

TOWN OF COUPEVILLE
Design Review Board Minutes
Tuesday, April 17, 2007
9:00 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairperson Carol Thrailkill, Boardmembers Larry Cort, Millie Fonda, and Jill Usher were present. Boardmembers Chuck Poust and Randy Williams were excused.

STAFF PRESENT:

Town Planner, Larry Kwarsick; and Recording Secretary, Karen Fuller.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Thrailkill at 9:02 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the March 20, 2007 and April 9, 2007 meetings were approved as presented without discussion.

Carol Thrailkill announced that she is stepping down as Chairperson of the Design Review Board, but will continue as a member of the board. She suggested Larry Cort, being vice-chairperson, move into that spot.

Board Action: A motion was made by Boardmember Fonda, seconded by Boardmember Usher, to appoint Larry Cort the Chairman of the Design Review Board. Motion passed 4-0.

Newly appointed Chairperson Cort elected not to appoint a co-chair today as there were two board members absent from this meeting, and thanked Carol for her service as Chairperson since 1996.

NEW BUSINESS

SGN 07-09 – Marine Resources Interpretive Display – Port of Coupeville Wharf

Larry Kwarsick explained that this is a joint application submitted by the Marine Resources Committee (MRC) and the Port of Coupeville. They propose to install 3 interpretative signs along the east side of the causeway of the Port of Coupeville wharf. In promotion of the educational mission of the MRC, a 3-panel display will be installed which will be located outside the railing, on the east side of the walkway of the wharf. The display will start about 300 feet from the entrance from NW Front Street. A support structure will be attached to the timbers that support the utility pipes running beside the walkway. The panels will be mounted at a low angle for easy viewing, below the top of the railing. No illumination is proposed. The Town Planner, as the Shoreline Administrator, has determined that the proposal does not constitute “development” and therefore a Shoreline Permit is not required.

Mr. Kwarsick believes these are very appropriate environmental and cultural messages. The location does not interfere with views of the historic structures, or marine or Town views. It is an ideal location for these interpretive signs. The MRC has done a tremendous job in terms of

designing the signs and text on the signs. Pedestrian activity is encouraged by interpretive signs. Mr. Kwarsick stated he is recommending approval.

Jim Patton, Executive Director of the Port of Coupeville, addressed the board and introduced Betty Weber and Sarah Smith, who were also in attendance. The Port likes the idea. MRC has been very responsive to all the Port's questions, and the Port supports this proposal.

Boardmember Usher stated that the signs look great, and she looks forward to seeing them on the wharf.

Chair Cort asked whether a fold-up step may be installed so young children may see the signs over the rail. Jim Patton shared his concern about liability issues. His preference would be not to have a step.

Sarah Schmidt, a consultant for the MRC, stated that they haven't yet measured exactly. There is some flexibility as to the height, and they will keep Chair Cort's suggestion in mind pertaining to the children.

Board Action: A motion was made by Boardmember Thrailkill, seconded by Boardmember Fonda, to approve SGN 07-09 with Staff Findings 1-4 as follows:

1. The applicant submitted a complete application on March 28, 2007, in accordance with CTC 16.28.050(C);
2. As primary signs, the proposed interpretive public signs at Port Wharf are reviewable by the Design Review Board at a public meeting;
3. The interpretive sign request is considered separate from the previously approved master signage plan for retail or quasi-public tenants of the Port Wharf which stands as previously approved; and
4. The interpretive displays encourage pedestrian activity on the wharf, which is one of the goals of the community design standards and comprehensive plan.

Motion passed 4-0.

SGN 07-10 – Frank J. Meyer – Whidbey Island Real Estate, 308 N Main Street

This application has been withdrawn at the applicants request.

SGN 07-11 – Kenneth Brewe – Brewe Layman Attorneys at Law, 107 S Main Street, Suite 103 (Coupe's Village)

Larry Kwarsick indicated two corrections to the Staff Report. Under 2. Size – total square feet should be 64 not 164. Under Findings 1. - the application was actually submitted on March 27, 2007, not December 14, 2006.

This is an application for a new business occupying first floor of Building E in Coupe's Village. They are requesting a single flush-mounted primary sign. Placement, colors, and lighting of the sign is consistent with the standards. The Town's building official has been asked to take a look at any work that may be going on in the building that reflect changes to the interior spaces. No occupancy permit has been requested for this business at this time. Mr. Kwarsick stated that he will communicate with the law firm regarding any incidental signs they may wish in the future, as this application only requests one sign.

Boardmember Fonda asked which colors they would be using. Mr. Kwarsick showed what was submitted. (Applicants only submitted one color copy.)

Board Action: A motion was made by Boardmember Usher, seconded by Boardmember Thrailkill, to approve SGN 07-11 with staff Findings 1-4 and Conditions 1-6 as follows:

Findings

1. The applicant submitted a complete application and review fee on March 27, 2007, in accordance with CTC 16.28.050(C);
2. As a primary sign, the proposed sign is reviewable by the Design Review Board at a public meeting;
3. The proposal is consistent with primary sign standards relating to placement, color, material, lighting and design.
4. The proposal size amounts to 9.58 square feet, which is within the remaining total building sign allowance.

Conditions

1. All exterior lighting used to illuminate signs, shall be designed to reduce glare impacts to adjacent properties and public rights-of-way, to use energy efficiently, and to reduce nighttime "light pollution".
2. All exterior lighting proposed to illuminate signs, shall be pointed downward and shielded from direct observation from the air, adjacent properties, and public rights-of-way.
3. Any sign light fixture intended shall be "full cutoff" fixtures as defined by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America.
4. The applicant must return a signed copy of the staff report acknowledging and accepting the conditions of approval.
5. The recently installed siding in the location of the prior door must be painted consistent with Building E.
6. Any additional incidental signage (per the following definition) must be approved prior to installation.
"Incidental sign" means a permanent sign meeting definition of an "on-premises" sign, non-electrical and non-illuminated of a noncommercial nature, which is permanently affixed on a plane parallel to the wall, on walls or windows located entirely on private property (address, hours of operation, historic register, directions, help wanted, public telephone, restores, etc.). Such signs are not included in the number of primary signs so long as the individual incidental signs do not exceed two square feet in surface area.

Motion passed 4-0.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION

Discussion on Internally Lit and Freestanding Signs

Mr. Kwarsick stated that due to time constraints, he was unable to complete a formal staff report on this issue, but did explain the following: If a sign is interior to the building and is highlighted to the point of illuminating, either backlit or neon, it's sole purpose is a sign. There were a few people that believed they could position a neon 'open' sign during their hours of operation. That is a specific type of sign that is prohibited. Either remove them, or turn them off. In the case of H&R Block, they had plastic backlit green signs with their logo. His opinion was that constituted a sign. He wasn't intending to say that any interior signage (display) would be considered a sign. Something that was illuminated to passers-by to draw them into a business is different. Vending machines are also an issue when/if they are easily seen from outside of the

business. He believes people were misinterpreting the code. Window signs are OK, illuminated signs are not.

Boardmember Fonda asked whether such things as a lit palm tree (whimsies) are permitted. A tenant of hers has one in her shop on Front Street. Mr. Kwarsick stated that if it's a message, it's not allowed. His concern is: where does it stop? We've taken a hard line in terms of internal lighting of signage.

Boardmember Thrailkill shared that a few businesses in town were grandfathered in. Mr. Kwarsick agreed and stated that when someone new comes into town and they see a sign, they assume they can use the same without asking. The mayor is working on a new informational package. When applications for occupancy permits or signs are requested, the information package would then be given to the applicant in an effort to clarify the Town's requirements. Signage review is one of the more difficult and time consuming tasks, and is very important to local businesses.

Chair Cort stated that it's nearly impossible to address a code to cover any possible scenario. There is one intent to try to bring people into the store, and another to attract people to a product once they are in the store. Some lines can be drawn between these two intents. He also said he would have less of a problem with internal signs being visible from the parking lot as opposed to being visible to the public roadways.

Chairperson Cort asked about the possibility of a review of the Code. Mr. Kwarsick stated that he is currently working on the Shoreline Master Plan, preparing for the Town workshop and adoption hearing, and making Planning Commission recommendations to Town Council. His preference would be to look at the Code upon the completion of these projects.

Boardmember Fonda asked whether we are revisiting the demolition code. Mr. Kwarsick explained that the Town is working with Mark Preiss, Executive Director of Ebey's Historical Reserve, to meet with the owners of Class I, II and III historic properties to discourage allowing a historic structure to deteriorate. From the DRBs perspective, we require review and approval of changes and modifications to historic sites. We don't have DRB review of Class II or III historic structures. The question would be how do we deal with complete modifications of these historic structures, which are not required to be reviewed by DRB? We need to be proactive in the avoidance of demolition.

Boardmember Thrailkill asked whether there is a check and balance in place on what is approved by the DRB to ensure what is requested is what is done. Mr. Kwarsick answered - yes.

Boardmember Fonda believes the requirements of Front Street are different as opposed to Main Street. Signage on Front Street could use some upgrading. There may be some inappropriate signs on Front Street that should be looked at.

Boardmember Usher asked if it would be possible to have two sets of guidelines: one for Front Street historic sites and one for other businesses, i.e., those on North and South Main Street.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:53 a.m.