



**City of Sebastopol**  
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Planning Department  
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## **APPROVED MINUTES**

TREE/DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL  
MINUTES OF June 27, 2023  
3:30 P.M.

The notice of the meeting was posted on June 22, 2023.

### **DESIGN REVIEW BOARD:**

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Langberg called the meeting to order at 3:30 P.M. and read a procedural statement.

**2. ROLL CALL:**

<b>Present:</b>	Lars Langberg, Chair Marshall Balfe, Board Member Lynn Deedler, Board Member
<b>Absent:</b>	Melissa Hanley, Vice Chair Cary Bush, Board Member Christine Level, Board Member
<b>Staff:</b>	John Jay, Associate Planner

### **3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**November 16, 2022 and January 18, 2023**

**Chair Langberg continued the Approval of Minutes for November 16, 2022 and January 18, 2023 to the next Design Review Board meeting.**

### **4. PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST:**

Associate Planner Jay reported that:

- He recently attended the SCTA kickoff meeting for the Sonoma County Active Transportation Plan, a Countywide bike and pedestrian plan that will begin soon in Sebastopol. He offered to send the DRB members the slide presentation given to the jurisdictions.
- Woodmark Apartments will soon start back up their project grading.
- The Habitat for Humanity project on Main Street has pulled their building permit and is in review.
- The City is moving along with the tribal consultation notice letters and notice of preparation for the EIR on The Canopy, an 80-unit, three-story, residential

townhome development behind the O'Reilly building at the north end of town. The Board saw the project in 2019 or earlier as a preliminary review.

- The Hotel Sebastopol project has submitted their Caltrans encroachment permit to begin sidewalk improvements on the corner of Petaluma Avenue and Depot Street. They will install a mid-street crossing at Weeks Way and remove the second crosswalk at the corner of Depot and Petaluma, because it has been identified as a traffic safety issue. Their archeology will get underway soon after bad weather delayed it earlier in the year.

The Board asked questions of Associate Planner Jay.

**5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:** None.

**6. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None.

**7. REGULAR AGENDA:**

- A. SIGN PERMIT: 100 South Main Street** – Project #2023-014 – The applicant is seeking approval of the Design Review Board to install new signs at 100 S. Main Street. Design Review Board approval is required because the application involves the installation of multiple illuminated signs per Section 17.120.050.C(2). Exceptions will also need to be made since the project is proposing to install signs greater than 25 square feet and exceeds the number of signs allowed for each tenant per Sections 17.120.060.C(2) and 17.120.020.A(3c) respectively. This project is categorically exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, pursuant to Section 15311, Class 11, in that it involves the installation of on-premises signage.

Associate Planner Jay presented the staff report and was available for questions.

**Marshall Balfe, Board Member**

The illuminated signs are a good thing. The sign dimensions when first given were huge, but I see it is broken down into little components and looks pretty good to me. When you're driving around an unfamiliar area looking for an ATM, it would be helpful if you could find the bank at night. Of course they don't light them up in the daytime, so it's a minimal problem. Overall, I like the package as presented, the colors and detail; a very good presentation.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

Just to be clear, the exception is because two signs are bigger as an individual sign, but you make a note that overall square footage of the signage is within the allowed overall signage square footage, is that right?

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

Correct. Because they're a corner lot they're allowed both frontage calculations, so what they're allowed within the calculation, what they've submitted, is under that total allowance. It's for the additional, because there are two wall signs and then there are two additional window signs, which our code only allows two of those three, so because they're adding an additional window or wall sign, that's the exception there, and on top of that they are internal illumination.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

The exceptions are a greater number of signs, and also two signs that are bigger than they can be by code.

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

Correct, by staff-level approval, so they would need the Design Review Board's approval.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

Our code says that externally illuminated signage is preferred, but it's not required, so when you or Kari see an application do you say, "We really prefer an externally sign," or do you just take in the application and we get to the talk about it?

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

In the future we should promote that at the very beginning and let the applicant know, and if they decide to go with the internal illumination then let them know that there is the process of going through the DRC for approval for internal illumination. But it is preferred, especially because the Downtown Core Area is subject to a little more scrutiny as far as internal illumination goes. Typically whenever we get a package in, especially in the Downtown Core, rather than going back and forth it's sometimes easier to go straight to the Board for a straight approval, denial, or revisions.

The applicant gave a presentation and was available for questions.

**Lynn Deedler, Board Member**

What color will the building be painted?

**Applicant**

I'm not aware of any building color changes; the application is just for signage. We're not doing any painting. The renderings show the building as the same color it is currently.

**Lynn Deedler, Board Member**

In the plan it says the new paint will be "steamed milk," which sounds like white.

**Applicant**

Are you referring to where he's talking about repairing the wall? On the top left, if you look at the drawings on S-2 it says, "Remove existing signage. Wall repaired as required seam-to-seam." They've listed the color on there so when they take the old sign off they'll paint and patch. This is a note to the sign installer on what the existing color is, so the patch is matched correctly.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

But it's referring to the spacer, so it's not the building color; it's just like the standoff of between the sign and the building.

**Applicant**

One of the elevations lists wall color and it says, "SW7554, Steamed Milk," and it gives a circular swatch of it. This is on page 3 of the plans.

Chair Langberg asked for further Board questions of the applicant. Seeing none, he asked for Board deliberation.

The Board discussed the application as follows:

**Lynn Deedler, Board Member**

Generally I think the signage is modest and appropriate. I would like to see larger signage on that building and think the square footage should consider that it's a corner building with two large surfaces that can be viewed easily from two different directions. That said, nothing in the signage says "bank" except the small strip in one window, and to Board Member Balf's point, people need to know that this is a bank, and it should say that in large bold letters like the building used to say. Regarding the internal illumination, we have a number of design guidelines that say we need to follow and support the historic nature of Sebastopol's downtown and the kind of sign called for here does not do that, and the plastic internal illuminated signs aren't historic in nature at all, but rather mid-modern, and don't add anything to or help preserve the character of the town that is valued by many in the community, so I'm against the internal illumination. Otherwise, all the smaller signs are fine and appropriate.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

I thought the logo was interesting as well. They need to add "Banking Center," to even say it's a bank, because the logo tells us nothing. I don't have a huge problem with that, but I would agree with Board Member Deedler on the internal illumination. In that area there are no other signs like this; they're more typical at the edge of town or on a strip mall, so here is an opportunity to change that and have something more like what the City has been asking building owners to do. I think the sign is actually plenty big. The current Bank of the West sign is nice in how modest it is, but you can see it's a bank. To Board Member Deedler's point, it could be bigger. It's already bigger than allowed in terms of each individual sign; I think that's okay. I have no problem with all the other signage, but I would advocate to have this come back as an externally illuminated signage solution for staff approval.

**Lynn Deedler, Board Member**

Part of the motion, if I were making it, would be to clarify that the word "Bank" needs to be there to address the public as to what this building is for, and I heard Chair Langberg say that.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

This is their branding; their signage, and it must be a successful bank if it's buying another bank. I don't see that we could make them change their logo or their signage; that doesn't seem like our place and we're not being asked to comment on that. We can comment on it, but my feeling is that's not our purview.

**Marshall Balfe, Board Member**

At least they do say "Banking Center," so there's some clue. It would be nice if they said what they do, but with commercial buildings I guess we have no say on that. I feel there's enough identification myself, but this bank I've never heard of and it would be helpful for it to say that it was a bank until we get used to it being a bank, but I don't know if this is our place.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

I think it's up to the designer and the owner. You can have restaurants that don't say, "restaurant," they just say the name of the restaurant. To say we have to describe everything to everybody is not at all what a sign designer does; there are other clues.

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

I completely understand what you are going for, but I believe the ATM machine is staying in that location and typically some sort of a bank is implied with an ATM there.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

We have a proposal for a sign exception. We have to vote on that, and then we're sort of ruling on the illumination part. Board Member Deedler, can you craft a motion without the bank name part of it?

Board Member Deedler moved to approve the sign program as submitted, with the exception of the illumination of the sign, which is to be external illumination.

Board Member Balf seconded the motion.

The maker of the motion amended the motion to include language that the application could then be approved at staff level.

The seconder of the motion accepted the amendment to the motion.

**Marshall Balfe, Board Member**

I honor Board Member Deedler's comment about the signage perhaps being historic, but we would have to include that in our guidelines to be fair if that's the way we want to go in this town. Someone coming in and making a proposal, they don't know how we feel about the historic aspect and so they just propose stuff, and it wouldn't be fair to shoot them down because they didn't do it. We've got to have guidelines.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

Board Member Deedler made the comment about when guidelines include suggestive comments, like in this one, preferred rather than required, things like that; just make it vague.

**Lynn Deedler, Board Member**

I believe that it is included in a number of guidelines that say it should conform to the surrounding signage to fit in, and I think it says it in the information that we received.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

Yes, it has to fit in the context.

**Marshall Balfe, Board Member**

So it's currently a contextual thing is what you're saying?

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

Yes, it's not like we have historic guidelines that have to be followed, it's more about the character of the town, which obviously includes the history.

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

With the objective design standards we also have signage as a part of that package, so when we get to that point we can look at that a little more.

**Lynn Deedler, Board Member**

I haven't had a chance to read all through this, but it says, "Signs are generally not allowed within the CD Central Core District." Illuminated signs.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

Internally illuminated signs, that's right. "Generally not allowed" doesn't say prohibited, so it's kind of in that same slightly vague language, but to Associate Planner Jay's point, they are working on these objective design standards that will codify a lot of that.

AYES: Chair Langberg, and Board Members Balfe and Deedler

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Vice Chair Hanley, Board Members Bush and Level

**Lynn Deedler, Board Member**

I have a lot of trouble with the signage in Sebastopol. Generally, there's a lot of poor signage, and new businesses go in where they are under-signed. Before about 1960, when everybody started squeezing down the signs, they were big and robust and the Historic District in this town used to have huge signs, and they were dramatic, they were artsy, they were beautiful, but we've squeezed the guidelines to make everything small, and I'd like to set a meeting where we discuss changing those guidelines.

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

Just looking at the Sign Ordinance over the time that I've been here, there are some revisions that need to be done, especially like for this last item. The corner building is only allowed a maximum of two either wall, window, or other monument signs and it seems troublesome for those corner businesses, because they have to come to the Board for their regular signage that we can approve at a staff level, but it's more signage because they have two facing building frontages and they are required to go for a sign exception. I think for corner buildings we should discuss that further, and maybe that includes increasing overall signage for what we're allowed to approve at a staff level. Our code limits it to 25 square feet, which is not too big, and with the objective design standards stuff that I mentioned earlier coming up, signage is part of that packet, so we can look at updating that along with our ordinance to maybe increase signage overall to, like you said, bring back that historic larger signage nature so people can find buildings. I'm definitely with you. If there are things that we need to update and change, I'd be willing to work with you on updating that section of the code.

**Marshall Balfe, Board Member**

Early in my career here in the Bay Area I laughed about and got frustrated about was how all the cities and towns were trying to become the same with their planning guidelines, signage, and landscaping, etc., and the towns lost their character, but this might be an opportunity to get back at them. It would be wonderful if we could look at that, because even in this town it has somehow evolved into becoming kind of bland. Some areas all look the same, and it would be fun to look at that.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

The design standards are very particular to certain projects, so there is a whole host of signs that are going to change in town that have nothing to do with that, and my question is how do we facilitate that discussion? I guess it would just be an agenda item and we give 20-30 minutes; people come prepared with their thoughts and analyses on what signs we have and what signs we'd like to see; we have a broad-based discussion; or we could form the Signs Rules Subcommittee at some point.

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

Maybe start off having it as an agenda item, and if Board Members Deedler and Balf have any ideas as far as documents go that we can have before the meeting, that way it's given

to the other Board Members and we can see what all the Board Members think about the Sign Ordinance and how it could be modified to fit Sebastopol's character more than how it is now. I get a feeling some of the Board Members feel the signs around town are generic and there is no diversity.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

To that point, if you did a catalogue of signs in town I think you'd find a lot of diversity and it would be worth doing. We're not just speaking generally, but let's take pictures and present that to everybody. Seeing a document showing 20 or 50 signs in different parts of town would be so helpful.

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

If we have a document of different signage around town as far as what works or doesn't work, what's a good idea to expand on further, or what is completely out of character we could hold a meeting for that and have that as a special item or agenda item so that we could have a full discussion, and then if that turns into recommending staff to look at the Sign Ordinance to make modifications in the future.

**Lynn Deedler, Board Member**

I'll volunteer to put together that information if I get someone to help me (looking to Board Member Balf).

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

That would be great. One other note, I'm on the Public Art Committee, and one of our members, Jeff Stucker, wants to be part of this too, at least from that perspective, but I think he feels that even in the signage in general. He was talking about "sign clutter," like a lot of little signs that aren't effective but take up a lot of space, so if a subcommittee forms, he could be part of that.

**Lynn Deedler, Board Member**

I've long thought Sebastopol signage for introducing the town was greatly lacking.

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

I think that could be a future agenda item if you guys are willing to supply me with that and I can pass it along to the Board Members so we can put it on the agenda and everyone has material to review.

**8. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES**

**Lars Langberg**

Design Guidelines Subcommittee. We've gone through all our objective design standards in a couple of rounds, and now we're moving on to the SB 9 standards, which is a different State law related to housing that allows one single-family parcel in certain zones to be subdivided and have duplexes on each of the half-parcels.

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

Also known as an urban lot split. That's the new SB 9 law that allows a minimum of an 800 square foot building. The other part of the design standards is the SB 9, which will come to the DRB in the future. Next month we will have our special meeting for the admin draft of the objective design standards, and a few months later the SB 9 draft will come to you. They will both go to the DRB, Planning Commission, and then City Council for adoption.

**Lars Langberg, Chair**

Is there an overall timeline goal, like by the end of the year?

**John Jay, Associate Planner**

By the end of the year, yes. That project is being funded by, I believe, SB 2 grants, and they need to be adopted by the end of 2023 or early 2024 at the latest, as Director Svanstrom has said. It's a little bit more intense with the SB 9, as it affects the subdivision section of the Municipal Code, because it's splitting lots and parcels.

- 9. ADJOURNMENT:** Chair Langberg adjourned the meeting at 4:21 p.m. The next regularly scheduled Tree/Design Review Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 25, 2023 at 3:30 P.M.