

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DESIGN COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD ON NOVEMBER 20, 2014**

I. CALL TO ORDER: Vice-chairman Hoopes called the meeting to order at 7:31 a.m.

II. ROLL:

Vice-Chair Hoopes, Commissioners Balcazar, King, and Roberts.

Absent: Chair Moldafsky

In the absence of Chair Moldafsky, Vice-Chair Hoopes assumed the chair for the meeting.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Flag Salute was recited.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: none

V. CONSENT CALENDAR: Minutes – 11/6/2014 Design Commission meeting.

M/S/C Roberts/King to adopt minutes as drafted. 3-0-1 (absent: Balcazar)

VI. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- A. 1537 Foothill Boulevard (La Canada Imports)**
Design Review 14-18
New wall sign

Planner Gjolme noted that the project was continued from the last meeting. It was an after-the-fact approval of a channel letter sign in the Old Town District where internal illumination is prohibited. That portion of the channel letters would be removed. Staff has met with the applicant, and is suggesting to modify the existing letters by converting the colors of the subcopy to terra cotta vinyl overlays. This would break up the nearly 20 feet of white copy, allowing focus on the business name, and differentiation of the important subcopy. The name alone is confusing as to the nature of the business.

Staff's initial solution was regarded by the Design Commission as a simplistic solution. Something more creative could have been sought, but in the absence of the applicant the Commission opted to continue the discussion.

Mr. Gjolme displayed the previous sign, which had a more interesting font.

Mr. Gjolme noted the presence of the applicant and welcomed the opportunity for the Commission to discuss the project with him.

Vice-Chair Hoopes opened the public hearing.

Bulent Kerimo, applicant and business owner, recalled that he hadn't been aware of the need for a permit. He noted that the subcopy added to the sign helped a lot with his business, helping him overcome a misleading business name. He stated that people living for many years two blocks away hadn't been aware that he sold sandwiches and pizza.

Vice-Chair Hoopes asked Mr. Kerimo if he agreed with staff's suggestions.

Mr. Kerimo stated that he respects the prohibition against internal illumination, but that external lighting is difficult because of the roof configuration and shadows. He stated that he could change the letters to the terra cotta color as recommended by staff. Mr. Gjolme offered a photo of the overhang and shadows.

Commissioner Balcazar asked how long Mr. Kerimo had owned the business. He replied that he has owned it for three years, but came back from Sweden only in February.

Commissioner Roberts noted that the Commission would not approve such a sign for a new business. He identified Mr. Kerimo's business success as their main goal, and stated that it bothered him the money was already spent on the unapproved sign. He noted that the City's façade improvement grant program could cut Mr. Kerimo's expense in half. Commissioner Roberts recommended improving the visibility from the street by using the two large walls for plaques, in color, perhaps pictographs, with lighting under the canopy, and with the subcopy on the wood beam deleted.

Mr. Kerimo expressed concern about the visibility of the pictographs.

Commissioner Balcazar endorsed the idea of the pictographs as something that would not have to be read to be understood.

Commissioner King concurred, noting that the view could get the whole message at once.

Planner Gjolme noted that vans parked in front of the building would block view of the wall signs, and asked if the pictographs could be mounted on the beam instead. Commissioner Robert responded that it might work if on metal chains.

Commissioner Balcazar asked if pictographs could be mounted on the beam. Commissioner Roberts recalled having that discussion with staff, and if so the pictographs would ideally be pinned off or on chains. It's unclear, since there could be clearance problems with adequately large graphics.

Commissioner Roberts commented that if the copy had not already been there, the Commission would have required a different font. Commissioner Balcazar asked if the Commission was ready to act on color. Commissioner Hoopes noted that the red is less visible than the white, and not what is desired. Commissioner King suggested reversing the colors, so that the more visible white would be used for the subcopy.

Planner Gjolme suggested that sandwich and pizza slice pictographs could be at low, compressed angles, possibly allowing them to fit within the depth of the beam. Commissioner Roberts encouraged that as more village-like signage that they are asking of all businesses.

Vice-Chair Hoopes closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Roberts advised of his difficulty approving the change of copy as exists, even with a color change, since the material is not approvable. He stated that it was unfortunate that the business owner didn't know about the review requirement, but he has been allowed to have the signs up for many months. He stated that a new applicant would not be allowed such signage so that it's unfair to allow it, but in the spirit of compromise would be receptive to keeping the main text as is, with the subtext to be removed and the applicant to return with pictographs or alternate text for approval.

Commissioner King noted that the harmonious design finding could not be made. She recalled that 7-Eleven was required to put up a plaque, and that approving the signage would be inconsistent. She noted problems with legibility of so many letters strung across, and an inherent difficulty with the business name not indicating its nature. She voiced the hope that the applicant would return with more harmonious signage.

Commissioner Balcazar agreed, citing the hope for more options and more color.

Vice-Chair Hoopes noted that this is the part of the community identified as Old Town, where other businesses were asked to come up with harmonious signs of interesting character. He also noted that the building itself has character that deserves better signage, and stated that he cannot approve any portion of the submittal.

Commissioner Roberts considered a motion to just allow the La Canada Imports portion without illumination, but again noted that if it were a new proposal it would not be approved. He suggested continuance.

Planner Gjolme stated that the Commission had given good direction for a second continuance, with several options. He noted that staff hopes for a continuance to work with the applicant, and asked if La Canada Imports alone without illumination and with pictographs would be allowed. He stated that the graphics could be on the beam or wall, or that a wall text sign could end up being used.

Director Stanley asked the Commission if they had a concern about the channel letters.

Commissioner Roberts stated that it could be considered as a compromise.

Vice-Chair Hoopes asked if the rope lights along the building eaves are allowed. Director Stanley replied that holiday lighting is allowed, but if it looks ragged it could become a code enforcement item.

M/S/C Roberts/King to continue the project for redesign. 4-0

VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- A. 663 Foothill Boulevard (TJ Maxx)**
Design Review 14-22
New wall sign and monument sign

Planner Gjolme noted that TJ Maxx now occupies the entire building, and thus needs signage to identify the rear entry. The proposal is for a new rear wall sign and monument sign. Code allows for an additional 10 sf of signage to face the parking lot. The sign would be awkwardly small on the large building face. As originally proposed in the upper northwest corner it would have been worse; staff had it moved close to the entry and low to serve as a pedestrian-oriented marker.

He noted that the proposed wall sign would use a routed metal face, painted red, with punch-through illuminated white copy. He stated that the sign would make sense from pedestrian scale and function.

Mr.Gjolme questioned the use of red returns, stating that it makes it a dimensional block, not properly integrated. He recommended that the return color be tan or beige to allow it to look like more of a projection from the building rather than tacked on. He noted the 3-inch depth of the returns.

With regard to the monument sign, Mr. Gjolme noted the existence of two other similar signs on the property, with the proposal rustic, well proportioned, and fitting in. It would use external uplighting and a 6-foot height and 8-foot width. He stated that the findings were easy to make for that sign.

Commissioner Roberts asked about the allowable area for the wall sign. Mr. Gjolme answered that it is 10 sq. ft., creating a proportion issue. Vice-Chair Hoopes asked if it could be made as large as possible by using pin-mounted letters, and Mr. Gjolme answered affirmatively.

Commissioner Roberts asked if the existing monument sign letters were acrylic; Mr. Gjolme stated that he did not know but that if they are metal the new monument sign's copy should be as well.

Vice-Chair Hoopes opened the public hearing.

Linda Smith of Signs and Services Co. stated that they will match monument sign letters, and that red is part of their trade dress, not just letters.

Commissioner Roberts asked if the applicant had considered reverse channel letters with larger copy. Mrs. Smith replied that they had not, but that the sign was too small for such letters to be effective, and that the red panel by day gives it more of an appearance.

Vice-Chair Hoopes closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Balcazar stated that she had no problems with the submittal.

Commissioner King stated that she had no objections and that she agreed with staff about the color of the returns. She voiced a wish that reverse channel letters could be used but acknowledged that it did not fit the circumstances.

Commissioner Roberts stated that he continued to support reverse channel letters for the wall sign as more consistent and attractive, noting that the proposed sign reads more like a can sign.

Vice-Chair Hoopes agreed with Commissioner Roberts. He praised the monument sign and the new rear entry to the building, but stated that the wall sign doesn't help it. He noted that the wall is concrete block, not conducive to channel letter installation.

Commissioner Roberts noted that ideally the sign would be like Ivar's was, a wood panel above the doorway.

Commissioner King recommended a separate motion for the monument sign.

M/S/C King/Balcazar to approve the monument sign with colors, materials and lettering to match the existing monument signs on site. 4-0.

Commissioner King made a motion to approve the wall sign with returns changed to match the wall. Commissioner Roberts asked for consideration of wood or wood composite sides to match the wood beam. The sides would project beyond the sign face to create an edge. Vice-Chair Hoopes asked about the edge thickness, which Commissioner Roberts did not think was necessary to specify. Commissioner King amended her motion accordingly.

M/S/C King/Balcazar as amended. 3-1 Hoopes: no

B. 475 Foothill Boulevard (Petco)
Design Review 14-23
New wall sign and monument sign copy

Consulting Architect/Planner Cantrell displayed the existing Petco sign along with the proposal. He noted that Petco had been in the center since it was built 20 years ago, and that the company had recently updated their trade dress. Rather than the signage extending the length of the fascia, it would be greatly reduced. The main sign would now be in lower-case letters, and the subcopy would be vastly reduced in size. It would be so minor as to read more as an accent than as an element interfering with the symmetry created by the business name and logo. He lauded the new signage as an improvement and recommended positive findings, with a suggestion to consider keeping the translucent sign faces but pinning the letters away from the wall.

Jeff Reich, sign company representative, stated that he was available to answer questions and hopeful for approval.

Vice-Chair Hoopes considered pinning the letters for a nice halo effect a nice refinement.

Carolyn Archbold, senior design manager for Petco, noted a preference for internally lit channel letters. Mr. Cantrell noted that the recommendation of halo letters was to augment, not replace, the face illumination.

Commissioner Balcazar stated support of the new design with fewer letters and confirmed that the larger logo is compensated by the smaller copy size.

Commissioner King confirmed with Mr. Cantrell that the halo effect would not preclude face lighting.

Commissioner Roberts praised the improved copy and logo, stating also that he preferred to limit halo lighting to the logo for emphasis. Vice-Chair Hoopes stated support for that idea.

Commissioner Roberts confirmed with Ms. Archbold that the returns would be red. M/S/C Roberts/Balcazar to approve as submitted with pinned logo to allow for halo lighting while retaining face illumination. 4-0.

Commissioner Roberts noted that throughout the shopping center the molding at top and bottom of each fascia band had been painted terra cotta color. He stated that it diminishes the size and look of the sign band, and is distracting.

Director Stanley stated that the City will investigate.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS: none

IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS:

TJ Maxx Parking Lot:

Vice-Chair Hoopes noted that large containers have been placed in the parking lot behind TJ Maxx, in need of screening and displacing parking spaces. Director Stanley stated that there is a temporary permit process under which they could possibly be approved, with the option of requiring screening.

Streetscape Manual Workshop:

Commissioner Roberts noted that the streetscape workshop is scheduled for January 15, and confirmed with the Commissioners present that the date was workable. Planner Gjolme noted that the 7:30 a.m. time was tentative, and that the process would lead to endorsement of the streetscape manual by the Design Commission before it goes to the City Council. Commissioner Balcazar asked if there is something she can do to prepare for the workshop. Planner Gjolme stated that he would email the draft manual.

Verizon Antennas Review:

Commissioner Balcazar asked if there is any news about the Verizon project. Planner Gjolme stated that they are apparently still working on it, and will have to return for review in any event.

X. COMMENTS FROM STAFF: none

XI. ADJOURNMENT: 9:08 a.m.