

HISTORIC AREA COMMISSION
New Castle Town Hall
2nd and Delaware Streets
January 18, 2018

Present: Laura Fontana, Chairperson
David Baldini
Lynn Briggs
Jean Norvell
Marty Wright

Also Present: Leila Hamroun, Architectural Consultant
Jeff Bergstrom, City Building Inspector

(There were no meetings in November and December 2017.)

The meeting was convened at 6:30 p.m. Roll call followed. A quorum was declared.

Approval of Minutes –A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the 10/12/17 meeting. Motion was approved.

OLD APPLICATIONS

414 Delaware Street – Café New Castle presented their sign request.

Discussion: Applicants Michele L. Ahwash and Jack Garnewski presented. They are seeking permission to use a composite material for one sign for their café. The sign will show the name of the business on both sides. The sign company they are working with, Insta-Signs Plus, recommended the composite material (HDU) citing its durability and it is less expensive. (HDU is high density urethane material.) The material is similar to what HAC has approved with other business owners in the City. The applicants mentioned HAC's approval of an exterior sign for 302 Delaware Street dated 5/14/15. Dimensions of the sign were 27" X 23" X 26". Later a second sign request for 302 Delaware Street was approved using a composite material.

Ms. Hamroun noted the application being addressed tonight was initially addressed as a Tier 1 consultation/review, noting that as per the Guidelines signage should be of appropriate materials, i.e., painted wood, metal and glass. The applicants have come to appeal that finding and request use of HDU. Ms. Hamroun's recommendation is to use wood that is more appropriate with the adjacent storefront and streetscape. She added the size and scale of the sign is significant in terms of visual appearance and should be reduced. The Historic Area Commission Design Guidelines & Standards (Guidelines) do allow an appropriate cedar product that would be long lasting. Painting would be needed over time. Ms. Hamroun advised that wood ages differently than composite products. Further, if the composite product does not need to be painted it will look more artificial.

The applicants are looking at a 40" sign to ensure it can be seen. In order to fit their oval logo on the sign, the sign would be 22" long. A sample of the plastic sign material being considered was shown to Commissioners. Mr. Wright concurred with Ms. Hamroun's comment that wood lasts longer.

The applicants are looking at how best to balance signs from the 1700's and 1800's and modern day. Ms. Hamroun pointed out when the Guidelines were approved for wood, glass

or metal there was a discussion about potential alternate materials such as painted high density resin wood fiber. This was an effort to encourage sustainability and reuse rather than choosing simple plastics.

Mr. Garnewski said they are focused on making sure the sign does not appear to be a synthetic sign. They are open to either a smooth or textured surface on the sign. Ms. Fontana favors a textured background look with raised letters.

Ms. Hamroun strongly recommended focusing on the size and scale along with the texture of the sign. Mr. Baldini thinks the café location is somewhat isolated. He is looking at how the signage can tie the business to the downtown while allowing them to promote their business. Mr. Wright reminded that the café is part of the historic district.

Mr. Baldini feels the colors on the sign impact the historic district. Ms. Ahwash informed the Commission that the colors are part of their branding used in social media. The background of the sign is white and lettering is white; the logo outline is purple. She is not amenable to changing the colors. Brackets for the sign will be new, black wrought iron fixtures.

Size and scale of the sign – Ms. Hamroun stated the Guidelines set parameters to approve some alternative materials; however, the HDU is outside the parameters for alternative materials. The proposed 40” width for the sign is greater than other signs in the City. The applicants said it will be hung over the entrance way in the middle of the building allowing it to be seen from both sides.

Ms. Norvell suggested the sign be smaller and the bracket needs to be smaller. Mr. Baldini agrees a smaller size will tie in better with the street. He does not care for the HDU or plastic, but could consider the composite wood resin noted in the Guidelines.

The applicants will check with the sign company concerning the composite material used for signage at 302 Delaware Street.

Ms. Fontana is in favor of the sign being reduced to 30” in width. Mr. Wright favors wood citing there are suitable woods for exterior use. Ms. Norvell stated there are many signs on Delaware that are using composite materials.

In summary, Ms. Hamroun reiterated her recommendation to use wood for the sign. The Guidelines do allow for using painted high density resin/wood fiber composite signage on a case-by-case basis if it does not negatively impact the historic character of the building. Further, she said that reducing the sign by 4”, or 10%, will not make much difference. It should be reduced to at least a width of 32” to lessen the impact. Current height of the sign is 22 inches. She suggested reducing it slightly while keeping it proportional.

Disposition: Ms. Fontana made a motion to amend the application that the sign proposed be a painted high density resin/wood fiber composite with dimensions of a width of 32 inches and height no larger than 20 inches, and the sign be textured with raised letters. Motion was seconded.

Historic Area Commission Minutes – 1-11-18

Action: The motion was approved with 4 in favor and 1 against (Wright).

Adjournment -- There being no further business to address, the meeting was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Debbie Turner
Stenographer