

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DESIGN COMMISSION  
OF THE CITY OF LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE  
HELD ON SEPTEMBER 2, 2010**

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Vavoulis called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.
- II. **ROLL:** Present were Commissioners Hoopes, Roberts, Tobias, Planners Gjolme and Clarke, Consulting architect Cantrell and Director of Community Development Stanley. Commissioner Moldafsky was absent.
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Flag Salute was recited.
- IV. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** There were no comments.
- V. **CONSENT CALENDAR:**
  - A. **Minutes** – July 1, 2010 and July 15, 2010 meetings. The minutes of July 1<sup>st</sup> were not prepared and the minutes of July 15<sup>th</sup> were continued to the next meeting for further input from Commissioner Tobias.
- VI. **CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS:**
  - A. **Design Review 10-13; Vons/Plaza de La Canada; 631-663 Foothill Blvd.;** review of new sign program.

Consultant Cantrell gave an overview of the project which consisted of new monument signs that have been redesigned after input from the subcommittee. Stone signs have evolved into wood panels and frame with a stone base and curving hedges to blend with the existing street walls. Mr. Cantrell identified minor concerns addressed through conditions of approval; most notably the need for a lighter panel color and some articulation of the field via horizontal beveling. He felt the white copy for "Rite Aid" should be toned down and Japanese Boxwoods should be used as the background planting, but this could be further discussed. Actual integration of the new hedge with the existing street walls needed further thought and Commission discussion was encouraged.

Commissioner Tobias commented that the stone sign concept had changed to wood and questioned how this change occurred after direction given at the July 15, 2010 meeting.

Mr. Cantrell responded that the sign's design evolved during review by the subcommittee and turned the discussion over to Commissioner Roberts.

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Commissioner Roberts prefaced his comments by first explaining that in order to incorporate the sign into the wall, you don't just build the wall. The original mockups needed to show the relationship between the monument sign and street walls, but since this did not occur, finding a solution was difficult. After walking the site, it made more sense to create another hedge to tie in with not only the street walls and new sign, but the corner hedges as well. The result would be a continuous wall consisting of stone and shrubs along Foothill Blvd. The stone base of the sign and its connection to the new hedge satisfies the intent of integrating the sign with the street walls. He noted that 5 gallon Ligustrum specimens have been installed at the corner, not 15 gallon per the conditions of approval. He felt the new hedge needed to be staked, with a minimum planting height of 4 feet, at 18"-2' on center. During the subcommittee site visit with Vons representatives, the Vice President of Vons was hopeful about using pinned letters on a wood panel since they would read much better. Given the amount of stone already used on the walls, this was viewed as acceptable.

Commissioner Tobias commented that the condition of approval required the sign to be integrated with the street wall and he was not convinced that the revised design accomplished this. He asked if a continuous wall was still an option at this point.

Planner Gjolme explained that the subcommittee reviewed several concepts, including a stone sign and continuous wall, during the August break. Over that time and based on discussion during the onsite meeting, the current design evolved and is now before the Commission for formal review.

Chairman Vavoulis asked if the subcommittee was satisfied with the revised design currently presented.

Commissioner Roberts felt this was an acceptable solution all things considered, but further refinements were necessary.

Commissioner Tobias felt the red color used for the "Vons" and "TJ Maxx" copy needed to be toned down.

Chairman Vavoulis confirmed that with minor refinements, the project could possibly be approved.

Commissioner Tobias commented that the design is shortsighted since the walls were designed without taking the monument sign into account. It was difficult to support the project in its current form. He was still not certain that the current submittal satisfied the prior condition of approval and was in accord with previous discussions by the Commission.

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Director Stanley clarified that the subcommittee has endorsed this design, which includes a curving hedge that would blend into the monument sign.

Commissioner Roberts reiterated that the street walls should not have been approved without the monument sign incorporated into them. The mockups should have been required to demonstrate this.

M. Cantrell noted the current submittal deviates somewhat from the condition of approval, but the Commission has the authority to reinterpret and revise the condition in conjunction with this current review. The issue before the Commission was if positive findings for signage could be made at this time.

Director Stanley explained that a vote for approval, denial or a continuance, if necessary, were all available options.

Chairman Vavoulis again inquired if positive findings can be made for the submittal on the table, with minor adjustments as needed.

Commissioner Tobias asked why the sign could not be placed on the existing wall. This would integrate the sign into the wall and the original condition would be satisfied.

Mr. Cantrell explained that this would require a much lower and longer sign that would likely exceed allowable dimensions and a Variance may be required, as would possible demolition of the walls already in place.

Commissioner Hoopes did not think the existing walls needed to be removed to accommodate the sign. The sign in its current form does not have an adequate relationship with the street walls. New landscaping will eventually cloak the sign's base, thus a higher base may be needed. He also noted that the lights seem to be too close to the sign. He felt that the submittal could be modified as needed and that the Commission should proceed in that direction.

Chairman Vavoulis agreed with Commissioner Hoopes' comments.

Commissioner Tobias agreed that tearing existing walls down was not appropriate. He inquired about Commissioner Roberts' original concept design presented at the July 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Commissioner Roberts explained that there is not enough space left between the existing street walls and the applicant's desire was for a perpendicular monument sign that would have better east/west exposure.

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Chairman Vavoulis commented on the sign's composition and felt that a wood sign was a better option since the project and site as a whole already includes a significant amount of stonework.

Chairman Vavoulis asked if tabling the item until the end of the meeting was appropriate since other items were on the agenda and could perhaps be expedited.

The Commission agreed unanimously to table the item.

Chairman Vavoulis noted for the record that the item was tabled earlier and the Commission would continue with its review/comments.

Commissioner Roberts explained that in order for the hedge to be effective in forming the desired continuity, 15-gallon Ligustrum staked at 18" on-center would be required.

Chairman Vavoulis stated that he preferred a combination of shrubs and walls, as opposed to a single continuous wall.

A Commission discussion ensued about the precise method/design needed to achieve appropriate integration of the hedge and monument sign.

Chairman Vavoulis asked if the landscape palette would be further refined.

Commissioner Roberts thought all other landscaping should be retained as previously approved.

Commissioner Roberts sketched out a final design which specified a curved hedge matching the basic course of the proximate sidewalk. Bender board would be used to designate the course. He suggested a minimum 4-foot planting height and a maintained height of 5 feet. The soft concave of the hedge's course would be confirmed by staff prior to installation of the individual plants. All existing approved landscaping would be retained. He also noted that the remaining connecting hedge for the street walls at the corner would be upgraded to 15-gallon staked Ligustrum planted at 18" on-center to match the new hedge.

Chairman Vavoulis directed the discussion back to the issue of letter color.

Commissioner Tobias restated his desire to see the red color darkened. He also felt the white needed to be softened and that there wasn't a need for the white trim on the "Vons" copy.

Chairman Vavoulis confirmed that the subcommittee endorsed the white trim for the "Vons" copy.

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Commissioner Hoopes stated he did not mind the white trim. He liked the subtle distinction between the "Vons" and "TJ Maxx" copy.

Chairman Vavoulis stated he was fine with the colors as submitted.

Tim Pitts - Cen Source - stated that an antique white with a flat finish and Vons corporate red was proposed.

Commissioner Hoopes inquired about the type of ground lighting proposed for the signs.

Mr. Pitts responded that adjustable fluorescent fixtures were proposed. Bar lights were also a possibility.

Commissioner Roberts questioned use of bar lights, and thought individual lights might be the better option. Regardless, the fixtures should be painted dark green or black.

Mr. Pitts commented that LED lighting could also be used.

Commissioner Hoopes noted that the street lights already provide some lighting as do the walkway lights.

Commissioner Roberts felt low voltage landscape lighting might work

Commissioner Hoopes pointed out that the light fixtures should provide adequate coverage.

Commissioner Tobias inquired about the concrete drain structure and if it could be stained to better blend with the ground.

Commissioner Hoopes summarized that a 4' LED fixture positioned approximately 18"-2' from the sign, no higher than 12" from grade, would be used. A similar fixture, yet smaller as needed, would be used for the monument sign along Oakwood Avenue.

Commissioner Tobias confirmed that a dark brown color (Butternut from Dunn Edwards) per the wood sample submitted would be used to stain the drain.

Further discussion about the precise design of the sign ensued.

Commissioner Roberts specified a continuous stone top cap on the sign's base with a 3-inch airspace/gap between the top cap and bottom of the sign panel. The pillars 1'-3" height would be retained to create the gap. This design feature would be incorporated into both monument signs.

M/S/C Roberts/Hoopes to approve the sign design and colors as submitted subject to planting a curved hedge matching the basic course of the proximate sidewalk; bender board used to designate the course; a minimum 4-foot planting height and a maintained height of 5 feet; the soft concave of the hedge's course to be confirmed by staff prior to installation of the individual plants; All existing approved landscaping would be retained; the remaining connecting hedge for the street walls at the corner to be upgraded to 15-gallon staked Ligustrum planted at 18" on-center to match the new hedge; a continuous stone top cap on the sign's base with a 3-inch airspace/gap between the top cap and bottom of the sign panel; pillar height of 1'-3" to be retained to create the gap; said design feature to be incorporated into both monument signs; a 4' LED fixture positioned approximately 18"-2' from the sign, no higher than 12" from grade, to be used; a similar fixture, yet smaller as needed, to be used for the monument sign along Oakwood Avenue; a dark brown color (Butternut from Dunn Edwards) per the wood sample submitted to be used to stain the drain structure proximate to the Foothill Blvd. monument sign. Unanimous 4-0.

**VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

**A. Design Review 10-15; TJ Nails; 2251 Foothill Blvd.; new wall sign.**

Planner Clarke gave an overview of the request for a new internally illuminated wall sign and the evolution of the design before the Commission.

Chairman Vavoulis confirmed that a period was not proposed after the "J" in the "T.J" portion of the sign's copy.

Commissioner Hoopes asked if the circular logo was used in the business's stationary or as part of a corporate logo.

Commissioner Roberts did not like the design of the logo and commented on its lack of readability.

Commissioner Hoopes felt the logo should not be internally lit, but should be slightly larger.

Chairman Vavoulis agreed but felt a specific size needed to be included as part of a motion.

Commissioner Tobias had no issues with the sign.

Commissioner Roberts preferred to see reverse channel letters used for the sign.

Commissioners Tobias and Hoopes agreed.

Applicant Tony Lam confirmed that reverse channel letters were acceptable and that white back lighting would be used.

M/S/C Hoopes/Tobias to approve the sign with reverse channel letters and white halo lighting. The Logo to be enlarged by 2 inches and to be unlit. Unanimous 4-0.

**B. Design Review 09-04; Ralph's; 521 Foothill Blvd.;** revisions to approved landscape plan and monument sign location.

Planner Clarke gave a brief overview of the project which involved relocation of the approved monument sign and new street trees, and turned the discussion over to Commissioner Roberts.

Commissioner Roberts stated he worked proactively with staff and Ralphs representatives to revise the street trees fronting Ralphs. Four 36"-box tulip trees are now proposed - realizing an opportunity to provide nice large trees along Foothill Blvd. The trees will utilize planter space on Ralph's property and area within the street right-of-way. The new monument sign and a large 60" oak tree were originally approved in the corner planter. However, the tree and an existing electrical box will partially obscure the new monument sign. Thus, the oak tree will be eliminated, replaced with a 24" crape myrtle, and a new raised planter will be created to better accommodate the sign.

Chairman Vavoulis was fine with introducing new street trees.

Commissioner Hoopes asked how large the tulip tree trunks can be expected to grow.

Commissioner Roberts responded that the trunks get quite large and that 3'x4' planters were required and approved by Public Works.

Commissioner Hoopes noted that the new planter holes would have to be saw cut.

Commissioner Roberts confirmed that new saw cut planters would be created since the trees would be relocated and perfectly spaced along the site's frontage.

Commissioner Tobias asked why there was not a new tree in front of the Bank of America building.

Commissioner Roberts directed the Commission to the proposed planting plan and identified a new tree to be planted in front of the B of A building.

Chairman Vavoulis confirmed that Public Works has reviewed and was agreeable to all proposed changes. He acknowledged Commissioner Roberts' efforts and commended him on a job well done.

Commissioner Roberts commented that the cooperation with Ralphs - owners, corporate reps, designers, etc. - has been fantastic throughout the project.

Commissioner Hoopes only concern were the existing utility boxes in the corner planter. He wanted to ensure that the edges of the new planter walls don't interfere with the utility boxes. The walls are curved and he did not want unsightly notches to be created to accommodate the boxes.

Eddie Duran - Ralphs - ensured that every effort would be made to follow the design. He noted that the curvatures of the walls could be adjusted slightly if necessary to provide space for the boxes.

Commissioner Tobias asked if the boxes could be relocated or shrunk in size.

Commissioner Hoopes asked if the boxes were an electrical utility of some sort.

Mr. Duran stated he was not certain but was confident the boxes would not interfere with the new planter walls.

Commissioner Hoopes also noted that the existing irrigation on the site is very poor.

Mr. Duran explained that the entire irrigation system is being revamped as part of the project.

Commissioner Tobias confirmed that the new trees would have an independent irrigation line.

M/S/C Roberts/Vavoulis to approve the revisions as submitted. Unanimous 4-0.

**VIII. OTHER BUSINESS:** There was no other business.

**IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS:**

Commissioner Tobias asked for an update on the change to the façade color at 823 Foothill Blvd., where the upper fascia has been painted bright yellow.

Planner Gjolme explained that color changes to a building do not require a building permit and are technically beyond the direct purview of the Commission. However, an application for new signage was anticipated and building color could be dealt with at that time.

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Director of Community Development Stanley mentioned that staff would be revising the Design Review Ordinance to include color change as part of the Commission's direct purview.

**X. COMMENTS FROM STAFF:**

Director of Community Development Stanley informed the Commission that this year's budget requests had been denied by Council.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 a.m.