

**CITY OF SONOMA
DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
November 5, 2013
Community Meeting Room, 177 First Street West**

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Tippell called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL: **Present:** Comms. Anderson, Johnson, McDonald, Tippell
Absent: Comms. Barnett, Randolph
Others Present: Associate Planner Atkins

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: None.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION: None.

Associate Planner Atkins welcomed Christopher Johnson as the new alternate for the Design Review Commission.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Comm. Anderson made a motion to approve the minutes of September 17, 2013, as submitted. Comm. McDonald seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, Barnett and Randolph absent.

CORRESPONDENCE: Staff memo regarding Item #1.

ITEM #1 – SIGN REVIEW: Consideration of a new monument sign for a community center (Sonoma Community Center) located at 276 East Napa Street. Applicant: Sonoma Community Center.

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report.

Comm. McDonald is unclear on the concept of what the three-color screen is – is it like a reader board where letters are placed, or is it an actual reader board with things being broadcast across the screen, like a TV? Associate Planner Atkins stated that it was the latter, but the applicant can go into more detail about that particular aspect.

Comm. Johnson questioned why the shape of the sign was in a “V”, as opposed to something similar to the existing perpendicular two-sided sign so traffic from both directions could view the sign.

Chair Tippell opened the public hearing.

Mark Perry, architect, was present to discuss the application. He has been working with the Community Center over the last five years on the historic rehab work that has been taking place. The sign is a collaboration between the Community Center and Robert Sanders, and the resulting proposal is a contemporary marquis sign for the theater, as well as all the events at the Community Center. The “V” shape was used for

better visibility. The sign is the final component of the historic rehab work and they tried to keep the size as small as possible and still have a quality LED sign.

Robert Sanders noted the reader board is four feet by eight feet, but the live area is smaller. The background is black and the sign will be a totally flexible RGB full-color product for the future. This will emit much less light than a reader board with a white background. The LED sign will emit much less light and is a “green” sign and meets Title 24 requirements. The LED lighting can be controlled and adjusted and provides great flexibility.

Chair Tippell confirmed the size of the existing sign – approximately seven feet tall at the gable and five feet wide. The new sign would match the existing height of the present sign.

Chair Tippell closed the public hearing.

Comm. McDonald has been a supporter of the Community Center for many years and applauds them for all the upgrading of the historic building. He is not convinced that an LED/reader board of this size is appropriate for the neighborhood, which is mostly residential. He suggested breaking up the sign into smaller components so it does not appear so massive and does not intrude on the visibility from the driveways.

Comm. Johnson concurred with Comm. McDonald, and agreed that the sign does not fit in the neighborhood. He would not be opposed to a different type of sign, but he is not comfortable with the LED sign, even though the lighting is adjustable.

Comm. Anderson does not have an issue with the size of the sign, given the mass of the building. He likes the materials and colors, but he is not sure an LED sign is in character for this neighborhood. He is reticent to move forward without a clearer understanding of what LED interprets to in terms of a sign at this location.

Chair Tippell concurred with her fellow Commissioners. This is such an important building and we want to get it right. She would like to see an actual rendering of what the sign will look like. She wouldn't want to see anything too large and bright in this neighborhood. She suggested that the applicant consider this as a study session and the applicant can return with something a bit smaller.

Comm. McDonald asked whether the neighbors received notices about the proposed sign. Associate Planner Atkins stated that sign applications are not noticed, and the only notice posted was the agenda on the City Hall bulletin board. She is unsure if the Community Center did any neighborhood outreach. Comm. McDonald was of the opinion that if the neighbors were aware of this sign proposal, the meeting room would be full. He would like to see the Community Center do a neighborhood outreach about the proposed sign. Comm. McDonald suggested that a notice of the next meeting be posted on the property. Associate Planner Atkins stated they could request the applicant to do so. He suggested the applicant work with a property owner on the Plaza, where there is a larger audience, to create something tasteful to advertise for the Community Center.

Chair Tippell made a motion to consider this item as a study session, with the applicant to return with a modified proposal taking into account the Commission's suggestions.

Comm. Anderson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, Barnett and Randolph absent.

ITEM #2 – SIGN REVIEW AND DESIGN REVIEW: Consideration of design review and sign review for a restaurant (Sonoma Cheese Factory) located at 2 West Spain Street. Applicant: Sonoma Cheese Factory.

Associate Planner Atkins presented staff's report. She noted that staff had observed an unpermitted portable freestanding sign at the front of the building that will need to be removed.

Comm. McDonald asked if the sign on the roof is considered a roof sign or a wall sign. Associate Planner Atkins stated it is considered a wall sign.

Chair Tippell opened the public hearing.

Mike Saravia, store manager of The Cheese Factory, was present to discuss the application. He explained they have instituted new branding on their products, and the orange color is part of the branding to catch the eye of the customer. He displayed a color board and specified where the trim color would be applied.

Comm. Anderson noted that the orange color seemed more subdued on the logo, and the paint color seems very bright. Mr. Saravia stated the orange color will appear more subdued on the brick.

Comm. McDonald commented that although there is signage for the store's products, there doesn't seem to be any real directional signage. Comm. Anderson noted that in the past, the Planning Commission had approved an arcade from the Casa Grande parking lot to Spain Street, but it was never instituted. There seems to be no focal point. Mr. Saravia noted that customers can enter The Cheese Factory through the rear, and that 70 percent of their customers do enter from the parking lot.

Chair Tippell closed the public hearing.

Comm. Johnson noted that while he is in favor of dressing up the back of the building, he feels the bright orange color may detract from the building.

Comm. McDonald applauded the applicant for painting the rear of the building, as it is one of the first things seen from the parking lot. He would like to see signage with a focus on the rear entrance as a focal point. He feels the wall sign on top of the building would be better and more pedestrian friendly if it were moved to eye level. With regard to the orange color, he is not necessarily supportive of the horizontal stripe along the top of the building.

Comm. Anderson commented that while the scope and scale are appropriate for the building, he feels the orange band on the fascia distracts, rather than adds. He would like to see the orange band eliminated.

Chair Tippell concurred with her fellow Commissioners. The proposal is a huge improvement to the back of the building, but the orange color, especially the band along the fascia, is too much. She has no issue with the proposed signage.

Comm. McDonald made a motion to approve the application as submitted, with the exception of the orange band along the fascia at the rear of the building. Comm. Anderson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, Barnett and Randolph absent.

ISSUES UPDATE: None.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION: None.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m. to the regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, November 19, 2013.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing minutes were duly and regularly adopted at a regular meeting of the Design Review Commission on the 17th day of December 2013.

Robin Evans, Administrative Assistant