



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Urban Design Commission

MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the City of Newton Urban Design Commission (UDC) was held virtually on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

<https://newtonma-gov.zoom.us/j/88948776741>

Ruthanne Fuller,
Mayor

Barney Heath,
Director
Planning & Development

Shubee Sikka,
Urban Designer
Planning & Development

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

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The Chair, Michael Kaufman, called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M.

I. Roll Call

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

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:

2. 308-322 Walnut Street - Lorraine

Proposed Sign:

- One wall mounted principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 6 sq. ft. of sign area on the western building façade facing Walnut Street.

3. 130 Needham Street – Fox’s

Proposed Signs:

- One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 40 sq. ft. of sign area on the western façade facing Needham Street.
- One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 40 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern building façade facing the side parking lot.
- One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 40 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern building façade facing Rockland Street.
- One window sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 9 sq. ft. of sign area on the western window.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the signs at 308-322 Walnut Street – Lorraine, 130 Needham Street – Fox’s. Mr. Doolin seconded the motion,

and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 4-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, John Downie, Bill Winkler, and Jim Doolin in favor and none opposed.

1. 344-348 Walnut Street – Otto Pizza

Applicant/Representative:

Stuart Pitchel, SRP Signs
Eric Holstein
Martin Sorger

Proposed Signs:

- One marquee split principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 22 sq. ft. of sign area on the western façade facing Walnut Street.
- One perpendicular split principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 6 sq. ft. of sign area on the western façade perpendicular to Walnut Street.
- Multiple window signs, non-illuminated.

Presentation and Discussion:

- Mr. Winkler commented that this sign design with small LED bulbs and is not appropriate for Newtonville. He believes that the sign has at least 50 individual light bulbs with no covering in front. Additionally, the background of the fixture is white metal. It was suggested by UDC the fixture could be dimmed but the issue is who controls the dimmer switch. Mr. Winkler is not in favor of this fixture and believes the regulations against exposed light bulbs (lamps) are valid and should be upheld.
- The Commission asked where are other locations with this kind of sign for this business? The applicant responded that the closest one is in Brookline, one in Lynnfield, Harvard Square, Arlington, Portland, more in Maine.
- Staff commented that she didn't realize that the bulbs are not covered. Staff looked at the ordinance and shared her screen to show the section of the ordinance that states that exposed illumination is allowed. Staff mentioned she will need to check with her colleagues about this. Staff checked with her colleagues after the meeting and found that the applicant will need to apply for a special permit to allow exposed illumination. Section 5.2.10.C. *"Any lighting of a sign shall be continuous and shall be either interior, non-exposed or exterior illumination. All illumination shall be of reasonable intensity and shielded in such a manner that all direct light falls on the sign or the wall to which it is affixed and does not shine onto any street or nearby property."*
- Mr. Kaufman asked what exposed means in this situation, is it for safety or visual reason? Staff responded she will need to check with her colleagues about what is allowed.
- Mr. Kaufman commented that he has the sign in Brookline and it's not very bright. The Commission could ask the applicant to put dimmers on the light. Mr. Winkler commented that there is always the question who will dim it?
- Mr. Kaufman and Mr. Doolin commented that they are okay with the sign.
- Martin Sorger commented that he is the designer of the signs and they have done others where they are internally illuminated with a constant light so it's not the marquee lights, and they have also done them a low lit. This is sort of the preferred brand version. Mr. Doolin commented that if there's an alternative that the applicant will be willing to do that is consistent with the ordinance, he would fully support that if it's HALO or another

option. Applicant responded HALO will not work in this situation since there's nothing to shine against. Mr. Kaufman commented that maybe there's a way of doing something, with LED or a string of LEDs and asked the applicant if there's a way of doing something so it is consistent with the ordinance?

- Mr. Winkler commented that it might be acceptable if there were a cover on it, because we don't want to see an all-white sign to begin with. If there were a cover that calmed down a little bit and then you would see all the dots of the lamps as little bit of ghosts behind it. So, you'd still get this little bit of a marquee look that you want it would be tamed down a bit. The applicant asked about the objection to the white. Mr. Winkler commented the objection is during the evening/night, it's bright white. Mr. Kaufman commented that typically objection is to white background, not white letters, these are just white letters, and he has no objection to them. Mr. Downie agreed with Mr. Kaufman.
- Applicant commented that these light bulbs come in various Kelvin temperatures, this can be a very warm light, so it's not white but it will be very warm, especially if it's dimmed a little bit. Applicant also commented that these bulbs are plastic and not glass so there shouldn't be any safety issue.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the signs at 344-348 Walnut Street – Otto Pizza. Mr. Downie seconded the motion, and one opposed. All the members present voted, with a 3-1 vote, Michael Kaufman, John Downie, and Jim Doolin in favor and Bill Winkler opposed.

The Commission recommended approval on the **condition**:

- Bulbs are dimmable
- Kelvin temperature is on the warm side of the spectrum
- Contingent that the Commissioner finds it consistent with the ordinance. Staff checked with Chief Zoning Code Official, and she said that the applicant will need to apply for a special permit since the ordinance doesn't allow it. Applicant has indicated that they would like to apply for a special permit.

4. 71 Needham Street – AT&T

Applicant/Representative: Bryan Michener

Proposed Sign:

1. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 44 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing Needham Street (sign S1).
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 24 sq. ft. of sign area on the western building façade facing the rear parking lot (sign S2).

Presentation and Discussion:

- Staff summarized the review that was sent by email before the meeting:
 - The proposed secondary sign facing Needham Street appears to be not consistent with the comprehensive sign package. As per the sign package, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 37 sq. ft., which the applicant is exceeding, the maximum width of the sign allowed is the storefront width (30'-11") which the applicant is not

exceeding, and the maximum letter height allowed is 2 feet 3 inches which the applicant is not exceeding.

- The proposed secondary sign facing the rear parking lot appears to be not consistent with the comprehensive sign package. As per the sign package, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 12 sq. ft., which the applicant is exceeding, the maximum width of the sign allowed is the storefront width (30') which the applicant is not exceeding.
- The Commission commented that they have reviewed signs for AT&T a few months ago and recommended approval for the signs that were consistent with the comprehensive sign package and recommend the signs be consistent with the comprehensive sign package.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to recommend proposed signs for denial at 71 Needham Street. Mr. Winkler 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 Urban Design Commission recommended denial because it exceeds the size of the signs approved in comprehensive sign package.

5. 131-181 Needham Street – Veterinary Specialists

Applicant/Representative: Christina Moreau

Proposed Signs:

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

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the sign at 131-181 Needham Street. Mr. Downie seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 4-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, John Downie, Bill Winkler, and Jim Doolin in favor and none opposed.

6. 200-220 Boylston Street - Glowbar

Applicant/Representative: Jess Caamano

Proposed Sign:

- One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 12 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade of building B facing the parking lot.

MOTION: Mr. Kaufman made a motion to approve the sign at 200-220 Boylston Street - Glowbar. Mr. Winkler seconded the motion, and none opposed. All the members present voted, with a 4-0 vote, Michael Kaufman, John Downie, Bill Winkler, and Jim Doolin in favor and none opposed.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Shubee Sikka

Approved on May 8, 2024