

City Council: Thanks - 30 Brattle St. Citizens' 10 Banner-Signs Denied 5/4/15; Next Stop BZA

Carol O'Hare <cbo1066@gmail.com>

Thu 5/7/2015 3:49 PM

City Clerk Agenda

To: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>;

Cc: Rossi, Rich <rrossi@cambridgema.gov>; Singanayagam, Ranjit <ranjits@cambridgema.gov>; Lopez, Donna <dlopez@cambridgema.gov>;

Importance: High

Dear Mayor Maher, Vice Mayor Benzan and City Councillors:

As you know, I and many others are pleased and relieved that you denied Citizens Bank/LeatherWorld/BobSlate's application for 10 projecting banner-signs. Those signs would have supplemented the tenants' 6 existing signs and possibly the 8 more signs (not under your jurisdiction) that require zoning variances – 24 total signs for one retail building with only 3 tenants! That's 3.6 times more signage than our Zoning Ordinance permits.

We hope that at their upcoming, zoning-variance hearing* for the 8 additional signs, the BZA heeds the Planning Board's recommendation, the Council's message, and the opposition of many residents. The tenants' proposed sign scheme is "chaotic and inconsistent," as the Planning Board said. It is not justified legally, practically or aesthetically. And, it would set a terrible precedent for Harvard Sq. and for retail areas throughout the City.

Thank you for sparing us and for sending your unanimous message to the BZA that enough is enough!

Note: Our Zoning Ordinance Article 7 clearly and specifically regulates and limits signs in various zoning districts. Some of the BZA's longtime members have publicly expressed their dislike for it and have used their authority to effectively amend it, variance by variance, sign by sign. Indeed, the BZA's Vice Chairman has said (during deliberations) at that our zoning restrictions should not apply "one-size-fits-all" and has voted accordingly!** I, therefore, encourage you to support Councillor Kelley's efforts to examine the record of variances issued by the BZA.

There may be good reasons to revisit Article 7, but that is for the Council to do, not the BZA.

Sincerely,

Carol O'Hare
172 Magazine St.

*The BZA hearing is now set for its 4th continuance on May 28! How many times should the public plan to attend a hearing and then learn at the last minute (if at all) that it's been continued?

**Compare this with the 9/16/14 "backgrounder" by Hugh Russell, Planning Board member and former longtime chairman, speaking during a Board sign-review: "The Sign Ordinance is actually an old part of the [Zoning] Ordinance. I think it was redone maybe in the 1980s. It's been around with relatively few changes for sort of a whole modern development era here in the city. And I think it was developed by the Planning Board and the Department with the idea that signs should serve the people who are on the streets trying to find the buildings, not people in airplanes. And that they should be scaled to the experience of, you know, pedestrian and the motorist who is going by at a certain speed."

5/11/2015

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Cc: Donna Lopez: Please file this with the Official Record.
Others as listed above