

Present: Chairperson Ostrowski; Vice Chair Westerlund; Members: Borowski, Chegash, Drummond, Grinnan, Jensen, Ruprich and Stempien

Absent: None

Also Present: Planning Consultant, Brian Borden
Village Manager, Chris Wilson

Chairperson Ostrowski called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Village of Beverly Hills municipal building at 18500 W. Thirteen Mile Road.

APPROVE/AMEND AGENDA

Stempien proposed moving agenda item 7 (Discuss Sign Ordinance Amendments) ahead of item 6 (Discuss Southfield Road Corridor marketing plan).

Motion by Stempien, second by Westerlund, to approve the agenda as amended.

Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

REVIEW AND CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF A PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING HELD MARCH 25, 2015

Motion by Westerlund, second by Chegash, that the minutes of a regular Planning Commission meeting held on March 25, 2015 be approved as submitted.

Motion passed.

REVIEW AND CONSIDER REQUEST FROM MARKET FRESH TO ALTER A PERMANENT SIGN AT 31201 SOUTHFIELD ROAD

Before the Planning Commission for consideration is an application requesting a modified wall sign and a new ground sign for Market Fresh/Biggby Coffee located at 31201 Southfield Road. Planning consultant Brian Borden from LSL Planning referred to his review letter dated April 17, 2015. The proposal has been reviewed for compliance with the requirements of the Village Zoning Ordinance. Borden understood that the intent of the ground sign was to replace the nonconforming pole sign on the Southfield Road frontage of the parcel.

Wall Sign

The submittal includes a rendering of the proposed lettering on the building. The applicant requests additional lettering “Fine Foods” beneath the existing “Market Fresh” wall sign. The proposed lettering is 1.5’ in height with a sign area of 18 square feet. The existing wall sign is 3’ in height with a sign area of 49.5 square feet. Section 22.32.110 limits the height of wall signs to 3’ and the area to 30 square feet. There is an allowance for up to 60 square feet where a single business tenant has more than 15,000 square feet. The proposed addition of “Fine Foods” creates a wall sign that is beyond the maximum height and area requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

The existing wall sign is 3' in height; adding the 1.5' letters would bring the height to 4.5', which is not permissible under the ordinance. In summary, the signage requested is too tall and too large. Wilson questioned whether it was the intent of the ordinance to limit the height of a wall sign to 3' if the building qualified for a wall sign up to 60 square feet.

Board members discussed the wall sign. It was suggested that the applicant could solve the issue of sign area by revising their design and presenting a smaller sign. The contractor Albert LaLonde from Creative Designs & Signs was present.

Motion by Jensen, second by Chegash, to deny the application from Market Fresh for a wall sign on the basis that the proposed signage is noncompliant with the ordinance.

Roll Call Vote:

Motion passed (9 – 0).

Ground Sign

Borden stated that it is proposed to install a new ground sign on Southfield Road frontage and remove the existing nonconforming pole sign, which will be a major site improvement. However, the proposed ground sign intended to replace the pole sign does not fully comply with current ordinance standards. Borden identified some of the issues as follows:

Color scheme: The sign contains four colors (black, white, green and orange); the ordinance allows no more than three colors.

Lettering styles: The sign contains at least three lettering styles; the Ordinance allows no more than two.

Sign type: Market Fresh is a multi-tenant building. Because the building contains two businesses, the ordinance only permits a development identification sign, which by definition is intended to identify a shopping center or other development that may contain a mixture of uses (Sections 22.32.020 and 22.32.095). Borden's understanding of the ordinance was that a development identification sign does not constitute space for multiple tenants. It is intended to illustrate a name that is representative of the full development. Inclusion of the Biggby sign is not permissible as a development identification sign.

Number of signs: Given the presence of an existing sign near the 13 Mile Road entrance to the site, the property already contains one ground sign. Section 22.32.110 permits a second ground sign for corner lots where the signs are separated by at least 300 feet; however, the same section permits only one development identification sign. Whether a second ground sign or development identification sign is allowed may be a matter of interpretation.

Sign location: Based on the site plan submitted, the proposed sign is depicted on the adjacent property to the north. Section 22.32.091 prohibits off premise signs.

Westerlund referred to the site plan and noted the requirement that ground signs have 200 sq. ft. of landscaped area, which is not depicted on the plan. He expressed concern about the location of

the sign relative to the property line, parking spaces, and sidewalk. It was noted that an accurate site plan would demonstrate whether the applicant complies with the landscaping requirement.

In response to an inquiry, contractor Albert LaLonde stated that he was using an old site plan to show the location of the sign. The building diagram is not accurate and does not show the expansion from a couple of years ago. LaLonde stated that the proposed sign would be moved from the location of the current sign to the Market Fresh entryway on the north end of the site.

Ostrowski suggested that the Commission provide the applicant with guidance on how to proceed with revising the sign to comply with the ordinance. The ordinance prohibits an existing multi-tenant business to update its ground sign. Ostrowski suggested that a development identification sign would work for a new development.

LaLonde said that he was working with the Village to present something that the Planning Commission would approve.

Motion by Jensen, second by Westerlund, to table the Market Fresh ground sign request and suggest that the applicant submit an accurate site plan.

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE SIGN ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

Commission member Stempien distributed and highlighted marked up portions of the sign ordinance and graphics in order to clarify issues and ambiguities relative to the intent of the ordinance in terms of nonconforming signs. He elaborated on changes or additions to the ordinance that would provide clarity.

Stempien suggested a change in the ordinance that would clarify the intent of the ordinance to allow two development identification signs if a business was on a corner lot and met the 300' of distance requirement for a second sign. This would have a bearing on consideration of the Market Fresh sign proposal.

The ordinance states that a development identification sign shall contain no other advertising display or business/tenant specific signage. Stempien said that this requirement warrants discussion by the Commission to determine what direction should be taken.

Borden said that the development identification sign concept would remove some of the sign clutter that exists. However, Beverly Hills is a built up community and will not have established complex identities until there is a total redevelopment of property. Medical Village is the exception. It would be difficult to force a new name onto an old shopping center. Borden questioned whether there should be a threshold of redevelopment where a multi-tenant sign would have to convert to a development identification sign based on a percentage of redevelopment of the space.

Wilson affirmed that the Village has some bad looking signs. A tenant who wants to install a better looking and more compliant sign cannot because of the requirement for development identification signs. Business owners have an option that should be mentioned. They may decide

to keep their old, nonconforming signs rather than erect a development identification sign that is not permitted to include signage for individual businesses.

Commission members discussed whether to redefine the ordinance section that requires development identification signs in lieu of ground signs on multi-tenant buildings. Consideration was given to the fact that there are long established multi-tenant sites in the Village. Members questioned whether the ordinance language is overly ambitious. Some Commission members thought that requiring a development identification sign for existing multi-tenant buildings is not working in this community.

Stempien suggested that the Commission needs to reach a consensus on what to do going forward with respect to multi-tenant signage. There was agreement that the ad hoc sign committee should meet with Administration and LSL Planning to work this out and provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission.

Borden expressed the view that the Planning Commission could resolve the majority of current issues if it directed its attention to multi-tenant signs and nonconforming signs. He mentioned that the Village has a window of opportunity with two sign applications submitted for Southfield Road sites.

Wilson added that, in the last four months, he has been contacted by the tenants of Brady's plaza, the 31333 building, Market Fresh, and the BP station. All of these business owners are considering removal of their nonconforming signs and erecting something better.

The protracted sign application process was discussed. It was suggested that the ordinance should be written well and clearly so that sign applications could be approved administratively.

There was agreement that the sign subcommittee would meet and reconsider the sign ordinance sections dealing with revisions to the development identification signs, multi-tenant signs, and nonconforming signs.

DISCUSSION OF SOUTHFIELD ROAD CORRIDOR MARKETING PLAN

Wilson related that Council is supportive of funding an aggressive corridor marketing plan to encourage interest in developing a Village Center. It was the consensus of Council that there is untapped potential in the land use along the Southfield Road corridor. If the Village could market this properly and spark the interest of individuals who could redevelop the corridor, there could be a significant return on investment in a marketing plan.

Jensen mentioned that urban planner Bob Gibbs has included a marketing plan as part of the Village Center Plan document. The Gibbs material will be distributed to Planning Commission members.

Borden stated that LSL Planning is doing a lot of work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The organization offers assistance and programs that help a community market itself and/or target areas. He referred to a program called "Redevelopment Ready". There are ideas that can be used from that program relative to marketing plans and

contact information. Borden said that he has a couple of contacts at the MEDC level; he or Wilson will do some outreach to those individuals.

DISCUSSION ON VILLAGE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Borden stated that there will be a subcommittee meeting between now and the next Planning Commission meeting. Kathleen Duffy has prepared a draft plan encompassing future land use and character, goals and objectives, recommendations, and establishment of an action plan. It will be reviewed by Borden and Brad Strader. Borden said that the project will be kept on track.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

ADMINISTRATION COMMENTS

Wilson reported that the Zoning Board of Appeals has requested that the Planning Commission consider reevaluating the ordinance regulating temporary storage pods. There have been some function and enforcement issues that have come before the ZBA. Planning Commission members suggested that permits be issued for storage pods.

Wilson related that there will be a case before the Zoning Board at its May meeting involving altering a nonconforming structure to construct a second story on the east side of the Village. This raises a question regarding what it means to increase the nonconformity of a structure.

COMMISSIONER’S COMMENTS

Grinnan thanked Sue Bernard for all her years of service as recording secretary. She congratulated Ms. Bernard on her retirement.

Ostrowski mentioned that the Village has posted an advertisement that it is seeking a planning and zoning administrator.

Motion by Westerlund, second by Borowski, to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Motion passed.

George Ostrowski
Planning Commission Chairman

Ellen E. Marshall
Village Clerk

Susan Bernard
Recording Secretary