Design Review Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, September 9, 2024
7:30 p.m.

Board Members:
Mark Gluesing, Board Chair (P)
Steve Dornbusch, Board Member (P)
Susan Opton, Board Member (P)
Milee Pradhan, Board Member (P)
Felix Zemel, Board Member (P)
Elisa Litchman, Administrative Specialist, Planning & Community Development (P)

Mark Gluesing, Chair, called the meeting to order on September 9, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. He reviewed the remote meeting procedures.

HEARINGS:
Public notice is hereby given that SKY CANDLE, located at 1096 Great Plain Ave., has made application to the Design Review Board for a Special Permit pursuant to the Sign By-Law Section 5.3.4 (Special Permits) whereas the application is for a second additional wall sign of 9.4 square feet and a third emblem style sign of 2.7 square feet when only one sign is allowed by Section 5.5.3.1.a. (allowable number of signs). and any other applicable sections of the By-law.

Chair Gluesing read and opened the hearing.

Ms. Pradhan and Mr. Zemel joined the meeting.

Mike Cohen, Signs by J, representing the applicant, explained that the proposal is to install a sign on the Great Plain Avenue side of this corner lot, along with some window lettering graphics. At the corner of Great Plain Avenue and Maple Street, the proposal is to install the company logo on a small of the building, with the hours on the front door. On the Maple Street side, the proposal is for a smaller sign, and also a window graphic. The panel signs include ¼" thick printed raised letters on an aluminum background to be installed on the existing spandrel panels. The graphics on the windows and on the door are flat and white.

Mr. Dornbusch asked if there is any illumination proposed. Mr. Cohen stated that there are existing wall lights, but no other illumination is proposed.

Mr. Dornbusch asked if the window signs are necessary, with all the other signage proposed. Mr. Cohen stated that the window signs are mostly for pedestrian traffic.

Ms. Opton asked about including the website on the sign. Chair Gluesing agreed that sign by-law is meant to identify a business in its location, so a website notation is not usually allowed. Mr. Cohen stated that this can be eliminated.

Ms. Pradhan asked about the proportion of the sign and the different panels. Chair Gluesing stated the sign on panel A is 35% larger than on panel C and generally the Board likes to see the lettering the same size on corner conditions where the signs are seen together. The lettering should scale down on panel A to match the size on panel C. The graphic over the door is a nice feature.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dornbusch and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the signs as submitted, with the condition that the letter height and size of Sign A match sign C. Steve Dornbusch – aye; Chair Gluesing – aye; Felix Zemel – aye; Milee Pradhan – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 5-0-0.

Applicants & Attendees:

1. Mike Cohen, Signs by J, representing the Needham School Administration Building
2. Steve Schwede, FastSigns, representing Soni Kim, owner of 117-119 Chestnut Street
3. Jason White, RSL Architect, representing Dedham Savings Bank
4. Reginald Foster, Needham Housing Authority and Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype design presenting Linden Chambers Redevelopment Project.

Agenda Item 1:

Mike Cohen, Signs by J, representing the Needham School Administration Building located at 1330 Highland Avenue and applying for graphic signage.

Mike Cohen, Signs by J, explained that the proposal is to install a 52" non-illuminated, aluminum circle with a printed logo for the Needham High School Administration Building.

Ms. Opton asked about the proposed white logo on the existing white background panel. Chair Gluesing stated that there appears to be a 1.1' white raised trim piece, leading into the recessed aluminum panel. The sign will fill a recessed area where a clock used to sit.

Mr. Dornbusch stated that he finds the proposed sign to be appropriate for the building.

Ms. Pradhan asked if the proposed sign is the same size as the clock. Mr. Cohen stated that the blue background is the same size as the clock was.

Mr. Zemel expressed concern regarding the font of the "N" in the sign. Chair Gluesing stated that this is part of the Town's new branding scheme.

Chair Gluesing stated that he appreciates the mounting information provided. He cautioned about measuring the actual recess to make sure it is correct. Mr. Cohen stated that this would be done.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dornbusch and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the sign panel to be installed in the pediment of the Emery Grover Building, as submitted. Steve Dornbusch – aye; Chair Gluesing – aye; Felix Zemel – aye; Milee Pradhan – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 5-0-0.

Agenda Item 2:
Steve Schwede, FastSigns, representing Soni Kim, owner of 117-119 Chestnut Street and applying for signage.

Steve Schwede, FastSigns, explained that the proposed ground mounted sign has to be 15' from the street and the sign is 65" wide. The sign may be pulled back a bit further, they have to work with an existing light post. The sign is made out of an ACM material with vinyl lettering on each side. The sign background is proposed to be white but could also be a light gray. The sign will sit on aluminum posts and there are two sides to the sign, based on the existing two tenants. Another sign is proposed on the building, as one cannot see the post and panel sign from the nearby stoplight. This second sign would face School Steet.

Chair Gluesing noted that the Board has previously allowed pylon signs on Chestnut Street in addition to building signs because the buildings are somewhat setback, though this one is not as much. The Building Inspector will determine whether he wants to have a Special Permit hearing for the second sign, but the Board can review it now and give some feedback. Mr. Schwede stated that this will also be an ACM sign with vinyl lettering.

Mr. Zemel stated that a light gray color for the sign might be better, due to the amount of traffic in the area and the dirt that may get kicked up. He agreed with reviewing both signs this evening and then leaving the Special Permit process up to the Building Inspector.

It was noted that the Building Inspector will require a special permit for the sign on the building.

Mr. Dornbusch agreed that a light gray color sign would be best.

Ms. Pradhan asked about the building sign and a gray border around it on the plan. It was noted that this is a Photoshop issue, but this coloring does not exist on the building.

Chair Gluesing stated that the building sign is okay and will need to go through the permitting process. The two signs are under the 32 s.f. allowance, but, at 5.5' wide they seem large, though the lettering is modest. He agreed with a proposed light gray color, instead of white.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dornbusch and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the primary ground mounted building sign with the condition that the background color be a pale gray. Steve Dornbusch – aye; Chair Gluesing – aye; Felix Zemel – aye; Milee Pradhan – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 5-0-0.

Agenda Item 3:
Jason White, RSL Architect, representing Dedham Savings Bank to be located at 695 Highland Avenue and applying for site plan review.

Jason White, RSL Architect, presented the proposed project of renovating the existing building which is currently vacant. The project will enhance the existing facility with no expansion except the drive thru canopy. A new parapet will be installed at the front entrance, along with a new glass storefront. Decorative graphic images are proposed on both sides of the existing brick walls. The brick will be painted a light gray color, and the facia will be resurfaced and painted a lighter color. A red vinyl will be applied to the glass storefront to create a graphic look. An ATM is proposed on an island in the parking lot, which will be moved from its current location to allow for a larger turning radius. The traffic flow of the site should stay the same. The existing canopy posts will be replaced to better match the building.

Mr. Zemel asked about the two square areas on the south elevation, and if they would be considered signs, requiring a Special Permit. Chair Gluesing stated that this is likely the case.

Mr. Zemel stated that the proposed enhancements may make the existing site conditions worse. The exit from the front parking area is tight at the corner and he asked about mitigating the traffic flow in this area. The applicant team noted that the site is tight, but the proposal will improve upon this. Additional traffic signage can be introduced, as needed. Chair Gluesing stated that a planting island will help this space, but it will still be a tight area. He noted that this project will be going before the ZBA for review and the Board will send comments along.

Ms. Opton stated that there is no need for a grass flat area in the island as proposed. A different planting that does not need to be mowed could be considered. She expressed concern with unsightly planting beds impacted by snow plowing will become taken over by weeds. Some of the proposed plantings may be overtaken by others.

Ms. Pradhan stated that the two new understory trees proposed could instead be shade trees to combat the amount of hardscape on this site. She suggested the 2 trees both be installed along Highland Avenue. She agreed with removing the proposed lawn area and planting short grasses or perennials. She asked about the lights shown on the south elevation plan. The applicant team stated that one of the lights is existing on the building for illuminating the parking area. The second is decorative and will be used to illuminate the graphic panel.

Chair Gluesing asked about the vinyl graphic images to be displayed. The applicant team explained that this will be a local community image. Chair Gluesing stated that these vinyl images will need to be applied for separately. He stated that he likes the idea of extending the canopy and installing real brick pillars, along with the proposed portico canopy. He agreed with the previous suggestion of removing the grass area and instead installing shrubs or native grasses.

Ms. Opton asked about proposed irrigation. Mr. White stated that there is not an existing system, and this has not yet been discussed. Ms. Opton also suggested river rock or decorative bollards to create an edging area along the east side of the site instead of plantings if the beds are narrow.

The Board agreed to draft all comments and send them to the ZBA.

Agenda Item 4:

Downtown Redesign Working Group – DRB participation discussion.

Chair Gluesing stated that the Selectmen have authorized a Downtown Redesign Working Group to help redesign Great Plain Avenue. This Board is required to have a member on the working group, and he asked for a volunteer. Dates and times of the meetings will be scheduled once the group is composed.

The Board agreed to revisit this item after additional information on the possible meeting time of day is provided.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dornbusch and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to adjourn at 8:48 p.m. Steve Dornbusch – aye; Chair Gluesing – aye; Felix Zemel – aye; Milee Pradhan – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 5-0-0.

Next Public Meeting – September 23, 2024, at 7:30pm via Zoom Webinar