And I think that's a nice range. 2700 for the old tiny street lamps is one thing, but I don't think it's appropriate for signage. It's okay, but I think it's nicer if it gets a little whiter.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Yeah. All right, why don't we go with that?

Cary Bush, Board Member

Yep.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Next item, should a maximum of window signage be established? Right now the code allows one square foot of window signage without permit. Do we allow window graphics to exceed that but count against the allowable sign area?

Alan Montes

We do.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Okay, so if you go over the one square foot now, you are eating away at your otherwise allowed sign limit. And for me, I think that makes sense. I think if they want to keep under the one square foot and that is not counted against their sign area, that is fine. But if they want to exceed that with you know, the Supercuts banding on the window, I do not think I have a problem with that. Peet's had a fairly large logo on the window that was walk up pedestrian oriented. I do not think I have a problem with that. It just starts counting against sign area. That would be my recommendation.

Cary Bush, Board Member

I agree.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

That sounds very good.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Yeah.

Ted Luthin, Chair

All right. And then the window sign section should be modified for the detail relevant information. And I think we just kind of touched on that. Associate Planner did that give you what you need?

Alan Montes

I think that does. Does the Board have any additional recommendations or anything that they want to see? If yes, what?

Ted Luthin, Chair

I think in general the halo lighting is kind of the hot button lighting for downtown. I think halo lighting meets the spirit of the code. And I think the areas that they are proposing are, again, in the spirit of the code. It almost seems like they don't really need a sign program, that they could kind of get similar signage just by going with the regular code. But so be it.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

I appreciate the nighttime drawings of seeing what that illuminated sign would look like, it feels right for that building and for downtown.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I've kind of made a personal decision here. I think I'm going to have a private meeting with an attorney to find out, because she was involved with the lawsuit, and a lot of things we are talking about today involve the lawsuit, which I'm not that familiar with. So I do know her in some respect, so I'm going to talk to her. Would it be okay for me to contact you guys with any information she shares?

Cary Bush, Board Member

Cannot do it.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Cannot do it?

Ron Hari, Board Member

Okay.

Alan Montes

I think any communication would have to come through the City. If you want to send it over to me, and I can run it through Director Svanstrom.

Ron Hari, Board Member

I mean, is that something you guys would be interested in, or not?

Cary Bush, Board Member

The Brown Act will not allow it.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Board Member Hari, are you asking if we are interested in seeing whatever information you find out by sending it to Planning staff and having them send it to the Board?

Ron Hari, Board Member

No, well, whatever. Should I not even bother? I mean, it is something you may not need, you don't want to see or, you know, I can get a private meeting with her no problem. But I am just concerned about this lawsuit.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Yeah. Well, I would actually say even if we're just getting some dribs and drabs of the sign program, any input we can give to that project would be great. We were shut out, so to speak, because of the lawsuit.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Yeah. I want to find some inside information concerning what is going on with this particular project from the city console.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Okay, fair enough.

Ted Luthin, Chair

All right.

Ron Hari, Board Member

Okay, I'll have it but won't send it.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Sounds good.

Ted Luthin, Chair

I think that concludes our second item. I do not think we have any discussion items.

Lars Langberg, Vice Chair

Do we have to make any motions on that one?

Ted Luthin, Chair

I don't think so. Do we Associate Planner Montes?

Cary Bush, Board Member

I asked that too.

Alan Montes

No motion, just looking for recommendations. The Board in general is not supportive of the sign exception to allow third signs.

Ted Luthin, Chair

Right.

Alan Montes

Is the Board in consensus on that?

Ted Luthin, Chair

Correct.

8. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Luthin adjourned the meeting at 04:59 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Tree/Design Review Board meeting will be held on October 21, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Kari Svanstrom
Planning Director