

**FALMOUTH PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 2012, 6:30 P.M.
FALMOUTH TOWN HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bernard Pender, Becca Casey, Kermit Stanley (Alternate), Walter Arsenault (Alternate)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bill Lunt (Chair), Heddy Snyder

STAFF PRESENT: Ethan Croce (Senior Planner)

The meeting started at 6:30 pm.

Bernie Pender served as Chair in Bill Lunt's absence.

Walter Arsenault and Kermit Stanley were appointed as voting members.

1. Approval of minutes from the February 7, 2012 Planning Board meetings.

Becca Casey moved to approve the minutes; Kermit Stanley seconded. Motion carried 3-0. (Pender abstained)

Administrative Action Items

2. Steven Anderson – 12 Winding River Lane– Request for a subdivision amendment for the Lower Falls II Subdivision. Tax Sheet 462; Map-Lot U69-076. Zoned RA, RCZO and RP (Shoreland).

3. Craig Ewald – 39 Seaside Way – Request for a subdivision amendment for the Seaside Way Subdivision. Tax Sheet 082; Map-Lot U18-048 and -052. Zoned RA and RCZO.

4. Dennis Coulombe – Farm Gate Rd. – Request for a subdivision amendment for the Farm Gate Subdivision. Tax Sheet 310; Map-Lot U24-013-003. Zoned RA and RCZO.

5. OceanView Retirement – 20 Blueberry Ln. – Request for re-approval of a subdivision and site plan for expansion of the Falmouth House. Tax Sheet 310; Map-lot U27- 013-D. Zoned RCOD.

Becca Casey moved to approve the administrative action items as submitted and with conditions as noted by staff. Ethan Croce read the conditions for the Anderson application. Kermit Stanley seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Agenda Items

6. Falmouth Crossing – 65 Gray Rd. – Request for a site plan amendment for new signage. Tax Sheet 373; Map-Lot R05-044-001, -002, -004. Zoned WFCMPD and Route 100 Corridor Overlay.

Ethan Croce explained that this is a two part request. First the applicant is requesting approval for 6 sign panels: 3 West Falmouth Crossing sign panels and 3 Hannaford sign panels located at the 2 main pylon signs on Gray Road and 1 at Leighton Road. These panels deviate from the standards set out in the design

guidelines with regards to allowable number of colors, narrative content, amount of content, and repetitive verbiage. Secondly, when the project was approved in 1998 the Planning Board set a requirement that all the tenant panel signs be similar in regards to content, color and font. The applicant would like that restriction removed.

Kyle Noyes of Sign One was representing the owners of Falmouth Crossing.

Bernie Pender explained the options for the applicant with regards to the application.

Mr. Noyes said the signs were 15 years old and needed updating badly. There are tenants still up on the panels that have not been in the plaza for a number of years. The owners want get their approval as soon as possible. He said there were two issues – redundant signage and number of colors. He said the restrictions placed on the site plan approval are not the Exit 10 design guidelines. The Hannaford logo is a fruit basket; their name and most of the signage stays within the limit on the number of colors except for the fruit basket. If they didn't use the colors on the fruit basket you wouldn't know what it was. The same argument applies to the compass on the West Falmouth Crossing (WFC) logo; if they don't use the colors, you can't tell what the logo is supposed to be. Nothing in the guidelines said that it "has" to be this way; it says it "should". He thought there could be some discretion here. He spoke about the redundancy in the Hannaford sign, with the name "Hannaford" in both the logo and on the sign. He argued that you can't read the word "Hannaford" in the logo. He said under the restrictions on the site plan, signs were limited to black and white, a certain size font, etc. It isn't clear what is in the Plaza without logos. They aren't asking for a change to the Exit 10 Guidelines, but an amendment to the restrictions on the site plan. Tenants are not getting the visibility they need on the sign, and are therefore choosing not to use the sign. The landlord is ready to invest money into improvements to the sign. The surrounding businesses at Exit 10 are allowed to do more than these businesses at West Falmouth Crossing.

Walter Arsenault drove by the site; it took him a while to identify the redundancy. He didn't think the colors in the logos were a big deal; the language in the guidelines says "should". He asked if the applicant was asking to have all the restrictions on the tenant panels removed.

Mr. Noyes said they are asking for the ability to use logos instead of being limited to black and white type, so that their signs are more identifiable. He said some of the tenants have decided to forgo the permit process and have installed signs that violate the restrictions.

Walter Arsenault asked if the sign is going to be completely refurbished.

Mr. Noyes said it already has been. The sign was falling apart; the signs for WFC and Hannaford are redone already. The applicant was issued a permit to replace exactly what was there before.

Ethan Croce said that the applicant worked with Community Development Director Amanda Stearns, who has the authority to permit the reface of an existing sign, as long as it clearly complies with all ordinance standards and design guidelines. The signs that were approved initially were approved with the understanding that the extra colors and verbiage would be removed. When the applicant wanted to explore adding the additional colors and verbiage, he was told that only the Planning Board can approve signs that don't meet the strict interpretation of the guidelines. The signs that are up there now are not the ones that were permitted by Ms. Stearns.

Becca Casey reviewed the design guidelines. She agreed that it is harder to read the uniform text of the tenant signs were you are driving by as opposed to different signs. She didn't think logos would be necessary, but maybe different text. She was fine with the Hannaford logo, but thought the increased size and complexity of the WFC compass logo competes with the Hannaford logo. She would like to see that simplified. The changes in the text of the WFC panel now compete with the Hannaford sign, due to the increased color and text style. Each individual tenant has their own wall sign with their own logo, and those are easy to see. She thought the sign would get busy without any uniformity of color and font.

Mr. Noyes said that when you put them all in black and white it is hard to read as you drive by. They will have ivory or cream backgrounds that match the Hannaford sign color. The background will be opaque; the Hannaford and WFC signs are opaque. He thought when you drive by it doesn't seem like the WFC sign competes with the Hannaford sign. The Hannaford sign is much larger. He said the light didn't pass through the WFC sign as it was designed.

Kermit Stanley didn't mind the Hannaford logo; he felt the WFC sign distracts from the Hannaford logo. He thought the way the tenant panel sign is now is very busy. He thought the new setup with the ivory background is much better.

Bernie Pender agreed that the Hannaford logo with the fruit basket is very recognizable, and they could probably work with it. The WFC compass has too many colors and is too distracting.

Mr. Noyes clarified that the compass is the logo for the Plaza.

Bernie Pender wanted to see a change to that – it is busy and has a lot of colors. He said the applicant was looking for removal of an existing restriction on the tenant panels; he was not comfortable with removing that at this time. He would be more comfortable if the applicant had provided examples of the font, colors, etc. that he is proposing.

Mr. Noyes discussed the plans in the application that show what they are proposing. The site plan calls for all black lettering on the tenant panels, all with the same height and style. The tenants are not showing interest in having panels on the sign with those restrictions in place; if the landlord removes the panels of those business that are gone, it makes it look like the Plaza is vacant.

Becca Casey asked about the applicant's request that the Community Development Director be able to approve tenant panels with no restriction on colors.

Mr. Noyes clarified that they are asking the Board to remove the restrictions placed on the site plan, and allow for approvals to be granted based on the Exit 10 design guidelines, with the Community Development Director having discretion on the number of colors allowed per tenant panel.

Becca Casey thought that the Hannaford logo was already approved.

Ethan Croce said the logo used to say "Food and Drug" and now says "Hannaford". The change to the logo triggered the redundancy.

Mr. Noyes said they want something so that the tenants could get an approval for their panel from the Community Development Director and not have to come before the Board. He argued that the Board could allow logos and turn over approval of the panels to the Community Development Director. She would have a good handle on how many colors would be appropriate.

Ethan Croce stated that it isn't clear whether the 2-3 color limitation as set out in the design guidelines is intended to be applied to each tenant panel separately or the multi-tenant sign as a whole. The Board has required consistency of font type, style and color over the whole multi-tenant sign at this property, Foreside Place and the Shops at Falmouth Village. Historically there has been some coordination on these multi-tenant signs. There are no black and white standards for how that coordination has been imposed by the Board, but typically some attempt has been made.

Walter Arsenault was in favor of removing the restriction with the condition that the backgrounds remain ivory and that each panel be limited to two colors.

Becca Casey agreed; she didn't think they would say "no limitation" on colors, but that they could remove the limits on color and font size. She was not bothered by the redundancy on the Hannaford sign.

Walter Arsenault asked if the sign has already been refurbished. Mr. Noyes said yes, the top signs have been replaced already.

Kermit Stanley agreed with Becca Casey and Walter Arsenault.

Public comment period opened; no public comment.

Mr. Noyes asked for the Board to grant the authority for the Community Development Director to approve future tenant panel signs and give her some discretion.

The Board discussed granting an after-the-fact approval for the 6 panels and removing the restrictions on the site plan in regard to the tenant sign panels. Each tenant panel could meet the Exit 10 design guidelines separately with regards to color and design. Ethan Croce wondered if the Board was considering allowing three colors for the whole multi-tenant sign, or on each tenant panel separately.

Becca Casey was concerned that, if they allow the tenant panels to have up to 3 colors each, the sign may get very busy with the compass on top.

Bernie Pender asked if the red colors on the tenant panels are the same red as the Hannaford sign; that would cut down on the number of different colors on the overall sign.

Mr. Noyes said there are different shades of red. It is important to allow people to use their logos. That is what drivers recognize.

Bernie Pender thought that the Board required the Irving next door to coordinate the signs on the site so that all the reds were the same shade. Ethan Croce confirmed that that was the case.

Mr. Noyes said that the signs will change over the years. He was afraid that if they do that they would run into trouble down the road if they get different, easily identifiable tenants who each use a different shade of red.

Becca Casey thought the Board agreed for the most part, but since that makes the sign busier, she felt the compass on the WFC sign was the place to back off and cut down on the busy-ness of the sign. That is a place where more complexity has been added. If they are going to allow for more colors on the bottom, she felt they could compromise and tone down the sign on the top. This is a place where the applicant has the ability to back down and balance it out. The compass isn't a logo for a recognizable brand and won't pull traffic. She would ask them to simplify that sign in regards to the additional colors, so they are not adding colors that were not already there.

The rest of the Board agreed.

Mr. Noyes didn't feel that the sign dominates or competes with the Hannaford sign, or makes it more complex. He felt what they did in comparison to the old sign made it more legible and clearer. He didn't think the driver's eye was pulled to the WFC sign, but the Hannaford sign. He thought WFC didn't even need to be on the sign.

Becca Casey said that was why the Board didn't think they needed the extra colors in that sign. While there is a good rationale for changing the tenant panel signs, there isn't a really strong argument for allowing the additional colors on the WFC sign.

Mr. Noyes said it is important to the landlord that the sign remain. He wondered about limiting WFC in the number of colors in their sign and not limiting Hannaford.

Becca Casey asked about the colors in the compass.

Mr. Noyes said they were trying to create a prismatic look. He said black, red, gold and blue are included in the compass.

Bernie Pender said he counted 6 colors in the compass; there are different shades. The ring blue is darker than the center blue. Mr. Noyes said no, there is a black outline around that.

Bernie Pender asked what kind of modifications he could do on the WFC sign; this is too much. Mr. Noyes said they could make the points black and take out the blue.

Walter Arsenault asked if they would have to remake the whole sign. Mr. Noyes said no, they could go up and overlay it. They could change the color to black.

The Board discussed the size of the WFC logo. They felt it was big.

Bernie Pender thought the ring around the compass was three colors. Mr. Noyes confirmed that it was black, blue and red.

Mr. Noyes thought the compass looked bigger in proportion on the design plan than it will look 30 feet in the air. He presented a photo of what has been installed on the sign to show how it looks in relation to the rest of the sign.

Bernie Pender felt the old compass design didn't look like it was competing with anything.

Walter Arsenault felt the compass didn't look as bad on the photo. He thought it was a bad print. Mr. Noyes explained that the printer was running out of ink when he printed it. Neither the Photoshop picture in the application nor the photo presented does the actual sign justice.

Becca Casey thought the WFC sign could easily have met the 2-3 color limitation and it didn't.

Walter Arsenault moved that the Board grant approval for the 6 sign panels that were installed without permits and that they remove the restrictions on the individual tenant panels, retaining the restriction that the background be opaque ivory, and the individual tenant sign panels are no more than 2 colors.

Becca Casey seconded.

Ethan Croce clarified that the authority to approve the tenant panels is already under the Community Development Director. The Board is not approving the tenant panels as shown tonight.

Motion carried 4-0.

6. Election of Planning Board Officers

Becca Casey nominated Bill Lunt as chair; Bernie Pender seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Kermit Stanley nominated Bernie Pender as vice-chair; Walter Arsenault seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Tryon
Recording Secretary