

RIVER DISTRICT DESIGN COMMISSION

MEETING OF

August 10, 2017

Members Present

George Davis  
John Ranson  
Johnathan Hackworth  
Courtney Nicholas

Members Absent

Sheri Chaney  
Peyton Keesee  
R.J. Lackey

Staff

Kenny Gillie  
Bonnie Case  
Clarke Whitfield

Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

Mr. Davis stated Renee is no longer with us and Anna is no longer with us and Tracie is no longer with us.

Mr. Gillie stated Ms. Levi moved to Mississippi, Mrs. Lancaster is a full time nursing student and starts nursing school next week, Mrs. Burton will be a stay at home mom.

**I. ITEMS FOR PUBLIC HEARING**

- 1. A request has been filed for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 410-A Main Street to install a 2' x 8' projecting sign for The Brick.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Present to speak on behalf of this request was Adam Jones. I am requesting to get a sign as you just read. The blade sign will make it more convenient and easy for my customers to see the location of the store. We've gotten calls throughout the years asking where are you. The nice tree out front in the summer kind of obstructs the little sign we have above the door. One day I was just talking to the sign shop and looking at Dell'Anno's sign how it's coming off the street where you can clearly see it coming up or down Main Street. So that's when we decided to move forward to see if we could get that approved.

Mr. Ranson asked what's the sign made of?

Mr. Jones stated it's like an aluminum, reinforced. It would come off the wall. It's 24 inches kind of like one big rectangle, very sturdy so the wind won't have it flapping.

Mr. Ranson asked if it was illuminated.

Mr. Jones stated no it's not illuminated. I didn't see anything else on Main Street lit up so we kept it as just not illuminated.

Mr. Davis stated according to staff recommendations, it does not meet the guidelines.

Mr. Gillie stated it doesn't and it does. The guidelines call for a smaller sign but the zoning code allows for a larger sign. If you remember the Dell'Anno's sign which is very similar to this, the board approved Dell'Anno's to have what the zoning limitation was, not necessarily what the guideline limitation was and that's what we were trying to explain. This is similar to another sign which the board has approved in the past. Although it doesn't meet the guidelines, it's similar size. The board asked us to look at that as one of the things in the future amendments of the guidelines is bring the two in compliance with each other. As it stands right now, it doesn't meet the size, but does meet the zoning size.

Mr. Davis asked you would do it with the condition that it would be placed 10 feet above the sidewalk? Is the Dell'Anno's sign the same way?

Mr. Gillie stated it's actually slightly taller than that. Just so you have it 10 feet to keep people from striking their heads and jumping up and hitting it and stuff. We want it to be above the windows. Dell'Anno's I think is slightly taller than that but their building is also a little different in size.

Mr. Davis asked is that okay with you if we do recommend the sign and propose that it be 10 feet off the ground?

Mr. Jones stated yes I actually prefer it. We have a copper awning over top and there are two windows and I was hoping I could get it symmetrically in between the windows and make it look even.

Mrs. Nicholas asked if those windows were part of an apartment?

Mr. Jones stated that space is unoccupied. I'm not sure which direction it's zoned. I've been there for five and half years and have had several people look at it. But the IDA owns the building and I'm not sure exactly.

Mrs. Nicholas stated I just didn't want it to be someone's apartment and we're now sticking a big sign when they look out the window.

Mr. Jones stated it's completely gutted and down to the studs.

Mr. Whitfield stated I can't speak for the IDA but it would be my belief representing them that would eventually become more commercial space rather than residential.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

**Mrs. Nicholas made a motion that the sign as presented does not meet the guidelines. Mr. Hackwork seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote.**

**Mrs. Nicholas made a motion that the sign be approved with a Certificate of Appropriateness because it is a minor discrepancy from the guidelines but that it**

**be placed 10 feet above the sidewalk. Mr. Ranson seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote.**

- 2. A request has been filed at 401 Craghead to remove the wood decking from the exterior awning located on the corner of Craghead and Wilson Streets.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Present on behalf of this request was Jordan Jones with Watershed Ventures. The canopy that's located at 401 Craghead the wood is falling in and it's very rotted. The city has asked us to go ahead and take it down because it's a public health hazard. I'm here to go ahead and request a COA to do that demolition. Just again removing the wood decking leaving the steel structure that currently exists.

Mr. Davis asked will you be coming back later to tell us what you're going to put over.

Mr. Jones stated yes but we don't have a plan in the short term. Watershed Ventures is a long term real estate acquisition partner in the River District. We have acquired about a half million square feet of space so far. We are still in the process of acquiring more buildings. We are in the process of starting to think through redevelopment plans, Richmond Cedar Works in particular. Hopefully I will have more information on that specific building in six to nine months. We hope to break ground and start a project there in maybe 15 to 18 months. Still a long ways out but I don't have anything immediately to share plans. We are planning on finding a partner to do a historic tax credit renovation type property. J. Burton is ready to immobilize on Monday if I get the approval.

Mrs. Nicholas asked if the metal parts of the building there will stay exactly as they are?

Mr. Jones stated they will stay exactly as they are.

Mr. Ranson asked if it was wood decking like on the roof?

Mr. Jones stated that is correct.

Mr. Ranson asked are you going to paint it?

Mr. Jones stated yes that is a requirement from the city so we will come back later talking about that. I just need to get it done first. We have started painting all the exposed wood and metal across all of our properties. We plan on going back to that same yellowish color we have been putting up on Richmond Cedar Works building and starting Imperial Mill next. We will paint it primarily just to protect the integrity of the steel.

Mr. Davis closed the public hearing.

Mr. Davis stated it's been falling down for a long time.

**Mrs. Nicholas made a motion that this request meets the guidelines as presented with the caveat of a 24 month time limit placed on the approval to allow for redevelopment plans. Mr. Ranson seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote.**

Mr. Davis stated we have a new application that has been brought before us today. I would like to see if we can accept it. All those in favor of having the request presented at today's meeting, say I. Request to hear was unanimous.

3. *A request has been filed for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 700 Wilson Street to add signs on the outside.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Present to speak on behalf of this request was Chris Wilson.

Mr. Gillie stated Mr. Wilson has requested to replace the hanging projecting sign which you will see in your photograph. Then on the other side of the building which would be the north facing wall, he is proposing putting a 4 x 4 internal illuminated acrylic sign. The hanging sign meets the guidelines, the size and location. The 4 x 4 acrylic illuminated sign does not meet the guidelines.

Mr. Davis asked did you say the sign on the back end is a lighted sign?

Mr. Gillie stated the one he would like to install will be lighted. That would be a new sign on the north wall. It will actually be along Wilson Street. The hanging sign that replaces the existing sign does meet the guidelines.

Mr. Wilson showed members photos of the sign from his phone.

Mr. Davis asked if it was the same size at that one right there.

Mr. Wilson stated this is a 2 x 4. The one I just showed you is a 4 x 4. It would be very similar to this.

Mr. Wilson stated I have two other options which are very expensive options.

Mr. Davis stated before you go into your other options, let's ask the committee if they have any questions about what you're proposing right now.

Mr. Davis asked will you be okay as far as the sign he has proposed putting on the north side?

Mr. Gillie stated that would be the east side for the projected sign. That one is alright. The other one would be on the north side. That's the 4 x4 internally illuminated acrylic sign.

Mr. Wilson stated you will be able to see it as you're coming up Wilson because that's the long side of the building itself. Once you get up on the middle it may be too late.

Mrs. Nicholas asked so there will be two signs on that wall or is this sign being removed and another sign being put up?

Mr. Wilson stated the one in the front will stay and then we will add this one.

Mr. Gillie stated they will be replacing the projecting sign and a new sign will be installed on the north wall.

Mr. Wilson stated all they are going to do is reface the one you're looking at.

Mrs. Nicholas stated I have no problems with the replacement sign. But I know internally illuminated signs are something that this group has denied before.

Mr. Hackworth stated correct me if I'm wrong but isn't Dell'Anno's internally illuminated acrylic?

Mr. Gillie stated it is external.

Mr. Hackworth stated I know it has lights up on the windows but those light up the building.

Mrs. Nicholas stated because we had that conversation at the time and I'm pretty sure we denied it and we did the same with the fish market on North Union Street.

Mr. Davis asked Mr. Wilson why he felt it would be beneficial to internally illuminate the sign?

Mr. Wilson stated actually we had the sign and the only other way to have it illuminated is to have individual LED lights. So that would be the purpose of it. Not being illuminated, the only time you're going to be able to see it is once you are up on it and I'm not sure how much of an impact that will have.

Mrs. Nicholas asked are you doing much business in the dark?

Mr. Wilson stated moving and storage people are always looking especially with all the new development in the area. It may actually be the only time they see it. They are working during the day. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to see it and probably wouldn't even come that way.

Mr. Davis stated the better part of the year it's light until about 8:30 at night.

Mr. Davis stated now let's go to what other options you have.

Mr. Wilson stated I had the sign contractor quote two other options. That sign I presented will cost \$200. The next one will cost \$3500 and the one after that will be \$4500. Mr. Gillie has confirmed my square footage allowance and maybe later on down the road I may take a look at that if we are able to afford it. I would love to individualize the letters and it would be 35 letters total for the River District Movers and Storage to go across that same wall at the top and some on the back wall which will project upward towards Galileo and up that way. You will be able to see it if you're up on that hill on the other end on Main. But again, it's some pretty expensive options and a lot more involved.

Mr. Ranson stated the sign doesn't comply with the guidelines because of the size or is it the fact that it's internally illuminated. Is that contrary to the guidelines?

Mr. Gillie stated the 16 square foot internal illumination acrylic sign is contrary to guidelines.

Mr. Ranson stated we could approve the compliant sign and give you a chance to come back and find something that's not \$3500.

Mr. Whitfield stated I was going to suggest you handle them individually anyway.

Mr. Davis stated you could go ahead and hang the sign and just not light it as of right now unless we move to change so.

Mrs. Nicholas asked can it be an acrylic sign at all?

Mrs. Nicholas asked do we have our guidelines on here?

Mr. Gillie stated yes, I'm looking them up.

Mr. Davis stated we can supercede the guidelines.

Mr. Gillie stated section 7 page 45.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Gillie read the code section of what would be allowed or not allowed.

Mr. Ranson asked what's the difference between recommended and approved?

Mr. Gillie stated there's nothing in the guidelines that says it can't be approved it just says not recommended. We wrote them specifically that way.

Mr. Davis asked how much it would cost to paint it on the wall? It wouldn't cost \$4500.

Mr. Gillie stated they just did the River District sign across from you.

Mr. Wilson stated yeah it's beautiful.

Mr. Davis stated that would be my suggestion. That would really be something that would stand out in my opinion.

Mr. Wilson stated he didn't know that was an option.

Mr. Davis asked do we want to go ahead and separate the two and vote on the one on the front side.

**Mrs. Nicholas made a motion to approve the projecting sign that it does meet the guidelines and should be issued a COA. Mr. Hackworth seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote.**

Mr. Davis asked do we want to table the second one until Mr. Wilson comes back to bring us another request?

Mr. Wilson stated I do have one question. If it's painted am I still working within the square footage guidelines?

Mr. Gillie stated yes. You can potentially do other designs and get that square footage.

Mr. Davis asked what was the square footage of the Coca Cola sign and the River District sign?

Mr. Gillie stated the River District sign was art and the Coca Cola sign was done before the guidelines were done.

Mrs. Nicholas stated what about the sign above the fire station. I know we messed with the square footage on that because it was such a big building that we allowed them much wider square footage than normal.

Mr. Gillie stated that was in the Tobacco Warehouse portion and it had different regulations. He's got different zoning than that where it's at. That's another thing in the guidelines we might tweak because one district allows one thing and another district another, but the River District encompasses both of those.

Mr. Davis asked aren't we allowed to do larger signs if we feel...

Mr. Gillie stated you can't exceed the zoning requirements though. You can exceed the guideline requirements and the guideline requirement for a projected sign is eight square feet where you just need 16 because the zoning code itself says 16. So you can go up to what the zoning says but zoning is a hard fast wall that you can't go past. In this case the 16 is the zoning part so you can't exceed that. If he was in the Tobacco Warehouse District, it does have a different requirement.

Mr. Ranson stated so according to zoning he can have up to 16 square feet of sign.

Mr. Gillie stated wall sign.

Mr. Wilson stated it's 98 actually but 5000 square foot is 98 square footage of signage. The 16 was just part of it and that's what I added. So it's 98 total.

Mrs. Nicholas stated we move to table the second sign request.

Mr. Davis stated with what we have had in the past the acrylic is a problem, the internally illuminated is a problem so that's why we are tabling it to give you time for more options and bring them back to us.

**Mrs. Nicholas made a motion to postpone it indefinitely until Mr. Wilson is ready to bring it back with a future submission. Mr. Ranson seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote.**

#### **I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**The July 13, 2017 minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.**

#### **II. OTHER BUSINESS**

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

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Approved By: