

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DESIGN COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD ON NOVEMBER 6, 2014**

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Moldafsky called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.
- II. **ROLL:** Present were Commissioners Hoopes, King, Roberts, Director Stanley, Planner Gjolme and Consulting architect/planner Cantrell. Absent: Balcazar
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Flag Salute was recited.
- IV. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** There were none.
- V. **CONSENT CALENDAR:** Minutes – 10/2/2014 Design Commission meeting.
M/S/C Hoopes/King to adopt. 3-0-1. Chairman Moldafsky (abstain)
- VI. **CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS:** None.
- VII. **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

A. Design Review 14-21; Panda Express; 700 Foothill Blvd.: remove front patio pergola and new outdoor dining furniture.

(Consultant Cantrell noted that the applicants were not present. Chair Moldafsky reordered the agenda to allow time for the applicants to arrive. The item was heard after Item D, although the applicants were still absent.)

Consulting Architect/Planner Cantrell gave an overview of the request to remove the front canopy structure from the existing building. He related that the applicant had stated that interior remodeling had been done and that they wanted to reflect a change in the exterior as well.

Mr. Cantrell noted that the original project had been reviewed extensively by the Design Review Board, with additional design approvals by the Planning Commission and City Council. He stated that the design was carefully considered, and that the canopy structure was an integral part of that design. He displayed a photo of the existing building along with a Photoshop depiction of the building without the canopy structure. He noted that, without the canopy structure, the building is symmetrical, as discouraged in the design guidelines, but beyond that not even successfully symmetrical, since one side is cut off.

Mr. Cantrell recommended denial of the canopy removal request, noting that the furniture portion of the request could be approved at staff level.

Chair Moldafsky suggested that the project could be continued because the applicants were not in attendance.

Commissioner Roberts recalled past problems with the project, including the unauthorized removal of a sycamore tree. He mentioned white light fixtures which had slipped through previous review, and stated that desire for Commission review of the new furniture. He stressed the need for good communication.

Commissioner King noted that the existing furniture is a poor replacement of what was previously there.

Mr. Cantrell stated that it would be good to give the applicant the opportunity to explain why they want to remove the canopy. Commissioner Roberts and Chair Moldafsky concurred.

Commissioner Hoopes noted that the proposal would diminish the streetscape, and that he would not support it.

M/S/C Hoopes/King to continue for the applicant to be in attendance. 4-0

B. Design Review 14-18; La Canada Imports; 1537 Foothill Boulevard: new wall sign.

Planner Gjolme stated that the request approval would be after the fact for the channel letter sign. Its white letters are 9 and 12 inches tall and span 20 feet. The signage raised no code concern for number or area, but within the Old Town District internal illumination is not allowed. The signs were fabricated and installed without City approval.

Mr. Gjolme noted that the business owner was not present, and that the owner was hopeful about a simple solution. One option is to remove the internal illumination and install spotlights. The current letters are monotonous and too bold but well-placed against the dark beam.

Mr. Gjolme displayed a different color, similar to the terra cotta tiles, for the subcopy ("sandwiches", "pizza", and "pasta"). As well as harmonizing with the roof tile, these would allow the subordinate copy to stand apart, with the main name emphasized. Mr. Gjolme displayed the previous white letters, which were

a more stylized font that was more attractive, but not significantly changed to the current letters.

Planner Gjolme concluded that the colored subcopy was one possible solution, and that an action resolution was prepared for its approval. He stated that aesthetics overall and copy choice in general are open for discussion, but that in any event there could be no internal illumination. He noted that four spotlights were proposed, and that staff supports that revision.

Commissioner Hoopes offered that he had visited the site the previous night, and seen that the subcopy signs are pure red. Mr. Gjolme stated that the letters could be painted or fitted with vinyl applique for terra cotta rather than red.

Commissioner King asked if staff had considered the sign's relationship to 7-Eleven sign. Planner Gjolme replied that staff had thought of replacing the subcopy letters with routed panels below, and that the applicant favored using the beam-mounted letters. Commissioner Roberts asked what would be the best solution for the business owner -- a pole or monument sign in future? Mr. Gjolme responded that a monument sign could be possible, but that the City had heard nothing from applicant or business owner. Commissioner Roberts thought that perhaps one monument sign for the entire property would be appropriate. Director Stanley noted that 7-Eleven never came forward, and only leases space, so that there's probably not a sign for both. He stated that it is up to 7-Eleven, and that it doesn't look like they will seek such signage. Planner Gjolme noted that it's the reason the City is reviewing the La Canada Imports signage in singular context.

Commissioner Hoopes stated that if spotlights are out in front of the sign, they will shine in eyes of people leaving the store, and that ambient lighting is already bright from the parking lot.

Chair Moldafsky stated that it's difficult because it's their only signage, and it is not strong from the Boulevard, partly because "La Canada Imports" could be anything.

Commissioner Hoopes asked how the individual letters are mounted - whether the beam works as a raceway. Mr. Gjolme stated that he didn't know.

Chair Moldafsky confirmed with Planner Gjolme that a sign would be allowed upon the wall.

Commissioner Hoopes stated that the ambient lighting would work better than spotlights pointing back to the doorway. He noted also that there were rope lights circling the eaves.

Commissioner Roberts endorsed the idea of putting in a pole sign out of the public right of way. He envisioned a non-illuminated sign on an iron arm bracket 7 or 8 feet high - a routed-out sign with charm. Identification out on the curb would help business, and not be expensive. Routed signs on the building, or the name pin-mounted on the building would be promising. He found it difficult to make findings of "band aiding" that sign on the building. He also noted that the business could have an illuminated sign inside for better identity. He stated support for a continuance so that the applicant could be present.

M/S/C Roberts/King to continue the project to a date uncertain. 4-0.

C. Design Review 14-19; SMID; 1341 Foothill Boulevard: new awnings and associated signs.

Planner Gjolme introduced the project as another after the fact review, this time of awnings with integral signs installed on a business. There are a total of 5 awnings flanking the southeastern corner of the building, wrapping around a corner courtyard. The awnings are dark gray, replacing the previous brown awnings. The size and locations are appropriate, but all awnings incorporate canopy and valance signage, exceeding the maximum of 3 signs allowed by code. Staff regards the awnings are approvable provided that two of the awnings are cleared of signs to comply with code. Mr. Gjolme recommended that the Foothill Boulevard awning, entry awning, and north awning retain their signs, so that there is an alternating effect.

Planner Gjolme advised that he had spoken with the business owner, who was amenable to replacing two, but who wished to address the Commission concerning the choice of which 3 signs to keep. Mr. Gjolme noted that it is a code issue and that the draft condition called for eliminating the signs on the two awnings flanking the entry.

Applicant J. Montgomery stated that he was forward to input from the Commissioners as designers. He stated that he understood that five signs are too many. He sought to leave blank the awnings over the door and fronting Foothill. That way the signs would focus on the courtyard, and he would avoid having to divide the corner awning and face difficulty matching old and new material colors.

Commissioner Hoopes complimented the owner on the effect of the light over the rear awning, which shows up well at night. Mr. Montgomery noted that he had replaced the incandescent bulb with LED.

Planner Gjolme stated that the applicant's revision would be acceptable to staff.

M/S/C Roberts / Hoopes to approve the project with signage deleted on the Foothill and entry awnings. 4-0

D. Design Review 14-20; Law Offices of Vanessa Terzian; 727 Foothill Boulevard: new wall sign and pole sign panels.

Planner Gjolme noted that the wall sign on the south elevation had already been installed, and that the request also included two new panels on an existing nonconforming pole sign. He noted that this was similar to a proposal for the Valley Sun. The two panels for Terzian Law Partners would be in subdued, which staff appreciates, given the considerable size and height of the sign panels. Only the copy and logo would illuminate, which is also important given height and prominence. The top panel would be 2 feet by 8 feet, while the bottom would be 2 feet by 6 feet. If applied to a monument sign, the total of these would conform to the 30 sf area limit. He noted that nothing was proposed for the vertical cabinet.

Mr. Gjolme discussed the building as a whole, with its brown and beige color scheme, and noted the harmony of the wall sign and pole sign faces. He stated that the signs and colors tie together well, and are not overpowering. He noted the nonconforming but legal right for the panels, and recommended positive findings.

Commissioner Roberts inquired about whether the display cabinet in front would be included as a sign. Planner Gjolme was unsure what was proposed for it and whether it would create excess sign area.

Commissioner Hoopes confirmed with Planner Gjolme that the Professional Office sign would have an opaque beige field with brown letters that would illuminate.

Responding to Commissioner Roberts, Mr. Gjolme stated that the wall sign is compliant, because the 30 sf monument sign area limit is just for that sign, with the property allowed two wall signs and a monument sign. Director Stanley stated that the display cabinet is not considered a sign, that one could not put a sign panel in it, just display material. It had not been used as a sign and was not grandfathered for that.

Commissioner King asked about the possibility of the bottom pole sign panel being used for signage. Planner Gjolme replied that it could be used since it is grandfathered. Director Stanley stated that it might be possible to limit the sign portion of such a panel; that would have to be confirmed by the City Attorney.

Commissioner Hoopes endorsed the signs.

Chair Moldafsky invited the applicant to speak.

Applicant Arby of Empire Signs confirmed the use of translucent brown letters for the Professional Office sign.

Chair Moldafsky stated that it is unfortunate that such excessive signage is grandfathered, but that he liked what the applicant did with it and stated that he could make the required findings.

Edward Terzian, business owner, stated that no signage was proposed for the bottom cabinet. The plan for the display case was to remove the blue area and improve it but no install a sign there. He declined an invitation from Director Stanley to remove it, stating that there may be a time when it would be useful as a directory, and he would seek approval in that event.

M/S/C Hoopes/King to approve as submitted. 4-0

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS: None

IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Hoopes that the City should let new businesses know about sign requirements simultaneous with business permit issuance, noting that he hates the idea of people not understanding the requirements and wasting money on unapproved signs.

Commissioner Roberts asked if La Canada Imports can apply for grant money for its new signage. Planner Gjolme stated that they can, and that they know about the program. Director Stanley noted that every time a commercial project comes in for an application the City informs them about the façade grant program.

Commissioner Hoopes stated that he would like paper stapled to the license, not just verbal communication. Director Stanley noted that the City created a handout, working with the Chamber of Commerce, and that he will make sure that it continues to be distributed.

Commissioner Roberts requested that Senior Planner Buss reach out to the Foothill and Angeles Crest Unocal station to plant their fall/winter annual color.

Commissioner King asked about the wall signs installed at Partners Trust. Planner Gjolme noted that they had “jumped the gun” and installed signs without subcommittee approval or permits. He also noted that the flat metal signs don’t look bad, and the small subcopy is not as illegible as had been expected. He stated that the City will contact them to figure it out.

Commissioners Hoopes and Roberts noted that they had thought it was a mockup.

X. COMMENTS FROM STAFF:

Planner Gjolme inquired about the Commissioners’ availability for the normally scheduled November 20 meeting, noting its proximity to Thanksgiving. Chair Moldafsky stated that he may or may not be available.

Mr. Gjolme informed the Commission that La Canada High School is due to be repainted next summer, and that they had asked for volunteer Commissioners to consult on the colors. The tentative meeting dates were December 4 and January 8. Commissioner Roberts volunteered, and Chair Moldafsky stated that perhaps Commissioner Balcazar should be on the committee as well. Planner Gjolme stated that Commissioner Roberts would be the primary representative and Commissioner Balcazar the alternate.

Commissioner Roberts noted a missed opportunity at the past City Council meeting to get La Canada High School to remove its reader boards. He noted their lack of use, and stated that if they were proactive and voted to prohibit them, it would have a positive effect on other schools in declining to seek reader boards.

Director Stanley asked about Commissioner Roberts’ progress with the streetscape master plan. Mr. Roberts stated that it was with Gonzalo, and that the Commission should have a working session on it. Director Stanley stated that it would only need to be agendized at a regular or special meeting. Planner Gjolme suggested the first December meeting.

XI. ADJOURNMENT: 8:33 a.m.