

Village of Croton-on-Hudson Visual Environment Board (VEB) Minutes

March 20, 2013

Present: Tom Smith, Valerie Leis, Seana O'Callaghan, Seth Weintraub

Absent: Doug Wehrle, Joe Sperber

Member(s) of the Public: Emily Prince

Discussed

1. Sign Application from Emily Prince, *Sunshine and Clover*, Grand Street

The sign proposal is in compliance with Village Code, and was approved with minor modification. Board members suggested removing colored bars on the right and left sides of the sign, changing the tagline text from gray to blue and increasing tagline font size. Ms. Prince concurred with these changes, and left with the assurance that she would put her copy of the design with notes showing these changes under door of the Engineer's office for their records. She was advised that she could go ahead and mount the sign with the above changes at will.

2. Sign Application for *Sunoco Gas Station*, South Riverside Ave

The board noted that Sunoco had already made changes to its signage without seeking Village approval, and now has come to the Village for approval of further changes. VEB members are in general agreement that the proposal for the new signage and architectural changes are overpowering for the site.

- The look of the revised canopy over gas pumps looks more appropriate for a highway location, and does not comport with the small village look that Croton-on-Hudson seeks to promote. The VEB would prefer to see a design that incorporates the existing canopy's mansard roof, with new paint consistent with the Sunoco color scheme but without the visual enlargement that would occur with the revised scheme.
- The VEB has previously voiced its opposition to large free standing signs within the South Riverside/Harmon Gateway District. While the proposed 4' X 8' company sign fall within the maximum size allowed by code, the VEB questions the appropriateness of placing such large signs in this Gateway district, which is intended to become more pedestrian oriented. Looking at other nearby filling stations in this area, we note that their sign placements allow greater setbacks from the sign to the public right-of-way, whereas the Sunoco sign's placement is constrained and will as proposed nearly overhang the sidewalk. The Board notes that new filling stations in adjacent Westchester village settings are employing smaller and less tall free standing signs, recognizing the fact that these stations are located on smaller scale village roadways with lower speed limits.

- The “Foodmart” sign’s location as proposed over the service bay doors is confusing. Will the service bay area now become a food mart?
- The VEB suggests that the Village Board consider revising the signage code for this key Gateway District in order to reinforce its pedestrian small-village classic feel as opposed to the auto oriented highway look that the current Sunoco proposal reflects.

3. Updating the biennial VEB Visual Environment Report

The members of the VEB will begin work on the report as set forth in an outline proposed by Doug Wehrle, and will work to scan with optical character recognition software and upload into a shared document to begin making revisions for ongoing discussion and review among VEB members.

4. Proposal to invite Village Manager Abe Zambrano to attend a meeting of the VEB to discuss management issues relevant to the visual environment of the Village

The VEB seeks to take an active role with the Village Manager’s office to beautify the Village and improve the visual environment in which we all live. In addition to seeking updates and a timeline for completion from the Manager regarding a very positive process to revise the signage at Silver Lake Park, the VEB would also like to raise other issues, including:

- Inaction by Con Edison and Verizon on a depressing number of unsightly and potentially unsafe poles, wires and utility apparatus throughout the Village (for example including inappropriate use of rope to secure wires and poles on Brook Street, Cleveland Drive and at the library).
- Processes for enforcement of visual environment code violations, including unpainted buildings, tattered awnings, sagging banners, non-compliant signage, (example the nail salon at the corner of Benedict Blvd. and South Riverside where a very visible business has been allowed to mount signage, without VEB review, on a building that has become an eyesore due to lack of maintenance).
- Development of a planting, maintenance and replacement protocol for the Village’s street tree inventory. Recent storms and utility company trimming have demonstrated the need to develop a sustainable long range master plan to insure the health of this significant and valuable Village amenity.
- Care, paving and cleaning of Village assets such as the Brook Street municipal parking lot.