Design Review Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 28, 2025
7:30 p.m.

Board Members:
Mark Gluesing, Board Chair (P)
Felix Zemel, Board Member (P)
Susan Opton, Board Member (P)
Elisa Litchman, Administrative Specialist, Planning & Community Development (P)
Alex Clee, Planning & Community Development (P)

Mark Gluesing, Chair, called the meeting to order on April 28, 2025, at 7:33 p.m. He reviewed the remote meeting procedures.

Applicants & Attendees:
1. Dawn Marie Johnson, Wingate Living, representing Ginger Care Living, located at 589 Highland Ave
2. Tyler Cofelice, P.E. - Weston & Sampson Engineers, Inc., and Hank Haff - Director, Building Design and Construction Dept., representing Town of Needham
3. Adam Knauer, srp Sign Corporation, representing Wilchins Consentino & Novins
4. Michael Lake, Signarama – Framingham, representing Burn Boot Camp
5. Gary McCoy, Poyant Signs Inc., representing South Street 4414 Holdings LLC
6. Avi M. Shoss, The Grossman Companies, representing South Street 4414 Holdings LLC

HEARINGS:
Public notice is hereby given that Ginger Care Living, located at 589 Highland 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 four 5' x 20' temporary banners which promote the proposed 63 unit residential development and one 4' x 8' temporary banner citing the name of the development's contractor, all to be placed on a construction fence for approximately 8 to 10 months. Section 5.5.1.d.ii & iii normally allows only one 12 sq ft banner foot the residential development and one 12 sq. ft. banner for the construction contractor.

Chair Gluesing opened the public hearing.

Dawn Marie Johnson, Wingate Living, stated that the request is to place banners on a fence to promote a new housing project. She stated that this project is a significant opportunity for seniors in Needham who may struggle with traditional rental models. The entry fee model may make this more accessible for those in the community. Wingate has built positive relationships within the town of Needham and believes this project aligns with the shared vision of supporting senior residents. The banners will help raise awareness to ensure that those who can benefit from this opportunity are well informed. The request is for two temporary 25'x6', mesh scrim, single sided banners on the construction fence facing Gould Street and two on Highland Ave.

Chair Gluesing asked about the temporary signs which were previously approved for the site. Ms. Johnson stated that there are no temporary banners currently up at the site. There is a contractor sign up, but the others have been removed in order to apply for the Special Permit.

Mr. Zemel asked why two contractor signs are necessary. It was stated that one of the signs would be at each of the entrances to the site for wayfinding. Mr. Zemel stated that a smaller sign stating "construction entrance" would be better for wayfinding. The applicant agreed to remove this sign along Gould Street.

Chair Gluesing stated that this property is within a Single Residence B District, which has a limit for 12 s.f. of signs. The applicant is requesting a special permit and so the sign at this Highland Avenue location could be a bit bigger as this is a busy road. He suggested a 20 s.f. wayfinding sign also, along Gould Street, as there will be traffic coming from Central Ave on Gould Street. Mr. Zemel agreed with the two 20 s.f. sign entrance signs.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Zemel and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the signage package for a Special Permit for 589 Highland Avenue, with a condition that the general contractor signs be reduced to 20 s.f. at both locations. Felix Zemel – aye; Mark Gluesing – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 3-0-0.

<u>Agenda Item 1:</u>
Tyler Cofelice, P.E. - Weston & Sampson Engineers, Inc., and Hank Haff - Director, Building Design and Construction Dept., representing Town of Needham, located at 1407 Central Avenue, Needham, MA, and applying for site plan review.

Hank Haff, Director, Building Design and Construction Dept., explained that the DPW Master Plan was completed by Weston and Sampson. In the Plan, it was determined that the project for the DPW could proceed in phases. This is Phase 1 of the Master Plan, a proposal to bring the fleet maintenance facility as an addition to the Jack Cogswell Building. This will provide the six employees adequately sized and contemporary facilities. The existing facility is well past its useful life. This has been before the Conservation Commission for a second hearing last week and is on the Planning Board agenda for May.

Tyler Cofelice, P.E. - Weston & Sampson Engineers, Inc., explained that there are wetlands around the perimeter of the site. The proposal is to renovate the most eastern bay in the existing storage garage for a maintenance bay, construct a proposed 12,000 s.f. pre-engineered metal maintenance garage on the eastern side, and an exterior wash pad at the southern end. One major feature of the site is a large ledge wall, left after removal of existing ledge hill to create space for the building. The ledge wall will be roughly 25'-30' tall at its max. In relation, the highest point of the building is the front edge at roughly 34' tall. The building and the ledge wall will be roughly the same magnitude and height. The ledge wall will provide a significant screening from the neighborhood and the road. The natural tree cover between the neighbor and the street is also proposed to be maintained. One of the goals of the project is to create a net zero facility and will include ground source heat pump wells. A sewer line extension is proposed to tie into the site, and there will be rooftop solar. The existing Jack Cogswell building has a simple finish with warm white metal panel walls and a white metal seam roof, with beige stone veneer along the bottom of the building and white overhead doors. The proposed addition will continue the aesthetic of the existing building by wrapping the stone veneer around the bottom to the wash bay and adding translucent panels to bring light into the building. A single story connector piece connects the two buildings. For the roof, a high point is proposed in the front which will slope to the rear. The connector building will break up the roof lines and the façade of the building. A shorter standing seam metal roof that pitches from the rear of the site to the front of the connector piece, at the same pitch as the existing building, is proposed. The proposed materials include overhead doors, triple pane glass, insulated translucent panels, and continued dark bronze accents for the lighting fixtures. The exterior wash pad will have galvanized steel metal framing to help with the wet environment. Per the Town's tree bylaws, removing trees in the wetland buffer zone requires replacement trees within the jurisdiction at a 2:1 ratio. The proposed project will remove 11 trees within the jurisdictional area and 22 new trees are proposed.

Ms. Opton asked about erosion controls. Mr. Cofelice stated that there will be compost filter tubes and silt fence during construction. Once stabilized, the steep slopes will be exposed ledge and not likely to erode. Some grass is proposed around the building. The Board suggested maintenance free grasses or ground cover instead of lawn.

Mr. Zemel asked about the ledge wall. Mr. Cofelice stated that this will be carved into the bedrock. This is a natural retaining wall. A fence will be proposed at the top for screening and safety.

Chair Gluesing stated that he believes the site is well screened from Central Ave and the abutters. The proposed materials and style of the new building are appropriate. He asked about any lighting. Mr. Cofelice stated that there will be no proposed site lighting. The building will have exterior lighting, matching what currently exists.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Zemel and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the site plan and building design for the addition to the Jack Cogswell building at 1407 Central Avenue, as submitted. Felix Zemel – aye; Mark Gluesing – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 3-0-0.

Agenda Item 2:

Adam Knauer, srp Sign Corporation, representing Wilchins Consentino & Novins, located at 250 First Avenue, Needham, MA, and applying for signage.

Adam Knauer, srp Sign Corporation, representing Wilchins Consentino & Novins, explained that the proposal is consistent with the existing signage and within the 32 s.f. requirement. The proposed sign will have channel letters, and be face lit. The text will be white with a logo of three different colors. This will be attached to the building using angle clips mounted to the back of the raceway letters. All of the signs in this area are face lit.

Mr. Zemel stated that it appears the white color may be more stark than surrounding signs. Mr. Knauer stated that this is a rendering issue. The white will be closer to what is on the surrounding signs.

Chair Gluesing asked if the graphic element is illuminated. Mr. Knauer stated that it is.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Zemel and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the signage package for 250 First Avenue, as presented. Felix Zemel – aye; Mark Gluesing – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 3-0-0.

Agenda Item 3:
Michael Lake, Signarama – Framingham, representing Burn Boot Camp, located at 77 Charles Street, Needham, MA, and applying for signage.

Michael Lake, Signarama – Framingham, representing Burn Boot Camp, explained that this item was continued from the last meeting. There is an existing sign cabinet on this site and a face change is proposed. Originally, the sign was proposed to be blue lettering on a white background, but the Board expressed concern with the prevalence of the white color on the graphic. The applicant has agreed to an inversion of those colors.

Mr. Zemel expressed his appreciation for the inversion and stated that the proposal utilizes the existing space well.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Zemel and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the signage package for 77 Charles Street, as presented. Felix Zemel – aye; Mark Gluesing – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 3-0-0.

Agenda Item 5: - *The Board took up this item at this time; it had been listed last on the agenda of applicants.*
Avi M. Shoss, The Grossman Companies, representing South Street 4414 Holdings LLC, located at 1299 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA, and applying for exterior alterations, including lighting and facade.

Avi M. Shoss, The Grossman Companies, representing South Street 4414 Holdings LLC, explained that 1257 Highland Avenue received approval for similar alterations in October 2024. Those improvements are nearly complete. Conrads currently has temporary sign lighting installed and is proposing to add new sign lighting as part of the signage package for that building. The proposal is to renovate this building 1299 Highland Avenue to be in alignment with Needham Wine and Spirits, Conrad's, and Cookie Monster building, along with painting in conjunction with that work. There are currently seven sign boxes for the four tenants and all new signage is proposed for the tenants along with some deferred maintenance for the canopy. The proposal is for an identical color palette to what was approved on 1257 Highland Avenue, including a more muted white color. The proposal is to redo the roof, which is currently leaking, and the soffit while using the same lighting fixtures that were approved on 1257 Highland Avenue. The construction for the canopy includes a series of wood joists, allowing a signage frame system with kickers. A reduction from seven signs to four signs is proposed. The Mathnasium sign is obscured by a pylon, but this is still an improvement. He asked for the Board's input on locating the Pure Hockey signage. The tenant may request additional branding in the future. Mathnasium currently has a large red awning, and this would be changed to a tomato red color. The roof of the bay window which is currently obscured by the awning will be redone and there will be an update to the current signage. There will be permission sought to paint the gutter and downspouts to a Sherwin-Williams Iron Ore color. There will be downspouts at each of the columns dropping into the planting beds at the base of the raised walkway. The existing railing will also be painted the Iron Ore color.

Ms. Opton stated that she prefers the simplified proposal for the signage and colors.

Mr. Zemel asked about adding a second rail on the other side of the entrance ramp. Mr. Shoss stated that this should be possible. A new ramp is proposed in the location of the existing planting bed along Highland Ave. The applicant stated they hope the Board could assist in connecting them with local artists to install a mural on the wall next to Mathnasium. Mr. Gluesing stated that working with the Needham Council for Arts & Culture on a future mural for the site is a good idea.

Chair Gluesing suggested a bit more landscaping for the site wherever possible.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Zemel and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the façade changes for 1299 Highland Avenue, as submitted. Felix Zemel – aye; Mark Gluesing – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 3-0-0.

Agenda Item 4:

Gary McCoy, Poyant Signs Inc., representing South Street 4414 Holdings LLC, located at 1299 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA, and applying for signage.

Gary McCoy, Poyant Signs Inc., representing South Street 4414 Holdings LLC, explained that there are several different tenants identified including Cookie Monster, Conrads, Needham Wine and Spirits, Mathnasium, Supercuts, Needham Nails and Skin Care, and Pure Hockey. The stores previously had internally lit cabinets which were not even across the façade. The proposal is for uniform continuity on each building. The Needham Wine and Spirits, Conrads, and Cookie Monster signs appear directly on the wall, as there is no canopy in that area, but the signs will be pulled forward and placed on the canopy for the other building at 1299 Highland Avenue. The proposal is for a frame system which will support each tenant sign. The signs will be a white background, not internally lit, with 2" deep dimensional letters. This will give a layered look. There will be a raceway strip in each sign. There will be new downlighting proposed using LED fixtures. There will be continuity with all the lighting on both buildings and the same specifications for the signage.

Mr. Zemel asked if the color schemes for all of the signs will be the same. Mr. McCoy stated that there will be a black, blue, and red color scheme throughout the signs. Mr. Zemel expressed concern with all of the white color on the new Mathnasium sign. He suggested this be a light absorbing material, or muted white, so it does not reflect as much onto the street. Mr. McCoy stated that a high gloss finish is not proposed. Chair Gluesing asked if this sign could have individual letters mounted on the wall. Mr. McCoy stated that the smaller text on the bottom of the sign could be challenging for dimensional letters. Mr. Zemel suggested handling the review and vote of the proposed Mathnasium sign separately from the other sign proposals.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Zemel and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve (as referred to on submitted plan) the signage for 1299 Highland Avenue, including 11-1 for Needham Wine and Spirits, 11-7 for Pure Hockey, 11-6 for Needham Nails and Skin Care, and 11-5, as submitted. Felix Zemel – aye; Mark Gluesing – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 3-0-0.

Regarding the Mathnasium sign, Mr. Zemel suggested a mockup of any proposed changes. Mr. McCoy agreed to send in paint samples for the Board's review.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Zemel and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the sign for 1299 Highland Avenue, 11-4 Mathnasium, with a condition that the background be an off-white, non-reflective, or gray color. Felix Zemel – aye; Mark Gluesing – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 3-0-0.

REVIEW

Minutes of 03/26/2025 meetings.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Zemel and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes of March 26, 2025, as presented. Felix Zemel – abstain; Mark Gluesing – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 2-0-1.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Zemel and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to adjourn at 9:01 p.m. Felix Zemel – aye; Mark Gluesing – aye; Susan Opton – aye; Motion passed 3-0-0.

Next Public Meeting – May 19, 2025, at 7:30pm via Zoom Webinar