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**STAFF MEMORANDUM**

Meeting Date: **Wednesday, November 18, 2020**  
DATE: November 12, 2020  
TO: Urban Design Commission  
FROM: Shubee Sikka, Urban Designer  
SUBJECT: **Additional Review Information**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the members of the Urban Design Commission (UDC) and the public with technical information and planning analysis which may be useful in the review and decision-making process of the UDC. The Department of Planning and Development’s intention is to provide a balanced view of the issues with the information it has at the time of the application’s review. Additional information may be presented at the meeting that the UDC can take into consideration when discussing Sign Permit or Fence Appeal applications.

Dear UDC Members,

The following is a brief discussion of the sign permit applications that you should have received in your meeting packet and staff’s recommendations for these items.

**I. Roll Call**

**II. Regular Agenda**

**Sign Permits**

**1. 160 Wells Avenue – Good Shepherd Community Care**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 160 Wells Avenue is within a Limited Manufacturing district. The applicant is proposing to install the following signs:

1. One wall mounted principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 22 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing Welles Avenue.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 19 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing the parking lot.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed wall mounted principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 64 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 100 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.
- The proposed secondary sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, two secondary signs are allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 82 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 50 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of both the principal and secondary signs as proposed.

## **2. 303 Auburn Street – Famili Photography**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 303 Auburn Street is within a Business 1 district. The applicant is proposing to replace and install the following sign:

1. One awning-mounted principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 48 sq. ft. of sign area facing Auburn Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 17 ft., the maximum size of the sign allowed is 51 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the principal sign as proposed.

## **3. 2 Wells Avenue – Bright Horizons**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 2 Wells Avenue is within a Limited Manufacturing zoning district. The applicant is proposing to reface the following sign:

- Reface of one free-standing principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 28 sq. ft. of sign area facing Wells Ave.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed reface of the free-standing sign appears to be consistent.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the proposed reface of the free-standing sign.

#### **4. 980 Boylston Street – Mr. K’s Wines & Spirits**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 980 Boylston Street is within Business 2 district. The applicant is proposing to replace and install the following signs:

1. One free-standing principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 24 sq. ft. of sign area perpendicular to Boylston Street.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 40 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern façade facing the parking lot and Boylston Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed free-standing principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one free-standing principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and the maximum size of the sign allowed is 35 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding. Per Zoning ordinance §5.2.13 “A. *In particular instances, the City Council may grant a special permit to allow free-standing signs and exceptions to the limitations imposed by this Sec. 5.2 on the number, size, location and height of signs where it is determined that the nature of the use of the premises, the architecture of the building or its location with reference to the street is such that free-standing signs or exceptions should be permitted in the public interest.*  
*B. In granting such a permit, the City Council shall specify the size, type and location and shall impose such other terms and restrictions as it may deem to be in the public interest and in accordance with the 780 CMR. All free-standing signs shall not exceed 35 square feet in area, or 10 feet in any linear dimension, or 16 feet in height from the ground, except as further described in Sec. 5.2.7.”*
- The proposed secondary sign appears to be not consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, two secondary signs are allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 24 feet, the maximum size of sign allowed is 24 sq. ft., which the applicant is exceeding. Staff has sent an email to the applicant regarding the secondary sign and is waiting to hear back from the applicant.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff does not recommend approval of the secondary sign as proposed. Staff encourages the applicant to reduce the size of the secondary sign to less than 24 sq. ft. Staff seeks recommendation from UDC regarding the free-standing sign to the Land Use Committee of the City Council.

#### **5. 277 Auburn Street – Ward 4 Restaurant**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 277 Auburn Street is within a Business 1 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to install the following sign:

1. One wall mounted principal sign, externally illuminated, with approximately 35 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern building façade facing the front parking lot.

**TECHNICAL REVIEW:**

- The proposed principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 32 ft., the maximum size of the sign allowed is 96 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the proposed principal sign.

## **6. 1293 Washington Street – Bluebird Bar**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The property located at 1293 Washington Street is within Business 1 zoning district. The applicant is proposing to replace and install the following signs:

1. One wall mounted split principal sign, non-illuminated on the southern façade facing Washington Street. Staff has requested the applicant to send measurement of the entire sign area with all the signs included (“*Late Night Menu*”, “*Desserts*” and “*Bluebird Bar & Woodfired Grill*”).
2. One perpendicular split principal sign, non-illuminated, with approximately 14 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade perpendicular to Washington Street.
3. One wall mounted secondary sign, non-illuminated on the eastern façade facing Waltham Street. Staff has requested the applicant to send measurement of the entire sign area with all the signs (“*Breakfast*”, “*Cocktails*”, “*Espresso*”, “*Booth Service*”, and “*Catering*”).

**TECHNICAL REVIEW:**

- Staff will have a recommendation about all the signs at the November 18<sup>th</sup> UDC meeting.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff will have a recommendation about all the proposed signs at the November 18<sup>th</sup> UDC meeting.

## **7. 21 Needham Street – Mavis Tires & Brakes**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The property located at 19-31 Needham Street is within Mixed Use 1 district. The applicant is proposing to replace and install the following sign:

1. One wall mounted principal sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 72 sq. ft. of sign area on the southeastern façade facing Needham Street.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, internally illuminated, with approximately 17 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern façade facing Easy Street.

3. Reface of two directory signs, internally illuminated, with approximately 2 sq. ft. of sign area perpendicular to Needham Street.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 100 ft., the maximum size of the sign allowed is 100 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.
- The proposed secondary sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, two secondary signs are allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 160 feet, the maximum size of sign allowed is 50 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.
- Both the directory signs are a reface of the existing signs and appear to be consistent.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the principal sign, secondary and reface of both the directory signs as proposed.

## **8. 697 Washington Street – Garden Remedies**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The property located at 697 Washington Street is within Business 2 district and has a projecting wall mounted sign authorized by a special permit via Board Order # 167-14. The applicant is proposing to install the following signs:

1. One wall mounted principal sign, externally illuminated, with approximately 60 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade facing Washington Street.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, externally illuminated, with approximately 24 sq. ft. of sign area on the eastern façade facing the parking lot.

TECHNICAL REVIEW:

- The proposed principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 93 feet, the maximum size of the sign allowed is 100 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding. The applicant presented this principal sign at the October 14<sup>th</sup> UDC meeting and UDC recommended to move the sign closer to the main entrance (over the windows on the left). The applicant would like to re-discuss the placement of the principal sign. Due to visibility, applicant would like to keep the sign where it was originally proposed (on the right side of the building).
- The proposed secondary sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, two secondary signs are allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 41 feet, the

maximum size of each sign allowed is 41 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of both the principal and secondary signs as proposed.

## **9. 232 Boylston Street - MedMen**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The property located at 232 Boylston Street is within Business 4 district and has a special permit via Board Order #774-85. The applicant is proposing to replace and install the following signs:

1. One free-standing principal sign, externally illuminated, with approximately 35 sq. ft. of sign area perpendicular to Boylston Street.
2. One wall mounted secondary sign, externally illuminated, with approximately 33 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade facing Boylston Street.
3. One wall mounted secondary sign, externally illuminated, with approximately 33 sq. ft. of sign area on the northern façade facing the parking lot.
4. One directional sign, externally illuminated, with 3 sq. ft. of sign area .
5. Five awning signs, non-illuminated, with approximately 1 sq. ft. of sign area on the southern façade facing Boylston Street.

### **TECHNICAL REVIEW:**

- The proposed free-standing principal sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, one free-standing principal sign is allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and the maximum size of the sign allowed is 35 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding. Per Zoning ordinance §5.2.13 "A. *In particular instances, the City Council may grant a special permit to allow free-standing signs and exceptions to the limitations imposed by this Sec. 5.2 on the number, size, location and height of signs where it is determined that the nature of the use of the premises, the architecture of the building or its location with reference to the street is such that free-standing signs or exceptions should be permitted in the public interest.*  
B. *In granting such a permit, the City Council shall specify the size, type and location and shall impose such other terms and restrictions as it may deem to be in the public interest and in accordance with the 780 CMR. All free-standing signs shall not exceed 35 square feet in area, or 10 feet in any linear dimension, or 16 feet in height from the ground, except as further described in Sec. 5.2.7."* Since there is a change of use, the applicant will need to apply for a special permit for the free-standing sign.

- Both the proposed secondary signs appear to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, two secondary signs are allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding, and on this façade of 80 feet, the maximum size of each sign allowed is 50 sq. ft., which the applicant is also not exceeding. However, condition 4 of the existing Board Order #774-85 (attachment A) specifies *“That a wall sign shall not be permitted on the building so long as the free-standing sign exists”*. The applicant will also need to apply for an amendment to the special permit to remove condition #4 to allow both the secondary signs.
- Directional sign appears to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, directional signs of up to 3 sq. ft. are allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding.
- All the five awning signs appear to be consistent with the dimensional controls specified in §5.2.8. Per the Zoning Ordinance, awning signs of up to 20% of the awning area are allowed, which the applicant is not exceeding.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff seeks recommendation from UDC regarding the free-standing sign and the two secondary signs to the Land Use Committee of the City Council. Staff recommends approval of the directional sign and the five awning signs as proposed.

## **Zoning Redesign**

### ***Zoning Redesign Community Engagement Update***

City of Newton's Department of Planning & Development is restarting community engagement around the Zoning Redesign project, a multi-year effort to update and rewrite Newton's Zoning Ordinance. The Community Engagement Planner will share the community engagement strategy for the upcoming months with UDC and solicit ideas on how Newton community members can be engaged during 2021.