

Docket Item #19  
BAR CASE# 2005-0069

BAR Meeting  
April 20, 2005

**ISSUE:** Signs

**APPLICANT:** PNC Bank, by Charles Erwin

**LOCATION:** 325 South Washington Street

**ZONE:** CD Commercial

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### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the awnings with the condition that they be covered in a canvas type fabric; and, denial of the internally illuminated and individual letter signs.

### **I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of signs for the new tenant, "PNC Bank," at 325 South Washington Street.

#### **Awnings**

Replacement awnings are proposed for both the South Washington Street (2) as well as the Wolfe Street (1) elevations of the building. The awnings will be dark blue fabric with the orange and white logo and the name of the bank, PNC Bank, in 8" high white and light blue letters. The lettering will be located on the 1' high valance.

#### **Wall signs**

Individual aluminum letters are proposed to be located above the bank entrance on South Washington Street. The 1/4" thick sign measures 4'4" in length by 6" in height. The lettering is dark and light blue with the orange and white colored logo.

A 5'6" by 1'7" aluminum wall sign is proposed to be located on the eastern corner of the Wolfe Street elevation. The internally illuminated sign will project 8" from the building. The face of the sign will have a dark blue background while the top, bottom and sides will be orange. The sign will again include the light blue, white and orange colored bank name and logo.

Staff notes that the applicant has proposed a freestanding sign at the entrance to the parking lot. The zoning ordinance states no freestanding signs are permitted within 200 feet of Washington Street. This sign does not comply with the zoning ordinance and therefore is not before the Board.

### **II. HISTORY:**

325 South Washington Street was constructed in 1953 as the Nancye Fleming Dress Shop and was designed by Joseph Saunders. In 1971, the Board approved a sign for Nancye Fleming (4/21/71). At the public hearing of October 6, 1999, the Board approved demolition of portions of the buildings as well as alterations for conversion of the building to Wachovia Bank (BAR Case #99-0175). Also in 1999, the Board approved signs for Wachovia (BAR 99-0197, 11/17/99). In 2004, the Board approved signs for Riggs Bank which were never installed (BAR Case #2003-0306, 1/7/04).

### **III. ANALYSIS:**

The subject building has a width of 44 feet facing South Washington Street and 55 feet facing Wolfe Street. The proposed signs comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

The Boards are particularly concerned with the maintenance of the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway which passes through Alexandria as Washington Street. Therefore, requests for certificates of appropriateness for signs on Washington Street must be

compatible with the memorial nature of the Parkway.

No information has been provided in regards to the fabric material for the awnings. The *Design Guidelines* recommend that awnings use a canvas type of fabric (Awnings - Page 3). Staff believes that a canvas type material should be used for this building which is located on the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

The *Design Guidelines* recommend generally only one sign per business is appropriate (Signs - Page 3). However, the Board has routinely approved multiple signs for corner buildings. The Board previously approved three awning signs and a small identification plaque adjacent to the entrance of 325 South Washington Street. The applicant is currently proposing three awnings signs, one individual letter sign, and one internally illuminated sign on the building.

Staff does not support five signs for this building. Staff believes that only two signs are appropriate on the South Washington Street elevation and one sign on the Wolfe Street elevation. The internally illuminated sign on the Wolfe Street elevation is proposed to be located adjacent to the awning sign. In cases where the Board does approve more than one sign for a business, there is generally sufficient space between the signs to warrant approval.

In addition to being located adjacent to the proposed awning sign, the internally illuminated sign is a discouraged type of sign within the historic district. The *Design Guidelines* strongly discourage internally illuminated signs (Signs - Page 5). Staff does not support the internally illuminated sign which will be visible from the Parkway.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the awnings with the condition that they be covered in a canvas type fabric; and, denial of the internally illuminated and individual letter signs.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F- finding

Code Enforcement:

C-1 A construction permit is required for this project.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

“This seems like a great many sign uses”