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Agenda Date: 1/5/2011
Agenda Placement: 9B

Napa County Planning Commission Board Agenda Letter

TO: Napa County Planning Commission
FROM: JESSICA JORDAN for Hillary Gitelman - Director
Conservation, Development & Planning
REPORT BY: Mary M Doyle, PLANNER - 299-1350
SUBJECT: The Press Sign Program Use Permit Major Modification P10-00331-MOD

RECOMMENDATION

PRESS RESTAURANT POLE SIGN / R & R LANDS USE PERMIT MAJOR MODIFICATION #P10-00331-MOD

CEQA Status: Categorically Exempt pursuant to Section 15304 of the California Environmental Quality Act (Class - 4 Minor alteration to the condition of land) and Appendix B, Class 4 of the Napa County Local Procedures for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act. This project is not on any lists of hazardous waste sites enumerated under Government Code Section 65962.5

Request: Approval of a use permit modification to a Comprehensive Sign Plan (#96639-S) for the Press Restaurant to permit a two sided, 35 square foot free standing pole sign with white background, black lettering, indirect illumination, and at an overall height of 16 feet. The sign will be located within an extension of an existing fire hydrant/parking island adjacent to the right of way for State Highway 29. The project site is located on the west side of State Route 29, approximately 470 ft. north of its intersection with Inglewood Avenue within a CN (Commercial Neighborhood) zoning district. Assessor's Parcel Number 027-150-001. 607 St. Helena Highway, St. Helena.

Staff recommendation: Find the project categorically exempt and approve an alternative ground mounted sign not to exceed 4 ft. in height or 32 square feet in area.

Staff contact: Mary Doyle, 299-1350 or mary.doyle@countyofnapa.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Proposed Action:

That the Planning Commission:

1. Find the project Categorical Exempt pursuant to Section 15304 of the California Environmental Quality Act (Class 4 - minor alteration to the conditions of land, and
2. Approve Major Modification #P10-00331 Sign based on findings 2-6 of Exhibit A and subject to the attached conditions of approval (Exhibit B)

Discussion: The proposal before the Commission is a request to amend Comprehensive Sign Plan #96639-S to include the proposed free-standing pole sign. It is the intent of the applicant to refurbish and reuse the original "The Spot" restaurant free standing pole sign, circa 1950's. The original sign was removed during the 1990's and was replaced with a rectangular sign in the same location. The rectangular sign was removed during the conversion of the building to the Press restaurant in 2002.

Currently, the County code prohibits tall, freeway style pole signs such as the one being proposed. However, as discussed in detail below, there are various factors impacting the analysis of the proposed sign that have lead to the conclusion that two alternatives are available to the Planning Commission.

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The project is Categorical Exempt pursuant to Section 15304 of the California Environmental Quality Act (Class 4 Minor alterations to the condition of land) and Appendix B, Class 4 of the Napa County's Local Procedures for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act. The proposed installation of a sign and modification to the parking island to accommodate the sign will result in minor alterations to the existing parking lot configuration. The project will not require extensive grading or major construction, no tree removal and no changes to the number of existing parking spaces will result. Therefore, a Class 4 exemption is appropriate.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Owner/applicant: R & R Lands/Guy Byrne (707-287-1026)

Representative: Heather McCollister (707-287-5999)

Zoning; Commercial Neighborhood (CN)

General Plan designation: Agriculture, Watershed, Open Space (AWOS)

Filed: September 17, 2010 **Completed:** December 8, 2010

Proposed Size: 35 square feet and 16 feet in height

Adjacent Zoning/Land Use/Acreage:

North: AP - 32 acre parcel containing vineyards and a winery

South: CL - 0.91 acre parcel containing a commercial activity

East: St Helena Highway (SR 29). AP - 1 acre and 3 acre parcel containing vineyards and a winery.

West: AP - 32 acre parcel containing vineyards

Property History: The property has been in commercial activity since the 1950s.

Code Compliance History: At this writing, the property is in compliance.

Discussion:

The applicant proposes to refurbish the original "The Spot" restaurant sign, a 1950's era style pole sign, and install it along the subject property's frontage near State Route 29. The applicant proposes to revise the sign's color palette to black, white, and gray, similar to the current Press restaurant wall sign. The proposed Press restaurant logo and lettering on the pole sign would also be reflective of the existing Press restaurant wall sign. As proposed, the sign has two sign faces, 35 square feet in area and 16 feet in height. Staff has concerns about the the sign request as proposed, described in detail below.

Code Provisions

In 2008, Chapter 18.116 of the Zoning Ordinance was updated, modifying the way signs are regulated within the County. Prior to this revision, the Code allowed ground signs of 32 square feet in area and 4 feet in height in all commercial zoning districts. The 2008 revision inadvertently omitted this provision however, Section 18.116.035 was retained, enabling the continued use of a comprehensive sign plan. The comprehensive sign plan allows the Planning Commission (and in some cases the Zoning Administrator) to approve alternative signage for commercial complexes and other uses. This signage can deviate from standard signage so long as the overall intent and practical effect of the sign ordinance is maintained. Specifically, the Code requires findings of compatible design elements such as materials, colors, and lettering style, architectural style of the buildings on the premises, size and sign area compatibility, and that the exceptions to the standards contribute to improved relationships between various signs and other elements of the area. Staff is concerned that these findings for the applicant's proposed sign may be difficult for the Commission to make given the difference in the surrounding environment from when the sign was originally designed. To the extent possible, the applicant has revised the sign to compliment the building in color, font type, and logo design. However, the overall design of the sign remains in question.

Project Consistency

The proposed sign is 35 square feet in area and 16 feet in height. Through the comprehensive sign plan process, the Commission may approve this request if the findings outlined above can be made. The applicant is requesting approval of this particular sign because the design and location of the sign is almost identical to the "The Spot" sign, which stood in this location from the 1950's through 2002. The sign was removed as part of the conversion of the building to the current tenant, Press restaurant. Staff supports allowing a ground sign for the use but, recommends that any ground sign be no greater than 32 square feet in area and 4 feet in height, consistent with the ground sign allowance throughout the rest of the County.

Site Constraints

The applicant has proposed to locate the pole sign within an existing parking lot island, which is currently occupied by a fire hydrant. In order to meet the required 3 foot radius from the fire hydrant and protection bollards, the applicant must extend the parking island towards the building by approximately 7 feet. The Fire Marshall has reviewed the proposal and indicated support so long as the 3 foot radius from the hydrant and bollards is maintained. In addition to Fire Department requirements, the road and streets standards require a minimum 20 foot clear vehicle travel path between the end of the hydrant curb and edge of curbs and/or parking spaces on the

opposite side of the parking lot. As dimensioned on the project exhibits, a 3 foot radius clearance and a 20 foot clear drive aisle are maintained with the proposed project. Additionally, the location may be within California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) right-of-way for State Highway 29 and may be required to comply with the Advertising Act of 2005 for eligible state scenic highways. The applicant will be required to provide the County with a copy of the issued CalTrans permit prior to installation of the sign to ensure CalTrans standards are satisfied. Although staff has concerns about pole signs, the Commission should note that placement of ground signs near driveways need a substantial setback to avoid adverse impacts to site vision at intersections. This is generally not an issue in Napa County as most project sites are larger and more rural in character, leaving abundant room to place signage on entry features that are setback from the roadway. In this instance, the site is a small 1.4 acre parcel, much more urban in character, and is almost entirely committed to either building or parking lot. This means that areas for placing a ground sign are constrained.

In conclusion, based on this information, there are two options available to the Planning Commission. If the Commission finds the applicant's proposal acceptable, it is recommended that the Commission find the proposal involves replacement of a sign that has historically existed in the location prior to the County enacting sign regulations that prohibited tall, freeway style pole signs. Such a finding will discourage others from citing such an approval as a precedent for any subsequent, similar proposals. Alternatively, if the Commission agrees with staff's recommendation, it is requested that the sign program be approved with conditions of approval enabling only the installation of a ground sign with a sign area of 32 square feet and height of 4 feet. Staff will support the applicant's analysis of the site to determine an adequate location for the ground sign.

Consistency with Standards:

1. Zoning: The project is consistent with the CN zoning district, which allows for a restaurant with a use permit approval.
2. Building/Fire: As proposed and conditioned, this project complies with the building and FIRE codes.
3. Public Works and Environmental Management: As proposed, there are no activities under Public Works or Environmental Management discretion.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- A . Findings
- B . Conditions of Approval
- C . Application Material
- D . Review Agency Comments
- E . Graphics

Napa County Planning Commission: Approve

Reviewed By: John McDowell