

Docket Item # 9  
BAR CASE # 2006-0302

BAR Meeting  
February 7, 2007

**ISSUE:** Signage and alterations  
**APPLICANT:** Kent Scholla & Timothy Ito  
**LOCATION:** 631 King Street  
**ZONE:** KR/King Street retail

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the signage and menu cases as submitted and deferral of the lighting for restudy.

(Insert sketch here)

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness for the installation of signs, lighting and menu cases at 631 King Street, located at the northeast corner of King and Washington streets. The applicant is proposing to paint the trim and the frieze band of the wooden cornice above the first story a dark green. The signage will be located on the frieze band, on either side of the corner entrance, with one sign facing King Street and one facing Washington Street. The signs will be composed of individual letters of either wood or metal. The font for the lettering is non-serif, Clearview One Gemini 1 Light in all small letters. The signs will read “bumblefish sushi & more.” The lettering for bumble will be white, light green for fish, and light orange for sushi & more. The dot above the letter “i” in fish will be light orange. The signage on the longer Washington Street side will be 12” high by 14’ long while that on King Street will be 10” high by 9.5’ long.

The applicant proposes to light the signs with three small-profile spotlights per side. The lights will be spaced 2’ apart from each other. They will project 3’ from the face of the building and shine down on the signage. The finish color of the metal fixtures is not specified, but is assumed to be white. According to the written materials, the fixtures will be installed directly into the wooden cornice or, if in the brickwork, installed directly into the mortar rather than the brickwork. The drawings show them mounted on the brick wall above the cornice. There will be no visible wiring.

The applicant is also proposing two wood and glass menu boxes. The drawings show them as 22” wide by 34” long. The written materials state that they will be 4” deep and no longer than 36”. One case will be located to the right of the secondary door on the Washington Street side. The other case will be located to the right of the main door on the King Street side.

**II. HISTORY:**

According to Ethelyn Cox's Street by Street the imposing, three and one-half story brick building at 631 King Street was built just after 1799 by Amos Alexander, mayor of Alexandria from 1800-1801 (p.68). It has a distinctive gambrel roof line with a denticulated cornice and flat stone window heads with pronounced keystones.

A series of restaurants have occupied this space at since 1991 when GRIND N’ BREW coffee house opened. The Board approved two signs on the frieze band for GRIND N’ BREW (BAR Case #91-252, 11/20/1991). Café Mezzogiorno occupied the space from approximately 1997 through 2004 and was followed by Fresco.

**III. ANALYSIS:**

The proposed signage, menu boxes and lighting comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

The three story brick building at 631 King Street is among Alexandria’s oldest and most prominently located buildings. Special consideration should be given to any alteration here. Having said that, Staff believes the current proposal is generally acceptable. Although the building dates to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Staff does not object to the very modern feeling of the signage. The modest size and clean lines of signage help to ensure that it does not compete with the building for attention. The use of the existing frieze band for the backboard of the signs

helps to keep the design simple. The dark green color proposed for the frieze band and trim is an appropriate color for the federal period building. While the *Design Guidelines* call for “generally, only one sign per business,” an exception typically is made for businesses located in corner buildings. Staff believes the two signs proposed here are appropriate.

Staff does, however, have reservations about the proposed lighting, fearing that the 3’ long projecting lights overhanging the cornice will have an awkward appearance. The Board did approve similar lights above the signage at 628 King Street for the Banana Republic (BAR Case #2004-0133, 7/21/2004). However, Staff notes that those lights do not extend as far, do not interrupt any architectural features and are located on a significantly more modern (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century) building. Staff recommends that the applicant restudy the lighting proposal. Instead lights projecting over the cornice, the applicant might want to consider incorporating small, flush downlights into the cornice itself.

Staff has no objection to the menu cases.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the signage and menu cases as submitted and deferral of the lighting for restudy.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

C-1 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

C-2 Additions and alterations to the existing structure and/or installation and/or altering of equipment therein requires a building permit (USBC 108.1). Five sets of plans, bearing the signature and seal of a design professional registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must accompany the written application (USBC 109.1).

C-3 Wall letters / signs must comply with USBC [H103-H111].

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.