

Docket Item # 7
BAR CASE # 2009-0185

BAR Meeting
October 7, 2009

ISSUE: Signage & Awning
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 reduced in size such that they can be mounted between the historic brick quoining on the building corner and the south side of the restaurant's entrance; and,
2. That the final design and location of the menu boxes be subject to Staff approval.

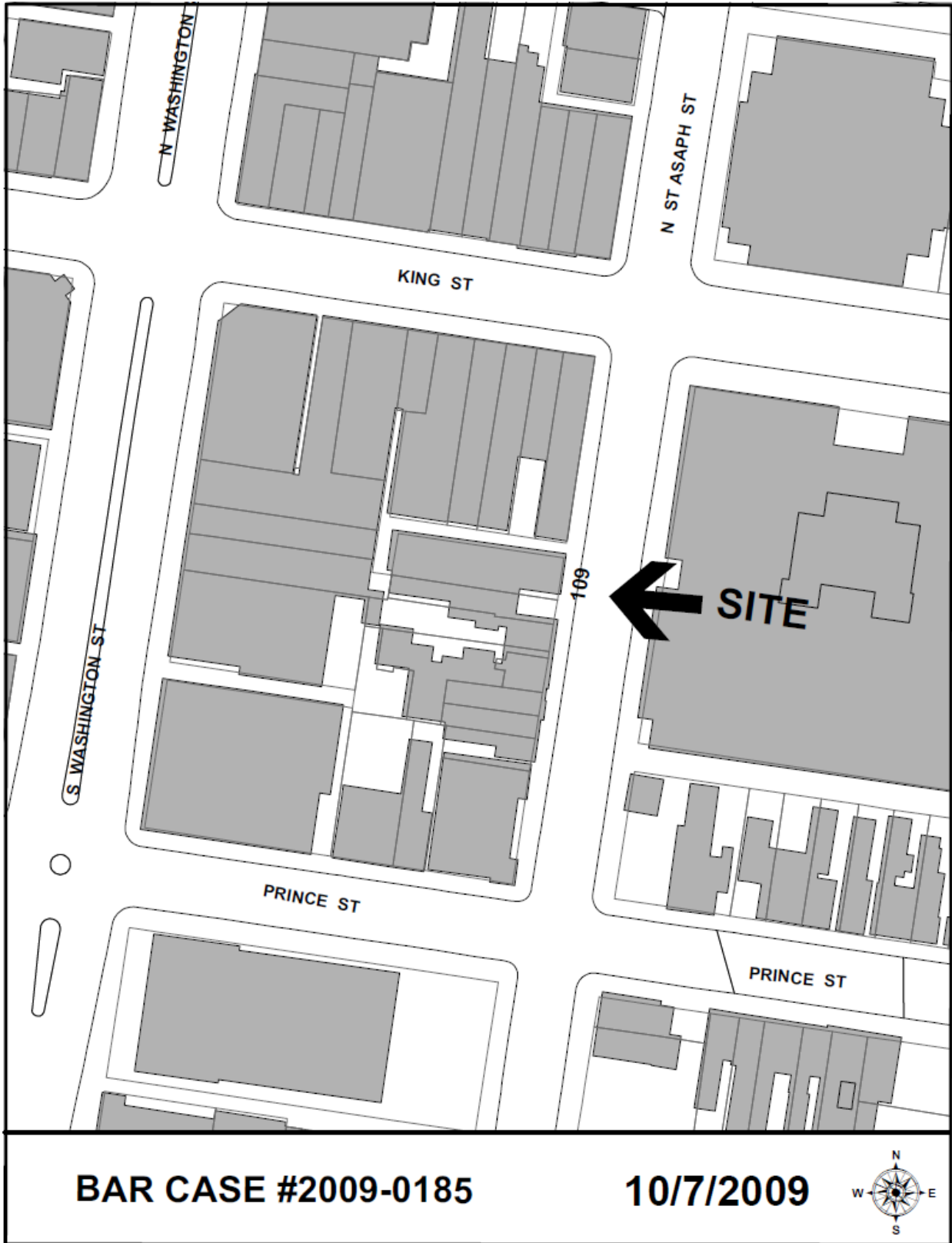
STAFF RECOMMENDATION, SEPTEMBER 16, 2009: Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

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.

The case was deferred from the September 16, 2009 hearing due to improper notice.

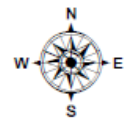
***EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 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.



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10/7/2009



UPDATE:

Since the item was deferred from the September 16, 2009 BAR hearing the applicant has revised the proposal and submitted additional information. The proposed signage on the bottom of the window was removed, leaving only the restaurant logo on the window, as had been previously recommended by Staff. In addition, the applicant provided photo simulations showing the proposed menu boxes proposed for either side of the restaurant's entrance.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for an 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 will be 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 be 2 feet in diameter.

The applicant proposes 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 black menu box will be constructed of wood and will measure 20 inches by 32 inches (8.92 square feet for both boxes). The menus will not be illuminated.

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 16.6 square feet of signage, not including the menu boxes.

In general, Staff supports the proposed signage for the Columbia Firehouse restaurant. When Bookbinders, the previous restaurant at this location, requested approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for awning with 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 that the size of the sign's text should be smaller and deferred the application for restudy (the applicant never returned to the BAR with revisions and subsequently went out of business). 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, utilizes 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 fit and do not overwhelm the architectural character and detail of the building and that they will not deteriorate over time. In this case, Staff does not believe that the proposed menu boxes should be mounted on top of the historic brick quoining around the building's window and door. As an alternative, Staff proposes that the applicant consider smaller or even custom constructed menu boxes that could both be installed vertically between the brick quoins located to the south of the entrance, an area measuring approximately 16 inches wide. Staff does not support the installation of a menu box in the area between the entrance and the front window as this area is too narrow to support the installation of a menu box.

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

1. That the menu boxes be reduced in size such that they can be mounted between the historic brick quoining on the building corner and the south side of the restaurant's entrance; and,
2. That the final design and location of the menu boxes be subject to Staff approval.

STAFF:

Stephanie Sample, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Lee Webb, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning
Stephen Milone, Division Chief, 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.

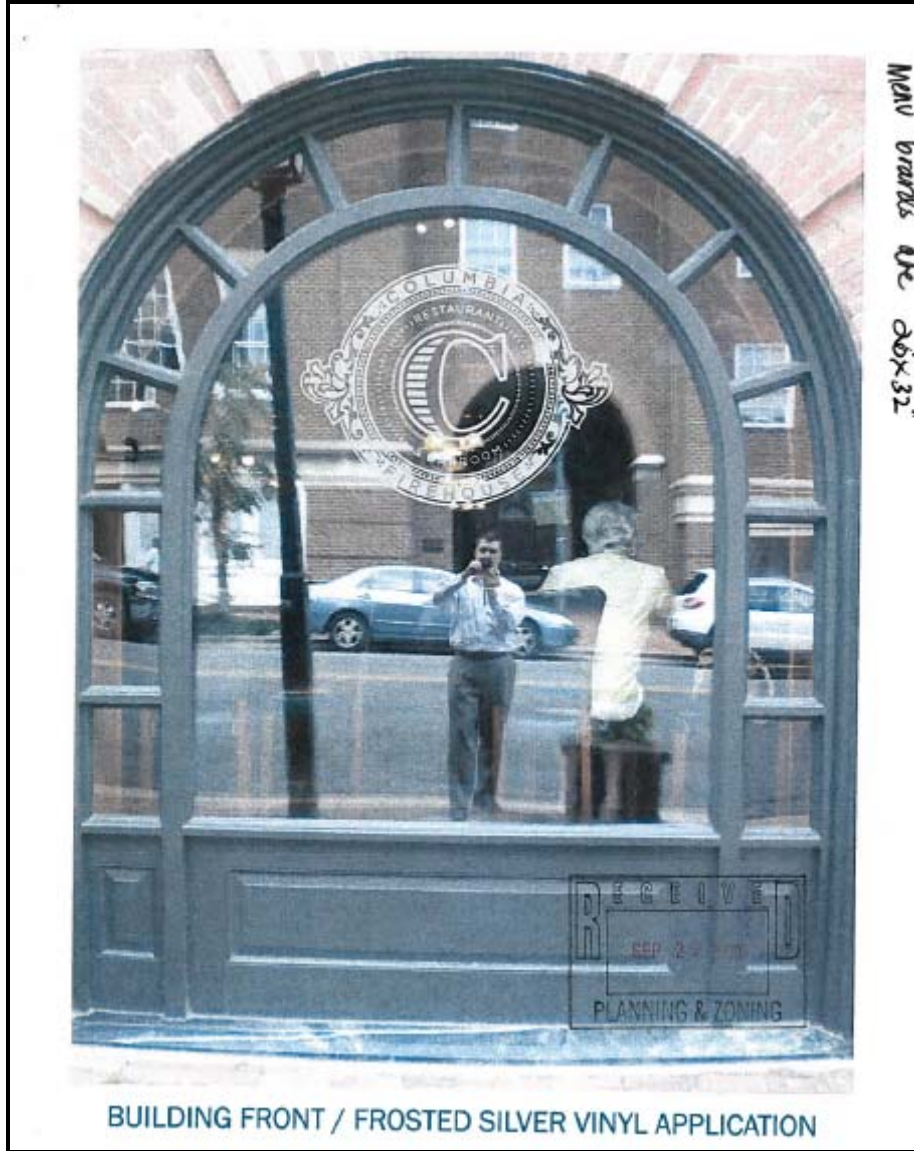


Figure 2: Proposed front window sign.

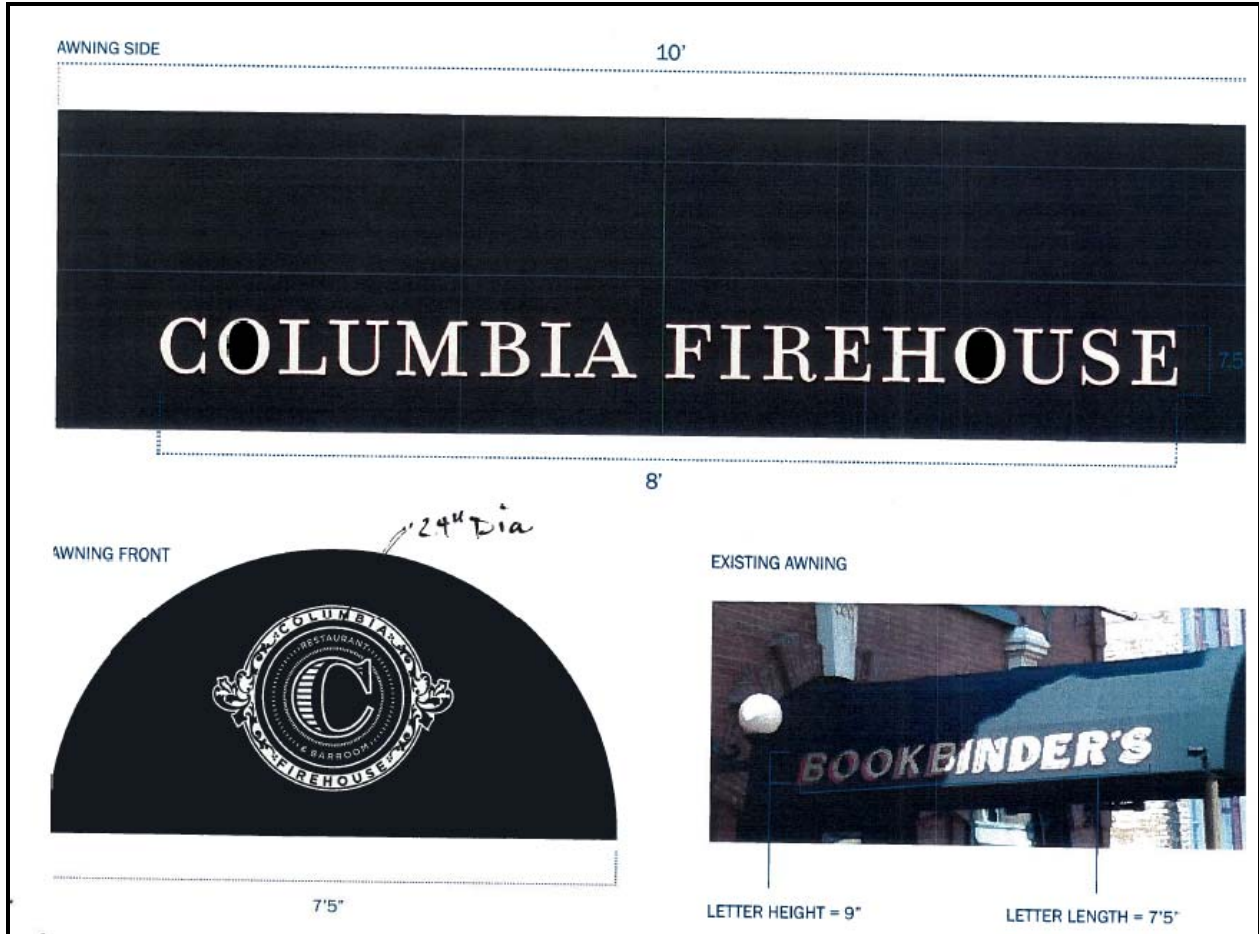


Figure 3: Awning details.



Figure 4: Photo showing simulation of menu box proposed to be located on the middle of the façade, between the restaurant door and the front window.



Figure 5: Photo simulation showing proposed menu box south of the restaurant door.