

Historic District Regulatory Board
Minutes of January 19, 2023 Meeting
City of Lake Wales
201 W. Central Avenue, Lake Wales, FL 33853

A regular meeting of the Board of Historic District Regulatory Board was held on January 19, 2023 at 5:15 PM in the City Commission Chambers at the Administration Building.

Chairman Brandon Alvarado called the meeting to order at 5:15 P.M.

Agenda Item 1. Roll Call

Members Present: Brandon Alvarado (Chairman), Tiffany Davis and Tammy James and Tina Peak

Staff Present: Mark Bennett, Director of Development Services, Autumn Cochella, Assistant Director of Development Services; Jasmine Khammany, Senior Planner and Shena Rowland, Secretary.

Megan McLaughlin from Plusurbia Design – Consultant for Historic District

Agenda Item 2. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Alvarado asked if there were any suggestions or edits that needed to be made to the minutes from last month's meeting.

Ms. James motioned to approve the minutes and Ms. Davis seconded the motion. All four Board members voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the September 15, 2022 meeting.

Agenda Item 3. Downtown Design Standards Revision

STAFF REPORT
Historic Business District Regulatory Board
January 19, 2023 Agenda

Project: Revision to Downtown Design Standards

Presenter: Megan McLaughlin with Plusurbia Design

Ms. Cochella introduces Ms. McLaughlin to present the Staff Report.

Ms. McLaughlin presents the Staff Report. She states the amendments pertain to the North 3rd Street set back. This is the street that goes along the Crystal Lake frontage. She explains the main emphasis of coming before the Board is the wording of publicly accessible and she points out in their report that it is struck thru. She further explains that this was brought to their attention by the property owner to be misleading. They

would like to change the wording of publicly accessible to unenclosed. She states that they have also received feedback on the 70 foot set back. This includes the Library site and the Old Plantation Inn site. There may need to be some flexibility with this number. All of these large sites have a built in site plan review. This would need to be an overall review that would go before Planning and Zoning for a recommendation to City Commission. The final amendment is in part 3 and is a text change that the public design would be a meeting and not a charrette. She then continues with a presentation on the Crystal Lake Overlay.

Mr. Alvarado asked what the original intent was for the 70 foot set back?

Ms. McLaughlin responds that 70 feet was the distance between the Women's Club stoop to 3rd Street.

Ms. Peak asked about historic homes on site, she asked for clarification on whether they can be relocated on site but not removed from site?

Ms. McLaughlin responds that in measure of last resort, the structures may be relocated and preserved on site. She further states they are open to suggestions.

Mr. Alvarado states that he does appreciate section 5 including the historic buildings as part of the preservation. He feels it is important to the City's history including the Historic landscape as well. He then opens to the public hearing and asks if anyone would like to come forward to speak.

Ms. Patty McKeeman of 211 Catherine Ave in Babson Park. She passes out a presentation and states that her and her brothers are the owners of the Plantation Inn. The packet includes old photos and letters from her mother regarding the Plantation Inn. She then gives a brief history of the Plantation Inn. She is in support of the proposed historic overlay. She states the property is special and with these guidelines, it will protect the property. She further stated there is a glitch that pertains to the 70 foot setback having public access which was not the intent. She understands that is being addressed that evening. This being said it was noticed there was another issue with the language which concerned the old buildings still there. It states the buildings have to be restored or moved and then restored which is what she would love to see happen. The old cottage has a home waiting for it but the old garages are in bad shape and may not be able to be restored. It is deemed the case then the old harp pine should be incorporated in whatever is built there. She states that Megan McLaughlin has written another amendment to address this and she would like to hear the Boards comments on this.

Ms. McLaughlin states that she did discuss with Ms. McKeeman. She stated that she did not want to start changing things without Mainstreet's letter. The discussion was to edit the section of Historic Buildings to add flexibility. As an example, if the garage was building was found to not be structurally feasible to relocate, they have the option to document, dismantle and reuse the wood. This would need to be approved thru the site plan application and go before the Planning and Zoning Board. She stated she has drafted a text and presents this to the Board.

Mr. Alvarado asks if they are voting today or if this another meeting.

Ms. Cochella states this will be in another meeting, this is the first she has heard and would like to bring it back to the Board. She feels it is important to correct the set back language on this meeting. She then asks for clarification on legal advertisement that if the Board were to make a recommendation would it be covered under the legal ad.

Ms. Rowland clarifies it was just the section as advertised so it would be covered.

Ms. Cochella states in that case if the Board is comfortable with the language then they can make the recommendation.

Ms. Cochella asks Ms. McLaughlin if she is comfortable with this.

Ms. McLaughlin responds that if they could bring it back and stay on schedule she would be comfortable with coming back if it would stay on schedule.

Ms. Cochella explains that an amendment like this requires recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Board, bringing it before the Historic Board is more of a courtesy, this being said if they are comfortable then they can move forward.

Mr. Alvarado asks if the language will change any from what is read.

Ms. McLaughlin responds it will not change, there are different opinions on what can be done and expands with an explanation of using the garage as an example.

Ms. Cochella states that the language is good there may be some items that needs to be tightened up because they are open to interpretation and there is a shall that needs to be a should. She thinks in general if the Board is comfortable with the intent of the language then they can move forward or they can wait for it to be changed and brought back before the Board.

Mr. Alvarado states he is comfortable with the intent language. If it needs to be strengthened he trusts the staff to do that before Planning and Zoning.

Ms. James states she has two comments, first, she likes the addition and is happy to vote on it tonight as long as procedurally it will not slow the process down. Second, the second sentence, the way it reads, structures may be adaptively reused for new purpose that implies to her that she can reuse the building, whether it is dismantled it and use for flooring or whatever if it was a situation where it was wanting to be developed and ran into issues. She would come before the Board to say it does not say that it cannot be dismantled use it for flooring. It implies it can.

Ms. McLaughlin states it is a may sentence. The structures may be adapted and reused. The term adapted and reuse in in terms to keeping a building as is, it means turning a church into a school or a church into an office. She thinks more needs to be added.

Mr. Alvarado asks for further public comment and in seeing none he closes the public hearing. He then asks that before he puts this thru a motion, is he adding the intent of what Ms. Mclaughlin just said?

Ms. Cochella states it can be done one of two ways, first, you can make a motion to adopt the original request with the setback and additional language. Second, you can also make a motion to do that and include that staff works with consultant to create language on what was just discussed. She recommends going ahead.

Ms. McLaughlin states she has notes that can be added to record.

Mr. Alvarado states he will entertain a motion to approve a recommendation to Planning and Zoning Board the proposed amendments to Land Development Regulations on the Crystal Lake Overlay with the addition of Ms. Mclaughlin's intent to preserve the Historic Building and if the building is not structurally sound to demolish and reuse the material.

Ms. James make the motion.

Ms. Davis seconds the motion.

All four Board members voted unanimously to approve the recommendation.

Mr. Alvarado then calls for the next item.

Agenda Item 4. Sign Code Amendments

STAFF REPORT
Historic Business District Regulatory Boar
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Project: Sign Code Amendments

Presenter: Autumn Cochella, Assistant Development Services Director,
City of Lake Wales

Ms. Cochella then explains her intent and presents the sign code amendments.

Ms. Davis interrupts clarify what projecting signs are, is it lighted?

Ms. Cochella states it is a sign that projects off of the Building, not lighted. She then continues her presentation.

Mr. Alvarado interrupts to ask for an example of something that would not be approved with the current language.

Ms. Cochella responds Maggie Mae's ice cream, the initial request.

Ms. Davis responds her establishment as well.

Ms. Cochella states she does not remember her signage.

Mr. Allen Tatem of Native Imagery responds it is a bar across the window.

Ms. McLaughlin asks if store front is defined? Could someone say they have two windows?

Ms. Cochella states Ronnie Wood with Mainstreet brought this up as well. She doesn't know if she addressed it or not and ask Ms. Woods if it feels safe to her.

Ms. Wood responds that it is advocate window, this means all of the windows.

Ms. Cochella is wondering if number 3 satisfies this or if the language needs to be tightened up?

Ms. McLaughlin feels that it is in the way store front is defined.

Ms. Davis states she has a few windows.

Ms. Cochella state they would get one window per store front.

Mr. Alvarado then clarifies they will need to choose which window they want the sign on. He also asks if this is common in other districts sign codes.

Ms. Cochella states she got this one straight out of Vero Beach and Coral Gables.

Ms. Peak states there are some that are far more strict.

Ms. Davis then asks for clarification on it is one window sign per business?

Ms. Cochella responds the idea is for a downtown store front to be visible and not have obstructions. The idea is to reduce the number of storefront signs that will block that visibility.

Ms. Davis then asks if you have one business with two doors that are not double doors, there are windows on each side of the door?

Ms. Cochella states you can only have one, it is not about how many window panes or doors you have. You can only have one sign on one window in addition to your wall sign or projecting sign or any other sign you have.

Ms. Peak brings up the care center. It has a massive amount of doors and window. They have a sign on the main entrance and then there are separate entrances.

Ms. Davis then asks if the doors are included with the windows.

Ms. Cochella confirms they are.

Ms. Davis states she has signage on door and hours listed on the other, that would no longer be feasible, correct?

Ms. Cochella confirms this.

Ms. McLaughlin states her only comment would be that she is not sure that “storefront” is the right word unless it is clearly defined.

Ms. Cochella states it is not. She then asks Ms. Wood if she were to switch storefront back to tenant would she feel comfortable?

Ms. Wood states the idea is transparency, there are great examples in downtown and other communities that has minimal signs that is still attractive. If you have too much signage you don’t even glance that way.

Mr. Alvarado agrees and would like to stay consistent, he feels if you nit pic one it will create leaks.

Ms. Cochella agrees. She feels this is something the Board needs to decide.

Ms. Wood states if the City were to delete number two and state if the sign area is not too exceed 10 percent of the window area, does that allow you to have multiple signage including the door?

Ms. Cochella responds yes, two small ones. It is the way it is written now, you have a maximum allowance, it is one for one and you can use your square footage any way you want to, the intent behind this is to control just the window.

Ms. Wood asks if you delete number two then the sign area would be a default maximum of 10 percent.

Ms. Cochella states yes, you could have some multiple small ones but you are still achieving the same thing, you have the same amount of transparency, it would be more clutter vs less clutter. She is ok with deleting this line.

Mr. Alvarado asks on number four section three if this is the current percentages for the windows or is this a new number?

Ms. Cochella states there is not standard right now.

Mr. Alvarado understands. He then asks if you remove number two and take the 10 percent or 20 feet down, does that break anything?

Ms. Cochella summarizes what he is asking, if she deletes number two and then reduces the percentage?

Mr. Alvarado states yes, to encourage the concentration which is the goal.

Ms. Cochella agrees that is the goal. She further states this is all new.

There is open discussion regarding this.

Mr. Alvarado asks if you shrink the numbers in number three does it help to encourage the concentration of the graphics?

Mr. Cochella states any reduction would help encourage the concentration. She does not know what the magic number is.

Mr. Alvarado states he gets the point of number two but he also understands what is being discussed.

Ms. Davis states it is harder when trying to put on one door for example smaller font.

Ms. Cochella states the 20 feet is to scale by the size of the building. The maximum is not for everybody.

Mr. Alvarado asks how Mainstreet would feel if removing number two and reducing the percentage of the window area and reducing the square feet.

Ms. Wood responds that the 20 square feet is 5 x 4 and that is massive, she feels less is more. They have always tried to partner with the City that in downtown has zero set back from sidewalk and 20 ft from curb to curb so visibility is limited. In downtown you are only working with sidewalk and a car going 25 mph. It is easier for people to see.

Mr. Alvarado asks the Board for additional comments.

Ms. Davis states the comments she receives is they cannot find her place. She even has an A-Frame outside her establishment.

Ms. Wood states at the same time too many signs can be distracting.

Ms. Davis agrees it could be. She has the logo and the door and you cannot see the door.

Ms. Cochella states also this is trying to encourage wall signs as well, this is just for window.

Ms. Davis states the wall sign is cool. She states she has an awning but does not have any writing on it.

Ms. Cochella states they encourage these types of awning signs. She states if this would have been in place when came in, this would have been encouraged over window signs.

Ms. Davis asks if the wall sign is new.

Ms. Cochella states it is not, she reminds the Board of the current sign code. You get one square foot per each lineal foot of the building storefront. If you have 20 lineal feet of store front then you can have 20 square feet of signage.

There is open discussion.

Mr. Alvarado asks if they now what Winter Haven or Lakeland are doing?

Ms. Cochella states this is from multiple jurisdictions, some Lakeland, some Vero Beach, some Winter Haven, some Winter Park, some Coral Gables, it is a nice mesh of what was felt to be appropriate by the steering committee and the City. She clarifies that what she has so far for windows there may be an edit to the number two changing it back to 1 per ground floor tenant and add some language to wall signage to allow one per frontage. She reminds the Board that none of this is set in stone after it is adopted, if they find it is not working or there is a public outcry, it can be revised.

Mr. Alvarado asks if there is any changing to number three, the sign area on the windows?

Ms. Cochella asks the Board if it should be reduced? It seems like a lot.

Ms. McLaughlin said it seems like a lot.

Ms. Wood brings up Winter Haven and states that they took a field trip to Winter Park to see what the standards were and in being able to walk with the planner, it gave an understanding of their intent and how it was managed. It gave them a new mindset.

Mr. Alvarado stated on the window signs, what his concern is number two because it limits to one window. He feels you should just strike number two and then reduce the percentages in number three. It still allows the flexibility to use different windows but it encourages them to concentrate on a certain space.

Ms. Cochella asks how they would feel to strike number two and reduce number three to 8 percent not to exceed 10 square feet?

There is open discussion.

Ms. Davis states she still has space in her front window.

There is open discussion.

Ms. Cochella states that the goal is get an endorsement so it can be progressed to Planning and Zoning Board, however, if there are things and this is important that the Board wants to re tweak and bring back before the Historic Board.

Mr. Alvarado states he cannot visualize the percentages.

Ms. Cochella states she can bring back some visuals to give an idea of what the sizes would be.

Ms. Wood states that Mainstreet would have no issues with doing a workshop in downtown and have examples.

Mr. Alvarado thinks they need to take their time with this.

Ms. Cochella agrees and then continues with her presentation. At the conclusion she agrees the window signage needs some work. She states it was an interesting diverse steering committee. It was a lot to incorporate. She feels that it is important to get it correct for the down town district and is looking for direction from the Board.

Ms. Davis states she understands the percentage is being discussed and states she feels it should stay the same and just remove the 1 per storefront, that way if there are more tenants they can have window, but she also understands you don't want to take away from logos. She asks if illumination is prohibited indoors?

Ms. Cochella states this is outdoor signage.

Ms. James states she would like to see some examples in a workshop, it is hard to wrap her head around or visualize.

Ms. Wood states she would be happy to coordinate with staff.

Ms. Cochella states she has been working on since April, she understands and states that a workshop should be done in a Public Hearing signage and she wants to understand what their concerns are.

Ms. Davis said examples are good.

Ms. Cochella states should will coordinate with Ms. Wood and bring examples back, it is important to make sure she addresses all concerns.

Ms. Peak states this is her first meeting so she is mostly listening, she is trying to think of small windows and gives Jim Weavers office as an example to compare sizes.

Mr. Alvarado states the window signage seems to be the most important thing to address and would like to see examples.

Ms. Wood states she didn't consider the fact that a workshop would have to be posted, she will assist in examples.

Ms. Cochella states they can have discussion on what is best. She thinks what the Board is looking for is real life examples. She states they can converse together to bring the best examples to meet downtown standards.

Ms. Rowland states the next meeting would be February 16th.

Ms. Davis states she cannot make the February 16th meeting.

Ms. Cochella states she is open to having a special meeting.

Mr. Alvarado asks if there are any further questions? In seeing none he moves to item 5.

Agenda Item 5. Other Business

There is no other business to discuss.

Agenda Item 6. Communications and Petitions

Mr. Allen Tatum from Native Imagery states that he is concerned about the changes being more constrictive. He is worried about new businesses being limited. He uses Ms. Davis as an example, she has a bar, it is low and you can see in. She wants to advertise and a 6" bar with 25 to 30 foot across is 15 foot and only leaves room for a 2-1/2 foot logo. A low budget business starting out that can only afford vinyl may not have enough time to be noticed. He is concerned they are too limited. He also stated he didn't see all of the materials but asks the Board to please look closely at this, plastic is more cost effective than metal. He states metal can rust and most clients do not want these. He states wood does no last either. He understands it is a Historic district but signs are not made this way anymore, they use PVC and when it is painted you cannot tell it is not wood.

Agenda Item 7. Adjournment

Mr. Alvarado then adjourns the meeting at 6:49 p.m.

Brandon Alvarado, Chairman

Attest: Recording Secretary