CAB
September 13, 2017

CITY OF CONWAY
COMMUNITY APPEARANCE BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2017
CITY HALL CONFERENCE ROOM – 229 MAIN STREET – 4:00 P.M.

Present: George Ulrich, Sheila Warburg-O'Neil, Brenda Ivester, Heather Whitley, Craig Smith
Absent: Jason Pippin, Paul Doyle
Staff: Jessica Hucks, Zoning Officer; Barbara Tessier, Secretary; Mary Catherine Hyman, Planning Director
Others: Barb Eisenhardt; Louie Welch, Jean M. Timbes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ulrich called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF JULY 26, 2017 MINUTES

Whitley made a motion, seconded by Warburg-O’Neil, to approve the July 26, 2017 minutes as written. The vote in favor was unanimous. The motion carried.

III. CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

A. Anderson Brothers Bank: The applicant, Garvin Design Group, requests approval to install a wood and metal roof canopy over the teller window on the Fifth Ave side of the building, located at 500 Main Street (TMS: 137-02-06-010 / PIN: 33813030017).

Hucks said the bank had been before the Board previously when they came for their building renovations. She said the wanted to add a wood and metal roof canopy over the teller window to protect their customers from the elements. She said it was of the same material as the other awnings on the bank.

Hucks said this request was consistent with the design guidelines and that staff had no issues with the installation.

Whitley made a motion, seconded by Warburg-O’Neil, to approve the requested awning as presented. The vote in favor was unanimous. The motion
carried.

B. **Spartina Land Surveying:** The applicant, Welch Sign Co., requests approval to install a wall sign on the front of the building located at 602 Main Street for Spartina Land Surveying (TMS: 137-02-19-009 / PIN: 33813030004).

Hucks said while this property was not located along the Central Business District portion of Main Street, it did not provide the dimension that the guidelines ask for. In addition, the building façade measurements were not provided. The max sign area permitted for a wall sign is 15% of the building façade or 100 sq. ft., whichever is less.

Hucks said the material for the sign was a white aluma-panel with black and gray lettering/graphics.

Ulrich asked if the sign met the UDO. Hucks said it met the UDO, but not meet the implied dimension requirement of the design guidelines. She said the Board had decided that they would require actual dimension versus strict implied dimension. Hucks said the Board could decide to grant the applicant a variance on the requirements.

Welch said this sign would get the business owner started, and that a few years down the road, he would put up a sandblasted sign. Welch said it was a budgetary issue at this time.

Ulrich asked Hucks what the guideline said about issuing temporary signage. Hucks said temporary signage was permitted for 10 business days four times a year.

Welch said he could do the implied dimension on the sign. He said he could put a shadow behind the lettering. Walburg-O’Neil asked if he could bring the sign away from the wall to give it dimension. Ulrich said the lettering and the graphics had to be dimensional not just the sign itself.

Ivester said the Board had decided to require the dimensional lettering and did not feel they should go back on that now. She said if they did not require it on this sign, what about the next one that came in. Hucks said the guidelines read that all attached signs should be or appear dimensional. She continued that true dimensional letters caught light and cast shadows and depth and highlight to the character of the letters or logo during the day and at night. Hucks said that what they did for another business downtown was to approve PVC letters that were attached to the sign to show dimension. She said that was an option for this business as well. Hucks said she did not know what that would cost.
Whitley asked if the Board allowed them to just put the shadowing on the sign to imply dimension, were they able to put a time limit on how long the sign could remain that way. Hucks said they could not set a time limit.

Ivester said that the Board had decided not to allow the shadowing. She said they had decided to enforce the true dimensional lettering and logos. Welch said people trying to open stores downtown could not afford true dimensional signage. He said there would be more vacant buildings if they made them do that. Welch said they could approve the implied dimension as they had many times before. Ivester asked Welch what the price difference was by percentage. Welch said it would be 300% difference.

Smith said he felt on a historic building in the downtown district they should be more strict, but perhaps not at this location. Whitley agreed. Ivester said everyone understood that, but they put them with a dilemma of knowing when and where to draw the line. She said the guidelines were not for new or old buildings, but for the district. Hucks said there would be in the future commercial buildings in the Main Street Corridor that would be governed by the guidelines.

Welch said he was perfectly willing to do the shadowing. He said they had done it before. Whitley said that was something they were trying not to do now. Hucks said once the signs are installed, they do not appear to have dimension even though they did appear that way on paper when submitted.

Smith asked about putting a frame, a picture frame, around the sign. Welch asked if he meant that to be the dimension. Hucks said Heritage Baby View did put a frame around their sign. Hucks said they could put the frame and the shadowing around the letters and logo. She said that might satisfy the guidelines to some degree.

Ulrich asked what the recourse was if what they Board approved is not what actually appears on the sign once installed. Hucks said there was really no recourse if the sign had been approved. Ulrich said he did not want this Board to be like Myrtle Beach and make things so difficult that no one wanted to do business in the city. He said he was not sure forcing them to have an expensive sandblasted dimensional sign was fair either. He said he did not think that was a hardship that didn’t need to be faced at the start of opening a business. Ulrich said he was fine with a frame and shadowing for this sign.

Whitley asked if the Board would see it again. Ulrich said that was up to the Board if they wanted to see the finished product. Whitley asked if they could give Hucks the authority to approve it. Ulrich said that would have to be in the motion.

Hucks mentioned the Board could grant a variance for undue hardship in
the UDO under the Community Appearance Board that she said it stated, “Where, by reason of unusual circumstances, the strict application of any provision of this Article would result in the exceptional practical difficulty or undue hardship upon any owner of a specific property, the CAB shall have the power to vary strict adherence to said provisions, or to interpret the meaning of said provisions, so as to relieve such difficulty or hardship;” but she was not sure if this met that requirement. She said variances were tied to property and not necessarily to the guidelines. Whitley asked if he would have to apply for a variance. Hucks said no, but that it would prolong the process for the business owner. Hucks said the Board would state what was being varied from in the motion, and if they owner did not comply, then it would have to come back before the Board.

Ulrich asked what the frame around the sign would be composed of. Welch said it would be urethane. He said it was what they made sandblasted signs out of. He said it was a more workable material and better resistant to the elements.

Whitley made a motion, seconded by Smith, to approve with a picture frame around the sign made of urethane with a 3-dimensional shadowing around the lettering and the logo. The vote in favor was unanimous. The motion carried.

IV. BOARD INPUT

There was continued discussion surrounding the use of dimensional lettering and logos. Hucks said the integrity of the guidelines needed to be upheld. She said she understood it was hard to balance. Ulrich said he did not want the CAB to be a foe to business owners that were struggling to open shops. Ivester said it was a big difference in price, but that walking around the city, she had become aware of how cheap looking a lot of the signs were. Hucks said owners could start with window/door signage first and then move on to wall signage when funds were available.

V. STAFF INPUT

Hucks said that Mary Catherine Hyman, the new Planning Director, was here this afternoon. Hucks said that she would be going out again for surgery on her shoulder and that Hyman would be facilitating the meetings in her absence.

VI. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.