

Docket Item # 14
BAR CASE # 2009-0185

BAR Meeting
September 16, 2009

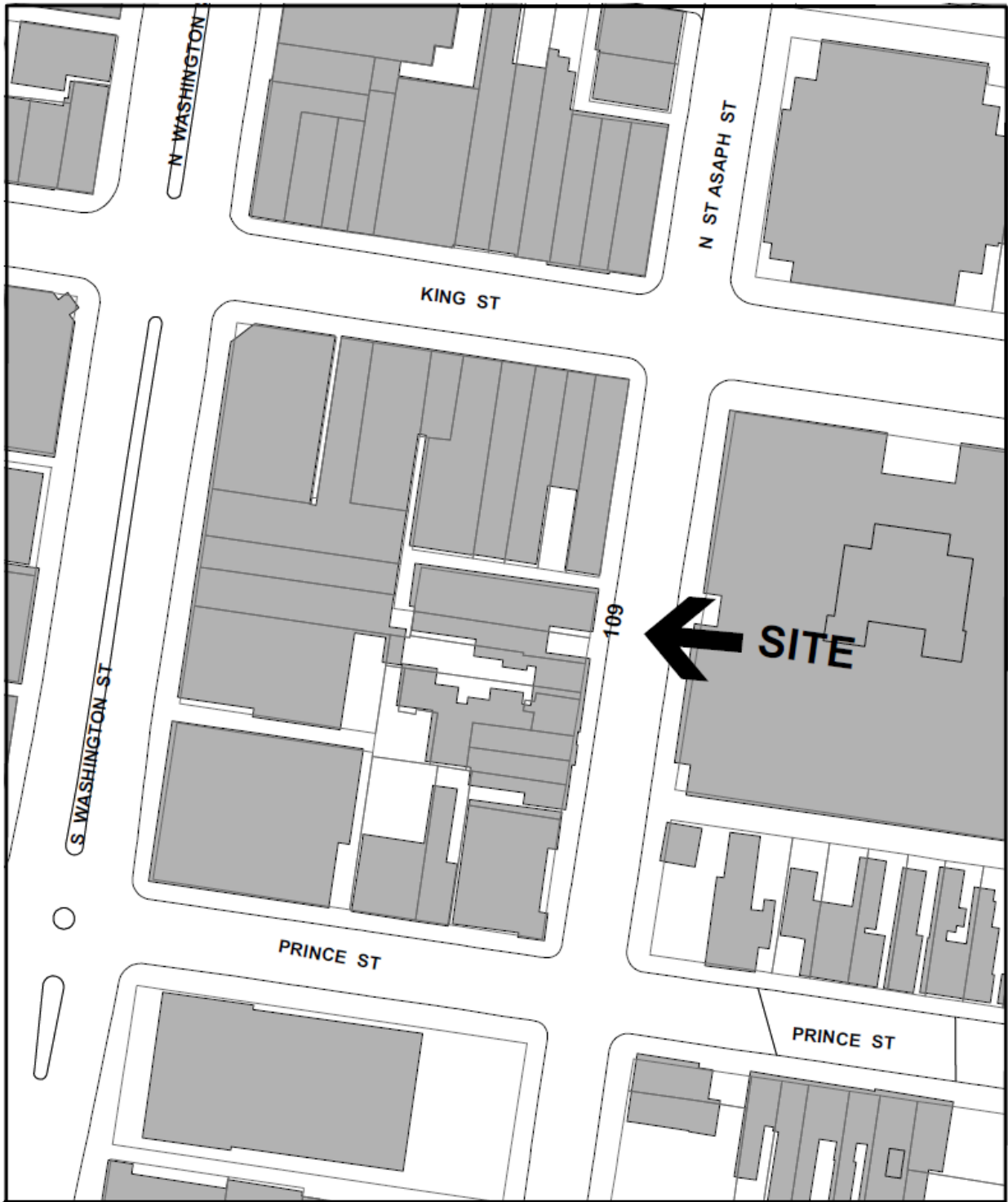
ISSUE: Signage
APPLICANT: Columbia Firehouse Restaurant
LOCATION: 109 South Saint Asaph Street
ZONE: CD/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the menu boxes be sized such that they can be installed without obscuring the historic brick quoining around the restaurant's window and door;
2. That the menu boxes be painted black to match the building's trim;
3. That the menu boxes not be illuminated;
4. That the design and location of the menu boxes be subject to Staff approval;
5. That the text considered "special advertising" on the restaurant's front window be deleted; and,
6. That only the restaurant's logo be permitted on the front window.

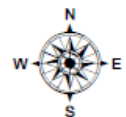
***EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period. In the case for a certificate or permit for a project that requires a development special use permit or site plan under section 11-400 of the zoning ordinance, the period of validity shall be coincident with the validity of the development special use permit or site plan as determined pursuant to section 11-418 of the ordinance.

****BUILDING PERMIT NOTE:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Building and Fire Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.



BAR CASE #2009-0185

9/16/2009



I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a new awning with signage, a window sign, as well as two menu boxes, for the COLUMBIA FIREHOUSE restaurant at 109 South Saint Asaph Street.

The applicant proposes to replace the black fabric on the existing awning frame with a new black Sunbrella awning with signage. Both sides of the awning will contain the name of the restaurant, Columbia Firehouse. The white signs will measure 10 feet by 7.5 inches (for a total of roughly 12.6 square feet for both signs). At the end of the awning facing South Saint Asaph Street there will be the restaurant's decorative logo, which measures 2 feet in diameter. The logo consists of a large "C" in the middle surrounded by the words Restaurant & Barroom and Columbia Firehouse on the outermost ring. The logo is primarily white with a thin burgundy outline.

The same logo will also be installed as a frosted image on the front window of the restaurant. This logo will also measure 2 feet in diameter. On the lower third of the window the applicant proposes to add a list of some of the items sold in the restaurant, as well as words Lunch, Dinner, Weekend Brunch.

The applicant intends to install menu boxes on either side of the entrance to the restaurant, one containing the menu for the fine dining restaurant on the upper floor and the other containing the menu for the first floor barroom. The applicant has indicated that the menu boxes will be constructed of either brass or wood. The menu boxes will measure 2 feet by 2 feet 6 inches and the menus will be illuminated from within the box.

II. HISTORY:

The brick building with an attached glass atrium at 109 South St. Asaph Street is a two story brick structure originally built as a city firehouse in 1885 for the Columbia Steam Engine Fire Company. Since the early 1980s the property has been adaptively reused as a restaurant. The Board first approved the restoration of the building in 1978, and approved the Portner's restaurant signage on July 7, 1982. On October 3, 2007, the BAR deferred for restudy a new awning with signage for Bookbinders restaurant (BAR Case #2007-0193).

Staff approved a temporary grand opening sign for Columbia Firehouse on July 16, 2009.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed sign complies with zoning ordinance requirements. The existing building width on South Saint Asaph Street measures approximately 39 linear feet. The applicant proposes approximately 20.6 square feet of signage, including the menu boxes.

In general, Staff supports the proposed signage for the Columbia Firehouse restaurant. When the previous restaurant at this location, Bookbinders, requested approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for awning signage Staff argued that the projecting awning should be removed because it obscured the architectural detailing around the entrance to the building, which is contrary to the recommendations contained in the *Design Guidelines*. The Board recognized Staff's concern but expressed that the Board could likely support the size of the awning since it was an existing feature that had been in place for many years. However, the Board found the size of the sign's text should be smaller. While the same argument could be made once again,

Staff understands the desire of the tenant to clearly identify the new business. The proposed new signage on the sides of the awning, while similar in length, uses a less bulky and more delicate font, and the individual letters are smaller in height (seven and a half inches versus nine inches for the Bookbinders sign). There is BAR precedent for approving the size of the awning with signage, since the proposal is similar to the previously approved awning with signage for Portner's. The encroachment ordinance for the awning to project into the public right-of-way was approved by City Council in 1981.

The *Design Guidelines* and the Board generally recognize that many restaurants desire menu boxes and in most cases recommend their approval, provided that they are designed such that they do not deteriorate over time. The applicant has not provided drawings of the exact menu box that is proposed, although the size of the menu box has been identified (2 feet by 2 feet 6 inches). Staff measured the proposed location for the menu boxes and believes that given their size they would have to be installed over the historic brick quoining around the building's window and door. As an alternative, Staff proposes that the applicant consider smaller or even custom made menu boxes (not unlike the wood menu boxes at 100 King Street) that could both be installed vertically to the south of the main door, between the brick quoining, and area which measures approximately 19 inches wide. Staff also recommends that the menu boxes be painted black to match the existing trim on the building and that they not be internally illuminated.

Staff supports the installation of the restaurant's logo on the restaurant's main window; however, the lengthy list of menu items and the Lunch-Dinner-Sunday Brunch text on the lower portion of the window cannot be installed because it is considered "special advertising" and is not permitted under the zoning ordinance. An alternative suggested by the applicant – the history of the historic firehouse written on the bottom third of the window – is also not appropriate. Staff recommends that only the restaurant's frosted logo be permitted on the front window.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the menu boxes be sized such that they can be installed without obscuring the historic brick quoining around the restaurant's window and door;
2. That the menu boxes be painted black to match the building's trim;
3. That the menu boxes not be illuminated;
4. That the design and location of the menu boxes be subject to Staff approval;
5. That the text considered "special advertising" on the restaurant's front window be deleted; and,
6. That only the restaurant's logo be permitted on the front window.

STAFF:

Stephanie Sample, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Lee Webb, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning
Stephen Milone, Division Chief, Zoning and Land Use Services

V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:

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

Code Administration:

F-1 The applicant shall obtain a sign permit for the proposed sign and/ or wall lettering.

C-1 Wall letters / signs must comply with USBC [H103-H111] Please indicate the method to be used for anchoring the letters to the wall.

C-2 Projecting, hanging signs must comply with USBC [H103-H107, H112] for type of materials, maximum projection, vertical clearance below all parts of the sign, and additional loads.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.

VI. IMAGES:



Figure 1. Google map image showing previous signage.



Figure 2: Front façade of 109 South St. Asaph Street.

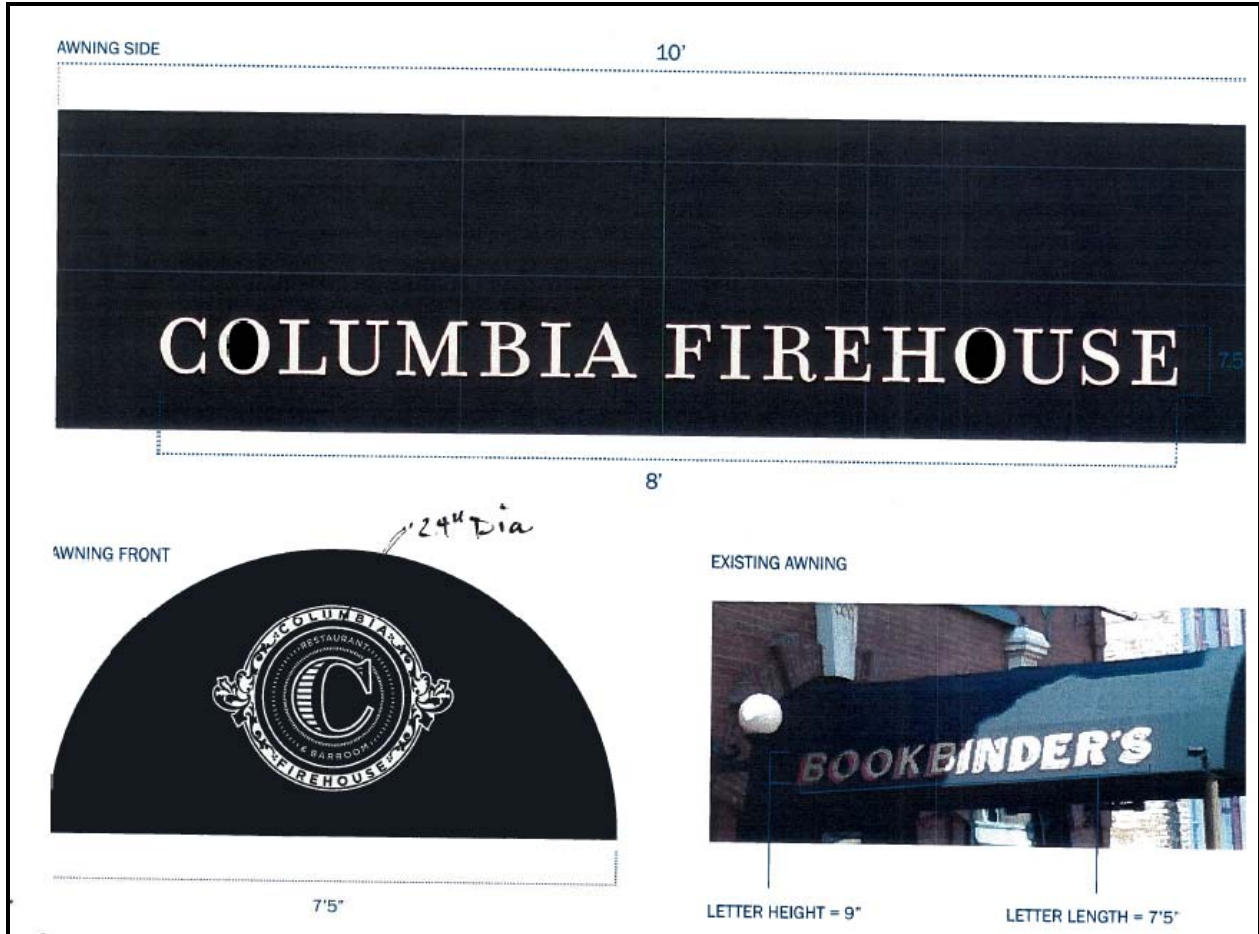


Figure 3: Sign details.



Figure 4: Proposed menu box.