

RIVER DISTRICT DESIGN COMMISSION

MEETING OF

OCTOBER 14, 2021

Members Present

George Davis
Adam Jones
Courtney Nicholas
John Ranson
Andrew Hessler

Members Absent

R. J. Lackey
Peyton Keesee

Staff

Lisa Jones
Doug Plachcinski
Ryan Dodson

Mr. Davis called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ITEMS FOR PUBLIC HEARING

1. *Certificate of Appropriateness Request PLRDD2021-370 by Funky's Bar and Arcade at 315 B Lynn Street (Parcel # 24853) for a projecting sign and window signs.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Will Mackaman stated, I am working with River District Association and I started about a month ago. I am the Programs and Services Manager, and I am just helping the applicant think about this process and apply for this sign.

Mr. Davis stated if we have questions are you going to answer the questions or would you prefer that they did?

Mr. Mackaman stated I prefer that the applicant did.

Mr. Davis stated if they don't mind coming up and we appreciate you introducing yourself. And welcome.

Mr. John Grothe stated we own 716 Wings up on Piney Forest and we have been down here looking at The River District for the last three or four years. We have been looking for a building that we could put a sports bar and arcade in and help build Danville and the downtown area. We know that it is up and coming. We have looked at some other buildings, but Lynn Street just happened to come available. We love the building and the location, and it has a nice kitchen and I think it fits what we would like to do. We are asking for some signage there and that kind of stuff. We would ideally like to try to open by the middle of November and I know that is kind of pushing it, but it is what it is.

Mr. Davis stated maybe a little ambitious, but we are glad that you are trying.

Mr. Grothe stated we have talked to Doug quite a few times about it and want to make sure that we are doing the right thing.

Mr. Davis stated we hope that it all works out for you. I am sure that we have a couple of questions about your signage.

Ms. Nicholas stated the sign as is pictured here on the actual logo of it is, I get what the funky and the color kind of coming off it. The actual sign that would be mounted would it be fully round or a weird, jiggered shape to accommodate the purple coming off?

Mr. Grothe stated no, just the round circle itself and the F and S comes out and that will be the only thing that's on there. The purple will not come down there and look jiggered. We are working with Eddie Hundley on this.

Mr. Ranson stated I think it would be funkier if it came off the circle.

Mr. Grothe stated it would be nice.

Ms. Nicholas stated it would be funkier, but it might also be a little more dangerous.

Mr. Davis stated John you have been known for your funkiest.

Mr. Grothe stated so does anybody oppose the name? I have had some people shake their head like what in the world. I like the name.

Mr. Davis stated it gets your attention.

Mr. Grothe stated it does.

Mr. Ranson stated but you must live up to it and you must have a funky sign.

Mr. Grothe stated I agree. The sign there is a huge cost difference for that purple down there and plus we have a minimum of 10 foot off the ground and nobody can touch it anyway. So, even if there was a sharp edge down there, they couldn't touch it.

Ms. Nicholas stated I teach middle school, so your ten feet is quite accessible when they put their mind to it. It does say that it's going to have led lighting and power supply, is that on top of it or lit from inside?

Mr. Grothe stated it is in the back of the sign. We are looking for a permission to do a back lit sign like brick has it done right here it is kind of lit from both sides. So, you can't see the other side but both sides would be lit up from inside.

Ms. Nicholas stated so it will come off a 45-degree angle and you will be able to see from both corners?

Mr. Grothe stated we had asked about that because it is a double-sided sign instead of putting some on the front and some on the side if we just put one sign and add 45 off the corner of the

building itself then we would be able to capture coming across the bridge there and everybody coming down the road there.

Mr. Ranson stated I think that is kind of neat.

Mr. Grothe stated we have some stuff inside that is going to hopefully attract some people.

Mr. Jones stated first, thank you for being a local entrepreneur and investing in Danville. The Wing place is really killing it and you have done a great job up there. We are happy to have you down in the River District. One of my questions: the arcade, bar, and food are they neon lit signs on the inside of the windows?

Mr. Grothe stated we want to.

Mr. Jones stated is that twenty-four hours or does it cut off on a timer?

Mr. Grothe stated it all will be on a timer.

Mr. Jones stated so when you are closed it will be down?

Mr. Grothe stated yes sir. I drove around here late one night and the current sign that is there now was lit all night. However, we don't want that. We plan on putting a switch in so at the end of the night we can kill everything that is in the window.

Mr. Jones stated I just didn't know being that close to the residential area with the apartments and the lofts I was just curious with that. I like the name, but I have to ask was funky' s just something that you just came up with?

Mr. Grothe stated so we were going to pick bar cade until we received a phone call from a lawyer from New York who said that you will not use that word under any circumstances. We really wanted to go with River City Bar Cade since it's in the River City area. As a matter of fact the name of our LLC is River City Kitchen, so it was just fitting. But funky' s is catchy and it's something that nobody else around here has.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Ms. Nicholas stated Doug is neon allowed? I can't bring up all the guidelines to check. I thought at one point we had said or there had been something that said neon was not permissible.

Mr. Hessler stated like in the window display.

Ms. Nicholas stated it's not that I am against I just want to know what it is versus the code.

Mr. Grothe stated the reason we wanted to go with neon is that some other signs in this area have neon on them.

Mr. Hessler stated I'm not sure. When Susan Stilwell did her?

Ms. Nicholas stated yes, her's is grandfathered in.

Mr. Mackaman stated I was just looking at the guidelines and it does say that neon is by approval allowed in the signage section.

Ms. Nicholas stated that changes on how we need to approve this.

Mr. Davis stated Andrew you think that we have approved other signs?

Mr. Hessler stated I don't remember anything in a window at least not in the last two or so years that I can recall. I am trying to think what places do have light up displays. Adam, does Delano's have anything that flashes in the window?

Mr. Plachcinski stated they have an open sign.

Ms. Nicholas stated from the code section it says that neon signs are allowed with approval, but care should be taken that the neon should not overwhelm the sign or the building and neon signs inside the windows are allowed. It is just external neon.

Mr. Plachcinski stated right.

Mr. Hessler stated for the record I love neon.

Mr. Jones stated are the letters individual or is like a row of lighting.

Mr. Grothe stated we haven't had them made yet because there is a couple of vendors that will make them. However, we weren't exactly sure the sizes and stuff. We want to shoot for individual letters because neon signs when they run together, they are hard to read. These neon signs are a little different and neon has come a long way in the last five years.

Ms. Nicholas stated Doug in 7.24 it does say that plastic side components with back lit signs and panels are not recommended.

Mr. Plachcinski stated right, but that would be internally illuminated side. It says that it is not recommended but it is not prohibited.

Ms. Nicholas stated I just know that we have specifically denied people the back lit signs before in the River District because we said that was not a look that we were going for within the district. I know the fish market, we told them to come back with a different kind of sign. I just thought that was something that we were not going to permit.

Mr. Plachcinski stated was that like a box mounted sign on the building?

Ms. Nicholas stated yes. I am struggling for us to be consistent if we are going to say one set of things and turn around and say another.

Mr. Jones stated my way of thinking is with this particular application, with funky' s, the letters are clean and not taking up the entire space, but my main concern was them being on a timer.

Mr. Hessler stated are you more concerned the internally lit projecting 45 degrees outside sign lit on the corner.

Ms. Nicholas stated yes, I'm not worried about the neon. That being an internally back lit sign on both sides, we have specifically prohibited that in the past. This was a boxed sign, but we had said across the board we weren't doing back lit plastic signs. That is why the lights normally come from underneath or up on something like that. I don't know that I am against it because it fits an event like an arcade.

Mr. Jones stated what is Delano's sign?

Ms. Nicholas stated what I remember, and I could be wrong it is lit within the cut outs of the letters. It's not actually solid plastic. It is lit. I am not 100% percent on that.

Mr. Grothe stated do you mind me asking just for clarification, the sign that is currently there now, is lit internally at Lynn Street Market. It is lit from the inside?

Mr. Jones stated looking at this case and the funky' s sign, for my clarity would it be that the funky silhouette lit only, and the arcade bar would be individual letters lit and everything else dark to fall within the guidelines.

Ms. Nicholas stated the neon, because it is inside, is fine. It's like later in the guidelines that neon on the inside is not a problem. If they are mounted on the inside of the window. The big one projecting off the building, we said at one point that we were not going to allow hard plastic signs with the light behind them.

Mr. Hessler stated the plain plastic.

Ms. Nicholas stated we have allowed a lot of variations where it was metal with something cut out behind and variations with that theme, but not a solid plastic lit. The Lynn Street Market I can't speak of right now or not. It says they added the whole section of materials not recommended and there are very few places in here where it says something is out right prohibited. Materials not recommended: plastic sign components, back lit sign panels, plastic letters or prefab boards not recommended, and plastic panel signs are not recommended, etc.

Mr. Jones stated so it sounds like some of these things are not recommended but it falls on the panel to decide whether funky' s bar is going to have a lit sign or go back to the drawing board.

Ms. Nicholas stated if the board so chooses to then you will have to do the two-part finding where it does not meet the guidelines, then two or three.

Mr. Plachcinski stated, or the alternative could be just a non-internally lit sign.

Mr. Davis stated is it going to project out from the building or is it going to be flat against the building?

Mr. Plachcinski stated out.

Mr. Davis stated project out?

Mr. Plachcinski stated yes.

Mr. Hessler stated from the corner with a 45-degree angle.

Mr. Davis stated so it will have to have a light on each side.

Mr. Jones stated if that is the case, we could table it and it won't get voted on until November?

Mr. Plachcinski stated unless you approve it if it is non-internally lit.

Ms. Nicholas stated elsewhere for lightning it says: illumination for signs should be from shielded, incandescent, led lights, halo lit, pen letters are allowed, and round mounted spotlights are allowed for illumination.

Mr. Davis stated so everybody is deep in thought right now.

Ms. Nicholas stated I am not trying to be difficult. I just don't want to open us up for people coming up and say wait a minute you said yes here and not here, there is no consistency. Anything that we decide can always go to city council to be overruled.

Mr. Hessler stated I wonder if we kind of slipped down that slope. I don't know if you were here when we did approve the Lynn Street Market.

Ms. Nicholas stated I don't think that I was, because I was very pregnant at that time.

Mr. Hessler stated I feel like we have partially already gotten to some plastic back lightning signage already and since we have some strict guidelines on size, I don't think we have to worry too much about golden arches ending up like burger king or something. It's not like we are going to have a huge sign that is sitting out there.

Mr. Davis stated it may be that we just changed our mind.

Mr. Plachcinski stated every location is individual, so I appreciate the concept of not wanting to quote set a precedent, but you really are deciding on a case by case.

Mr. Jones stated Mr. Grothe this is nothing towards your business. We are just trying to get things dialed in because we want you here. I am looking at the Lynn Street Market sign now and Market is individual letters and Lynn is kind of script.

Ms. Nicholas stated that is not a projected sign.

Mr. Jones stated right, this is mounted on the building.

Mr. Hessler stated it is flat mounted and it is raised or more boxed lettering and lightning within the letters. We are in a slippery slope situation and we have already kind of did this for this location in a way.

Ms. Nicholas stated but a projecting sign and a flat mounted sign are a very different thing.

Mr. Jones stated Mr. Grothe what is the chance of looking at this and getting Funky's being the only thing lit. What is your take on that verses the entire sign with the blue and purple like

Funky's, Arcade Bar the name of the business and what it is lit and the background dark with maybe lights shining up on it? I am just curious what is your take on that?

Mr. Grothe stated so even Delano's where it says pizza is flat acrylic where pizza is back lit and I'm not sure what the difference on this is because it is flat acrylic with letters with back lighting. Even though they have some other stuff written on top and bottom, it is still part of their sign is flat acrylic back lit.

Ms. Nicholas stated this is not what we just looked at.

Mr. Jones stated If I am riding down Lanier or coming up from Craghead and I say hey there is funky' s and it is lit up, but the circle is not lit up. What is your opinion on that?

Mr. Grothe stated so originally, we wanted just the blue and purple part and round to be that's the only thing then basically come off the profile and have the word funky' s in back light just the word funky' s. That is originally what we had planned on because reading the guidelines its hard to determine those guidelines obviously. But reading those guidelines it looked like it fit in those guidelines, however, then we talked to Mr. Hundley because he does this for a living. We asked what the city allows or not allow. So, if the work funky' s was protruding off it and the rest of it was back lit or just the word funky' s was lit up or back lit just that word would that sacrifice the requirements?

Ms. Nicholas stated I think it would.

Mr. Jones stated I think it would on this end of walking that fine line of what Delano's has and at the same time make sure that people can see your business and that it is visible at the same time and not creating another slip or slope.

Mr. Grothe stated if we didn't back light the purple and the blue area and say that was just a flat one piece printed on both sides and we did the funky' s and it was stuck out about two inches and that had neon behind the word funky' s which is what we originally wanted to do anyway.

Mr. Jones stated you could even light arcade bar if you wanted to.

Mr. Grothe stated we really didn't want to put arcade bar on the front of it. Would there be anyone opposed to funky' s in pink with black letters?

Mr. Jones stated I don't have a problem with that. I think it fit's your business and I think it will be appealing and something catchy and cool.

Mr. Grothe stated we defiantly want to follow the guidelines because we plan on opening other things in the downtown area here.

Mr. Jones stated, and we want you to open.

Mr. Davis stated thank you for being so understanding.

Ms. Nicholas stated Doug based on all of that we are approving them to work with you to make a sign that fits the guidelines. How do we phrase it for maximum flexibility while still achieving our goal?

Mr. Plachcinski stated what I heard was that you asked him to only back light the lettering within the sign. I would approve it with only the letter lit.

Ms. Nicholas made a motion that a Certificate of Appropriateness be granted for PLRDD 2021-370 by Funky's Bar and Arcade at 315 B Lynn Street Parcel #24853 for a projecting sign and window signs with the stipulations that the projecting sign does not exceed sixteen square feet for each of the two sides that the word funky' s is the only part that is lit and that the window signs conform to the River District Design guidelines. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote.

Mr. Plachcinski stated I think that Mr. William has something to bring up from the RDA.

Ms. Nicholas stated is it just information or is it a request?

Mr. Will Mackaman stated I think it is just information, but I wanted to see if I might need to come back for a request.

Ms. Nicholas stated just in case we had to add to the order.

Mr. Mackaman stated at RDA we are organizing a window campaign to help with curb appeal for some of the vacant windows we are trying to connect business owners for inside decorations to do their kind of standard thing. We are hoping to get a painter to do temporary chalk paint on the outside for about four weeks. It would be from Thanksgiving through January 1 or so. We are just curious if we would need to submit an application for that?

Ms. Nicholas stated we have allowed it before with homecoming, cancer awareness and also autism awareness. We have allowed several different campaigns like this. I can't remember if we made a blanket that it was okay with the time limit.

Mr. Davis stated I think it was with a time limit and that he does have to bring it before RDDC because of the nature of it. What is he going to put on the wall and the windows because we need to have some sort of idea?

Ms. Nicholas stated what is the topic?

Mr. Mackaman stated it will be like a holiday scene of some sort. I understand if you need some type of visual for that, but it would be a Christmas theme.

Ms. Nicholas stated the next meeting is the 2nd week of November would that be enough lead time?

Mr. Mackaman stated it might make it tight, but I understand if we need to come back.

Mr. Plachcinski stated we were going to discuss rescheduling that meeting because the city is closed for Veteran's day. If you guys want to do that Wednesday instead of Thursday.

Mr. Davis stated I think the question right now is will it give him enough time to do what he needs to do? It seems like to me that we could make some kind of recommendation today that it would be limited to whatever scenes that we are talking about.

Mr. Jones stated are you familiar with the artist or can we pull up some of their work and look at it?

Mr. Mackaman stated so we have a potential artist, but we have not decided.

Mr. Jones stated are you thinking Craghead side and front of Me's and Main Street side?

Mr. Mackaman stated hopefully both, but we will probably prioritize the visual ability. I think the Craghead side would be more visible, I think.

Mr. Jones stated I thought the lightning of the Christmas trees on the front side.

Mr. Ranson stated I think you should call it Danville's Funky Christmas.

Mr. Davis stated Doug could we go ahead and give a blanket approval as long as you have the final say on what type of scene they did put up on there.

Mr. Plachcinski stated sure, so it will be removed by January 15 or something?

Mr. Davis stated I don't know that we need a vote or anything as long as everyone is in agreement.

Mr. Ryan Dodson, Assistant City Attorney stated a blanket approval is ok as far as they understand that basically this approval is on the grounds that this is a temporary seasonal decoration and that it must be approved by Doug before it goes up.

Everyone agreed to change the RDDC Meeting next month to November 10, 2021.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The September 9, 2021 minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Approved By: