



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Urban Design Commission

MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the City of Newton Urban Design Commission (UDC) was held virtually on Thursday, **January 10, 2024** at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom
<https://newtonma-gov.zoom.us/j/89487501867>

Ruthanne Fuller,
Mayor

The Chair, Michael Kaufman, called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

Barney Heath,
Director
Planning & Development

I. Roll Call

Those present were Michael Kaufman (Chair), John Downie, Visda Saeyan, and Bill Winkler. Shubee Sikka, Urban Designer, was also present.

Shubee Sikka,
Urban Designer
Planning & Development

II. Regular Agenda

Sign Permits

Mr. Kaufman asked if the Commission felt there were any applications they could approve without discussion. The Commission agreed to approve the following signs without discussion:

Members
Michael Kaufman, Chair
Jim Doolin, Vice Chair
John Downie
William Winkler
Visda Saeyan

Sign Permits

4. 1253 Washington Street – Brezniak Funeral Directors

Proposed Signs:

- One wall mounted principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 16 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern building façade facing Washington Street.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the sign at 1253 Washington Street – Brezniak Funeral Directors. Mr. Winkler seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 4-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Visda Saeyan, John Downie, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed.

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1. 131-181 Needham Street – Newton Nexus; Veterinary Specialists

Applicant/Representative: Applicant not present at the meeting

Proposed Signs:

- One arbor mounted sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 8.95 sq. ft. of sign area facing Needham Street.

Presentation and Discussion:

- The UDC had questions about the different existing signs, but the applicant was not present to answer any questions. Hence, the Commission continued this hearing to the next meeting.

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2. 269-287 Grove Street – Kendall Kitchen

Applicant/Representative: Tori Sabatino, Greatland Partners, Representative of the owner

Proposed Signs:

- One free-standing principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 24 sq. ft. of sign area facing Grove Street. The applicant initially submitted two options for the sign at two different locations and has decided to move forward with location 1 (next to the existing free-standing sign).

Presentation and Discussion:

- Applicant mentioned that the café opened this summer, and they are proposing the monument sign to make the public aware of Kendall Kitchen.
- Mr. Winkler commented that the proposed sign should be the same height as the existing stone sign and not be higher.
- Mr. Kaufman commented that this property already has a free-standing sign. He asked the staff if the applicant will need to go to city council to allow this proposed sign. Staff responded that they would need to amend the special permit to allow the proposed sign.
- Mr. Kaufman asked the applicant if most people using the café will be people who are in the building. The applicant responded that is correct at this time, majority of the tenants use it now, but the owner of the café is trying to bring in more customers.
- Mr. Kaufman commented that this is not an appropriate permanent sign for this location, but he understands that the café has a visibility problem, and they probably would like to tell people that they are here. Maybe the Commission suggests to the City Council that they allow this sign for up to 6 months or something like that. Not appropriate for 1 business to have a free-standing sign, next to the main sign for the office park.
- Mr. Winkler asked about the white part of the sign, is it solid as shown or is it standing on two posts. The applicant responded that it is standing on two posts, that was a mistake as shown. He recommended to lower the sign, so the top of the sign aligns with the stone. He also recommended to move the sign to the other end of the big stone sign so that the stone sign is the lead sign.
- Mr. Downie commented that the sign is not appropriate at all, understand the dilemma because the café is in an office building. Is it the only business that serves food, only business that has retail sales? The applicant responded affirmatively to both questions. Mr. Downie commented that it is a tough situation to be in. He asked how many tenants are in the building? The applicant responded there are about 10-12 tenants. His concern is that no other tenants have signage here at the Riverside Center. Agree with Bill's comments if the sign is approved. It doesn't make any sense for a single business to have a sign in multi-tenant building. It might make sense for the café to have a sign on the wall of the building near the entrance, first pillar on the right of the entrance.
- Mr. Kaufman commented that if the landlord really wants the sign, they should figure out a way to put it on the stonewall under the name of Riverside Center. A second free-standing sign is not appropriate. The applicant should look to revise their existing free-standing sign, then they can come back to UDC with a design to provide a recommendation to the City Council. The sign as proposed is not appropriate and probably doesn't fit with the zoning ordinance of the sign ordinance. And it takes away from the relative pretty handsome existing sign that's there. Mr. Winkler and Mr. Downie agreed.

- Mr. Winkler commented this is one of the best properties along Grove Street and it should be the prototypical one for what's going on down the street. The sidewalk that winds into the property to get you away from the street is very well done, has a high end look to it. Wouldn't want to see it degraded with many little signs.
- The applicant responded that she understands this, but the business sales aren't doing great, and the landlord is trying to get the public. Mr. Kaufman recommended that maybe applicant should ask the City Council to approve a limited time sign. This is not appropriate for a permanent sign.
- Mr. Downie commented that this sign will probably be visible after you have entered the property. The applicant responded that it will probably be visible to see the signs at the traffic lights.
- Ms. Saeyan commented that she agrees with everyone, the sign doesn't go with the building. Would it they be allowed to have a vertical banner, maybe flag? Staff responded that the ordinance doesn't allow flag signs.
- Mr. Kaufman commented that a banner or a permanent sign attached to the area under the Riverside Center might help too.
- Mr. Kaufman recapped the recommendations by UDC:
 - If the applicant would like a permanent sign, then UDC recommends a sign on the stonewall in the blank space under the sign Riverside Center.
 - If the applicant wanted a temporary sign while the application is in process, then they could either do the same location or check with Commissioner of ISD to see what he would allow on a temporary basis.
 - Or the applicant to go to the City Council for the sign as proposed.
- Ms. Saeyan commented that the building sign is not a retail type of sign that would attract attention, so the applicant will need to come up with a clever design to make the Café sign read as commercial.
- Mr. Winkler commented that the sign could maybe on the stonewall lower right-hand corner, thin black letters Café. Don't want to call too much attention, but black against the stone might look classic. Mr. Kaufman commented that they are probably also trying to tell people when its open, which is not regular business hours.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to recommend proposed sign for denial at 269-287 Grove Street. Mr. Downie seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 4-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Jim Doolin, John Downie, and William Winkler in favor of the denial and none opposed. The sign was recommended for denial. The Commission made a recommendation to the applicant to propose a sign in the blank space on the existing free-standing sign under words Riverside Center.

3. 30-34 Langley Road – Tango Mango

Proposed Signs:

1. One wall mounted split principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 62 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade facing Langley Road.
2. One awning split principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 10 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade facing Langley Road.

Presentation and Discussion:

Mr. Kaufman requested the applicant to provide the dimensions of the awning sign, which was not included on the application and asked if the awning sign would comply with the ordinance. Staff responded that this business is allowed a principal sign of up to 100 sq. ft. and the wall mounted sign is 62 sq. ft. and the awning sign doesn't appear to be larger than a 30 sq. ft. so both signs would comply with the ordinance as split principal signs.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve both split signs as submitted shown in drawings at 30-34 Langley Road – Tango Mango with a condition. Ms. Saeyan seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 4-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Visda Saeyan, John Downie, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed. The Commission approved both signs on the condition that the applicant send the dimensions of the awning sign. The applicant uploaded the dimensions of the awning sign on NewGov on January 15.

At 7:32 p.m., Mr. Kaufman suspended the Urban Design Commission, and enter the Commission in its role as Fence Appeal Board.

Fence Appeal

1. 47 Windsor Road – Fence Appeal

Homeowner/Applicant: James Houghtlin

Fence Appeal: The property located at 47 Windsor Road is within a Single Residence 2 district. The applicant has added the following fence:

- a) Side Lot Line– The applicant has added a new fence, set at the southern side property line, approximately 6 to 7 feet tall solid, 100 feet in length. The Commission requested the applicant to provide the length of the fence that is more than 6 feet. The applicant submitted a drawing showing approximately 20 feet length of the fence is over 6 feet tall.

The proposed fence along the side property line appears to be not consistent with the fence criteria outlined in §5-30(d)(2) of the Newton Code of Ordinances.

According to §5-30(d)(2), "Fences bordering side lot lines: No fence or portion of a fence bordering or parallel to a side lot line shall exceed six (6) feet in height except as provided in subsection (6) below, and further, that any portion of a fence bordering a side lot line which is within two (2) feet of a front lot line shall be graded to match the height of any fence bordering the front lot line." As specified under §5-30(c) and (h), the UDC may grant an exception to the provisions of the City's Fence Ordinance. The proposed fence, however, must be found to comply with the *"requirements of this ordinance, or if owing to conditions especially affecting a particular lot, but not affecting the area generally, compliance with the provisions of this ordinance would involve substantial hardship, financial or otherwise."* The UDC must also determine whether the *"desired relief may be granted without substantially nullifying or substantially derogating from the intent and purposes of this ordinance or the public good."*

Presentation and Discussion:

Staff commented that it is a 100 feet long fence and height initially given by the applicant was that the fence is six to seven feet tall. But at a previous meeting, UDC asked for very specifically, which portion of the fence was more than six feet tall. And the applicant has

provided a drawing, which shows that it's about 20 feet at towards the middle of the property, which is more than six feet tall.

Mr. Kaufman commented it's relatively minimal and there's some grade issues that made it difficult to keep it to six feet height. His thought was that UDC should except that 20-foot portion that exceeds the six feet but asked for any other discussion from the Commission?

Mr. Winkler asked to see the photograph of the fence from the street and the side and questioned if it was 2 feet from the property line. The Commission looked at the photo and the survey plan and concluded that it appears to be 2 feet or more than feet from the front property line.

Mr. Kaufman moved the motion to grant exception to accept 20 feet of the 100 feet fence that exceeds 6 feet for that 20-foot length. Ms. Saeyan seconded the motion. All the members present voted, with a 4-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, John Downie, Visda Saeyan, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed. The motion was granted.

At 7:40 p.m. the Commission adjourned the Fence Appeal Board portion of the meeting and reconvened as the Urban Design Commission.

III. Old/New Business

1. Meeting minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes of December meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Winkler made a motion recommending approval of the regular meeting minutes for December as submitted. Ms. Saeyan seconded the motion. All the members present voted, with a 4-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, Visda Saeyan, John Downie, and William Winkler in favor and none opposed. The decision is hereby incorporated as part of these minutes.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kaufman made a motion to adjourn the meeting and there was general agreement among the members.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Shubee Sikka

Approved on February 14, 2024.