

Docket Item #3
BAR CASE #2003-0201

BAR Meeting
February 16, 2005

ISSUE: After-the-fact approval of signage

APPLICANT: Shanna Ruhl

LOCATION: 6 King Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial

BOARD ACTION, SEPTEMBER 3, 2003: This docket item was removed from the Proposed Consent Calendar by Ms. Crenshaw. On a motion by Dr. Fitzgerald, seconded by Mr. Wheeler the Board approved the application as submitted. The vote on the motion was 5-0.

REASON: Ms. Crenshaw said that the signs for Starbucks diminish the historic value of the building and asked the Board to ask Starbucks to reconsider their signage package for this location. The Board agreed with the Staff analysis.

SPEAKER: Julie Crenshaw, 816 Queen Street, spoke in opposition

Background

In early 2003 the Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review approved a sign package for the new Starbucks restaurant at 6 King Street (BAR Case #2003-0011, 2/5/03). The approval was later modified by BAR approval on September 3, 2003. That approval was appealed to City Council and the appellants stated that the signs are not appropriate in design for this historic building. The appeal was heard by City Council on November 15, 2003. The Council remanded the signs back to the Board to consider the appropriateness of all of the signs on the building. The Council decision was appealed to Circuit Court which found that Council did not have the authority to open the entire Starbucks' sign package up for review, but was limited to the action taken by the Board concerning the hanging sign alone on September 3, 2003. Thus, the only issue to be decided by the Board is the angle of the hanging sign.

Original Application

Starbucks' original request was for three signs: two hanging signs, one for Union Street and one for King Street, plus one wall sign to be installed on the South Union Street frontage. Staff believed that the amount of signage proposed was excessive. The recommendations of the *Design Guidelines* state that, "Generally only one sign per business is appropriate." On corner buildings, the Board has often approved two signs, one on each frontage of the building. Consistent with the guidelines' general direction and with the Board's practice on corner buildings, staff recommended that the hanging sign on South Union Street be eliminated. Staff also had concerns about the amount of illumination proposed and recommended an overall reduction in lighting.

Board's First Decision

The Board agreed with staff, and required the elimination of the Union Street hanging sign, and reduced the amount of illumination for the remaining two signs. As to the King Street hanging sign, the approval required that the sign be hung at a 45 degree angle, as proposed by the applicant, in order that it be visible from both King and South Union Street. When the hanging sign was installed it was inadvertently installed at a right angle to the building along King Street.

Board's Second Decision

Starbucks decided that it preferred this perpendicular sign rather than the one that had been approved by the Board at an angle to the building. Starbucks, through its agent, returned to the Board seeking approval of the sign as installed. The application for a revision to the Board's previous decision was heard and approved.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting after-the-fact approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the hanging sign for Starbucks as installed along the King Street side of the building. The sign is a

36" oval of “faux wood” with a green background and white lettering and is illuminated by two gooseneck light fixtures.

II. HISTORY:

According to Ethelyn Cox in Alexandria Street by Street, the original warehouse building at this location was constructed ca. 1787 and was owned by Col. John Fitzgerald, an important Revolutionary War figure. The rear addition dates from the early 1960s and was approved by the Board on October 12, 1960. In 2002, the Board approved extensive alterations to the 1960 addition (BAR Case #2002-0240, 10/2/02).

III. ANALYSIS:

The signs for Starbucks were originally approved by the Board in 2002 (BAR Case #2002-0011, 2/5/03). At that time the Board’s motion was:

- The 11' wall sign on South Union Street is approved with three (3) gooseneck lights that are no more than 60 watts each;
- One (1) hanging sign on the bracket drawn to be installed at a 45 degree angle at the northwest corner of the building is approved with two (2) gooseneck lights that are no more than 60 watts each;
- The signs are approved with green backgrounds and white lettering;
- There are to be no window signs (they may be the subject of a separate application);
- The light fixtures are to be as smaller than those proposed in the drawings submitted

When installed, the sign on King Street was not installed at a 45 degree angle as approved by the Board, but rather perpendicular to the building. The applicant would like the sign to remain as erroneously installed because they believe that it provides more visibility for the restaurant location from the lower blocks of King Street than if it were installed as approved. Staff has no objection to the approval of the sign as it is installed. It meets the recommendations for signs in the *Design Guidelines* and is, in fact, more visible to a pedestrian on King Street than a sign installed at a 45 degree angle.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.