

Visual Environment Board (VEB) meeting minutes

November 19, 2014 7:30 pm

In attendance: Tom Smith (TS), Doug Wehrle (DW), Seana O'Callaghan (SOC), Mayla Hsu (MH).

Petitioners present: Dan McCarthy, Cathy Gallagher, Susan Schmidt

Petitioners absent: Edmond Gemmola

1. Dan McCarthy (DM), Law firm, 37 North Riverside Avenue.

DM has moved to this new office from a smaller location, and has put up the sign from the former office. He has already moved in, and has a certificate of occupancy. From the photo, DW questions whether the trim around the window is complete; DM responds that this work is continuing. VEB asks about the lights over the sign, and DM indicates that the photos in the application are not the actual lights that he will install, but are similar in style. The two lights will resemble the neighboring Tavern lights, and won't obstruct the sign. DM states he also plans to have planters in front, and will replace the chain link fence along both sides with a white solid fence, thus improving the overall appearance of the exterior. TS says his only comment about the sign is that there is too much space between the words, which affects the overall space filled by the words. However, due to cost considerations, DM wants to keep this sign, and had a professional sign-maker touch it up with some gold paint. DM states that the former office building was much smaller, and the sign looked proportionally different. VEB inquired about window blinds, and DM says his partner prefers vertical blinds. SOC points out that horizontal blinds are more energy-efficient than vertical, and VEB adds that these are more formal and classic-looking, particularly suited for an attorney's office. DM says he will consider these facts. VEB approves his sign.

2. Susan Schmidt (SS) and Cathy Gallagher (CG), Journey to Birth Midwifery, 18 Old Post Road.

DW begins by asking SS and CG how long they have occupied the building. They have been tenants for 11 months, but this is not widely known, owing to the absence of a sign, which will now be located for maximal visibility as people drive by. VEB discusses sign details: it will be vertical, of composite material, flat, with two pieces held together with a small piece of metal, similar to the co-tenant Organic Teaching Kitchen, but larger. DW confirmed the sign will be high enough off the ground (8 feet minimum), and SS points out it will be more than 8 feet because of the high porch. DW, TS discuss the sign color and suggest that a darker green color would be more impactful. SS and CG show their business card, and indicate that the sign is a replica of their logo, thus changing colors would incur additional expense. TS notes that their card and sign have a large number of fonts, and suggests using the same typeface when new cards are printed. As for the sign, MH suggests there is too much text, making it difficult to read quickly when passing by. The VEB helped to shorten the text. SS and CG will re-submit their updated sign by email, for further consideration by the VEB.

3. Edmond Gemmola (EM), Mobil on the Hudson, 205 Riverside Avenue. EM was not present at the meeting.

There are multiple signs associated with this project, and each one is discussed as follows:

- a. The tall, free-standing sign. DW indicates we do not have information about the exact height, location, brightness etc. of this sign. We do not know whether this sign is intended to be seen from the highway. If so, its height and size may be disproportionately high and large in relation to the surrounding area, which is composed almost entirely of low buildings and a residential neighborhood in close proximity. While the proposed new freestanding sign may fall within the maximum size (40 square feet) allowed by code, the VEB questions the appropriateness of such large ‘highway’ signs in the Village. DW notes that new gas station signs in neighboring towns are all lower in height, recognizing that these stations are located on smaller-scale village roadways with lower speed limits. Since the petitioner is absent, it is impossible to determine the intentions and precise details of this sign. The VEB is concerned that not only would this sign be out of scale for its location, approval of this sign could create a precedent that could encourage other businesses to increase the height of their signs to be seen from the highway. In addition, this sign may be unnecessary since the petitioner already plans another standing sign (b). The VEB opposes this sign until we have further details.
- b. The short, free-standing sign. This will be converted from the existing previous sign (“Doms”) to the new name (“Mobil”), and along with the name, indicates the price of gas. Since it replaces an existing sign, with the same dimensions, the VEB approves it. However, the VEB notes that if there will also be a tall, free-standing sign (a), then there will be too many signs of this type on one site.
- c. The two red horizontal signs on building. All VEB members agree that these are obtrusively placed, esthetically displeasing, and inelegant. DW and TS state that the placement, between windows, disrupts the flow of the architectural design and doesn’t integrate well. Moreover, the color of these signs has no relationship to the building or other signs (e.g. Mobil), and the design is different. The VEB makes two suggestions to improve the signage link with the architecture:
 - i. Place the two signs above the windows, partially spanning them (see Fig.1).

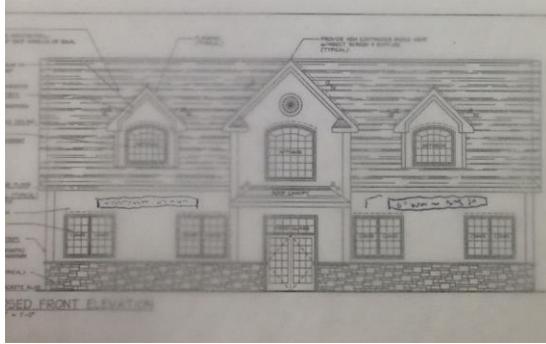


Figure 1. Proposed horizontal rearrangement of building signs (“Food Mart” and “Mobil on the Hudson”) on front façade.

ii. Make vertical signs between the windows (see Fig.2).



Figure 2. Proposed vertical rearrangement of building signs (“Food Mart” and “Mobil on the Hudson”) on front façade.

d. Signs mounted on awnings, and above gas pumps. These are the “Mobil” logo that is present a total of 4 times. Combined with the above signs, that means a cumulative total of 8 signs on this site, which is definitely too many.

Due to serious concerns about the tall sign (a) and building signs (c), the VEB recommends that the planning board withhold approval of these signs until these issues are resolved. In particular, the petitioner should appear before the VEB and give further information.