

# CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

## DESIGN COMMISSION MINUTES

February 5, 2015 Meeting

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** 7:30 a.m.
- II. **ROLL:** Vice-Chair Hoopes and Commissioners Balcazar, King, and Roberts. Chair Moldafsky had not yet arrived.
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Flag Salute was recited.
- IV. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** None.
- V. **CONSENT CALENDAR:** Minutes – 1/15/2015 Design Commission meeting. M/S/C Roberts/King to adopt the minutes as written. 4-0
- VI. **CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS:**
  - A. **Design Review 14-18:** La Canada Imports  
1537 Foothill Boulevard  
New wall sign

Planner Gjolme notes that this is an after-the-fact approval of a wall sign. There are code issues with the existing installation, since its internally illuminated channel letters are not allowed in the Old Town District. The internal illumination will not be allowed. The previous discussion included retaining the La Canada Imports copy alone, with new subcopy signs.

Chair Moldafsky arrives at 7:35 am.

Previous review dealt with the monotony of all white letters for the main copy and subcopy. Mr. Gjolme recalls meeting with the applicant, with direction to draw from what 7-Eleven has done. The previously suggested subcopy signs on wood panels alleviate the sense of one bold line of copy overpowering and crowding. The applicant has submitted two routed wood panels with white painted copy. The panels are 15 inches tall and 61 inches wide. Staff sees this as moving in the right direction, but not yet alleviating the problem. The rather large letters are italicized. Staff does not regard the submittal as having enough variety or refinement for positive findings, and the beam remains crowded with lengthy white copy.

Planner Gjolme displays the staff alternate design. The applicant's panels were reduced 6 inches in length, with a narrower and more refined font (Tempus Sans). The fit of the

copy into the panels and the panels into the beam is more comfortable, and the contrast to the bolder La Canada Imports copy greater. Mr. Gjolme mentions that a condition has been included to require staff confirmation, finalizing measurements, color of panels, and similar particulars. As shown, the main sign would be 5'-6" from each end of the bay. To fit within this space, the panels should be approximately 4'-6" long with 13-inch height and 7 inch letters for comfortable top and bottom margins.

Mr. Gjolme also mentioned the four external spotlights already in place, in need of a permit after the fact.

He recommended approval of the staff alternative, based on positive findings.

Director Stanley states that the Old Town District has special sign requirements, and that the business has to be consistent with regulations of the signs of other businesses, with no special consideration because the sign is already in place. He notes that the sign was installed illegally and should be disregarded. He mentions that people have come in asking why the lit sign is allowed. He asks the Commission to be mindful of the character of the District.

Chair Moldafsky asks if the lights were pre-existing. Director Stanley responds that they were newly installed without permits, and should thus be disregarded.

Commissioner Hoopes asks if everything installed is legal, approvable within code. Mr. Gjolme states that everything is within code limits, except for the internal illumination of the individual letters.

Chair Moldafsky opens the public hearing.

Applicant Bulent Kerimo apologizes for the illegal installation, stating that he hadn't known of the requirements.

Commissioner Hoopes asks how the applicant feels about the staff alternate. He responds that it is close to what he wanted.

Commissioner Hoopes asks if he still desires to have rope lights under the soffit. Mr. Kerimo answers affirmatively. Mr. Hoopes asks staff about the approval status of the rope lights. Mr. Gjolme states that it is a gray area, most likely exempt from permits. Chair Moldafsky asks if it is subject to Commission review, and Mr. Stanley answers affirmatively. Mr. Hoopes asks for examples in the city; Mr. Stanley states that there might be one or two, perhaps seasonal, with the Kabob Place at Foothill and Ocean View coming to mind. Mr. Hoopes complains that the La Canada Imports rope lights look ragged because they are not straight, and thus cheapen the building.

Commissioner Balcazar asks if the La Canada Imports letters are legal. Mr. Gjolme responds that they are new and unapproved, but the previous letters were similar. Commissioner Roberts asks if the previous sign was installed without a permit; Mr. Gjolme states that he doesn't know. Mr. Roberts states that the letters must have been installed prior to 1978, before the design review process was in place.

Commissioner Balcazar states her support for changing the white La Canada Imports letters, and for staff's plaques as individual components. However, she voices concern over the length of the sign.

Chair Moldafsky closes the public hearing.

Commissioner Roberts states that he can't approve nonconforming channel letters, even without internal illumination. He can't make the findings for them. Mr. Roberts bemoans a "huge missed opportunity to sell the restaurant's story".

Commissioner King comments that the signage looks crowded, and that the plaques would be better on the wall. She disapproves of the La Canada Imports font.

Commissioner Hoopes agrees about the lost opportunity, that the signs would be better on the wall, and that more interesting La Canada Imports letters would be desirable. However, he states the array of signs is acceptable, especially considering that the business is across the street from a gas station, which dilutes the Old Town setting. He recommends that the business owner follow Commissioner Roberts' recommendation, and states that he can support that option.

Chair Moldafsky reopens the public hearing, stating that he wants the applicant's input. Mr. Moldafsky agrees about the lost opportunity. He notes that the business is as old as the town, but that styles are changing, with the City trying to bring in a small town feeling. He suggests that it is an opportunity for the business to jump in there, and that it should be good for business to upgrade the sign. Mr. Moldafsky endorses Commissioner Roberts' ideas, and asks the applicant if it's something that would be interested in pursuing.

Mr. Kerimo again states his desire to retain non-illuminated channel letters and his opposition to sign components on the building's wall, citing their lack of prominence and good visibility.

Commissioner Roberts comments that if someone rented 7-11, they would look to plastic next door as a precedent. He states that he can make findings for a white wood pinned letter sign in the same font as the staff alternative presented. He further states that the Commission is trying to help the business by making the sign more interesting to draw attention to it.

Director Stanley mentioned that the external lighting that has been installed will also need to be reviewed prior to any approval action.

Commission Hoopes states that he is amenable to wooden panels per staff, pinmounted letters in an off-white tan for the "La Canada Imports" copy and external lighting under the soffit.

Commissioner King notes that the copy length of the revised proposal remains excessive and precludes her from making positive findings.

Commissioner Balcazar agreed.

The Commission suggests forming a subcommittee to work with the applicant and staff.

Planner Gjolme reminds the Commission that pictographs remain an option and would minimize the extent of copy on the beam.

Commissioner Hoopes comments that after 35 years in the community, he knows the business name is La Canada Imports. The name should be subordinate to the product. Sandwich and pizza is the meaningful information and should be better emphasized.

M/S/C Moldafsky/Hoopes to continue the item for further review and form a subcommittee of Commissioners Balcazar and King to work with the applicant and staff. Unanimous 5-0.

Director Stanley reminds the applicant that the sign may not be lit in the interim and that a decision needs to be rendered on the matter at the next meeting since this remains an outstanding code issue.

**VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:** None.

**VIII. OTHER BUSINESS:**

**A. STUDY SESSION - Streetscape Design Manual:** discussion and revisions prior to document finalization.

Consultant Cantrell reviews changes since the last meeting. Commission discussion of said changes ensued, with the document reviewed page by page.

Commissioner Hoopes questions the term 'open space extensions'.

Mr. Cantrell explains the term refers to curb extensions.

Director Stanley comments that a landscaping section should be included to illustrate general concepts.

Commissioner Roberts suggests including a photo of the Ralphs planters that are on private/public property to illustrate shared City trees in larger planter boxes.

Director Stanley comments on and offers examples of “parklets” – temporary use areas extending into the public right-of-way. The Commission is enthusiastic about the concept, but not as a formal element of the streetscape guide at this time.

Commissioner Roberts simplifies the purpose and goal of the document; it should convey the Design Commission’s vision of the Blvd. to the City Council and Public Works Department.

Commissioner Roberts states the need for inclusion of the following statements within the landscaping section; 1) raising tree canopies to improve sign visibility; 2) street tree planters may be relocated into shared PROW/private property.

The Commission also endorses language to “encourage replacement of older cobra lights” and show two options for bus shelters, with corresponding photos, rather than a preferred and secondary option.

Commissioner Roberts introduces a third statement needed in the landscaping section - ‘City approved street planter boxes in lieu of trees where restricted by area.’

M/S/C Roberts/King to continue the study session to revise the guide’s content and language per the discussion and bring back for review at the next meeting. Unanimous 5-0.

#### **IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS:**

Commissioner Hoopes inquires about possible budget requests for professional trade publications.

Director Stanley will look into the matter.

Commissioner Roberts asks about upcoming budget periods.

Director Stanley responds that midyear budget is underway and the fiscal year budget is in June. Budget requests from the Commissions are typically made in April and May.

Commissioner Roberts suggests architectural materials from Benjamin Moore, signage industry catalogs, etc.

Commissioner Hoopes mentions a design conference he will be attending in Long Beach next month.

Director Stanley asks if other Commissioners are interested in the conference and will look into expense reimbursement through the City.

**X. COMMENTS FROM STAFF:** None.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:**

M/S/C Roberts/Hoopes to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 a.m. Unanimous 5-0.