

# APPROVED

## MINUTES OF THE VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS DESIGN COMMISSION

HELD AT THE ARLINGTON HEIGHTS MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
33 S. ARLINGTON HEIGHTS RD.  
MARCH 12, 2024

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

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

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Thomas Budzik, Thomas Architects for *124 S. Vail Ave.*  
Mark Erickson, Four M Builders for *124 S. Vail Ave.*  
Jennifer Hense, BBA Architects for *1314 N. Harvard Ave.*  
Nathan & Julie Baylor, Owners of *1314 N. Harvard Ave.*  
Kevin Purdom, JRC Design Build for *434 S. Dunton Ave.*  
Paul Loiterstein, Owner of *434 S. Dunton Ave.*  
Dale Balsitis, Corporate Sign Systems for *44 S. Vail Ave.*  
Drew Bulson, Ketone Partners for *44 S. Vail Ave.*  
Steve Hautzinger, Planning Staff

### REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 27, 2024

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 27, 2024. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

**ITEM 4. SIGN VARIATION REVIEW****DC#24-008 – 44 S. Vail Ave.**

**Dale Balsitis**, representing *Corporate Sign Systems*, and **Drew Bulson**, representing *Ketone Partners*, were present on behalf of the project.

**Mr. Balsitis** said he is petitioning for Ketone Partners to have a multi-tenant business sign in front of 44 S. Vail. A variation is needed for the 20-foot setback required from the property line, and the 6-foot clearance required from the building. The parking lot entry at the north side of Vail has an existing Permit Parking Only sign, so this was the only allowable location for the new ground sign. Their intent is to have a multi-business ground sign that will be the most impactful and visible for customers and clients coming into the building, and the sign will be to the right of the main entry in the grass area. Key things to point out with the placement of the sign; it was moved back another 1' closer to the building, so at this point there are no issues with visibility for foot traffic or vehicle traffic on both Vail and Sigwalt, as well as coming out of the parking lot. They also took into consideration being far enough from the building so there are no issues with the Fire Department connections. The sign structure is very contained with a simplistic, rectangular box with all-black paneling and only the lettering illuminated. **Mr. Balsitis** said they are pursuing the variation to provide visibility for all of the businesses that occupy space in this building.

**Chair Kubow** asked Staff about the variation request. **Mr. Hautzinger** said that ground signs are allowed in the Downtown, however, there are a number of requirements for them. Per the sign code, the parcel must have an area with a 20-foot setback to accommodate ground sign placement, such as at the Jewel grocery store for example, and in this case there is only a 7-foot setback. Ground signs are also required to maintain a minimum 6-feet of separation from any building or other structure, and the proposed ground sign will be within 5-feet of the building wall to allow space between the sidewalk and the sign. These are the two variations required, otherwise the proposed ground sign complies with all other code requirements.

1. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-201.h.5.b, to allow a ground sign to be located in an area with a 7-foot setback, where the parcel must have an area with a 20-foot setback for ground sign placement.
2. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-301.d, to allow a ground sign to be located 5-feet from the building wall, where no ground sign shall be closer than 6-feet from any building or other structure.

**Mr. Hautzinger** clarified that the petitioner is requesting a variation for a 5-foot separation between the back of the ground sign and the building wall, where 6-feet is required, however Staff is suggesting the ground sign be moved 12-inches further away from the sidewalk, reducing that separation from the building to only 4-feet, which will give more relief from the edge of the sidewalk and allow for landscaping around the front of the sign. This would change the variation from 5-foot clearance where 6-feet is required, to 4-foot clearance where 6-feet is required.

**Chair Kubow** asked if there was any public comment on the project and there was no response from the audience.

The commissioners summarized their comments. **Commissioner Fitzgerald** saw the need for a sign and was not opposed to a variation for it, and he definitely agreed that the sign should be pushed back another 12-inches. He liked the color and the material of the sign, but was also open to a different sign altogether. He suggested the sign be low and long, possibly centered on the window to the right of it, making the sign feel a little sleeker. He said this building is one of his favorite rehabs that he has seen in years, and although the proposed ground sign is not bad, he questioned if it could be better for this building.

**Commissioner Eckhardt** was fine with the ground sign as proposed, and suggested smooth lava rocks or some type of hard landscape element instead of vegetation in front of the sign to allow visibility of the two bottom sign panels. He said Commissioner Fitzgerald's idea is intriguing and he liked the idea of making the sign long and sleek and becoming part of the architecture of the building, sitting between the two brick pilasters in front of the windows. **Commissioner Eckhardt** also said he was surprised that the Fire Department was okay with the sign visually covering up their

connection on the building, and **Mr. Bulson** replied that the plan is to install an FDC sign on the wall above it. **Commissioner Eckhardt** said he could support the sign being proposed, but also thought Commissioner Fitzgerald's idea was pretty cool.

**Commissioner Kingsley** agreed with Commissioner Fitzgerald's suggestion for a horizontal ground sign, and that the black color of the sign be consistent with the black color on the building. The petitioner confirmed that it will all be the same black color. **Commissioner Kingsley** also said the 5-foot tall ground sign will block light from the fixture on the building behind it, and a horizontal sign would be nicer. She questioned the width of the brick pier behind the sign, and **Mr. Balsitis** said that it is about 60-inches.

**Commissioner Seyer** was in favor of the ground sign as proposed, as opposed to something more horizontal as suggested. Turning the sign on its side would have twice as many business names at the bottom of the sign that are going to be hard to read, and it will overlap with everything. Looking at the overall picture of the building, right now the sign looks very similar in scale to the center panel within the opening, and it almost feels like the same scale. Taking that center panel and making it a little smaller in between the two sets of doors is probably 3-feet wide, and he was in favor of it. He commented that once things are put horizontal, it will result in more space for people to put things on top of when walking by the building. He felt the ground sign is successful as proposed, with the location requested. He asked about any code requirements with regards to the interior illumination and lighting color of the sign, because this is a beautiful building and he would love to see the sign lighting come into a warmer more neutral tone, to the point where it would match the coloration of the lights on the building. **Commissioner Seyer** reiterated that he liked the ground sign the way it is.

**Chair Kubow** loved the updates that were done to this building and appreciated the thought that went into the design, and he hoped for continued success in getting tenants for the building. He was fine with the ground sign as proposed, it's clean and simple, and it fits with the existing building. He liked the idea of a more monument horizontal sign, but he was concerned about the overall execution of that, so he is in support of the ground sign as proposed.

**Mr. Bulson** appreciated all the comments and said for them it is important that the sign is very intentional and matches the existing aesthetic. His only comment about a horizontal sign is that they are actively marketing that front tenant space for a coffee shop, café, or similar use, and any sort of disturbance to the window line and the views could be a detriment to the leasing of that space. Also, the existing windows allow the potential to add an exterior door directly into that space, as opposed to entering through the lobby.

**Commissioner Kingsley** encouraged the petitioner to look at the location of the ground sign to ensure it is far enough away from the entry canopy to eliminate the potential for anyone to climb up on it.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER ECKHARDT, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SEYER, TO RECOMMEND TO THE VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING SIGN VARIATIONS FOR 44 S. VAIL AVENUE, AS SUBMITTED.**

1. A VARIATION FROM CHAPTER 30, SECTION 30-201.H.5.B, TO ALLOW A GROUND SIGN TO BE LOCATED IN AN AREA WITH A 7-FOOT SETBACK, WHERE THE PARCEL MUST HAVE AN AREA WITH A 20-FOOT SETBACK FOR GROUND SIGN PLACEMENT.
2. A VARIATION FROM CHAPTER 30, SECTION 30-301.D, TO ALLOW A GROUND SIGN TO BE LOCATED 4- FEET FROM THE BUILDING WALL, WHERE NO GROUND SIGN SHALL BE CLOSER THAN 6- FEET FROM ANY BUILDING OR OTHER STRUCTURE.

**THIS RECOMMENDATION IS SUBJECT TO COMPLIANCE WITH THE PLANS RECEIVED 1/31/24, FEDERAL, STATE, AND VILLAGE CODES, REGULATIONS, AND POLICIES, AND THE ISSUANCE OF ALL REQUIRED PERMITS, AND THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:**

1. A RECOMMENDATION THAT THE PETITIONER REVIEW THE LANDSCAPE MATERIALS LOCATED

DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE GROUND SIGN, SO AS NOT TO CREATE VEGETATION THAT WILL GROW AND HIDE THE SIGN.

2. A RECOMMENATION THAT THE PETITIONER REVIEW THE COLOR TEMPERATURE OF THE LIGHTS INSIDE THE GROUND SIGN, SO THEY ARE NOT THE BRIGHT WHITE DAYLIGHT BUT A SOFTER COLOR.
3. 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 about moving the sign back 1-foot as suggested by Staff. **Mr. Hautzinger** clarified that the current variation is to allow the sign to be located 5-feet from the building wall, and he asked if the motion was intended to approve a variation to allow the sign to be located 4-feet from the building and **Commissioner Eckhardt** said yes. **Mr. Hautzinger** also said that the Staff report includes a recommendation that the Design Commission consider including a condition to prohibit wall signs on the south and west walls of the building, in exchange for approval of this new ground sign. He explained that this building has 3 street frontages, and code allows for wall signs at each frontage. **Commissioner Eckhardt** was opposed to adding that condition to the motion, and said it is hard enough to lease space now in the Downtown. **Commissioner Kingsley** agreed.

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

**Mr. Hautzinger** clarified for the petitioner that the Design Commission is a recommending body to the Village Board for sign variations, so a final review by the Village Board is required for approval of the ground sign.