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Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City of Rensselaer Zoning Board of Appeals
First Floor Conference Room, Rensselaer Community Center, 62 Washington Street
March 22, 2010

Members Present:

Chair – Gene Hilstro, Vice Chair – Bill Bulnes, Nancy Hardt, Nancy Johnson, Terance Ruso

Members Not Present:

Leonard Sciotti, Michael Scott

Staff Present:

Marybeth Pettit – Planning Director, Kevin McLoughlin – Assistant Director of Planning, John Spath – Deputy Corporation Counsel

Others Present

Lou Lourinia, Abdul Hayati, Dave Gardner, Joe Whalen

Call to Order:

The regular meeting of the City of Rensselaer Zoning Board of Appeals was called to order at 6:05 PM. Roll call was taken and it was determined that there was a quorum.

Adoption of Past Meeting Minutes:

The minutes of the regular meeting of February 22, 2010 were approved as submitted and without correction.

Old Business

NONE.

New Business

- 1. Abdul Hayati, 240 Broadway** – request for Area Variances to allow a sign of 10.4 square feet extending 5.25’ beyond the 3’ maximum extension from a building frontage and 8.25’ over a public right of way in a local business (LB) zoning district.

Abdul Hayati described his desire to have a projecting / hanging sign outside his new pizza store. He noted that the an updated drawing showed the sign as 5’x2’.

Ms. Pettit confirmed that she had worked closely with the applicant to propose a sign design that went beyond the basic back-lit plastic sign allowed under the current sign law. She considered it a template for new signage rules that would be considered for adoption as part of the zoning law update.

Mr. Ruso asked for confirmation of the distance of the sign from the front façade of the building and was told that it would project approximately 60” from the bay window.

Ms. Pettit noted that since the applicant was being allowed to use both sides of the sign the dimensions would allow him more square footage than a flat sign and this was considered a good incentive to encourage this form of extra investment in quality signage.

Chair Hilstro opened the public hearing at 6:18 PM.

Dave Gardner of 905 6th Street thought the sign looked great and should be approved. He thought the city should do all it could to help out such small businesses. He did not think the extra sign area the applicant would gain from using both sides of the sign was an issue as there were larger signs on that block already.

Lou Lourinia of 3rd Street spoke in support of the variance for the sign as an improvement. He stated that the downtown businesses such as the ‘Auto Zone’ should be encouraged to maximize their signage to increase their visibility. He pointed out several businesses where signage was an issue: Handy Andy’s on Washington Avenue is old and overdue to come down; Red House Tavern on Broadway erected a new sign without a permit; Winn’s Market on Partition Street has excessive signage; 1489 Broadway has excessive signage for a residential district; most deli/markets have excessive signage in the windows limiting the ability of police to look in the windows. He stated that these issues could be dealt with through enforcement of existing codes.

Hearing no one else to speak for against the application, Chair Hilstro closed the public hearing at 6:25 PM.

Mr. Bulnes moved to grant area variances of 3’8” over the maximum 3’ sign projection from building facades and 6’8” over the maximum 0’ sign projection over a public right of way with the stipulations that the sign (as depicted on the submitted schematic): is 2’x5’, is externally lit, has identical text on both sides, projects no more than 2/3 of the distance from the building face to the curb & is at least 3 feet from the curb, and is hung at a height so that it’s bottom edge is at least 8’ above the surface of the sidewalk. Mr. Ruso seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Bulnes noted that several recent variances had involved signage and that some follow-up from code enforcement would be valuable to ensure compliance with variance limits and stipulations adopted by the board.

Other Business:

NONE.

Adjournment:

Hearing no objections, Mr. Hilstro adjourned the meeting at 6:43 PM.

Next Meeting:

The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 22, 2010 at 6:00 PM

Record of Decisions:

An official record of decisions noting the details of motions from this meeting along with conditions & stipulations has been filed with the City Clerk and a copy maintained in Planning Department records.

Respectfully submitted,

Marybeth Pettit
Secretary