

Present: Chairperson Jensen; Vice-Chair Ostrowski; Members: Borowski, Peddie, Ruprich Stempien and Westerlund

Absent: Abboud and Freedman

Also Present: Village Manager, Wilson
Planning Consultant, Brian Borden

Chairperson Jensen called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Village of Beverly Hills municipal building at 18500 W. Thirteen Mile Road.

APPROVE/AMEND AGENDA

Motion by Westerlund, second by Peddie, to approve the agenda as published.

Motion passed (7 – 0).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF A PLANNING BOARD MEETING HELD MAY, 25, 2011

The correction was made to include Peddie in the list of those present.

Motion by Ostrowski, second by Westerlund, that the minutes of a regular Planning Board meeting held on May 25, 2011 be approved as amended.

Motion passed (7 – 0).

TACO BELL SIGNAGE REQUEST FOR REBUILT RESTAURANT AT 31305 SOUTHFIELD ROAD

Jensen reviewed that the signage request from Taco Bell was discussed last month and tabled for the reason that the submittal did not include drawings and calculations for the ground sign.

Eric Rauch with Desine Engineers was present on behalf of B-B Sign Company, contractor for Sundance Inc., franchisee for Taco Bell. The Planning Board has received additional information on signage for the Taco Bell building at 31305 Southfield Road. The proposal is for a 48.2 sq. ft. ground sign that will be 11 ft. tall with a 1 ft. base constructed of brick. There will be a directional sign on the north and south sides of the property; both signs are 3 sq. ft. and 4 ft. tall. The menu board is 43.8 sq. ft. and 7 ft. tall, and there is a clearance bar.

Only the front wall will have building signage. The wall signage was reduced from the corporate prototype to meet the Village's specifications; the signage has been lowered below the parapet elevation. The total square footage of the wall sign is 56.7 sq. ft., which meets ordinance requirements. The square footage for all of the signage on the site excluding the menu board is 111 sq. ft., which is below the 120 sq. ft. maximum allowed. There are three primary colors used on the signage in accordance with the ordinance.

Stempien expressed concern about the size of the ground sign considering the scale and proportion of the site and the building. He used a tape measure on the wall to demonstrate the width and height of the proposed 5'10" x 8' 9" sign plus a 12 inch base. Stempien suggested that a 30% reduction in size would result in a 6' x 4' sign, which would be more appropriate for the development and for what is proposed for the Southfield Road corridor overlay district. He asked that the unique character of the Village of Beverly Hills be taken into consideration.

Bob Bongiorno from B-B Signs stated that the size of the proposed ground sign is a standard manufactured sign from a national company. It is the smallest sign available without using a custom fabricated sign. He added that a monument sign that is low to the ground can be blocked by snow banks in the winter months.

Borowski commented on the proximity of the ground sign to Southfield Road, which could be a safety factor. He added that the building is a recognizable structure with respect to its design and façade. Borowski suggested a relatively low ground sign with less width.

Ostrowski questioned whether the Planning Board has the authority to require a lesser sign if the proposed sign meets ordinance requirements. Planning consultant Brian Borden stated that the signage proposed by Taco Bell complies with the ordinance requirements. The Planning Board may be able to discuss the size of the sign with the applicants and come to an agreement.

Jensen asked the applicants if they would consider decreasing the size of the sign proposed.

Rauch responded that the franchisee for Taco Bell brought in an application for sign permit that meets the ordinance requirements and is about 30% less in terms of square feet than the maximum allowed square footage for a ground sign (48 sq. ft. in lieu of 64 sq. ft.). Speaking on behalf of the owner, Rauch thought that he would like to have the sign approved as proposed considering the fact that the amount of signage on the building has been significantly reduced and he has agreed to building improvements suggested by the Planning Board.

There was further discussion by the Board on the Taco Bell sign. Reference was made to the proportionality of other signs along the corridor and proximity of the Taco Bell ground sign to the front property line. The parking variance granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals enabling the franchisee to rebuild the structure was a topic of discussion. It was noted that the Village also worked with the applicant on lessening landscape requirements at the site.

Rauch stated that he and the individual from B-B signs were attempting to reach the owner by phone and would have an answer tonight on decreasing the size of the ground sign. Rauch remarked that the applicant and his representatives have been working with the Village for a year on this project and would like to get the sign issue resolved. The building is under construction and the signs need to be ordered.

Jensen stated that the Board will vote on approval of each sign individually.

Motion by Westerlund, second by Peddie, to approve the application from Taco Bell for two directional signs (1.33 x 2.25 = 3 sq. ft.) at 4 ft. tall to be erected at the north and south side of the property at 31305 Southfield Road.

Motion passed (7 – 0).

Motion by Westerlund, second by Peddie, to approve the application from Taco Bell for a channel letter sign with logo (4' x 14'-2" = 56.66 sq. ft.) to be mounted on the building at 31305 Southfield Road.

Motion passed (7 – 0).

Borden encouraged the Planning Board to work with the applicant to reach a compromise on the size of the ground sign rather than deny an application that meets ordinance requirements.

The Planning Board continued with the next agenda item while the representatives of the applicant were speaking on the phone with the owner.

LSL DRAFT OF AN UPDATED AMENDMENT TO CHANGE THE DESIGNATION OF THE PLANNING BOARD TO A PLANNING COMMISSION

Planning consultant Brian Borden provided the Board with a draft ordinance that integrated the first draft prepared by Attorney Tom Ryan into the current ordinance format plus additional language. Also distributed to the Board were copies of sample Planning Commission By-Laws for consideration.

Borden commented that the powers, duties, and responsibilities of a planning board will not necessarily change with the planning commission designation. A planning commission is required to make recommendations on certain legislative decisions such as an ordinance amendment or rezoning. The Council could give its planning commission the authority to make a decision in lieu of a recommendation on items such as site plan review. Borden stated that the draft ordinance does not make any substantive changes to the current procedures.

Questions from Board members were addressed by Borden. The Planning Board will review the draft ordinance and by-laws for discussion at an upcoming meeting.

TACO BELL SIGNAGE REQUEST FOR REBUILT RESTAURANT AT 31305 SOUTHFIELD ROAD (continued)

Rauch stated that he had a phone conversation with the property owner, who asserted that he came before the Village with a request that not only met the ordinance but was a reduction from the requirements of the ordinance. The owner seeks approval of the ground sign as proposed.

There was further discussion by members of the Board who reiterated reasons why they thought the ground sign should be reduced in size. It was questioned whether there was any benchmark data available on sign size for the location.

There was a comment regarding evaluation of sign issues during the site plan review level. Rauch responded that part of the reason for submitting the proposed signs was due to what transpired at the Planning Board level during the site plan review process. The building signage was reduced because of those discussions. The ground signage has not changed throughout the site plan review process.

Motion by Ostrowski, second by Ruprich, to approve the application from Taco Bell for a ground sign (8'-9" x 5'-10" = 48.2 sq. ft.) at 11 ft. tall with a 1 ft. base to be located at 31305 Southfield Road.

Westerlund said that, due to the cooperation between the Village and Taco Bell during the site plan process, he had hoped that the applicant would be able to compromise and agree to a reduction in the size of the ground sign. Members of the Board thought the proposed sign was too large in relation to the size of the property and considering the proximity of the road.

Borowski commented that it is the function of the Planning Board to protect and improve the Village. Peddie referred to the major variance from Village parking requirements that were granted by the Zoning Board.

Ayes – Ostrowski, Ruprich, Westerlund
Nays – Borowski, Jensen, Peddie, Stempien

Motion failed (4 – 3).

CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF SOUTHFIELD ROAD CORRIDOR – BOUNDARY DELINEATION

Stempien discussed what the Planning Board could do to prepare for the upcoming discussion with the public and business owners on the Southfield Road corridor redevelopment plan. He prepared a draft property data sheet that could be used to document existing buildings and properties within the boundaries of the corridor study. It will assist in understanding what the Village is dealing with as far as structures, parking, stakeholders, uses, and other aspects of the property.

Westerlund used the white board to draw an outline of the properties and landmarks located along Southfield Road from 13 Mile Road to Beverly Road. The Board referred to the sketch to discuss potential boundaries of the overlay plan.

Westerlund identified existing properties in the area and suggested that the Village had many components in and beyond the corridor providing various mixed uses that could work together as a business district and town center. He listed the various commercial properties, retail, restaurants, athletic club, office space, gas station, apartment complex, senior assisted living facility, village office, swim club and school. The apartments and rehab facility would introduce some housing into the district.

The cemetery and The Corners shopping mall is across the street. Westerlund suggested that the discussion consider including Southfield Township in the commercial district and involving them with The Corners strip mall and the cemetery.

Westerlund thought that consideration should be given to including some of the properties further back from Southfield Road for the reason that there may be future changes that would incorporate that property into the district. He suggested that all existing uses have the potential to complement each other. Westerlund asked the Board members to decide on the scope of the overlay district and begin to accumulate information from property owners and stakeholders in order to determine the direction and mission statement of the corridor plan.

Board members continued their discussion of the scope and other aspects of the corridor plan. Consideration for linkages between properties and uses was put forward in order to create a walkable community. The Board indicated that it will be cognizant of the surrounding residential development as it goes through this process. The point was made that the underlying zoning will not change with an overlay plan. A larger development could occur if properties are bought and grouped together for a development using incentives provided through the overlay zoning.

The suggestion was made that the site development guidelines drafted by the Board be reviewed and possibly adopted into ordinance form. There are sign controls in those guidelines. Stempien proposed putting guidelines in place regarding signage, parking and landscaping in order to be prepared in the event that an applicant comes before the Village with a redevelopment proposal.

Borden remarked that the Board is starting to rough out the framework of the overlay district starting with the boundary. He will develop a map illustrating that boundary. The Board should arrive at a name to identify the overlay district. Borden suggested that the Board begin to draft text for the overlay district beginning with a framework using their existing outline. He can work on this with Westerlund and Stempien and provide sample documents.

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Annual elections are held for a Planning Board chairperson and vice-chairperson. Jensen opened the floor to nominations for the office of chairperson.

Borowski prefaced his nomination with a comment about managing the succession of Planning Board officers. Jensen has been chairman for ten years. Borowski said that he has been pleased with Jensen's approach and his leadership. He will nominate Jensen to serve as chairman for the next year with the understanding that it would be his last year as chair. Borowski remarked that there is a lot of leadership potential among the current Planning Board members.

Members voiced support of electing David Jensen as chairperson particularly since the Board is working on the Southfield Road corridor, an area where his leadership has been significant. The point was made that there are Board members who have been working diligently on moving forward with the corridor redevelopment and who have generated a positive momentum.

Jensen commented on his tenure as chair and said that he would be happy to relinquish the position if any other Board member wished to serve as chairperson. Jensen remarked that this will be his last year as chairperson if he is elected.

Borowski nominated David Jensen to the position of chairperson of the Planning Board. There were no further nominations. Jensen was elected as chair by acclamation.

Jensen opened the floor for nominations for the position of vice-chairperson.

Jensen nominated George Ostrowski as vice-chair of the Planning Board. There were no further nominations. Ostrowski was elected vice-chairperson by acclamation.

PLANNING BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Ruprich questioned the next step in terms of amending the Village's sign ordinance. It was evident at this meeting that the current sign ordinance needed revision, particularly with respect to the maximum allowed ground signage.

Borden commented that revising the entire Sign Ordinance would be a major project while addressing the issue of allowable size, height, and placement of a ground size could be accomplished easily. He proposed that the Board liaison or Village Manager take the request to Council for approval as a Planning Board work project.

Ostrowski cautioned the Board from being reactionary in terms of sign restrictions prior to developing the overlay zoning district. There followed discussion on whether an ordinance can contain some discretionary language. It was suggested that allowable size of signs be reduced without revising the entire ordinance. The limitations could be relaxed in conjunction with incentives that are offered through use of overlay zoning.

Borden will provide the Board with sample ordinances before drafting a sign ordinance amendment.

ADMINISTRATION COMMENTS

Wilson reported that a representative of the Community Food Garden group will be going before the Zoning Board of Appeals at its July 11 meeting to request a variance to allow a noncompliant fence surrounding the garden located on the grounds of the Beverly Hills United Methodist Church (corner of 13 and Evergreen Roads).

Wilson stated that Ellen Marshall will be contacting newly appointed members Borowski, Freedman, and Jensen about being sworn in for their new term of office.

Wilson stated that a question arose recently about the Consumers Energy structure located on Lahser Road near Detroit Country Day School Property. A site plan for the building was reviewed by the Planning Board in 2005. A concern has been raised that the screening requirements imposed by the Planning Board were never met.

Jensen responded that the site plan should illustrate the landscaping proposed for the property. Ostrowski thought that the problem could be that the site plan shows mature trees, but the trees planted were seedlings.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

Motion by Westerlund, second by Stempien, to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Motion passed (7 – 0).

David Jensen, Chair
Planning Board

Ellen E. Marshall
Village Clerk

Susan Bernard
Recording Secretary