



Design Review Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, January 30, 2023
7:30 p.m.

Board Members:

Mark Gluesing, Board Chair (P)
Steve Dornbusch, Board Member (P)
Susan Opton, Board Member (P)
Kristan Patenaude, DRB Recording Secretary (P)
Elisa Litchman, Administrative Specialist, Planning & Community Development (P)

Applicants & Attendees:

1. Michael Barker, BH & A, Inc., and Hank Haff, Town of Needham Emory Grover School Administration building located at 1330 Highland Avenue and applying for signage.
2. Sandra Robinson, Needham Community Council located at 570 Hillside Avenue and applying for an awning with signage.
3. Scott Fagan, Commonwealth Caregivers located at 40 Chestnut Street and applying for signage.
4. Rebecca Durandisse, Shop Micki located at 99 Chapel Street and applying for signage.
5. Ed Spinney, Sign Art Boston representing Gentle Giant located at 422 Hillside Avenue and applying for signage.

Chair Gluesing called the meeting to order on January 30, 2023, at 7:30 p.m.

Chair Gluesing notified attendees of new public meeting orders issued by the governor of Massachusetts.

Agenda Item 1:

Hank Haff, Town of Needham Emory Grover School Administration building located at 1330 Highland Avenue and applying for signage.

Hank Haff explained that this is a request for a sign to be placed in the landscaping in front of the building.

Michael Barker explained that the sign is proposed within the front yard. This is proposed to be a 3'x6' sign, in a Needham school blue/white color scheme. The 'Needham Public Schools' lettering is proposed to be removed from the front of the building and so there is a need to express to the public the use of the building. At the Center At the Heights, there is a composite sign with a routed, recessed border, attached to granite posts, and it is believed this design is fitting for the new proposed sign at the Administration building. The sign is proposed to be 1'10" clear from the ground, with posts 5' tall. A metallic gold color is also proposed to be used on the sign on the border and to outline some of the text to make it more visible from the street. A secondary option, using the gold for some of the text and blue for the border, is also being considered. The sign is to be located 15' from the curb, per the bylaw. This is a one-sided sign that will fit with the landscaping of the project.

Chair Gluesing asked about the material proposed for the sign. Mr. Barker stated that the material was initially proposed to be wood, but the applicant is now considering a composite material. The drawings can be updated to reflect that. The letters will be carved.

Chair Gluesing stated that the stroke for the 'Needham Public Schools' lettering could be heavier.

Ms. Opton noted that, per the proposed placement of the sign, it may be difficult to see it until one is in the driveway. The applicant could consider a larger size, larger letting, or a different orientation. Chair Gluesing agreed that this sign basically faces the street and, if a perpendicular placement was considered, it may be easier to read from the road.

Mr. Dornbusch stated that the 'Needham Public Schools' lettering could be a bit larger, but if the type is too large, it could be confusing. He stated that he believes the orientation proposed is appropriate.

Chair Gluesing asked if placement for the sign was considered on the other side of the sidewalk, closer to the driveway. Mr. Haff stated that this placement was discouraged by a traffic engineer. There is a parking space near that location and a sign placed there may block the view from that spot when backing out.

Upon motion duly made by Ms. Opton and seconded by Mr. Dornbusch, it was voted to approve the sign at Emory Grover, as submitted. Susan Opton – aye; Steve Dornbusch – aye; and Chair Gluesing –aye. Motion passed 3-0.

Agenda Item 2:

Sandra Robinson, Needham Community Council located at 570 Hillside Avenue and applying for an awning with signage.

Sandra Robinson stated that this proposal is for the Thrift Shop entrance, located on the left side of the Community Council building. The walkway under the proposed awning can get icy and is often an issue. The proposal is for an awning with a small sign on the front. There will be small, galvanized posts located along the front of the awning. No lighting is proposed as part of this project. There are existing lights on the top corners of the building.

Chair Gluesing stated that the Building Department will review the construction of the awning for safety and other purposes.

Mr. Dornbusch asked if the awning will split the windows. Ms. Robinson explained that there is a metal bar which already splits the window, and the awning will be mounted to this.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dornbusch and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the awning and signage, as submitted. Susan Opton – aye; Steve Dornbusch – aye; and Chair Gluesing –aye. Motion passed 3-0.

Agenda Item 3:

Scott Fagan, Commonwealth Caregivers located at 40 Chestnut Street and applying for signage.

Scott Fagan stated that the proposed sign is 12'x17.5", wood, with an engraved logo and lettering, 'Commonwealth Caregivers.' The sign will be a couple of inches thick, and attached directly to the wall, right above the door.

Ms. Opton noted that the logo may reach too close to the lettering. Chair Gluesing agreed that the Board would generally request a bit more negative space. The Board would likely request that the logo be made 10% smaller. Mr. Fagan explained that the sign has already been built. Chair Gluesing noted the DRB review should precede fabrication of the sign, however, due to what would be a minimal change suggested, this item can likely move forward as submitted.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dornbusch and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the sign, as submitted. Susan Opton – aye; Steve Dornbusch – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 3-0.

Agenda Item 4:

Rebecca Durandisse, Shop Micki located at 99 Chapel Street and applying for signage.

Rebecca Durandisse explained that she is proposing a sign above the door and window to be 24"x96". This size is consistent with other buildings on the street. The sign will be located 10' high off the street and will cover parts of the door and window. The sign will be digitally printed on an aluminum frame, containing the shop name and logo.

Chair Gluesing asked where the door is located on the building. Ms. Durandisse stated that the door on the left of the building leads into her store. This sign will match the height of the existing sign on the building for the other tenant.

Chair Gluesing noted that the Board often discourages a full white sign backing on a dark building.

Ms. Opton stated that the proposed sign does appear to have a lot of negative space. She suggested considering stretching it out to remove some of the negative space on each side.

Mr. Dornbusch stated that the white background on this sign makes it look a bit stark. It also looks a little weak. He suggested different coloring or something similar to make the word "Shop" stand out more.

Chair Gluesing agreed that there is a bit of negative space on the ends, but he likes the geometry of the ends of the sign. He would like to give the applicant the choice to increase the intensity of the word "Shop" on the sign. He asked the applicant to change the sign to a non-stark white background.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dornbusch and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the sign, with the conditions that the background be changed from white to a pale gray or similar off-white color of the applicant's choosing, and with the option to increase the density of the lettering on the word "Shop," if the applicant so chooses.. Susan Opton – aye; Steve Dornbusch – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 3-0.

Agenda Item 5:

Ed Spinney, Sign Art Boston representing Gentle Giant located at 422 Hillside Avenue and applying for signage.

Ed Spinney, Sign Art, stated that the proposal is for a sign with a 1” deep aluminum belt frame, aluminum covering, and a full digital print graphic. The applicant would like to place a sign on the side and back of the building. The colors and images are corporate colors. The wall surface is metal paneling in both locations.

Chair Gluesing stated that the Board typically discourages phone numbers on signs. The bylaw is written to help people identify businesses and their locations. He does not have as much of an issue with it on this sign, as it seems to fit in. He is okay with the street side sign, but the applicant is only entitled to one sign. The second sign at the rear entrance is only allowed if it is smaller. Mr. Spinney noted that the rear entrance sign is smaller. He stated that he could move the sign down on the building slightly. Chair Gluesing stated that it is unclear if this is helpful in identifying the rear entrance in the proposed location. He stated that he would rather have this sign relate more to the parking lot than being up high on the building.

Mr. Dornbusch stated that he believes the rear sign will be hard to read from far away. Moving the sign over an existing window could help to mark the rear entry, instead of placing it on top of the building as more of an advertisement.

Ms. Opton agreed that the rear sign needs to relate to something, instead of floating on the wall.

Upon motion duly made by Ms. Opton and seconded by Mr. Dornbusch, it was voted to approve the sign on the front of the building, as submitted. Susan Opton – aye; Steve Dornbusch – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 3-0.

Upon motion duly made by Ms. Opton and seconded by Mr. Dornbusch, it was voted to approve the sign on the rear of the building, with the condition that the bottom of the sign be located 18” above the window and centered between the two windows, as seen in the package. Susan Opton – aye; Steve Dornbusch – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 3-0.

Minutes:

Minutes from the 9/12/2022, 10/3/2022 and 12/5/2022 meetings.

The Board agreed to review these minutes at a future meeting.

Upon motion duly made by Ms. Opton and seconded by Mr. Dornbusch, it was voted to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Susan Opton – aye; Steve Dornbusch – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 3-0.

Next Public Meeting – February 13, 2023 at 7:30pm via Zoom Webinar