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TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

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February 8, 2024

Design Review Committee

Meeting Minutes

Approved as Amended April 11, 2024

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, signed into law on March 29, 2023, this meeting was conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance by members of the public was permitted but it was open for public comment.

This meeting can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTB7PPJYKRQ&list=PL2mWMhvXDP2jEcEYll3OQcq1H4fKZ1Cl8&index=37>

Members Present: Amy Poretsky, Chair; Lisa Maselli, Mark McMenemy, David Veron

Others Present: Laurie Connors, Planning Director

The meeting was called to order at 8:32am.

Ms. Poretsky welcomed Mr. McMenemy to the Design Review Committee.

Discussion of Proposed Sign Bylaw and Design Guideline Changes

Ms. Connors shared the latest revision of the Design Guidelines, to which she'd added sections for awnings and signs. Examples of curved and sloped awnings were shared. Suggestions for changes to be made included adding more detail to the title above the photos (i.e., Open Space – Encouraged or Open Space – Discouraged), and Ms. Maselli suggested adding examples of different awning styles.

Discussion turned to the category of signs. Mr. McMenemy felt the guidelines had become a more in-depth explanation of the bylaws rather than guidelines and that they should be geared towards visual thinkers who will want to just see examples and not the legalese. Ms. Connors explained the guidelines were created to help developers understand what the permitting authorities are looking for so that they can design accordingly; some communities have entire books devoted to sign guidelines. Mr. McMenemy will go through the document and make note of things that are not clear.

Ms. Connors said that Mr. Frederico had emailed his suggestions to the committee regarding some changes to the sign guidelines; those changes were shown in red on the shared document.

Illumination of signs and the timing of such was next discussed. The proposed guideline stated 'sign illumination should be turned off when the business is closed'; in his email, Mr. Frederico stated there are restrictions for lighting between midnight and 6am per zoning bylaw 7-09-040D(7). Ms. Poretsky said she

felt that he was trying to point out that the guidelines didn't match the bylaw and that if they wanted signs to be turned off at the close of business, then the bylaw should be updated.

Sign types were next discussed. Ms. Connors went over photos she'd included of the various types of signs. Descriptors will be placed under the photos. Wordsmithing followed.

Mr. Veron remembered they were advised in the past not to use photos of local properties in their guidelines and if that was due to legality. Ms. Maselli recalled that was said by Judi Barrett. Ms. Connors said that was guidance provided by Ms. Barrett regarding houses that were shared as 'encouraged' versus 'discouraged'; Ms. Connors was only sharing the 'encouraged' photos in these guidelines which she felt were more positive, she'd eliminated all references to discouraged.

Mr. McMenemy said he would email Ms. Connors some suggestions regarding use of the word 'vinyl' in these guidelines.

Review of Minutes from 10.12.23, 10.19.23, 11.30.23, 12.14.23

Mr. McMenemy said he'd briefly reviewed the minutes and had some suggestions. He recommended not using brand names in the minutes and instead using the product type. In another set of minutes, square footage was discussed but the minutes did not reflect that detail. Ms. Poretsky and Ms. Maselli agreed that some of the minutes lacked detail, that detail is needed for future reference. Ms. Maselli understood that writing the minutes was time-consuming but that the important details needed to be captured and an overview provided of what occurred at that meeting. Ms. Connors said extensive detail of a site plan is not critical to the minutes, but documenting who was in attendance and what decisions were made was critical; the meetings are recorded and since this is an advisory committee and not a permitting board, there is no possibility of the minutes being used in litigation. Ms. Maselli asked that more consideration be given to providing more detail, going forward. Members agreed that a 10% improvement in the level of detail would be sufficient. Ms. Maselli had redone one set of minutes; Ms. Connors said that if members approved those minutes, Ms. Maselli's name would be included as having authored that set.

Minutes were tabled to the next meeting since not every member was prepared to vote.

Next meeting date tentatively scheduled for February 29th.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50am.

Respectfully Submitted by
Michelle Cilley, Board Secretary