

Meeting Minutes of the Design Review Board (DRB)
Meeting
Tuesday, November 5, 2013

The Design Review Board (DRB) met in the City Hall Council Chambers on Tuesday, November 5, 2013, at 5:30 P.M., with the following members in attendance: Ricky Richardson, Bill Joslin, Tip Pitts, Mike Henthorn, and Jessica Folk. Representing the Planning Department were Joshua Henderson and Julie Roland. Assistant City Manager Chris Story also attended the meeting.

[Editor's Note: A Pre-Agenda meeting was held at 5:15 P.M. in the City Manager's Conference Room, where they were briefed on the discretionary sign review request regarding St. Paul The Apostle Catholic Church].

Roll Call

Mr. Richardson, the Chair, stated that notice of this meeting was posted and provided to the media 24 hours in advance as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

Mr. Richardson said all five Design Review Board Members were present, constituting a quorum; and he welcomed New Board Member Jessica Folk to the meeting.

The Agenda for the November 5, 2013 meeting was approved by acclamation.

Disposition of the Minutes from the October 1, 2013 Meeting regarding "partial approval" of minutes pertaining to New Construction Case at 120 W. Broad Street.

The portion of the minutes from the October 1, 2013 Design Review Board Meeting regarding the New Construction case at 120 West Broad Street portion were approved by acclamation.

Old Business – There was no old business.

New Business:

Discretionary Review of proposed 9' 4 ½" double pole sign perpendicular to E. Main Street at the front of the property located at 290 E. Main Street in the DT-5 District, from Joe Lauer, on behalf of St. Paul The Apostle Catholic Church, Owner.

Mr. Joshua Henderson, Planning Coordinator came forward and was sworn; and he submitted the meeting packets the Board Members had previously received, as well as the slides and presentation into evidence, as Exhibit A from Joe Lauer, on behalf of St. Paul The Apostle Catholic Church, Owner.

Mr. Joe Lauer of 520 Glendalyn Avenue came forward on behalf of the Church, and was sworn. He said they originally asked their architect to design a monument sign; but what he designed was a limestone brick monument sign that was four times larger and a lot more expensive than what they had asked for. The Church then explained to the designer they needed something that was more architecturally in line with the Church and also still be in line with other churches in the area; and he referenced a slide in order to show what the designer had compromised with; which he explained was a painted metal sign with raised letters and was architecturally suited to the rest of the building, and was lit with small LED lights. Mr. Lauer referenced another slide to show where the sign would be situated, and said it would be small enough so it would not be an obstruction as you entered or left the church.

Board Questions:

- Mr. Joslin asked Mr. Lauer how tall the trees would get in the area where the sign was proposed to be located. Mr. Lauer said all the plantings along the sidewalk would be low ground cover, between 18" to 4' tall.
- Mr. Richardson said the Code specifically called for a monument sign; and he asked Mr. Lauer was there any reason why they could not have a monument sign as opposed to the pole sign. Mr. Lauer explained that the scale of the building was a challenge.

- Mr. Joslin said the spirit of the Code was to accommodate automobiles, as well as make the pedestrian experience a priority; and he felt the Board Members were trying to understand why the sign needed to be 9' tall. Mr. Lauer said from an architectural standpoint, he did not know why; but from the relationship from the building to the street, the sign was significantly smaller than what they had started with.
- Mr. Richardson felt the proposed sign was non-compliant with what the Code stated in that it was not a monument sign, and asked Mr. Henderson didn't it also have too much square footage by a certain amount.
- Mr. Henderson explained they were o.k. on the square footage; that it was the height and the non-monument.
- Mr. Richardson said they had built a beautiful building, and it would be a real asset to the downtown area; but he would have to rely on the architects on the Board regarding the scale regarding the sign.
- Mr. Henthorn asked Mr. Henderson if the regulations required it to be a monument sign. Mr. Henderson said yes, and it was stated in Section 9.2 of the Urban Code.
- Mr. Joslin asked Mr. Lauer was there any way that just the upper portion of the sign could be integrated with the landscape. Mr. Lauer said when they first came before the Board they were required to put in additional landscape; and if they did as Mr. Joslin suggested it would obscure the sign.
- Mr. Henthorn felt if they could take the poles off the sign and put it on a brick base it would become a monument sign.
- Mr. Joslin informed Mr. Lauer the way it was proposed, it confronted the Board with a situation regarding precedence setting.
- Mr. Richardson asked Mr. Henderson would it be do-able to come up with an 18" to 24" base and take the poles off and construct the sign on top of the base, wouldn't it make it a monument sign. Mr. Henderson explained.
- Mr. Joslin asked Mr. Lauer if the sign was already constructed. Mr. Lauer said it was under construction.
- Mr. Joslin asked if it could be modified in order to be in compliance with the monumental sign as stated in the Code. Mr. Lauer said anything could be modified.
- Mr. Richardson informed Mr. Lauer that the consensus of the Board Members was that they did not want a sign on poles, or a sign that was 9' high.
- Mr. Richardson asked Mr. Lauer if the architect that originally designed the sign knew about the Urban Code specifications. Mr. Lauer gave an explanation.
- Mr. Richardson asked when the proposed opening date for the new church was. Mr. Lauer said it was December 9, 2014.
- Mr. Henthorn said he knew the sign was already under construction and that the church was tall; but he felt as a Board they needed to have some rules regarding signs, and he also felt they needed to be able to justify as a board why this sign needed to be over 5' tall. He felt they might as well throw the Code away if they could not stick to their rules regarding any sign applications.
- Mr. Joslin said that was the point he was trying to make earlier in establishing precedence, which was definitely an issue.
- Mr. Lauer said they could modify what they had.
- Mr. Richardson said he needed to ask Mr. Lauer a question he already asked him for a good reason; and asked if the designer of the sign that came before the Board Members had adequate information regarding the City and their Ordinance to make the sign? Mr. Lauer felt the designer had the complete Urban Code for reference.

- Mr. Richardson explained to Mr. Lauer the Board Members had this issue come up time and time again, where design people did not have access to the Code; and the Board Members were trying to avoid a lot of these issues; and that they and staff were trying to develop a check list in order to help people to have the proper tools and information before they come before them.
- Mr. Richardson and Mr. Pitts felt perhaps the landscaping could also be modified some in order to be able to achieve a compliant monument sign.
- Mr. Richardson asked Assistant City Manager Story if he would like to weigh in on the discussion.
- Assistant City Manager Story agreed the large scale of the building posed a problem regarding the sign, but he also understood the Board Members' opinion regarding precedence setting. He also thought there was a mitigated factor regarding institutions they could give some weight to.
- After some more discussion Mr. Lauer said he would have the sign redesigned as a monument sign in order to be in compliance with the code; and send the new plans to Mr. Henderson.

Ricky Richardson informed Mr. Lauer if the sign was redesigned as such that met the Code he would not need to come back before the Board.

Mr. Richardson noted for the record there was no one present in the audience to speak in favor or against the request.

Mr. Richardson moved to table the request, in order to give Mr. Lauer time to have a sign redesigned and bring it back to Staff to determine if it met the Code; and he was seconded by Mr. Pitts. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

Mr. Henderson said he would email all the Board Members a copy of the revised sign as soon as he received it.

Other Business: Approval of the Proposed 2014 Design Review Board Meeting Schedule

The Board Members approved the 2014 Design Review Board Meeting Schedule by acclamation.

Staff's Announcements

Mrs. Roland again welcomed New Board Member Jessica Folk; and she informed the Board Members she had informed Ms. Folk regarding New Board Member Training.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 6:10 P.M.


 Ricky Richardson, Chair

Edited by Julie Roland, Secretary