

**CITY OF SONOMA
DESIGN REVIEW AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
June 21, 2016
Community Meeting Room, 177 First Street West, Sonoma, CA
MINUTES**

Chair Randolph called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Chair Randolph, Comms. Tippell, Essert, Barnett, Johnson,

Absent: Comm. Cory (Alternate)

Others Present: Associate Planner Atkins, Administrative Assistant Morris

Chair Randolph stated that no new items would be heard after 10:30 p.m. unless the Design Review and Historic Preservation Commission so decides. Any decisions made tonight can be appealed within 15 days to the City Council. She reminded everyone to turn off cell phones and pagers.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: None

Item 1- Sign Review consideration of a portable freestanding sign, two interchangeable wall signs, and illumination for a previously approved wall sign for a wine tasting room (Lake Sonoma) at 134 Church Street.

Applicant: Tyler Galts

Associate Planner Atkins presented the staff report.

Tyler Galts, applicant, said the new tasting room location is somewhat problematic since it is setback from the street 30 yards so a larger sign for more visibility is proposed.

Comm. Barnett questioned the reasoning behind the sandwich board request.

Comm. Essert confirmed with the applicant that the proposed lighting complied with standards.

Chair Randolph opened the item to public comment.

No public comment.

Chair Randolph closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Johnson questioned the value of having a sandwich board.

Comm. Tippell is satisfied with the design package and preferred one sign.

Comm. Barnett is not opposed to the A board sign but only questioned why it is being proposed. He preferred installing two smaller signs.

Comm. Essert agreed with the applicants reasoning for having one sign as opposed to three signs.

Chair Randolph agreed with her fellow commissioners and is comfortable with three signs. She supported an A frame sign on the site.

Comm. Johnson made a motion to approve the proposal as submitted. Comm. Tippell seconded. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Item 2- Issue: Review of Draft Downtown Sonoma Preservation Design Guidelines.

Associate Planner Atkins presented the staff report.

Christina Dikas, project manager, Page and Turnbull, presented an overview of the draft Downtown Sonoma Preservation Design Guidelines that is based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. She outlined the process and stated the objective is to have a clear focus. There was an advisory group meeting that elicited questions/feedback. The general consensus is that the Plaza is the "heart and soul" of Sonoma, that includes a variety of architectural styles (character defining features) that must be preserved, while changes are being proposed, along with having building height and massing to scale.

Chair Randolph opened the item to public comment.

Jim Bohar, historic district resident, questioned the relationship between this document and the existing historic overlay guidelines. He is primarily concerned with adaptive reuse and neighborhood compatibility.

Associate Planner Atkins clarified that the scope of the design guidelines focused on aesthetics rather than adaptive reuse.

Mary Martinez, resident/business owner, requested a longer period of time to comment on the draft guidelines. Her initial impression was that the document is too general and more substance is needed including consideration for a building's footprint. She questioned the standard to be used for comparing renovated historic buildings to the original buildings with no alterations in regard to color schemes.

Patricia Cullinan, resident, is concerned with demands made on the community and she questioned if solar panel installations will be addressed in the design guidelines.

Victor Conforti, local architect, agreed with Mary Martinez that specific terms related to the size and massing of the project should be included. In general, he felt the document was well written but adding more substance is necessary to be an effective planning tool. He recommended that the DRHPC review projects prior to Planning Commission review.

Robert Demler, resident/League of Historic Preservation, concurred that the draft is a good starting point. He suggested providing clarity on what could be approved according to City standards.

Gina Cuclis, valley resident/ former City planning commissioner, sees value in clarifying what can be approved according to City standards to gain a better perspective that in her view the new document will provide. She noted a difference between zoning requirements and design review guidelines.

Prema Behan, resident, recommended that the guidelines be reviewed in the initial stages of project review prior to any planning approvals.

Amy Alper, resident, recommended having active links included in the document and successful examples.

Victor Conforti, resident/ local architect, recommended that the commission use the document when evaluating development proposals.

Robert Demler, resident, recommended having a document check list as an initial review.

Chair Randolph closed the item to public comment.

Comm. Barnett thanked City staff for initiating the process and engaging the consultant. He felt the document will be valuable to identify restrictions in the preliminary stages of project design. He suggested reexamining some portions of the development code in context of the downtown design guidelines. He wants a more aligned approach between the Planning Commission and DRHPC.

Comm. Essert is of the opinion that something is missing/disconnect with some of the subjective language used. For example, “necessary” as referenced in the Windows and Doors section 5.1.4.

Comm. Johnson applauded the public for their insightful input and he agreed with his fellow commissioners that it is a good start.

Comm. Tippell agreed with Robert Demler that a checklist as a benchmark will benefit applicants.

Chair Randolph is pleased with the discussion and she recommended having more examples of successful projects for reference. She reminded everyone that the draft report is available at <http://www.sonomacity.org/News/Alcalde-Reception.aspx>. She asked for an explanation about why color options were not included and recommended incorporating the Cochran binders from the League of Historic Preservation as an additional resource.

Associate Planner Atkins clarified that the guidelines should be relevant to the Downtown District rather than outside the district that will use the development code.

Chair Randolph reopened the item for public comment.

Mary Martinez, resident, is of the opinion that the floor area ratio (FAR) should be considered by the DRHPC so the massing is appropriate in the Historic District.

Victor Conforti, suggested that the design guidelines should override FAR that is under the Planning Commission purview. He suggested reducing the FAR in the development code specific for the Historic Overlay District.

Chair Randolph closed the item for public comment.

Comm. Essert confirmed with Associate Planner Atkins that the Planning Commission will refer to the document.

Associate Planner Atkins confirmed that the scope of the project is for the Downtown District and said the goal is to expand/apply the guidelines to the entire City in the future.

Comm. Barnett suggested there should be a sense of urgency in implementing the document.

Comm. Barnett made a motion to forward to the City Council, with recommendation to approve the Downtown Sonoma Preservation Guidelines after Page and Turnbull has incorporated all the public feedback from this meeting and the Planning Commission meeting in addition, the DRHPC strongly encourages the City Council to allocate resources for additional preservation guidelines for the remaining planning districts starting with filing in the districts located in the Historic Overlay Zone. Comm. Essert seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. (5-0).

Next Steps:

July 14, 2016 Review by the Planning Commission,
August 15, 2016 City Council adoption of final Downtown Sonoma Preservation Design Guidelines.

Item 3- Review future items/projects priority list.

Associate Planner Atkins presented the staff report.

Comm. Johnson recommended demolition by neglect as a priority then commercial real estate signs.

Comm. Barnett agreed with working on water efficiency first then commercial real estate signs.

Comm. Essert is interested in discussing story poles.

All the commissioners recommended the following priority list:

1. MWEL0
2. Demolition by Neglect
3. Story Pole Requirement
4. Commercial Real Estate Signs (how attached to buildings)
5. Threshold of Significance (1945 vs. 50 years old)

Chair Randolph appreciated Associate Planner Atkin's quick responses.

Issues Update: None

Comments from the Commission: Patricia Cullinan, resident, said demolition by neglect is not always obvious and is very important in the Downtown District.

Adjournment: Chair Randolph made a motion to adjourn at 8:45 p.m. to the next regular meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 19 , 2016. The motion carried unanimously.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Design Review and Historic Preservation Commission on the 19th day July of 2016.

Approved:

Cristina Morris, Administrative Assistant