



Design Review Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 27, 2023
7:30 p.m.

Board Members:

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

Applicants & Attendees:

1. Julie Smith, The Architectural Team, Inc.; Tom Miner, Hawk Design, Inc.; and Evans Huber, attorney representing Wingate Development LLC, located at 589 Highland Avenue, and applying for site plan review.
2. Charly Nanda, Needham Council for Arts & Culture applying for mural design for exterior wall located at 922 Highland Avenue and West Street.
3. John Renzi, Graphic Impact Signs representing Landry's Bicycles located at 100 Highland Avenue and applying for signage.
4. Jay Spencer, owner French Press located at 74 Chapel Street and applying for outdoor dining and signage.
5. Tom Taricano, FastSigns; and Vinod Kapoor, owner Masala Art located at 990 Great Plain Avenue and applying for outdoor dining, signage, and exterior lighting.
6. Kate O'Neil, Enterprise Rent-A-Car; Scott Rogers, J.K. Holmgren Engineering, Inc.; and Peter Zahka, representing Enterprise Rent-A-Car to discuss informally a proposed project at 1584 Great Plain Avenue.

Chair Gluesing called the meeting to order on February 27, 2023, at 7:30 p.m.

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

Agenda Item 1:

Evans Huber, attorney representing Wingate Development LLC located at 589 Highland Avenue and applying for site plan review.

Evans Huber explained that Wingate Development LLC formerly operated a nursing home in a building which is currently vacant. Approximately a year ago, the intention was to turn this building into independent living units, keeping the existing building envelope as is. Subsequently, special permit approval was received to amend the special permit to allow for that. Wingate then decided it would be better to increase the size of the building and add a third floor to allow for an additional 22 independent living units. The required percentage of those units will be affordable. As this is a construction project involving more than 10,000 s.f., it requires a site plan review.

Julie Smith, The Architectural Team, Inc., stated that this is an existing two story, brick veneer building. There is a standard red brick and an orange-yellow color brick on the existing building. The building contains gabled roofs, with a flat roof in the center area. The proposed third story will not run the entire footprint of the lower floor layout. The proposed changes to the building will modernize it and move it away from a traditional façade. The third story will have a fiber cement lap siding, in a gray color. The bump outs will be white fiber cement panels with a reveal to differentiate the panels. The roof will be raised at those levels to create a soffit and give the area more presence. The front entrance is proposed to have a darkened entry to distinguish it from the rest of the façade. All of the windows are proposed to be changed to black or dark charcoal frames. Some existing gables will remain on the building, in areas where the third story is not located. The main residential entry area will include a glass storefront vestibule within the existing entryway. Juliette balconies are planned to vary the façade. The yellow brick is proposed to be painted a dark gray color.

Tom Miner, Hawk Design, Inc., stated that the proposal includes replacing a sunken loading dock area with green space. There are currently parking spaces to the left of the secondary entrance that are proposed to be converted to landscape space adjacent to the existing recessed patio. An existing patio will be renovated. The intention is to leave existing trees on the site. A drop off area on the lower left of the site will be converted to a landscape feature with a resident seating area. The paving areas on site are proposed to be decreased. The distance between the building and the interior parking lot sidewalk will be extended to provide more privacy to those units on the ground floor. A seating wall is proposed with a pergola. Some existing shrubs will be replanted so that the sign will better stand out. A stand of existing trees will be supplemented with shrubs. Bollards will be included to protect some of the new lawn area from vehicles. A bike rack was added under the covered portion of the previous loading dock area. An existing safety rail along the top of the wall will be replaced and perimeter shrubs will be added. The existing parking on site will be reduced.

Mr. Dermody stated that he believes the proposal is an improvement on the existing structure. He asked about the gables and the units proposed behind them. He suggested reducing the gable on the back of the building to allow better space for that unit. Ms. Smith stated that most of the gables are not close to the units, and they can be shortened to allow for more space from the unit windows. The applicant considered removing the gables from the plan but would like to leave them in to work with the façade.

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody, Ms. Smith explained that there are energy recovery ventilators (ERVs) shown on the roof. These may be 5'-6' maybe off the roof deck. These would have a gray metal finish, and could be screened, if needed. The goal is to minimize the view of these from Gould Street and Highland Avenue.

Ms. Opton asked if the additional lawn areas proposed will have uses or simply be decorative. Mr. Miner stated that he does not envision these as heavily used areas. Most of the used areas will be near the rear patio. The intention was to make the front area look nice and reduce pavement on the site.

Ms. Opton noted that many towns are having water issues. She agreed with having aprons of lawn area, but the corner lawn proposed is hard to mow, and most likely will not get enough water. She suggested removing the corner lawn area as a way to conserve water. The applicant could consider including plants or ground cover, instead of only lawn. Native trees would be helpful for wildlife. She asked if the rear area could be used for community gardening or a community space. She noted that lawns require an overspray for watering and lose a lot of water due to evaporation. Planting beds could instead incorporate a drip system.

Chair Gluesing noted that the Muzi site across the street has a similar area proposed on its corner. It is interesting to see that reflected in this proposal. These might be a nice balance to each other.

It was noted that this proposal will go before the Planning Board on March 7th. The Board agreed to send comments prior to that hearing.

Agenda Item 2:

Charly Nanda, Needham Council for Arts & Culture applying for mural design for exterior wall located at 922 Highland Avenue and West Street.

Charly Nanda stated that two years ago the Council was tasked by the Town to come up with a mural. A Public Arts Subcommittee identified Needham Heights as an area underserved with public art. The proposed owner for 922 Highland Avenue agreed to consider the proposed mural. Through an RFQ process, 20 applications were considered, and three artists moved forward to a design process. From those three candidates, a piece was chosen. *Blossom* by Ryan “Arcy” Christenson, is a nod to the Needham Town flower, the pansy. Mr. Christenson will come to Town and spray paint the mural live. He is sponsored by the spray paint brand. The brand’s paints have minimal wear and tear, and the mural is expected to last more than ten years.

Deborah Robinson joined the meeting.

Chair Gluesing noted that this is before the Board due to its being a façade change to a commercial building.

Ms. Opton stated that she loves the theme and that the Town could use a cheerful mural.

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody regarding the safety of the paint, Ms. Nanda stated this paint is mostly water based. The solvent takes 6-8 minutes to dry to the touch and cures within 12-24 hours. She stated that she believes it has low toxins.

Chair Gluesing stated that this is an oil-based paint, not water based. He stated that he hopes work will not be done if it is a windy day or other inclement weather.

Ms. Robinson asked about the window with the Urgent Care sign on it. Ms. Nanda explained that the door on the building is allowed to be painted on. Permission has not yet been given for the window. Chair Gluesing suggested a scrim material that could be placed over the window and the design painted on the scrim, which would still allow for light to enter it.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the mural at 922 Highland Avenue and West Street, as submitted. Susan Opton – aye; Bob Dermody – aye; Deborah Robinson – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 4-0-1. Steve Dornbusch – recused himself.

Agenda Item 3:

John Renzi, Graphic Impact Signs representing Landry’s Bicycles located at 100 Highland Avenue and applying for signage.

John Renzi, Graphic Impact Signs, explained that the primary building sign is proposed to be 32 s.f., illuminated, on the parking lot side of the building. A second sign is proposed, 31 s.f., nonilluminated, on the Highland Avenue side. The proposal also includes two signs on the building to match signs that were approved five years ago by the Design Review Board for the F.W. Webb building. The signs proposed are

24 s.f., where the Board had previously approved 32 s.f. signs. These will be located in the same placement as the previous F.W. Webb signs. The proposal includes refacing an existing multi-tenant, freestanding sign.

Chair Gluesing stated that the two signs on the sides of the building will require a special permit application. The Board can discuss the main two signs this evening. The compound sign is also allowed, per the bylaw.

Ms. Robinson stated that the number of signs proposed seems like a lot for this package. She would object to the two smaller signs on the sides of the building, as she does not find them necessary.

Ms. Opton stated that the sign for the front of the building appears to have letters not in scale to the area it is located. There is a lot of negative space around the letters. Chair Gluesing noted that the sign is approximately 5 s.f. smaller than the previous sign.

Mr. Dermody stated that the Board typically suggests a tint on the illumination of the compound pylon sign. He stated that he was unclear as to why the parking lot sign is larger and illuminated, instead of the Highland Ave sign. Mr. Renzi stated that the illuminated sign is lit by individually, internal, LED-illuminated letters. This is on a raceway which will be painted to match the background. They prefer to illuminate this sign, not the Highland sign.

Mr. Dornbusch stated that the typography of the sign style works well. The type within the frame does not match the scale. Chair Gluesing stated that this is not solvable due to the bylaw limit on the size of the sign. The frame panel on the building was designed to be large.

In response to a question from Ms. Robinson regarding why the multitenant sign has different coloring from the main building signs, Mr. Renzi stated that the pylon sign has bronze and white colored signs for the other tenants. This was likely a previous contingency required by the Board.

Chair Gluesing stated that he would like a condition for the compound sign that film layers be added to the back of the panel to diffuse the brightness of the illumination.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the signs, with the condition that the compound sign have layered screening behind it to dim the intensity of the panel. Susan Opton – aye; Bob Dermody – aye; Steve Dornbusch – aye; Deborah Robinson – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Renzi explained that the two signs on the building previously were internally illuminated with an opaque background. Chair Gluesing noted that the façade is visible from many directions and these additional signs seem superfluous. He stated that the applicant can apply for a special permit for these signs.

Agenda Item 4:

Jay Spencer, owner French Press located at 74 Chapel Street and applying for outdoor dining and signage.

Jay Spencer, French Press, 74 and 78 Chapel Street, stated that the proposal includes an exterior alteration of the front of the building and a change to the existing sign. The intention is to add is a louvered pergola that covers the entrance to 74 Chapel Street and extends over to 78 Chapel Street. This pergola is an extruded aluminum, powder-coated, and black in color. There will be one clearly defined entrance. The

proposal is to add 22 seats underneath this pergola. The pergola will be attached to the building by a beam, and there will be three additional posts to support the structure. There will be a solid pan roof over the entryway to protect people from the weather. The louvered part will open and close accordingly. There will be support in the ground to provide adequate structural support for the posts. There will be three footings, 24"x48". There will also be a gutter on the inside of the pergola. He stated that the intention is to add electric heating, fans, and lighting underneath the pergola. The existing front awning will be removed, and the proposal is for illuminated channel letters fastened to the new structure.

In response to a question from Ms. Opton, Mr. Spencer explained that the louvers can be opened to alleviate the weight of snow. There are electric heaters proposed under the pergola to melt snow as well. The louvers cannot be opened when frozen. The louvers are on an automatic sensor and sealed to be completely watertight.

In response to a question from Ms. Opton, Mr. Spencer explained that the remaining sidewalk is completely accessible at 4'6".

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody, Mr. Spencer explained that a barrier shown on the plan is a previously approved iron and wood railing barrier. A shade shown on the plan for the pergola is a solar shade, as umbrellas are not proposed for the front area.

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody, Mr. Spencer explained that the sign will no longer contain a bean logo.

In response to a question from Ms. Robinson, Mr. Spencer explained that the solar shade will be able to extend all the way to the ground. It will likely only ever be closed halfway. It will not be closed to split the tables under the pergola.

In response to a question from Mr. Dornbusch, Mr. Spencer stated that the sign face illumination is proposed to be colored either white or sea salt, similar to the brand colors inside.

Chair Gluesing stated that he believes this will be a nice addition to the building. Mr. Spencer confirmed that the sign is proposed to be individually mounted channel letters with a white face raceway behind it with LED lighting. The raceway will be mounted to the steel frame and stand clear of the gutter.

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody, Mr. Spencer explained that the footings of pergola will be slightly below the sidewalk, per the Building Commissioner.

Chair Gluesing stated that the Board will send a memo to the Planning Board with comments and/or suggestions regarding the outdoor seating.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the sign, as submitted. Susan Opton – aye; Bob Dermody – aye; Steve Dornbusch – aye; Deborah Robinson – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 5-0.

Agenda Item 5:

Vinod Kapoor, owner Masala Art located at 990 Great Plain Avenue and applying for outdoor dining, signage, and exterior lighting.

Chair Gluesing stated that he would like to continue the signage portion of the application, as the documentation submitted is not in scale. The design of the sign can be discussed at this time.

Tom Taricano, FastSigns, stated that the sign is proposed to replace an awning that currently exists. Chair Gluesing reviewed the scale of the proposed sign. He stated that revised documents need to be submitted.

Ms. Robinson stated that there appears to be a lot of wording regarding an explanation of the establishment, instead of simply the restaurant's name.

Vinod Kapoor, Masala Art, stated that there has often been confusion with this being an art store, so more wording is needed. Chair Gluesing suggested reconfiguring the wording on the sign.

Mr. Taricano stated that the length of awning is 35' or 420". He agreed that this is scaled incorrectly on the drawing.

Mr. Dermody suggested that 'Masala Art' have a thicker letter stroke and 'Indian Restaurant' in a thinner letter stroke.

Chair Gluesing stated that the same scale issues exist for the back sign proposed.

Ms. Opton suggested combining the wording for 'Indian Restaurant' and 'Bar and Lounge' in potentially a different way.

The Board reviewed the proposed outdoor seating area.

In response to a question Chair Gluesing, Mr. Kapoor explained that both sides of the seating area are proposed to be screened using artificial planters set in stones. No dirt is allowed per the Health Department.

Ms. Robinson stated that the outdoor seating proposed looks nice. The jersey barriers are bright and fun.

In response to a question from Mr. Dornbusch, Mr. Kapoor stated that the outdoor seating area is proposed to have green artificial turf. The accessibility ramp will have planting barriers on the right and left sides.

Ms. Opton asked how one keeps from tripping on the artificial turn when entering. Mr. Kapoor stated that this is one piece of turf, stapled to ground.

Chair Gluesing stated that comments on the seating will be sent to the Planning Board. He suggested that revised scale drawings be submitted regarding the proposed sign.

Agenda Item 6:

Peter Zahka, representing Enterprise Rent-A-Car to discuss informally a proposed project at 1584 Great Plain Avenue.

Peter Zahka, representing Enterprise Rent-A-Car, explained that Enterprise Rent-A-Car has entered into a lease on the property at 1584 Great Plain Avenue. This site is approximately 29,000 s.f. and currently has a pre-existing nonconforming use on it, an automobile repair garage. The property is located in the Single Residence B Zoning District and requires an application to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to allow for a special permit to substitute one nonconforming use for another. It is believed the proposed use is less objectionable and less detrimental to the site. That application has been filed simultaneously. The interior and exterior of the outside of the existing building will be retrofitted for the use of a rental car agency. This includes a new roof, new siding, new windows, and new doors including the garage doors. The

interior will include a wash bay to allow for cleaning or washing vehicles. No changes are proposed to the existing parking and no pavement is proposed to be added or removed. The plan shows 26 parking spaces, including ADA compliant spaces. There is some enhancement and improvement to the existing landscaping proposed. The existing automobile garage sign will be removed, and three new signs are proposed.

Scott Rogers, J.K. Holmgren Engineering, Inc., stated that the existing building is approximately 1,497 s.f. There are two existing curb cuts off Great Plain Avenue that will remain. The topography of the site is that it sits at elevation 141-142 at the street grade and slopes towards the rear of the lot, to elevation 134. There is a bordering vegetated wetland in the rear of the site and this project will be discussed with the Conservation Commission. An existing shed in the back corner of the property will be removed. A new trash enclosure is proposed on the site, near the location of the existing shed. The existing parking lot will be sealed and restriped to include the ADA spaces. Three lights are proposed, two poles on each side of the site and one at the rear, and a lighting plan is being prepared.

Mr. Rogers stated that lawn area on the site abuts up against the buffer zones to the wetland. This lawn area will be cleaned up, new topsoil will be added, and the area will be hydroseeded. Some screening will be added to the western side of the site. An existing spruce tree towards the rear of the parking area will be retained, along with a couple of deciduous trees towards the front. An additional red maple street tree is proposed.

Kate O'Neil, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, stated that the renovation includes new vinyl siding and trim, with stone veneer wainscot at the bottom of the wall. There will be a new roof, new storefront doors, and new windows. There is an intention to install a pylon sign. As proposed, the sign will violate the size and area requirements, at 15' high and 20 s.f. in area, so special permit relief will be sought. The building color will be beige.

Ms. Opton asked how many cars will be on site at any given time. Ms. O'Neil stated that there is no designation between employee and rental car spots on the plan. There are 26 spots shown. The intention is to get cars back out on road as quickly as possible, so they are not sitting in parking lot. She is unclear as to exactly how many cars may be on site at a time. Mr. Zahka stated that there are eight parking spaces required for employees and customers on the site. There will likely be five or six employees on site at a time. This leaves approximately 20 spaces available to park rental vehicles. This type of business is not typically a major traffic generator.

Ms. Opton asked if there is another Enterprise Rent-A-Car location in Needham. Ms. O'Neil stated that there is an existing location on Wexford Street, and this project is proposed as a relocation.

Ms. Opton noted that the Conservation Commission will likely tell the applicant that they do not want grass on the slope near the wetland buffer. It would be nice to plant native species on the site.

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody, Mr. Rogers stated that the building is on posts and there is an area underneath the structure with an accessible space. This area is currently gravel. Mr. Dermody suggested possibly screening this area.

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody regarding the lot to east of this site, Mr. Rogers stated that this lot is owned by the same owner but is a separate parcel. Cars will not be parked on that lot.

Ms. Robinson stated that there is some charm to the Old Time Garage character of the building and the existing doors. The existing doors give more of a residential feel than the proposed door. She suggested

keeping the proposed door centered under the gable. Ms. Opton agreed that the existing building is more charming than the planned structure.

In response to a question from Mr. Dornbusch regarding if the front lot will look loaded with cars and block the view of the building, Ms. O'Neil stated that only a couple of cars will be left up front; the rear lot will be used for larger vehicles.

Mr. Dornbusch stated that he agrees that native ground coverings are important.

Chair Gluesing asked if there will be lighting on the new building at night. Mr. Rogers stated that lights will be located on the building. Chair Gluesing noted that the ZBA will likely discuss the proposed business hours.

Regarding proposed signage, Mr. Zahka stated that, to the left of the property from the street, the applicant is proposing an illuminated pylon sign, 15' high, 20 s.f. There is also a sign proposed above the door, and a wall sign, 18 s.f., to replace the garage sign. Additional window stripe signs, 12", over the door, are also proposed.

Chair Gluesing noted that this building is proposed in the Single Residence B Zone. There is no other commercial competition in this area. He suggested that the applicant consider the minimum level of signage needed to accomplish wayfinding to the business. He stated that he would be hesitant to approve a pole mounted sign in this location. He stated that he would prefer to see an externally illuminated sign in the gable of the structure. He noted that if one of the signs is proposed over the 12' maximum, a special permit and public hearing will be needed.

Ms. Opton stated that she is opposed to the proposed pole sign. She stated that she believes this would be unsightly in this location. The area is mostly single-family homes. A quaint sign over a quaint door would be appropriate and would still allow the business to be noticed.

Mr. Dermody agreed that he is not in favor of the pole sign in this location at the proposed scale and height. He would prefer to see a sign on the gable of the structure. Mr. Dornbusch agreed.

Ms. O'Neil showed a rendering for the proposed sign on the gable. She noted that this would eliminate the fake roof eave in this area. Chair Gluesing stated that this would be a better approach. He noted that the applicant should be careful with the scale of the sign; it needs negative space around it.

Ms. Opton noted that the existing doors add charm to the building. The proposed doors look too commercial. She suggested the applicant consider adding character to the building with certain doors and windows.

Chair Gluesing noted that the house to right of this site is now contemporary, compared to the rest of the neighborhood. A door located under the gable would be more cohesive.

Chair Gluesing stated that the Board may send along comments to the ZBA, if asked.

Minutes:

Minutes from the 9/12/2022, 10/3/2022, 12/5/2022, and 01/30/2023 meetings.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes of September 12, 2022, as presented. Susan Opton – aye; Bob Dermody – aye; Deborah Robinson – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 4-0.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes of October 3, 2022, as presented. Susan Opton – aye; and Bob Dermody – aye. Motion passed 2-0.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Ms. Robinson, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes of December 5, 2022, as presented. Bob Dermody – aye; Deborah Robinson – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 3-0.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dornbusch and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes of January 30, 2023, as presented. Susan Opton – aye; Steve Dornbusch – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 3-0.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to adjourn at 10:05 p.m. Susan Opton – aye; Bob Dermody – aye; Steve Dornbusch – aye; Deborah Robinson – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 5-0.

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