

# APPROVED

MINUTES OF  
THE VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS  
DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING  
HELD AT THE ARLINGTON HEIGHTS MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
33 S. ARLINGTON HEIGHTS RD.  
NOVEMBER 12, 2019

Chair Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: John Fitzgerald, Chair  
Scott Seyer  
Kirsten Kingsley  
Ted Eckhardt

Members Absent: Jonathan Kubow

Also Present: Stephen Daday, representing *Metropolis Performing Arts Centre*  
Neil Scheufler, representing *Metropolis Performing Arts Centre*  
Rick Mojek, SouthWater Signs for *Metropolis Performing Arts Centre*  
Steve Hautzinger, Staff Liaison

## REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 22, 2019

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KINGSLEY, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 22, 2019. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

## ITEM 1. SIGN VARIATION REVIEW

### DC#19-095 – Metropolis Performing Arts Centre – 111 W. Campbell St.

Stephen Daday and Neil Scheufler, representing *Metropolis Performing Arts Centre*, and Rick Mojek, representing *SouthWater Signs*, were present on behalf of the project.

Mr. Hautzinger presented Staff comments and gave a slide presentation of the proposed marquee sign. The Metropolis Performing Arts Centre is proposing to remove the existing curved glass entrance canopy on the front of the Metropolis building and replace it with a new theater marquee canopy. The new marquee is designed in the style of a traditional theater marquee, and will include the following features:

- Illuminated "METROPOLIS PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE" signage and theater logo on the front face.
- Changeable electronic message displays on each side, with small illuminated "METROPOLIS" signage below.
- Individual illuminated LED accent light bulbs on all three sides (the bulbs will have a warm color tone, less than 4,000 Kelvin).
- Decorative soffit lighting.

The petitioner is proposing to remove the two existing middle fabric wall banners to accommodate the new marquee hanging rods. The two remaining banners will be used by the Metropolis School of the Performing Arts.

Per Chapter 30 Sign Code, marquees are allowed in the Downtown, if in conjunction with a theater. However, only manual change displays are allowed, so a sign variation is required to allow the proposed electronic message displays. The theater is proposing to use the electronic displays to promote upcoming and current theater productions. As part of those advertisements, the theater is proposing to include the names of sponsors (as shown in the examples provided). Off-premises sponsor advertising is not allowed, so an additional variation is required to allow it.

1. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-801.c.2 to allow a theater marquee with electronic message displays, where only manual change displays are allowed.
2. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-120.f to allow off-premises advertising on the theater marquee electronic message displays for theater sponsor names, where off-premises advertising is prohibited.

In 2017, the Village-wide matter of electronic signage was studied, and as part of that study, one option that was considered was to allow electronic signage for major tourism venues, such as the Metropolis Theater. However, the Design Commission and Village Board decided that it would be better to review such requests on a case-by-case basis as sign variations.

Staff recommends the following conditions and restrictions:

1. The electronic displays shall only be used to advertise upcoming and current theater productions and events, except for theater sponsor names which shall be limited to a maximum of 10% of the electronic display area for a given theater production advertisement, and shall be in substantial compliance with the examples received 10/25/19.
2. The marquee lights and electronic displays shall be turned off at all times between the hours of 11:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M. that the business is not in operation. The lighting on the underside of the marquee only may remain on for 1 hour after the last business in the building closes, no later than 3:00 A.M.
3. The brightness of the individual light bulbs shall be dimmable, and they shall not chase or blink.
4. The electronic displays shall be static displays only with no scrolling, fading, flashing, animation, video, or sound.
5. The message on the electronic displays shall be held for a minimum of 10 seconds.
6. The electronic displays shall be equipped with auto-dimming photocell technology to control the brightness to .3 footcandles maximum above ambient lighting conditions, to be certified by the manufacturer.

The petitioner submitted a letter addressing the hardship criteria, which in summary states that the existing signage for the theater is lacking and patrons have a difficult time locating the theater. Additionally, the small poster boxes are insufficient to promote theater productions. The new marquee is necessary to clearly identify the theater, and the proposed electronic message displays are needed to effectively promote current and upcoming productions. The petitioner reports that almost all performing arts centers in Chicagoland have marquees, and the proposed marquee will be a focal point in the Downtown entertainment and dining area.

Staff agrees that the existing theater signage is insufficient, and it is currently very difficult to know that there is a theater inside the building. Staff has worked closely with the petitioner on the design of the proposed marquee, and overall it has a classy appearance that is very appropriate for a theater and works well with the building. The use of electronic message displays on the marquee is also appropriate at this major entertainment venue to effectively promote current and upcoming theater productions. Finally, Staff does not object to the use of off-premises sponsor names on the marquee since this is a unique situation associated with current or upcoming theater productions only, and the sponsor named will be limited to only 10 percent of the display area for any given production advertisement.

Staff recommends that the Design Commission recommend approval to the Village Board for the sign variation requests, including the conditions listed in the Staff report.

**Steve Daday** said he is the Board President of the Metropolis Theater and thanked the commissioners for considering their sign variation request tonight. They have worked diligently and closely with the Village and Staff to come up with what they feel is a very impressive and important part of what the theater is. He explained that when the lobby was renovated a few years ago, a new video board was added that is very inviting and has had a substantial impact on what is happening in the theater, and they feel the new marquee sign will have as much impact, if not more. He reiterated the difficulty visitors sometimes have in finding the theater, and added that studies have shown that a marquee like this will increase revenues by 15 to 20%, which is also an important consideration. He introduced Staff members of the theater that were present, as well as the representatives from SouthWater Signs.

**Mr. Scheufler** gave an overview of the proposed marquee sign. There are only about 5 sign companies in the country that manufacture this type of sign, and they sent an RFP to all five and received responses from three, two from Illinois and one from Ohio. SouthWater Signs in Elmhurst was chosen because they are the only local sign company to respond; they also refurbished the marquee sign at Wrigley Field, and have worked with many major corporations. **Mr. Scheufler** said that they have been working with Staff for over a year on the design of the marquee, which includes push-through lettering on a panel that will be recessed 1-inch from the lights. The starburst design under the marquee was chosen from recommendations given to them from SouthWater Signs, and they feel the starburst is a fun and modern design element that will be an attractive addition to the marquee sign. Samples of the 'Pantone' colors being proposed for the sign were presented, as well as a sample of the illuminated push-through letters. **Mr. Scheufler** added that they held a neighborhood meeting on October 15 with residents living across the street, and received no negative comments about the new sign. Residents were also informed of tonight's meeting as well.

**Chair Fitzgerald** pointed out that there is no one in the audience at this time other than those who are part of the project.

**Commissioner Eckhardt** asked about the symbolism of the star medallion and the stars around it at the top of the marquee sign, as well as the red color chosen for the sign. **Mr. Scheufler** replied that the existing Metropolis logo has a star as part of the logo, and red and black are the existing Metropolis colors. **Mr. Keefe**, Executive Artistic Director of the theater, added that red is a traditional, theatrical color, with many lobbies being done in a royal red color that goes back to the middle ages.

**Commissioner Eckhardt** said that the sign drawings were nicely detailed and the proportions of the marquee sign appear appropriate. He supported the new marquee sign that has noble, historic materials, and the detailing of the push-through letters is an example of quality and sustainability in terms of its presence. He felt that the 3-dimensions of the sign will be very exciting, the starburst under the sign is a cool design element, and the digital portions of the sign are appropriate and well located in terms of pedestrian traffic. **Commissioner Eckhardt** also commented that this commission originally pushed back on allowing digital signs, and then became very cautious with allowing them; they understand the importance and convenience of digital signs and their ability to get the message out, and he is glad to see that the theater marquee sign will

be one of the first digital signs approved in the downtown. He felt the sign was very tastefully done.

**Commissioner Kingsley** also felt the marquee sign was tastefully done, and she liked both the punched out letters and the red color being proposed. She also liked the idea of the star as part of the Metropolis logo, and she suggested also using the star logo underneath the sign where it would be more noticeable when entering and exiting the theater and help draw people into the building, instead of the starburst. She asked about the brightness of the underside of the sign and if it would be the same footcandle that exists under the current canopy. **Mr. Mojek** replied that the footcandle level will be a little brighter than currently exists, and he clarified that only the white starburst portion of the soffit will light up, not the gold portions surrounding it.

**Mr. Daday** said that feedback from the resident meeting included comments about the late night activity in the Downtown, and residents supported increased lighting on the sidewalk to improve safety and help with visibility of ice and snow. **Commissioner Kingsley** said that although she liked the level of light of the existing canopy, the petitioner indicated that only the starburst portion under the sign would be lit, and she had confidence in the petitioner's to decide the appropriate amount of light. She asked why 4,000 Kelvin was chosen for the color tone of the lights on the marquee instead of doing even warmer such as 2,800 Kelvin. **Mr. Mojek** replied that with 6,500 being the typical norm in the industry, 4,000 was a good middle ground that was not too bright, but bright enough. A sample of the light color was presented, which **Mr. Mojek** said would match on all sides of the marquee.

**Commissioner Seyer** said the proposed marquee sign was very nice and whatever can be done to get more business to the theater is fantastic and applauded. He felt the 4,000 Kelvin temperature being proposed seemed a little cool, and he did not want to see it go above that number. He recommended a photometric study be done of the footcandles at the ground beneath the sign, to confirm that the light will be what the petitioner believes it will be. He had concerns about being able to dim the lights if necessary, and felt that having separate controls for that was crucial to ensure that the lighting will be acceptable for the theater's needs as well as the residents.

**Mr. Scheufler** explained that the sign would have three separate circuits; one for the lights in the red portion, one for the soffit, and one for the message boards. **Mr. Mojek** clarified that the entire bottom portion of the sign is on a separate control. **Commissioner Seyer** reiterated the importance of being able to dim or adjust the lights, and having as much individual control as possible. He suggested the star be on a separate control because it could be brighter than the strings of lights on the soffit. Seeing this in a rendering is not the same as seeing it in real life and making everyone happy. **Mr. Mojek** clarified that the gold portion under the marquee sign is aluminum and will not light up; only the white starburst will be lit, which is about 40% of the surface under the sign.

**Chair Fitzgerald** agreed with the comments already made. He was in favor of the marquee sign but felt it was unfortunate that the beautiful arched window above the entrance would be hidden by the new marquee. He was curious about the view of the back of the marquee from inside the building, and hoped that attention was being given to that. **Commissioner Eckhardt** said the front of the marquee sign could be reflected in paint on the back side of the sign, including the star and the red color, which would improve the visual of the back of the sign from inside the building, especially from the dance studio. The petitioner was not opposed to a painted finish on the back of the new sign to match the front, and clarified that the EPDM roof membrane shown on the drawing was incorrect; the drainage surface will all be sheet metal which will drain to a roof drain on the existing canopy, which is hidden.

**Commissioner Eckhardt** agreed with Commissioner Seyer's suggestion that a photometric study be provided of the footcandle light levels on the ground under the new marquee. He liked the design direction of the starburst element and the light coming out of it; however, he had concerns about the bulbs and the star light feature together, and asked the sign contractor if they have a similar type of sign as this. **Mr. Mojek** replied that they have only done something similar to this on an interior sign. **Commissioner Eckhardt** also agreed with Commissioner Seyer's concerns about having separate controls for the lights and being able to dim the lights if necessary, to ensure satisfaction of the overall light levels. **Mr. Mojek** clarified that all components of the marquee will be dimmable including the star illumination as well as the letters on the front of the marquee sign.

**Commissioner Kingsley** felt it was a great idea to do a photometric study of the light levels on the ground under the marquee,

because it appeared as though a lot of light is focused right in the center, as opposed to the even spread of light on the existing canopy. The petitioner explained that the existing canopy light is a rim around it, so there is not much light underneath, so the new sign will have more light underneath than the current canopy. Mr. Hautzinger pointed out the five existing recessed can lights in the soffit area above the doors, which would remain, as well as the street lights along the sidewalk in the Downtown.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KINGSLEY, TO RECOMMEND TO THE VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING SIGN VARIATIONS FOR THE METROPOLIS PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE AT 111 W. CAMPBELL STREET:

1. A VARIATION FROM CHAPTER 30, SECTION 30-801.C.2, TO ALLOW A THEATER MARQUEE WITH ELECTRONIC MESSAGE DISPLAYS, WHERE ONLY MANUAL CHANGE DISPLAYS ARE ALLOWED.
2. A VARIATION FROM CHAPTER 30, SECTION 30-120.F, TO ALLOW OFF-PREMISES ADVERTISING ON THE THEATER MARQUEE ELECTRONIC MESSAGE DISPLAYS FOR THEATER SPONSOR NAMES, WHERE OFF-PREMISES ADVERTISING IS PROHIBITED.

THIS RECOMMENDATION IS SUBJECT TO COMPLIANCE WITH THE PLANS RECEIVED 10/25/19, FEDERAL, STATE, AND VILLAGE CODES, REGULATIONS, AND POLICIES, THE ISSUANCE OF ALL REQUIRED PERMITS, AND THE FOLLOWING:

1. A REQUIREMENT THAT THE SIGN MANUFACTURER PROVIDE A PHOTOMETRIC STUDY OF THE FOOTCANDLE LIGHT LEVELS ON THE GROUND UNDER THE MARQUEE SIGN, TO BE SUBMITTED AND REVIEWED BY STAFF PRIOR TO THE VILLAGE BOARD REVIEW.
2. A RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER DECORATIVE PAINTING ON THE BACK SIDE OF THE MARQUEE SIGN, WITH STRONG ENCOURAGEMENT TO INCLUDE SOME OF THE FENESTRATION ON THE FRONT OF THE SIGN ON THE BACK, TO IMPROVE THE VIEW OF THE BACK OF THE SIGN FROM INSIDE THE BUILDING.

Commissioner Seyer asked if the motion was clear about having separate controls for the dimmability of the lights as discussed.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KINGSLEY, TO AMEND THE MOTION TO ADD THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS:

3. A REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE FOR SEPARATE DIMMABLE LIGHTING CONTROL OF THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MARQUEE SIGN; THE FRONT 'METROPOLIS' LIGHT LEVELS, THE 'STAR' LIGHT LEVEL, AND BULB LIGHT LEVELS, SO ADJUSTMENTS TO ALL THREE CAN BE MADE SEPARATELY.
4. THE ELECTRONIC DISPLAYS SHALL ONLY BE USED TO ADVERTISE UPCOMING AND CURRENT THEATER PRODUCTIONS AND EVENTS, EXCEPT FOR THEATER SPONSOR NAMES WHICH SHALL BE LIMITED TO A MAXIMUM OF 10% OF THE ELECTRONIC DISPLAY AREA FOR A GIVEN THEATER PRODUCTION ADVERTISEMENT, AND SHALL BE IN SUBSTANTIAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE EXAMPLES RECEIVED 10/25/19.
5. THE MARQUEE LIGHTS AND ELECTRONIC DISPLAYS SHALL BE TURNED OFF AT ALL TIMES BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 11:00 P.M. AND 7:00 A.M THAT THE BUSINESS IS NOT IN OPERATION. THE LIGHTING ON THE UNDERSIDE OF THE MARQUEE ONLY MAY REMAIN ON FOR 1 HOUR AFTER THE LAST BUSINESS IN THE BUILDING CLOSES, NO LATER THAN 3:00 A.M.
6. THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL LIGHT BULBS SHALL BE DIMMABLE, AND THEY SHALL NOT CHASE OR BLINK.
7. THE ELECTRONIC DISPLAYS SHALL BE STATIC DISPLAYS ONLY WITH NO SCROLLING, FADING, FLASHING, ANIMATION, VIDEO, OR SOUND.
8. THE MESSAGE ON THE ELECTRONIC DISPLAYS SHALL BE HELD FOR A MINIMUM OF 10 SECONDS.
9. THE ELECTRONIC DISPLAYS SHALL BE EQUIPPED WITH AUTO-DIMMING PHOTOCELL TECHNOLOGY TO CONTROL THE BRIGHTNESS TO .3 FOOTCANDLES MAXIMUM ABOVE AMBIENT LIGHTING CONDITIONS, TO BE CERTIFIED BY THE MANUFACTURER.
10. THIS REVIEW DEALS WITH ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN ONLY AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED TO BE AN

APPROVAL OF, OR TO HAVE ANY OTHER IMPACT ON, ANY OTHER ZONING AND/OR LAND USE ISSUES OR DECISIONS THAT STEM FROM ZONING, BUILDING, SIGNAGE OR ANY OTHER REVIEWS. IN ADDITION TO THE NORMAL TECHNICAL REVIEW, PERMIT DRAWINGS WILL BE REVIEWED FOR CONSISTENCY WITH THE DESIGN COMMISSION AND ANY OTHER COMMISSION OR BOARD APPROVAL CONDITIONS. IT IS THE ARCHITECT/HOMEOWNER/BUILDER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO COMPLY WITH THE DESIGN COMMISSION APPROVAL AND ENSURE THAT BUILDING PERMIT PLANS COMPLY WITH ALL ZONING CODE, BUILDING PERMIT AND SIGNAGE REQUIREMENTS.

Commissioner Kingsley asked if the maximum 4,000 Kelvin for the lighting was included in the motion. It was pointed out that the drawings include this information. Commissioner Seyer asked if Items 1 through 7 in the Staff report are recommendations or requirements, and Commissioner Eckhardt said they are all requirements.

KINGSLEY, AYE; ECKHARDT, AYE; SEYER, AYE; FITZGERALD, AYE.  
ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.