



Town of Vienna

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Meeting Minutes Board of Architectural Review

Thursday, January 16, 2025

7:30 PM

Charles Robinson Jr. Town Hall, 127 Center
St. South

Roll Call

The Board of Architectural Review met in a regular session on Thursday, January 16, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. in Town Hall, 127 Center St S, Vienna, VA 22180.

Roll Call: Ms. Couchman, Mr. Cheselka, Mr. Penati, Mr. O'Keefe, and Ms. Hanley were present.

Staff present: Planner Sharmaine Abaied, and Board Clerk Yaska Camacho Castillo.

Approval of the Minutes

The December 19, 2024, BAR regular meeting minutes and the January 10, 2025 BAR work session minutes were accepted into the record.

Regular Business:

[BAR25-560](#)

101 Maple Ave E - Patrick Henry Library - Exterior Modification - Revision

Request for revision of the garage elevation for Vienna-Carter Library at 101 Maple Ave E, Docket No. PF- 1125258-BAR, in the C-2, General Commercial zoning district; filed by Keith Leonard, RRMM Architects.

Applicant present: Maryam Mostamandi

Ms. Mostamandi explained that the original approved design involved a wraparound facade on the east/rear side of the building. The design team now recommends extending the brick facade across the entire rear of the building for a more cohesive look. The brick will not extend on the west side, however. They've developed this updated design and are asking for feedback on whether to proceed with it or stick with the originally approved design.

The board was pleased with the proposal since this was an option they wanted to suggest but were conscious of the applicants' budget.

Mr. O'Keefe made a motion to approve the request to revise the garage elevation for Vienna-Carter Library at 101 Maple Ave E, Docket No. PF- 1125258-BAR, in the C-2, General Commercial zoning district; filed by Keith Leonard, RRMM Architects, as submitted.

Motion: O'Keefe

Second: Ms. Couchman

Motion Carried

[BAR25-561](#) 131 Church St NW - Café de Vienna - Exterior Modification - Revision

Request for approval of string lights for Cafe De Vienna, located at 131 Church St NW, Docket No. PF-1217390-BAR, in the CS, Church Street zoning district, filed by Reza Sadeghi, Toranj LLC, project contact.

Applicant present: No show when called at 7:35 p.m.

The item was postponed to the end of the agenda.

[BAR25-562](#) 131 Church St NW - Café de Vienna - Signs

Request for approval of a wall sign and tenant panel for Cafe De Vienna, located at 131 Church St NW, Docket No. PF-1412106, in the CS, Church Street zoning district, filed by Reza Sadeghi, Toranj LLC, project contact.

Applicant present: No show when called at 7:35 p.m.

The item was postponed to the end of the agenda.

[BAR25-563](#) 155 Maple Ave W - Panda Dumpling - Sign

Request approval of a wall sign and tenant panel for Panda Dumpling, located at 155 Maple Ave W, Docket No. PF-1500446, in the AC, Avenue Center zoning district, filed by James Byars of Signs by James, LLC, project contact.

Applicant present: James Byars

Mr. Byars provided the board with a sample of the LED channel letter. He confirmed that the business logo would be a digital print on translucent vinyl laid on white acrylic. The Kelvin level for the sign is 3000K and 86 lumens per module.

Ms. Couchman asked for clarification on the digital print process. The applicant clarified that the process begins with a white background, onto which color is overlaid. Specifically, the word "Panda" will be a contour channel, similar to the letter "E," (the sample that was provided). The face will be white, with digital printing and translucent vinyl applied. Ms. Couchman asked the applicant if the colors submitted would appear exactly as shown, to which the applicant responded affirmatively.

Ms. Hanley asked if the window panels from the previous tenant were to remain. The applicant stated they were going to be removed and returned to clear glass. Ms. Hanley commented about the colors. She noted that typically, the board would want to see color samples, not just color numbers. She felt comfortable moving forward with the application because the color palette consists of red, black, and white, which she believes won't clash.

Mr. Cheselka made a motion to approve the request for a wall sign and tenant panel for Panda Dumpling, located at 155 Maple Ave W, Docket No. PF-1500446, in the AC, Avenue Center zoning district, as presented.

Motion: Mr. Chesleka

Second: Mr. O'Keefe

Motion Carried

[BAR25-564](#) 444 Maple Ave W - Exterior Modification

Request approval for a permanent fence, located at 444 Maple Ave W, Docket No. PF-1581194-BAR, in the MAC, Maple Avenue Commercial Zoning district, filed by Karen White of Walter Phillips, Inc., project contact.

Applicants present : Chris Bell & Karen White.

Mr. Bell explained that the construction fence was put up after demolition work, which had to be completed earlier than planned due to the impact of COVID. They couldn't begin construction immediately because of economic challenges, but they wanted to prevent erosion by leaving some of the existing curb and paving intact. The fence has been upgraded to a more permanent structure with concrete bases and a green screen around it. The applicant is seeking approval for this temporary fence, which is in between construction and permanent status. They are working to relaunch the project's architecture in order to meet updated building codes (IBC 2021) and plan to apply for a building permit in late spring or early summer. They request an extension to keep the current fence in place until the end of September, by which time they hope to be back in construction mode. If the project doesn't progress as planned, they may return for approval of a different, more permanent fence.

Mr. O'Keefe asked what was the difference between a temporary fence versus a permanent fence. Ms. Abaied explained that construction fences are generally allowed anywhere during construction as long as they maintain proper sight lines. For a permanent fence, they need to meet setbacks. However, since there is no ongoing construction at the moment, it's understood that the fence needs to be approved as a permanent fence rather than a temporary construction fence, as mentioned by the Zoning Administrator Ms. West. Mr. O'Keefe asked whether, by approving the fence, the board would need to set a timeframe, or if the fence would become permanent. Ms. Abaied stated that Miss West may have provided guidance on how the board can condition the permanent fence. If there's a timeframe for the fence, the board could allow some flexibility, as they have done in the past for other projects, since things don't always happen as planned. However, the decision is ultimately up to the board.

The board expressed difficulty with the situation, suggesting that they are being asked to approve something they would typically not agree to specifically, a chain link fence in the front yard of a commercial property.

Ms. Hanley suggested the idea of setting a time limit or a specific trigger point that would allow the fence to transition back to being classified as a construction fence. She also suggested making a small modification at the corner of Purple Onion and the applicant's property line, either to lower or pull back the shade, to improve the visibility of the Purple Onion's entrance and activity on the lot from pedestrians and vehicles.

The applicants proposed a potential solution to improve sight lines by pulling the fence back 25 feet in a specific direction and adjusting the gates. They suggest creating a triangular shape or truncating the corner to achieve this.

Ms. Hanley suggested adding a condition to ensure that any shrubbery or items outside of the fence are removed if they are dead. The board discussed. Mr. Bell noted that they have someone who comes out every two weeks to keep the area well-maintained.

Ms. Hanley noted that the chain link fence screens are on the inside and wants to ensure the board addresses this, agreeing with the current setup to avoid later requiring the screens to be moved to the outside or creating a zoning issue. Ms. Abaied confirmed that the screening is being proposed on the inside and the board can approve the fence as

submitted with the condition that the screening is on the inside.

Ms. Hanley commented about the retail sign on the site. She described the "retail space available" sign as being in poor condition—weathered, deteriorating, and falling apart and suggested it could be cleaned up a bit to improve its appearance. The applicant agreed to clean it up.

Ms. Hanley pointed out the need to remove any debris or materials not attached to the ground near the fence. Ms. Couchman noted that the shrubbery, particularly along the Nutley side near the intersection, looks unkempt and is often treated like trash by people waiting at the traffic light. While some of the shrubbery isn't entirely dead, it's in poor condition and needs to be cleaned up or removed to improve the area. The applicant stated that this would be addressed during maintenance.

Mr. Cheselka commented on the time frame, noting that while the applicant is requesting until the end of the year, he doesn't see much difference between September and December. He acknowledged the town's frustration with the situation, especially since it's the main entrance to the town. While understanding the challenges the business faces, he feels that granting an extension until the end of the year wouldn't be an issue, as long as there is a genuine effort to move things forward.

The board discussed a way to craft the motion that would not require the applicant to come back to get approval for the construction fence.

Ms. Couchman made a motion to approve the request for a permanent fence, located at 444 Maple Ave W, Docket No. PF-1581194-BAR, in the MAC, Maple Avenue Commercial Zoning district with the following conditions:

- The fence will become a construction fence at the end of the year (December 2025) or upon the Fairfax County building permit approval.
- The (wind) screening is located on the interior side.
- The NE corner (of the fence) adjacent to the Purple Onion be truncated to provide visibility to the Purple Onion restaurant.
- Remove the existing shrubbery on the exterior of the fence along Maple Ave and Nutley and stabilize it with mulch.

Motion: Ms. Couchman

Second: Mr. Cheselka

Motion Carried

Item No. 2 and Item No. 3 were recalled

Item No. 2: Request for approval of string lights for Cafe De Vienna, located at 131 Church St NW, Docket No. PF-1217390-BAR, in the CS, Church Street zoning district, filed by Reza Sadeghi, Toranj LLC, project contact.

Applicant present: No show when called at 8:10 p.m.

The board discussed the property's uniqueness compared to others along the road, noting that its setback allows for something like this to be done in the front, while most other properties are either too close to the sidewalk, have parking in the front, or are directly against the sidewalk. However, they expressed concern that approving the string lights could set a precedent. The board would prefer the applicant to be present so that he can explain his request and also this would allow the board to clarify expectations, such as maintaining neatness to the applicant.

Mr. O'Keefe made a motion to defer the request for string lights for Cafe De Vienna, located at 131 Church St NW, Docket No. PF-1217390-BAR, in the CS, Church Street zoning district, filed by Reza Sadeghi, Toranj LLC, project contact.

Motion: Mr. O'Keefe
Second: Ms. Couchman
Motion Carried

Item No. 3: Request for approval of a wall sign and tenant panel for Cafe De Vienna, located at 131 Church St NW, Docket No. PF-1412106, in the CS, Church Street zoning district, filed by Reza Sadeghi, Toranj LLC, project contact.

Applicant present: No show when called at 8:16 p.m.

Ms. Abaied explained that the sign has an LED strip under an aluminum cap that needs to be plugged in for the light to work. She contacted the company that designed the sign, which typically creates signs for interior use. The company told her that they reached out to the applicant and the applicant stated that they don't plan to plug the light in. Ms. Abaied informed the board members that the LED strip is present, but the light won't be activated because the applicant has chosen not to plug it in. There was a brief discussion about the information provided on the application.

Ms. Hanley asked if there was any information about the LED, to which Ms. Abaied responded that she had inquired about the Kelvin and lumen levels, but the company only provided information about the wattage (24-watt LED strip).

Mr. Cheselka expressed confusion about the owner's decision not to plug in the LED light on the sign. He questioned why the owner didn't choose a sign without any electrical components, which would have been cheaper and more straightforward. After discussing the signs, the board felt the need to defer the application.

Mr. O'Keefe made a motion to defer the request for a wall sign and tenant panel for Cafe De Vienna, located at 131 Church St NW, Docket No. PF-1412106, in the CS, Church Street zoning district, filed by Reza Sadeghi, Toranj LLC, project contact.

Motion: Mr. O'Keefe
Second: Mr. Cheselka
Motion Carried

Other business:

Ms. Hanley thanked Mr. Cheselka for his years of service on the Board of Architectural Review.

Mr. Cheselka reflected on his 16 years as a Board of Architectural Review board member. He mentioned how he now has grandchildren and travels more. He praised the board members, including Ms. Hanley for her exceptional attention to detail. He also recognized the DPZ staff, acknowledging their hard work and saying they didn't get enough credit.

Meeting Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Yaska Camacho Castillo

Board Clerk

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