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Town Planner's Project Review
Wednesday, December 12, 2018

- XI. **56 Dover Road – Sign Master Plan.** Sign master plan for up to six commercial tenants. Six signs are proposed including one freestanding pylon-style directory sign. Land Options, LLC, property owner. Sundance Sign Company c/o Chris Mulcahy, designer. Map 11, Lot 8.
- I recommend discussion, holding a site walk, and setting a public hearing for January 9, 2019.

Please note the following:

- 1) **Public hearing.** Pursuant to Planning Board practice, a public hearing should be held on the plan.
- 2) **Site walk.** This site is located on Dover Road in front of the Riverwoods project. Riverwoods is using the old barn on the property as its marketing center. The lot includes the old barn and another building that houses multiple commercial tenants. Given the visibility of this location and the potential prominence of the sign package, I think a site walk would be helpful.
- 3) **Ordinance.** The Planning Board reviews a sign master plan for new development per the Sign Ordinance. The ordinance allows for the Code Enforcement Officer to review existing developments but where the sign program is involved, as this one is, it is best for the Planning Board to review it. Audrey Cline concurs and has deferred the review to the board.

L. Multi-Tenant Developments.

Owners of new multi-tenant developments shall submit a Signage Master Plan to the Planning Board for approval. Owners of existing multi-tenant developments shall submit a signage master plan to the Code Enforcement Officer for approval though he or she may refer the master plan to the Planning Board for review and approval at his or her discretion. The Planning Board may alter any of the standards for signage in Section 175-120 General Provisions and in Section 175-26 Types of Signs Permitted at its discretion for good cause provided it specifies in the approval which standards are being altered.

Free Standing or Ground Mounted Directory Sign – an entrance sign shall be allowed with a maximum of sixty (60) square feet of sign area, and a maximum height of twenty (20) feet. This signage will not count toward the individual businesses total allowable

signage. However, a maximum of one hundred (100) square feet may be allowed by conditional use.

- 4) Parameters. As part of the approval for a sign master plan the locations, sizes, types, lighting, etc. should be specified for each sign. But there needs to be flexibility built in so that signs may be changed in the future and new signs may be installed for new tenants such that the sign master plan need not be revised except when significant changes are sought.
- 5) Illumination. Illumination will need to be clarified. Generally, it is best for a small light to be placed at the top of the sign (when illuminated), designed and arranged so there is no glare. A top light is better than a bottom light to prevent sky glow.
- 6) Sign Guidelines. Here are the suggested sign guidelines from the Durham Site Plan Regulations. These are not mandatory because they apply to signage that is part of a site plan and because they are only encouraged. Nonetheless, they provide guidance for enhancing sign quality. As part of the Sign Master Plan the Planning Board may specify any appropriate requirements.

7.6.3 Suggested Sign Guidelines. In order to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the community, the following approaches and types of signs are encouraged:

- (a) Signage that is low in height and small in area;
 - (b) Signage which is non-illuminated
 - (c) Use of a dark background with light letters;
 - (d) Use of wood, metal, urethane, or other solid materials, rather than plastic;
 - (e) Use of a matte or non-reflective surface;
 - (f) Use of building-mounted signs rather than freestanding signs;
 - (g) For freestanding signs, use of two posts rather than one center pole; and
 - (h) Monument style signs (signage rising from a base connected to the ground) rather than pole signs
- 7) Comments on signs. Here are some preliminary comments on the 6 proposed signs.

General comments. Signs 3, 4, and 6 are understated. I recommend the board look carefully at signs 1, 2, and 5.

What is the finish on the signs? It should be matte rather than glossy. The applicant should bring a sample of the signs, at least for the panels for the freestanding sign. It is

recommended in (c) above to use a dark background. White signs can be too prominent especially on the freestanding sign. It is preferred to have a dark background. Flexibility in designing individual signs can be provided with a requirement that a certain percentage of the sign be medium or dark in color (not white, not yellow or other light colors). This can be implemented. Should this include additional signage for Riverwoods which is located in the former barn building, including on the main freestanding sign?

1. Main Freestanding Sign. The dimensions of the overall sign should be shown on the sign rendering. I infer that the overall height is 96 inches or 8 feet. How wide is it? The sign appears to be quite massive. What is the main sign constructed of? The black posts are quite heavy. They could be narrower. Are they square in plan? While a traditional sign is not required, the sign is very basic. Can the designer show the board some other possible designs? The header with “56 Dover Road” should be embellished in some manner. It would be helpful for the applicant to place a mockup with the actual overall dimensions on site for Planning Board members to see (on their own or with a site walk if desired).

2. West Wall. It would be better if the sign does not have a white background. It looks like a banner. Can there be a frame around it? It would be best to lower the sign so that it is no higher than the sills of the second floor windows. Does the size and proportions seem okay?

3. Entrance Sign. This sign is understated. It looks fine.

4. Directional Sign. This sign is understated. It looks fine.

5. Exterior Wall Tenant Directory. What is the appropriate size for these signs?

6. Projecting Sign. This sign is understated. It looks fine.