



CITY OF  
**West Linn**

PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes of March 19, 2014

Members present: Chair Christine Steel, Vice Chair Russell Axelrod, Lorie Griffith, Nancy King, Jesse Knight, Robert Martin and Ryerson Schwark

Members absent: None

Staff present: Chris Kerr, Community Development Director; Tom Soppe, Associate Planner; and Megan Thornton, Assistant City Attorney

**PREHEARING MEETING**

Chair Steel convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. in the Rosemont Room of City Hall. Staff reported that no public comments had been received. Staff and Commissioners discussed the venue and agenda for the April 2 hearing/work sessions and their preferences in regard to microphones and monitors. They agreed to postpone action on the January 15 minutes so staff could refer to their voting sheet regarding actions taken when recording equipment was not working. Chair Steel closed the meeting at approximately 6:54 p.m.

**REGULAR MEETING - CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Steel called the meeting to order in the Council Chambers of City Hall at 7:00 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner King **moved** to approve the Minutes of December 4, 2013 as corrected by Vice Chair Axelrod. Commissioner Martin **seconded** the motion and it **passed** 5:0:2. Commissioners Schwark and Knight abstained. Action on the Minutes of January 15, 2014 was deferred.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**CUP-13-03/DR-13-07/VAR-13-12/VAR-13-13/MISC-13-07/VAR-14-02 – Youth Music Project**

The case file with the staff report and written testimony is available online at:

<http://westlinnoregon.gov/planning/2015-8th-avenue-conditional-use-permit-and-class-ii-design-review-youth-music-project>

Chair Steel opened the hearing. Commissioner Knight declared a potential conflict. Each of the Commissioners reported making a site visit. Vice Chair Axelrod and Chair Steel had participated in the original CUP hearing. No one present challenged the ability of the Planning Commission or any individual Commissioner to hear the matter.

**Staff Report**

Mr. Soppe outlined the required approvals. He pointed out the proposed new additions and changes on the elevations, materials/colors board and site plan. He reported that the Historic Review Board (HRB) concurred with staff findings that the gable and stained glass met the variance criteria. However they did not concur with the staff finding that the sign font did not meet variance criteria. The HRB supported the variance because this was a unique, Mid-Twentieth Century, special purpose, building in the district and because parents needed to be able to easily see the applicant's recognizable logo and font as they drove to the building. Staff recommended conditions of approval included meeting the font requirement.

23:25

#### **Questions of Staff**

Mr. Soppe responded to questions regarding why the list of approval criteria was in random order in the summary (because that was likely the order in which staff addressed them); why there was 'Condition 4 - Signage Font Variance' if staff recommended denying that variance (because it required the applicant to choose from the allowable historic fonts ); why there was no condition related to the findings regarding stained glass and the roof gable (because if the Commission approved the application as staff recommended they would not have to specifically call that out); and why Condition 3 did not address the design of the garbage receptacle (because the code did not detail that). He clarified where the signs were: above the foyer in front and on the east side of the building facing towards 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

28:30

#### **Applicant**

Jean Pierre Veillette and Garrett Martin, Siteworks DesignBuild, 1255 NW 9<sup>th</sup> Ave., Portland, Oregon, 97203; and Charles Brucker, PLACE Studio, 735 NW 18<sup>th</sup> Ave., Portland, Oregon 97209; represented the applicant. Mr. Veillette noted the HRB had approved the sign font. He explained that there were 600 students coming from all over Portland. Their parents would be looking for the applicant's logo. They should be able to easily identify the location and not be confused by an historic font at the last minute. The building was not typical of the historic district and it was not appropriate to have a historic font when there was no historic experience. He pointed out the drop-off zone and a big gabled entry where kids could wait for parents to pick them up. He explained the site plan considered the safety of kids and discouraged cut-through drivers who were trying to avoid the stop sign.

32:44

#### **Questions of Applicant**

The applicant's representatives clarified the stained glass was not original. It was a special design with a music theme behind the performance stage inside. They explained they no longer proposed to use arborvitae on the west side of the building. They would have a mix of plants for variety and to separate their parking lot from the alley visually and acoustically. They explained they did not think they needed to keep a fire access in back of adjacent properties because they did not think a fire truck could get through that way and frustrated drivers coming off the freeway and trying to avoid a queue at the stop sign were still going to use it. When asked if parking was still an issue as it had been during the original CUP hearing, the

representatives explained that they did not need 600 spots because they staggered class start and end times and all 600 students were not there at the same time. They indicated they were focused on a pass-through condition that parents would drop off their kids and visit nearby retail and coffee vendors. When asked if they had reduced parking they clarified they had removed some spaces to create a drop-off area and a small outdoor space, added landscape screening, and modified slopes to make the parking lot more efficient. They related the HRB had commented that the large sculpture of a guitar with the flying V from their logo was not subject to review because it was artwork.

42:08

#### **Public Testimony - Neither for nor Against**

Alice Richmond, 3939 Parker Rd., expressed concern that the size of the parking lot and having 600 students and events there did not correlate and that the proposal would increase traffic at an intersection that was already problematic. Commissioner Knight indicated he appreciated the drop-off zone was located where it could divert some traffic away from the intersection. He noted there were 600 students there now and he had never seen the parking lot full.

52:34

#### **Rebuttal**

The applicant's representatives indicated the approximately 700 s.f. addition might look large, but it was embedded within existing walls and lower than the roofscape so it did not have great impact. The changes were not proposed to get more business but to improve existing conditions, functionality, enjoyment and safety for students with things such as parking upgrades, an ADA ramp, a front plaza, more natural light, and a covered entry where they could wait for parents. They explained that most of the students were from West Linn and nearby communities. Some might not be as familiar with the intersection as local people and they did not want to increase parents' tension by making it less identifiable.

57:26

#### **Questions of Applicant / Staff**

The applicant's representatives clarified that they had not discussed an alternative of using a historic font on only the sign that faced Willamette Falls Drive with the HRB and they would prefer not to have a sign at all there in that case. They held an historic font would not generate a historical experience as it was not right on the street where it would relate to the rest of the district and because their building did not have the historic qualities of the district. Staff advised the criteria did not specify which side, so the font requirement applied to all sides. They clarified that variances were not precedent-setting. The applicant team related the HRB found the building was a non-contributing structure and this was a unique situation that would not set a precedent. The applicant clarified that the planting plan they had submitted met code requirements and they were in the process of fleshing it out. Mr. Soppe advised the applicant could do that because the plan they had already submitted met the criteria. Chair Steel closed the public hearing.

1:08

#### **Deliberations**

Commissioner Schwark interpreted that as long as the landscape plan the applicant had submitted met the minimum standards they were allowed to add things later. He indicated he felt he had to agree with the staff in regard to the font requirement because it was code, although he wished the applicant could do what they proposed under the code. The applicant had a great logo, but a McDonalds or some other business would also say they had a great logo and would want to use theirs. Commissioner Griffith indicated she found the application very acceptable. Commissioner King related staff had addressed her concern about setting a precedent by advising that each variance was reviewed in its own right. Vice Chair Axelrod indicated he supported the application because the property was being enhanced; the design would make the building fit the area better; he had no problem with the logo; nearby McDonalds and Chevron used their own logos; the sign was not right on the street where it would tie into buildings along the street; and the sign was not ugly. He indicated he hoped the city would be able to address the traffic problem in the future, but it was not the applicant's problem. Commissioner Knight indicated he was in favor of approving the application with the sign variance because the design was well done and would enhance the neighborhood; this was a very unique corner with buildings across the street that were not historic in any sense; and because the HRB had reviewed the sign and supported the variance. Commissioner Martin indicated he was inclined to support the font variance because variance code allowed the Commission to make that judgment; it would make it safer for people to identify the site; he could see no detrimental aspect to allowing it to face 10<sup>th</sup> Street; the logo would be more consistent with the stained glass windows than a historical font; and the HRB, which had done a wonderful job in Willamette, agreed to the variance. Chair Steel agreed with the majority of Commissioners regarding the font, noting it was a wonderful design that would make the site more active and inviting for the students than an old-fashioned font.

Commissioner Martin moved to approve CUP-13-03/DR-13-07/VAR-13-12/VAR-13-13/MISC-13-07/VAR-14-02 without Condition 4. Vice Chair Axelrod **seconded** the motion and it **passed** 6:1. Commissioner Schwark voted against. He explained that although he supported all the other aspects of the application he could not vote to approve it with the font variance because he wanted to follow the code. He suggested the code needed to be fixed

1:21

#### **ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION**

The Commissioners asked staff to look into problems with the audio-visual system. Commissioner Griffith mentioned there was going to be a brunch and walk at McLean House on March 30 for all volunteers. Chair Steel asked staff to distribute copies of the Planning Commission's end of the year report to City Council.

#### **ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM STAFF**

Mr. Kerr confirmed the joint work session was scheduled on April 7.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business, Chair Steel adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:25 p.m.

APPROVED:

Christine M Steel  
Christine Steel, Chair

5-7-14  
Date