

Michael Gehr, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 23, 2015, in the Conference Room, Fourth Floor, City Hall. A roster of the members of the commission and the technical posts they fill are on file and available upon request. Also present were commission members L. Allen, C. Crumrine, C. Davis, and M. Wertman. S. Bockmiller, Development Planner/Zoning Administrator, and D. Calhoun, Secretary, were present on behalf of the Planning and Code Administration Division.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

Minutes were not ready for approval.

CONSENT AGENDA

None.

DESIGN REVIEW

33 West Franklin Street – RG Realty – Window Film, Case No. HDC 2015-08 (Tabled on April 9 – Motion to Dismiss).

The applicant, Roberto Gonzalez, was not present.

Staff Report: Mr. Bockmiller stated that this is a continuation of the case that was tabled at the last meeting. He noted an error on the staff report in that upon visiting the site he discovered that the film is actually on the outside of the glass which puts it under the purview of the HDC. Staff recommended that since the applicant was not present, the commission should move to dismiss the case which would allow Mr. Gonzalez to file his application without any changes (i.e., to keep the film on the outside of the glass). If the application were to be denied, Mr. Gonzales would be precluded from filing the same application for a period of one year. Dismissal would permit him to come back with the same application within a year.

MOTION: (Wertman/Davis) I move that we dismiss case HDC 2015-08 given that the owner of the property is not here and the 45-day time limit is over before the next meeting.

DISCUSSION: None.

ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

WORKSHOP

33 West Franklin Street – RG Realty – Window Film.

Mr. Gonzalez was not present.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

Staff-Approved Work. Not discussed.

Design Guidelines Amendments: Review of Window Graphics. The Design Guidelines amendments currently pending before the Mayor and City Council may extend authority to the HDC to review window signage in the historic district. If approved, the guidelines will need to be amended to add criteria for window signs. Staff provided proposed language (meeting file), including the following guidelines:

- Graphics should not cover more than 50% of the surface of any window.
- If applied to the window, painting is preferred, but pre-manufactured lettering applied to the interior of the window may be considered, provided that the product can be applied in such a way where adhesives are not visible.
- Application of window graphics to the exterior of a window is strongly discouraged; when considered, painted lettering is strongly preferred.
- Height of lettering should not exceed eight inches in height, but may be larger when considering extra-tall windows.
- The number of lettering styles in any one sign shall not exceed two; simple, traditional and easy-to-read fonts are recommended.
- Message should be limited to business or store name. Simple graphic images or logos associated with the business are acceptable. Points of communication (telephone, website, and/or email address) should not occupy more than one square foot each for each form of contact.
- Colors should be compatible with the architecture and color of the building when possible. Black, brown, white, metallic gold, silver, and the basic primary and secondary colors are recommended. Pastel tints or neutral tones of the above are acceptable. “Neon” tones and high-contrast color schemes are not recommended.
- Use of films on the interior of windows for purposes exceeding normal signage, such as reducing visibility into storefronts is strongly discouraged. Storefronts with expansive

areas of glass and transparency between the sidewalk and the business space is an important character-defining feature for commercial and mixed-use buildings in the Downtown district.

- Etching of glass is permitted, provided the property owner co-sign the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness and understands that once the business leaves the unit, the Zoning Ordinance requires signs to be removed after 30 days and this may require replacement of the window.

Mr. Bockmiller handed out photographs of several examples of window graphics in the Downtown District. He noted that window lettering on the outside of the glass weathers more quickly, however, interior appliques appear to be okay. Because interior applications of signage on smoked windows are not readable, staff would allow reasonable exterior window clings when applied to smoked glass. Standards will need to be developed addressing the size of logos and messages.

Existing signs would be grandfathered; any temporary signage would need to be removed. This language will only affect new signage. Commission members were concerned about charity events, such as Maryland Theatre posters. Staff indicated that this type of temporary signage would be treated differently, and the ordinance has requirements for temporary signs.

Ms. Allen stated that Main Street and these regulations need to work together. There needs to be continuity between Main Street and the HDC. Also the Guidelines need to be consistent from inside the historic district and outside.

Concerning the eight-inch maximum for window lettering, Ms. Davis felt that some of the existing signage in the examples provided by staff might violate this requirement. Eight inches may be too small. Mr. Bockmiller offered to measure some of the logos. Ms. Davis cautioned that the HDC should not have rules that are constantly being waived. Mr. Gehr noted that the Fire Department now requires eight-inch tall numerals and letters noting the street address on the front and rear facades of buildings.

Mr. Gehr informed the commission that he called the window cling company that installed the clings at 33 West Franklin Street. The company admitted that the adhesive used will not hold up for more than two years before the clings start to peel.

Mr. Bockmiller said the guidelines need to be flexible on a property-by-property basis. Ms. Allen stated that one of the groups at the Main Street Launch was a design group and could offer suggestions to businesses on their signage. Participating design or marketing firms could assist businesses in effective marketing techniques. Services would need to be affordable. Also, she suggested that a directory kiosk could help supplement visibility in light of less signage on storefronts. The kiosk could be located near parking so more people could see it.

**Historic District Commission
MINUTES**

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Mr. Bockmiller will reach out to Frederick and Annapolis to see what they allow with regard to window signs and will take measurements on some of the signs.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **New Member.** Mr. Bockmiller introduced Samantha Taylor who was appointed by the Mayor to fill the last remaining vacancy. Commission members welcomed Ms. Taylor to the commission.
- Tax credit workshop will be held this evening at the Washington County Free Library.
- Dedication of Memorial Park will occur on Saturday, May 16.

ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn (5:25 p.m.).

7/9/2015

Approved



Debra C. Calhoun – Secretary