

Historic Preservation Advisory Commission Meeting

Regular Meeting of June 15, 2009 7:00 pm

The regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission took place on the above date. Chairwoman LeFrois read the Open Public Meeting Act and requested Board Secretary Mrs. Citterbart called the roll. Board Secretary Citterbart stated there was a quorum.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Kaplan, Mr. Read, Mrs. Schulte, Chairwoman Le Frois, Mr. Storm, Mr. Wright – 7:30

ABSENT: Mr. Becker

FLAG SALUTE

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

April 20, 2009

Mr. Kaplan made a motion to approve the April 20, 2009 minutes. Mrs. Schulte second the motion.

AYE: Mr. Kaplan, Mr. Read, Mrs. Schulte, Chairwoman Le Frois

ABSTAINED: Mr. Storm

APPLICATIONS

#2009-03-County of Sussex

Property Location: Newton Green

Planting plans & maintenance schedules for flower bed for bell monument submitted for Veteran's Monument Committee

SWORN: Joseph Biuso, County of Sussex, 1 Spring Street, Newton, NJ.

Mr. Storm made a motion to table the application. Mr. Read second the motion.

AYE: Mr. Kaplan, Mr. Wright, Mr. Storm, Mr. Read, Mrs. Schulte, Chairwoman Le Frois

#2009-04-Richard S. Wahlers/Electronics Service Unlimited

Property Location: 200 Spring Street

Block: 714 Lot: 11

Requesting to install one lit "Open" sign in window.

Chairwoman LeFrois stated: The sign is currently hanging in your window not lit. Mr. Wahlers stated: Correct. Chairwoman LeFrois questioned: Is this a neon lit sign? Mr. Wahlers stated:

No, it is a LED sign stated on Page 4 of the packet you received. Chairwoman LeFrois stated: It is a plastic LED sign with lighting behind. It has a flash speed control but you are not using it? Mr. Wahlers stated: It will be turned to permanently on position since flashing signs are prohibited. Mr. Storm questioned: What is the tubing made of? Mr. Wahlers stated: Plastic. Mr. Storm questioned: What is inside it? Mr. Wahlers stated: Small little white LED lights. Neon is usually gas depending on which color you want. It is electrified with 10 to 15 thousand volts on either end of the neon tube itself. A self-contained unit runs on approximately 5 volts and has light emitting diodes. Mr. Storm stated: The average person is going to ride by that whether it is LED or neon and think it is a neon sign. We did. Mr. Wahlers stated: I would have to disagree because neon signs are brighter, glass tubes with a wire support. There is no back to them. There is no housing to them or assembly to them. Mr. Storm stated: There is no back to yours either. Mr. Wahlers stated: Yes there is. If you look on Page 3 it gives you the dimensions and a picture of the sign itself with a 2-1/4 inch deck with the black plastic which seals up the sign. It is the sign with the dimensions on it (22-1/2 by 9-1/4). Mr. Storm questioned: Where is the backing? Mr. Wahlers stated: The backing is the shown as the 2.25 inch. That is the black plastic coming off the back. Mr. Storm stated: You can see through the sign. Mr. Wahlers stated: Neon signs have a different look to them. Almost every place now has these LED signs in it and most people can tell the difference between them.

Mr. Wright stated: The ordinance does not prohibit neon signs. Mr. Storm stated: Yes it does. In the Historic Ordinance on Page 10, Section F under Illumination.

Mr. Storm stated the ordinance: "Signs may appear without any illumination or they may be illuminated reflected light from an exterior source preferable incandescent, this is not from an exterior source. The design for and placement of the source of lighting for the signs must be as unobtrusive as possible. The proposed method of lighting is also subject to review by the Newton Historic Preservation Advisory Commission."

Mr. Storm questioned: Would it be acceptable to you to move the sign back 6 inches? Mr. Wahlers questioned: What would be the cutoff date to be grandfathered in on Spring Street? Mr. Storm stated: Years ago. Chairwoman LeFrois stated: Before the ordinance. Mr. Wahlers questioned: The Chinese restaurant is in violation? The pizzeria is in violation? Mr. Storm stated: Yes. Chairwoman LeFrois stated: Mrs. Citterbart has recently been appointed to Zoning Officer and is has started to go through Spring Street and try to identify those businesses that are compliant or non-compliant according to the ordinance. Mrs. Citterbart stated: The Chinese restaurant and the liquor store are recently sited.

Mr. Read stated: This isn't a neon sign. Mr. Storm stated: The appearance looks like it is because it is hanging. So everyone on Spring Street is going to go out and buy an LED sign.

Mr. Wahlers stated: I would like clarification of what is "in the window." If 6 inches back is considered not in the window then the sign can be placed on the counter. Mr. Wahlers questioned: Does the ordinance state the sign cannot be inside the window or just not on the building? Mr. Storm stated: It just states no illuminated signs. Mr. Wahlers questioned: Do we have separate guidelines for inside as opposed to outside? Anything inside of the glass does not

require a permit, yet anything outside the building does? Mr. Storm stated: We need to define “in the window” for Mr. Wahlers. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Storm made a motion to deny the application as presented for the use of internal illuminated light fixture and approve use of the sign as long as it is not internally illuminated and approve an unobtrusive external light source be used on the sign with cord removed out of window. Mr. Kaplan second the motion.

AYE: Mr. Wright, Mr. Kaplan, Mr. Read, Mr. Storm Mrs. Schulte, Chairwoman Le Frois

Brad Schneider, 192 Spring Street, Newton, NJ. Regarding approval of signs for Schander in Spring Board Shoppes. We applied for a sign for the business. I made up these sheets for everyone to look at. I don't understand the whole thing. They asked us a size. We had to get a specific size.

Mr. Schneider stated: He is not part of the Spring Board Shoppes. He has an application with him. I am going to deferring it to the commission to see if you would like to have a preliminary discussion and have him file his application or just give the application and put it on the agenda for next month. Mr. Storm stated: Let him show us his plan and if it meets the ordinance as far as square footage and design. Once he submits his application she can approve it after we approve it tonight.

Chairwoman LeFrois suggested Mr. Schneider bring the application to Mrs. Citterbart's office tomorrow with what your thoughts are in regards to the sign. Please include size, materials, square or oval. Mr. Schneider stated: I think it will be 2x4. There is 12 feet of frontage. Mr. Read stated: You have to give us a drawing, what it is going to be made out of, and where it is going to be in the store. Chairwoman LeFrois stated it cannot be an interior lit sign and no neon sign or anything like that. Mr. Schneider stated: Just flat, no lights shining down on it. Mr. Storm questioned: You are going to make it 4 feet long and 2 feet high? Chairwoman LeFrois questioned: Hung perpendicular to the building or flat? Mr. Schneider stated: Flat. There is a bracket there. I can make it out of wood and have it painted. Mr. Ross stated: No cutting a 2x4 and painting it. You might want to make it fancy or oval. Discussion ensued.

Chairwoman LeFrois stated: Given that we do not have a complete application or a rendering I am going to say that we need to have all that and put it on the agenda for the next meeting in July. Mrs. Citterbart can reach out to me with the information when she gets it. Give the rendering to the Mrs. Citterbart as soon as possible and we will see what we can do.

Chairwoman LeFrois opened the floor to the public. With no public coming forward the public portion of the meeting was closed.

Chairwoman LeFrois stated the process of amending the ordinance. Mr. Storm stated: Especially the neon and internally illuminated signs. What we need to do immediately is to have our Zoning Officer have everyone comply to what is in the ordinance now. Chairwoman LeFrois questioned: What is your process for going through Spring Street and having some of them removed? Mrs. Citterbart stated: I let them know it is against the ordinance. Chairwoman

LeFrois questioned: What is your plan? Mrs. Citterbart stated: I started at Soho Nails, Spring Liquors, and Liberty Tax. Then I send a letter. They usually remove it. Chairwoman LeFrois questioned: What happened this time? Mrs. Citterbart stated: I sent him a letter. Then I went to see him. He did not agree with it so I told him to come before the commission.

Mr. Read stated: It may be worthwhile to send out a reminder or flyer that says “before you purchase a sign, signs are governed by ordinances in the historic district and outside of it, please contact us.” Chairwoman LeFrois stated: I think this is a good idea. I think that I would like to do a mailing to all the businesses. Let’s do one notification reminding people that signs are governed by ordinances and some other reminders, for example: no illuminated signs, etc. In 15 or 30 days the Zoning Officer is going to come through to make sure you are compliant. If you are not in compliance, you may be issued a summons indicating same. Mrs. Citterbart stated: It would be a good idea to post it on the website.

Mrs. Schulte questioned: When a business comes into town is there any formality? When they go to apply for their certificate or whatever they do, could they be given a copy of the sign ordinance when they go for the permit? Mrs. Citterbart stated: Yes. Normally what I do is check for historic. If there is historic then I tell them that they will have to go before the Historic Commission and they have to sign off. Mrs. Schulte questioned: Each business that comes into the Town of Newton do they have to get a business permit? Mrs. Citterbart stated: A waiver of site plan. Mrs. Schulte stated: When they come in for the permit that would be a starting point to introduce them to the restrictions on signage. Mrs. Citterbart stated: There are some on Spring Street that will blame it for their business going down.

Mr. Storm stated: There was a list of signs that were non-conforming but were exempt. One of them was the marquis on the theatre, and the other is clock at One Main Street. Nowhere in there does it show the neon signs that were exempt. People came to the council and were complaining after the ordinance that they had the signs and we were making them take the signs down. If it is not in the ordinance, you have to make them take them down. Mr. Kaplan stated: I think it would be a great promotion because they wouldn’t have to be made of wood or anything else. Chairwoman LeFrois read ordinance on Page 20-57 and 20-58. The marquis sign existing at the Newton Movie Theatre, Sussex Merchants, and the clock on the PNC building. Those are your only grandfather ones.

Mr. Storm stated: I want to go back to abandoned signs. The sign at Plaza Restaurant has been there for two years this month. According to Page 20-60.4a of the General Revised Ordinance the Plaza Restaurant sign is in violation. Chairwoman LeFrois stated to Mrs. Citterbart to take Mr. Storms comments as a reopened issue back to the Town Manager.

Chairwoman LeFrois discussed partnering with Main Street Newton in outreach notifying town’s people when they are moving into the Historic District. It makes sense to have representation on the design committee of the Main Street from someone in the Historic Commission. Is anyone interested in getting involved with Main Street Newton? Is anyone interested in being the liaison from the Historic Commission and sitting on the design part of the committee of Main Street Newton program? Mr. Storm volunteered on but as needed. Mr. Wright and Mrs. Schulte volunteered too.

Mr. Wright stated: Years ago we paid for a façade design for every building on Spring Street. Chairwoman LeFrois stated: So far Abigail's is the only one that has taken advantage of the free façade architectural help from Trenton.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Storm made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Schulte second the motion. The meeting was adjourned with a unanimous "aye" vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm. The next regular scheduled meeting will be held on July 20, 2009 at 7:00 pm in the council chambers of the Municipal Building.

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine Citterbart
Historic Board Secretary