

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DESIGN COMMISSION  
OF THE CITY OF LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE  
HELD ON APRIL 7, 2011**

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Commissioner Hoopes called the meeting to order at 7:30 am.
- II. **ROLL:** Present were Commissioners Moldafsky and Tobias, Director Stanley and Planners Gjolme and Clarke.
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Flag Salute was recited.
- IV. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** There were no comments.
- V. **CONSENT CALENDAR:**
  - A. **Minutes** - February 17, 2011 meeting. Approved unanimously.
- VI. **CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS:**
  - A. **Design Review 10-23;** Remedy Liquor; 823 Foothill Blvd. - new wall sign and façade changes.

Planner Gjolme gave an overview and background for the project.

Commissioner Tobias spoke about the interim tenants in the building and how they did not have window signs. He said that the Council wanted it to stay as it is without additional window signs.

Planner Gjolme spoke about conditions for finding of necessity. He had a resolution for Commissioners to consider if they got to that point and were able to approve the project.

Director Stanley spoke about changing Conditions of Approval 11 and 12 with the applicant required to submit a revised plan subject for review and approval by the Director of Community Development prior to issuance of building permits.

Mike Manuelian 3102 Cambridge Way, Glendale, said that they bought the closed liquor store over a year ago and had worked with City staff to reopen it.

Commissioner Hoopes asked about the lighting for the proposal.

Mr. Manuelian said that the proposed lighting is to enhance the sign but that it can be removed if the Commission wants. He agreed with Planner Gjolme that there will be up-lighting at the bottom but it will be hidden. He planned a fluorescent light - bronze color similar to the top of the building. Two 4' outdoor lights in

boxes with windows for light to shine up and not visible from street as it's covered.

Commissioner Tobias asked if it made more sense to paint it same color as the building.

Mr. Manuelian said that it can not be seen from the street. If it is painted over the paint can peel over time. Bronze and brown are as close as possible.

Planner Gjolme showed a photo of the building. The light box would be slightly visible from the street.

Commissioner Hoopes said that they should keep it bronze in color in order to coordinate with the rest of the building. It catches your eye more and becomes more distracting. He believed that 8' long LED lights were available. Otherwise, they would have to keep the two 4' ones abutted against each other. It was good to avoid a gap between the LED box lights. It would be a lot cheaper to operate with less opportunity for one fluorescent light to be off or flickering.

Mr. Manuelian said that he will research 8' lights and that they already use LED lights and that they save money. He can bring lighting back to staff for review before installation.

Commissioner Tobias said that he would like to see lighting coming from behind the letters (halo lighting) on the sign like other places on the Blvd. He suggested putting some extension of the face of the canopy so that it's not just an 8' box visible from the street. He wanted something provided to hide the box. He noted that there are lots of things attached to the sides of the building and that the applicant should try to clean them up.

Mr. Manuelian said that he has no objection to making changes in order to have a more attractive building to attract customers.

Planner Gjolme mentioned reverse channel letters in previous submission.

Commissioner Tobias suggested low key lighting style which would create interest in the business.

Mr. Manuelian said that the business is not a regular liquor store. It's more of an upper class and a welcoming store. It's more about the product they sell in the other store in Glendale. The look is very important and he is willing to spend a little more money to look better.

Planner Gjolme suggested reverse channel letters with opaque faces which would tone it down at night. For example, the signage for the new bookstore creates a nice misting effect.

Commissioner Hoopes asked if the white face would be opaque and asked if external lighting would be needed.

Commissioner Tobias said that it would get away from bolting things to the side of the building. He also said that residents of the City like low-key classy signs.

Planner Gjolme said that it was close to the street and toned down.

Commissioner Moldafsky asked if these proposed changes will slow down the opening of the business.

Mr. Manuelian asked if it was okay if they had a temporary banner sign. He said that they plan to open the business in a couple of weeks.

Commissioner Tobias said that they can put temporary banners up by right.

Director Stanley said they still have to meet size and time limits but that there was no need to return to the Design Commission.

Commissioner Tobias said that the wine logo was unbalanced on the front of building. He liked Planner Gjolme's idea to put sign on the side of building. The wine copy is hard to read and does not have to at an angle and that you can change the font. It would add depth and be more elegant with a different font.

Planner Gjolme asked about the need for any copy with the sign.

Commissioner Tobias liked staff's idea of putting something visual on the side of the building. He had difficulty running copy on the sign. The font could be changed. Grapes could be added to the sign.

Commissioner Hoopes said that it's a wine specialty store and not just a liquor store. The glasses proposed for the sign read as cocktails glasses.

Mr. Manuelian said that he has no objections. It's a wine specialty business and not just a liquor store.

Commissioner Tobias said that they could use a lighter field with purple grapes.

Planner Gjolme suggested individual pinned metal letters with the building as the field.

Mr. Manuelian suggested types of lights to light sign.

Commissioner Tobias suggested goose neck lights. Metal letters are easy to do. He asked if a Commission subcommittee or staff can review any proposals.

Commissioner Moldafsky wanted a strong statement made with the signage.

Planner Gjolme said that staff could review the sign and send an email to Commissioners for comment at a later date.

Mr. Manuelian said that the intention is to remove these lights and replace them with others. There could be two lights on either corner shooting in. He will bring product in for staff to see.

Planner Gjolme asked what the consensus of the Commission was regarding painted base along the side.

Commissioner Tobias said that he had no problems with the ideas discussed and that it may add interest to the building.

Commissioner Hoopes asked the applicant if this was something he could do.

Mr. Manuelian replied by saying that he would be happy to do that. He also wanted to add a suggestion that it be darker brown at the top.

Planner Gjolme said that it was not a darker brown but a darker shade of the primary fascia color.

Mr. Manuelian asked if he could paint the entry wall same color as the top.

Commissioner Tobias said that he is not a big proponent of painted wainscoting. For example, the next item on the agenda uses stone or manufactured stone instead. Vons was an example of the painting not working.

Commissioner Hoopes felt that color at the doorway would be a nice thing to add. He was ambivalent about painting the side of the building as it may detract from the sign. The color of the side of the building is slightly different from front.

Commissioner Hoopes asked if they were going to cut the color change around the outside corners.

Mr. Manuelian said that the intent was to remove the pipes and conduit from the roof. He also said that once the store was open, that he would paint the side to match the front of building unless the Commission wanted something else.

Director Stanley said that exposed lights were not allowed in the downtown and that they need to be removed. The neon below the overhang can not be exposed and the bulbs need to be internalized. He asked for cut sheets and a drawing showing the location of any lights on the building.

There was a general discussion about the details which were summarized into the following motion.

M/S/C Tobias/Moldafsky to approve with the following modifications; the main sign on Foothill will be composed of halo lighting with pinned off lettering with opaque letters(reverse channel letters); the wine logo will be moved from the front to the side of the building; the red LED lighting will be removed from the cornice; the sign on the west side of the building will be either pinned on metal lettering or routed foam or wood up to 10 sf in size and illuminated by a gooseneck fixture on the building, if applicant desires; plan to be submitted to Director prior to issuance of a building permit; the panel of color by the front door DEC 717 (Baked Potato), or similar from Dunn Edwards color chart to be the paint color to be painted in a darker complementary color from the ground to the ceiling; the lighting under the canopy will be changed so that there are no exposed bulbs and will be moved subject to review and approval by staff; flood lights on the west side of the building shall comply with the lighting requirement that no bulbs be exposed or visible; cut sheets shall be provided to staff prior to installation; the wine logo copy shall be changed to something more readable and elegant if not removed; the cornice shall be painted the same Baked Potato color; remove conduit on the west side of building if feasible. Vote: 3-0 to Approve.

Pat Anderson thanked the Commission for its support and said that the applicant wanted to be part of the community. Along Foothill Blvd a lot of businesses are lost as it's like a tunnel when you are driving down it. Unless there is something significant about frontages or signage, businesses are not visible. Make signage tasteful, but obvious, particularly in 700-800 block as blooming trees cut down visibility. She said that she liked wine glasses on the side of the building. She asked why the City allowed the car wash to paint its outside mustard color.

Commissioner Tobias asked if the City had authority over building colors.

Planner Gjolme said that design review was required if building permits were needed. If color is remarkably different from an approved color then it is an issue. The Commission had a possible zone code change to address building colors at the end of the agenda.

Commissioner Tobias asked Pat Anderson what she would want.

Ms. Anderson said that maybe she would want individual signs. The issue came to her attention when the bookstore was under construction.

Commissioner Tobias said that Montrose had similar tree issues. There are a lot more hanging signs there which give more visibility. You can not tell if some businesses are even there. Cars go faster along Foothill Blvd. compared to Montrose.

Commissioner Hoopes said that he had issues with the trees along the Boulevard. They are not watered sufficiently to make them healthy and able to grow over the sign band elevation. Crepe myrtles should not be street tree as they are messy. It would be a dream come true to change them out. A taller tree that can clear the signs with a canopy for shade would be better for sign visibility. It was necessary to put irrigation in so that trees can stay in good health and be attractive.

## **VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

**A. Design Review 11-02;** Calstar Realty & Mortgage; 1033 Foothill Blvd. - new wall sign and façade changes.

Planner Gjolme gave an overview for façade changes and new signage.

The applicant was not in attendance at the meeting.

Commissioner Tobias spoke about the sign at the dental building next door. This sign is an example of not knowing what type of business is in a building as you need to read the entire sign to have some idea about the type of business. There is no design work in the sign like Remedy when it first came to the Commission. It's like using letterhead as signage. He did not like having these two signs adjacent to each other. Why not have a sign with an identity.

Planner Gjolme noted that the Commission accepted the dental sign and approved it.

Commissioner Tobias said that he was opposed to the sign for the dental office. The new application needs awning. He noted that the applicant was not at the meeting, started work without permits and that the sign needs changes. He would vote to continue the item at this time. This was not meant as criticism of staff. He was frustrated as the proposed sign was similar to the one on the building next door. It needed an awning and crown molding.

Planner Gjolme said that the applicant was supposed to have been at the meeting. They have had to stop work and have paid fines for the work done without permits. He does not think that the sign was objectionable and that this is the business name. When staff brings a case to the Commission they know that it may be refined during the meeting and that it's not necessarily in its final form.

Commissioner Moldafsky said that it was only a problem if the applicant sees it as a problem. If an applicant does not want his sign to stand out, it's his business.

Commissioner Tobias said that he would not approve something at this meeting as the applicant needs to attend. He said that Commission recommendations were beneficial to applicants. Maybe the applicant is busy getting business open. Staff is bound by findings but Commissioners can vote no. There is a human factor. He can make findings and vote no.

Planner Gjolme said that he would like to have had the applicant at the meeting. He can not recommend approval if the findings can not made. He expected refinement at Commission meetings knowing that changes would be made and that he was being business friendly.

Commissioner Tobias said that the earlier comments were not meant as an attack on staff and that the staff report was excellent. He said that it was a business friendly Commission and that he desired to see that businesses succeed. Staff may want to suggest to applicants what the Commission might say about proposals. He noted that there were 50 letters running across the front facades of the two buildings.

Staff Gjolme said that the sign was not objectionable and that it could be refined. Staff knows that conditions can be changed and added to during the review process.

Commissioner Hoopes stated that the applicant did not come to the meeting and that he needs to explain his thoughts to the Commission about the message that he wanted the sign to deliver. The sign is a professional tailored sign.

Planner Gjolme asked about what direction to give to the applicant in terms of colors and size.

Commissioner Tobias said that the proposed sign was hard to read as it had too many letters and that no design was involved.

Director Stanley said that decisions have to be made using the required findings. The Commission can deny applications based on findings if it wants.

Planner Gjolme said that the uniformity of letters was addressed in the staff report and that findings could be made. It can be more distinct and readable as it's an attractive lettering.

Commissioner Tobias said that letters are attractive but excessive.

Commissioner Hoopes said that it was easier to read the proposed lettering compared to the next door neighbor's sign.

Commissioner Tobias said that it was hard to listen to criticism of visibility when signs like this are proposed. It does not cost more to design a better sign and people wonder why they go out of business.

Commissioner Hoopes said that they need to continue the item in order to discuss.

M/S/C Tobias/Moldafsky to Continue 3-0.

**VIII. OTHER BUSINESS:**

**A. Zone Change 11-02;** Amendment to Section 11.47.020 - Design Review Applicability.

Planner Gjolme asked the Commission to continue the item in order for the entire Commission to discuss. Unanimously approved.

**IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS:**

Commissioner Tobias asked to agendize a study session on a Saturday before the summer break with the Chamber of Commerce and public to discuss Foothill Blvd business identity.

Director Stanley said that it may need to be an evening meeting as business owner's work during the day. Staff will work with the Chamber on this issue.

**X. COMMENTS FROM STAFF:**

Director Stanley will bring future budget items to Commission.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:14.