

**Historic Zoning Commission  
Minutes  
August 28, 2018**

The Historic Zoning Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on August 28, 2018 at 5:30 pm in the Commission Chambers at the Municipal and Safety Building.

**Members Present:** Mr. Hal Hunter, Chairman  
Mr. Wesley Forsythe, Vice-Chairman  
Mr. Tom Mozen  
Ms. Valda Jones  
Ms. Liz Biosca  
Mr. Nathan Brand

**Members Absent:** Mr. Mike Williams, Planning Commission Representative

**Staff Present:** Matthew Manley, Senior Planner, City of Johnson City  
Nicole Lawrence, Acting Recording Secretary, City of Johnson City

Chairman Hal Hunter called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

Approval of the Johnson City Historic Zoning Commission agenda was put forth  
Commissioner Jones made a motion for approval with a second from Vice-Chairman  
Forsythe.

The agenda was then approved by a unanimous, verbal vote.

The minutes from the Historic Zoning Commission Special Called Meeting held on July  
31, 2018 were approved with a motion from Vice-Chairman Forsythe and a second from  
Commissioner Jones.

## New Business

CoA #2018-213 – 121 Spring St. Approval of the revised signage for Wonder Land.

Front: The main front sign is an LED internally illuminated sign that is 3' x 15' – pictured below. The background cabinet would be custom-produced aluminum painted matte black. Graphics and copy to be 3/4" push through acrylic with surface vinyl applied.

Back: The main rear sign would be an LED internally illuminated sign that is 3' x 15' with the same design as the front.

Staff recommended that while a number of policies from Policy 10 were relevant and the proposal was in accord with most of them, there were still a number of issues that needed to be highlighted.

Staff pointed out the following items:

- In keeping with the goals of the design guidelines, a projecting sign would be preferred and would offer an appropriate pedestrian scale. In particular, this block of Spring St. is visible from both Main St. and State of Franklin. A wall sign would only be visible from one direction while a projecting sign would be visible from two main commercial thoroughfares – thus achieving greater visibility and potential benefit to the applicant. Furthermore, all other businesses along Spring St. feature projecting signs for the reasons stated previously.
- According to the policy, the proposed wall sign should only be considered “depending on the building façade”. In this case, the façade lends itself to either a wall sign or a projecting sign. For wall signs, the policies encourage utilizing existing architectural features and specifically calls out a molding which can be used as a sign panel. While this building does not have molding, it does have a space between the storefront and the 2nd floor windows that includes a recessed portion which is an appropriate space for hanging a sign.
- The policy encourages a simple design that includes fonts that are used elsewhere in the district. The policy discourages typefaces that are hard to read. The proposed sign includes symbols of glasses and bottles along with words written in a whimsical font that bob up and down across the face of the sign. This font is not completely unlike others seen in the historic district. However, the use of multiple colors within the title of the business has not been observed elsewhere in the historic district. The policy goes on to say that colors on the sign should be compatible with the building. It is possible that the proposed sign colors may not compliment the proposed new paint color. The two shades of red could clash. The black of the base color of the sign is also a stark contrast to the building. The proposed sign would be metal and vinyl/acrylic. While the policy does speak to metal as a material that is permitted, it also says that plastic is not allowed. The proposed internal illumination is in accord with the requirements of the design guidelines, however external illumination is preferred.

While the smaller size front wall sign now fits within the existing brick recess in the center of the building, staff recommends that the applicant give consideration to a projecting sign. If a wall sign is the only option, staff recommends that exterior lighting should also be considered for the wall sign – eliminating the need to use plastic materials and in order to meet the goals of the design guidelines.

The rear sign is out of scale with the back of the building. A smaller, subordinate sign should be used to mark the rear of the business.

While this month's application has made some marginal improvements in regards to the issues discussed at last month's meeting, staff still finds that the proposed signage is not fully in line with the Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines and has advised the applicant of this fact.

The public hearing was opened in regards to the proposal for signage at 121 Spring St;

Meenu Singh – 121 Spring St., the petitioner spoke in favor of her proposed signage for the front of her establishment.

A very lengthy discussion ensued between the petitioner and the commissioners regarding the sign design, color, size, type (vinyl vs. glass) and illumination (external vs. internal). Some of the items brought up were:

Commissioner Brand stated that under the Downtown Design Guidelines, Policy 10, section I, acrylic and plastic are not allowed. Glass and externally illuminated wall signs were acceptable. He also stated the banner that is currently up at the business location was not the banner approved at the last meeting. The background on the banner that is up is white where the approved banners background was black.

The petitioner stated that the banner with a black background was going to take a lot longer to make and The Little Chicago Festival was approaching. She wanted her business visible to potential customers during that time.

Commissioner Jones suggested that the background for the front sign could be a bronze color. This would be acceptable by the current guidelines. Commissioner Mozen agreed with this suggestion. Chairman Hunter agreed that the background of the sign should coordinate with the building color.

Adam – Foster Signs was present for another applicant however he wanted to explain to the Commission that the use of glass on a sign of this nature was not recommended due to safety issues with breakage, especially in a highly trafficked pedestrian area beneath a sign.

Commissioner Biosca suggested that the Commission hold a Special Called Meeting in the next few weeks in order to approve the parts of the signage that they were unable to decide upon at this meeting.

The Commissioners decided to make a motion on the parts of the sign they could agree upon and hold the other items until they could hold a Special Called Meeting in the next few weeks. This would give the applicant more time to meet with her sign designer and staff in order to come back with an agreeable sign option.

Seeing no one else wished to speak, the public hearing was closed.

**FRONT SIGNAGE ONLY** – A motion was put forth by Commissioner Mozen to approve the front sign as presented with the following conditions; the background color cannot be black, the approved colors are red, yellow and white. The font is approved as presented and internal illumination and size were approved as presented. A second was given by Vice –Chairman Forsythe.

**VOTE: 5-1 (Brand)**

**Motion approved with conditions.**

**BACK SIGNAGE ONLY-**

The commission began to discuss the proposed signage for the back of the building and quickly came to a consensus that signage of that size was not appropriate for the second story of any of the buildings that face Downtown Square. Additional discussion was had regarding the need for a coordinated master sign plan for the businesses that back up to Downtown Square. After some deliberation a motion to deny the back signage as presented was put forth by Commissioner Brand with a second from Commissioner Jones.

**VOTE: 6-0**

**Motion to deny, approved.**

Due to the complicated nature of this item and in order to help the petitioner move forward in a timely manner on ordering her signage for the back side of her establishment, the commissioners decided to hold a Special Called Meeting of the Historic Zoning Commission on Monday September 10, 2018 at 4:00 pm in the Commission Chambers.

CoA #2018-214 Exterior Renovations and signage approval at 133 Commerce St was the second item on the agenda.

The petitioner has proposed the following exterior renovations to the property:

Front (Commerce St Side):

- Two (2) new sets of double doors (half glass) and 2 new fixed single doors in recessed entry.
- New historically-appropriate sconces to be added to the exterior
- New historically-appropriate windows to be installed on
- Minor repair work to existing masonry
- New steel sign

Rear (Buffalo St Side):

- New historically-appropriate sconces to be added to the exterior
- Minor repair work to existing masonry
- Existing doors and windows to be repaired and restored to original appearance
- New blade signs to be installed

Signage –

Front - The application includes a proposed wall sign on the Commerce St side. This sign would be made of steel and the total area of the sign would be 13.5 sq. ft (“Atelier”) and 7.6 sq. ft (“133”). This meets the sign code for B-2 wall signs.

The placement of the sign within the square brick rectangles above the storefront helps to emphasize and compliments the existing architectural features of the façade. The material of the sign is metal as recommended by the design guidelines.

Rear – The proposed signage for the Buffalo St platform includes two (2) projecting signs one for each business. Projecting signs are encouraged according to the design guidelines.

Public hearing opened;

Andrea Russell a representative from the applicant, Rothe Architecture, spoke in favor of the proposal and was available to answer any questions from the commissioners.

Seeing no one else wished to speak, the public hearing was closed.

A motion to approve as presented was put forth by commissioner Jones with a second from commissioner Biosca.

**VOTE: 6-0**

**Motion approved as presented.**

CoA #2018-215 was the third item on the agenda and included a proposal to relocate an existing sign to 109 Cherry St Suite 30.

The petitioner is proposing one new sign on the front of the building on Cherry St  
New Sign:

- 3' x 12' = 38 Square Feet
- Hung on flat brick space above storefront/awning
- Internally illuminated
- Sign letters hung on custom painted raceway
- Relocated from previous storefront

The proposed sign features a small logo and individual letters set on a raceway that will mount the sign to the brick veneer. The font is simple and east to read. The colors of the sign are a basic white and black with a red raceway. The sign fits within the design guidelines other than the sign materials.

Staff recommended approval of the proposed sign.

Public hearing opened;

Adam – Foster Signs, was present to answer any questions the commissioners may have regarding the sign.

Seeing no one else wished to speak, the public hearing was closed.

Motion to approve as presented was put forth by Vice-Chairman Forsythe with a second from commissioner Biosca.

**VOTE: 6-0**

**Motion approved as presented.**

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.



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Hal Hunter - Chairman