

Docket Item # 4  
BAR CASE #2010-0293

BAR Meeting  
April 6, 2011

**ISSUE:** Signage  
**APPLICANT:** Capital One Bank  
**LOCATION:** 500 South Washington Street  
**ZONE:** CD/Commercial

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

1. That only two “Customer Parking” signs be installed, one at each of the bank’s vehicular entrances (Washington Street and Wilkes Street);
2. That the “Customer Parking” signs be installed on bank property and not in the public right-of-way;
3. That the amount of illumination on the “ATM/teller open/closed signs” be reduced so that they are more subtle and less visible from the Washington Street, as approved by Staff in the field; and,
4. That the existing and unapproved Capital One Bank signs are replaced with the approved bank signs within 60 days.

**BOARD ACTION JANURARY 16, 2011:** Deferred for restudy, 7-0.

**SPEAKERS:** Mr. Gary Brent, American Sign Mfg., represented the applicant.

**BOARD DISCUSSION:**

Mr. Fitzgerald asked why the existing signs were installed without BAR approval.

Mr. Brent responded that his company did not fabricate or install the existing signs. However, he understood that the signs had already been made, so the bank installed them pending Board review of appropriate signs.

Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to defer the application until a representative of the bank was present.

Mr. Smeallie seconded the motion. He then stated that the entire approach to these signs is wrong and that the signs approved for the previous bank were excessive. He said they looked like Las Vegas billboards, drew entirely too much attention, and were not compliant with the memorial character of the GW Parkway which the Board is charged with maintaining. For instance, he did not believe that the box signs above the ATMs needed to be internally

illuminated, though he acknowledged that there needed to be sufficient ambient illumination for customer safety, and did not need a logo.

Mr. von Senden appreciated that the present proposal removed the existing bank logos on the directional signs but that the signs themselves should now be reduced in size. He agreed that the ATM signs were all too bright.

Mr. Carlin stated that there were simply too many signs. He pointed out that this was a freestanding building with its own limited access parking lot which did not require customer parking only signs at each space or bank logos throughout the site. He suggested that a consolidated sign at each parking entrance would be sufficient. He agreed with the other Board members that the application needed to reduce both the size and number of signs.

The application was deferred for restudy, 7-0.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION JANURARY 16, 2011:** Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the existing ATM/Teller LED/neon “open” signs are removed; and,
2. That the existing and unapproved Capital One Bank signs are replaced with the approved bank signs within 60 days.

**\*\*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 final approval if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.

**\*\*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, 703-746-4200 for further information.



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**UPDATE:** At the January 16, 2011 hearing, the Board felt that the quantity and illumination of the proposed bank signs was excessive and in conflict with the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The Board also expressed concern that the existing Capital One Bank signs were installed without approval. Subsequent to the hearing, the bank received a zoning violation ticket for the installation of the signs.

## **I. ISSUE**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of multiple signs for Capital One Bank, at 500 South Washington Street. Capital One Bank acquired the previous bank tenant, Chevy Chase Bank, in 2009.

The following proposed signs will replace the existing Capital One Bank signs installed without BAR approval. It should be noted that the materials provided by the applicant show the previous bank's signs, and not existing conditions.

- The Washington Street and Wilkes Street entrances will have reverse channel white letters (halo lit) with the bank logo. The Washington Street sign will measure 14" by 13' 10 3/4" (approximately 16.2 square feet). The Wilkes Street sign will measure 9" by 8'11" (approximately 6.6 square feet).
- The "TELLER EXPRESS" sign adjacent to the westernmost ATM drive-thru will be resurfaced with a solid blue insert.
- The ATM header signs on the two drive-thru ATMs will be refaced with Capital One Bank logo, which will not be illuminated. The ATM machine itself will be illuminated for security purposes.
- The header sign on the walk up ATM on the Wilkes Street elevation of the bank will be reduced in size and not illuminated. Again, illumination will be limited to the ATM machine itself.
- The applicant proposes to change the neon-like, LED sign on the ATM drive-thru kiosk from "ATM ONLY OPEN" to "OPEN." The neon-like sign on the other drive-thru kiosk will remain the same.
- The applicant will remove all of the individual "customer parking" bank signs within the parking lot and install four new "customer parking" signs. Two of the signs will be located along the South Washington Street frontage, and two on the interior of the property.
- No changes are proposed to the already installed blue clearance signs above the drive-thru or to the door graphics.

## **II. HISTORY**

The Board reviewed the construction of the Greek Revival style building for the previous bank owner, Chevy Chase Bank, on two occasions. In 1995, the Board determined that the proposed building met the *Additional Standards for Washington Street* set forth in the Zoning Ordinance (BAR CASE #1995-0070), and again in 1996, when the building and associated signage were approved (BAR Case #1996-0015, January 17, 1996). The approved signage consisted of two individually illuminated letter signs, Chevy Chase Bank, above the bank's Washington Street and

Wilkes Street entrances. The Washington Street sign measured 14 inches by 12 feet (13.92 square feet), whereas the Wilkes Street sign measured 10 inches by 10 feet (8.3 square feet). The Board also approved bank signage on each of the three ATM's – two in the drive-thru kiosks and the third adjacent to the Wilkes Street entrance, as well as "other signage normally associated with ATMs."

### **III. ANALYSIS**

The proposed alterations comply with Zoning Ordinance requirements. The existing ATM predates the 2002 ordinance which regulates exterior ATM machines in the Historic Districts. The existing signs on the ATM are deemed noncomplying and may be directly replaced. The applicant must apply for a change of ownership for the Special Use Permit to operate a drive-thru facility. Given that the bank signs are an on-going BAR case that needs to be resolved soon, the bank may proceed to the Board prior to obtaining the change of ownership.

In general, Staff finds the revised bank signs an improvement over the previous proposal. After the January hearing, the applicant met Staff on site to discuss each proposed sign. With one exception, Staff supports the proposed application.

Staff encouraged the applicant to remove the numerous "customer parking" signs located at nearly every parking space within the bank's parking lot, and instead encouraged a sign at each of the Bank's two entrances, as recommended by Mr. Carlin at the previous hearing. Instead, the applicant proposes four monument-style customer parking signs – two on Washington Street and two within the property. The application is somewhat confusing as to where the actual signs will be located, although Staff believes from the mock-up photographs that the Washington Street signs may be located in the public right-of-way, which is not permitted. In the opinion of Staff, the two customer parking signs within the bank property are unnecessary and redundant. Instead, Staff recommends the installation of a customer parking sign at the Washington Street parking entrance and another at the Wilkes Street entrance, provided they are located on the bank's property. An alternative to the freestanding signs may be the installation of signs on the low brick wall which surrounding the bank's parking lot.

When the Board originally approved the bank building in the mid-1990s, they approved the ATMs with "other signage normally associated with ATMs." As a result, Chevy Chase Bank installed illuminated header and side panels on each of their three ATMs, as well as "ATM/Teller open/closed" neon-like LED signs on each drive-thru ATM kiosk. At the January BAR hearing, the Board expressed concern about the amount of illumination associated with each of the bank's three ATM machines. Capital One Bank no longer proposes to use the built in internal illumination for the header and side panels of the ATMs, and the only illumination will be for the machines, which is essential for customer safety. Staff does not object to the use of the bank's logo on the ATM header signs, especially the Wilkes Street walk up machine, which will have a much smaller sign than currently exists.

With respect to the illuminated neon-like signs on the drive-thru kiosks, the bank changed the ATM only sign to just read "open", rather than "ATM only open." The bank felt strongly that it was important to retain the ATM open/Teller open/closed sign, so that customers can readily see if the

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teller and ATM machines are available for use. Staff did an informal study of the other banks on the George Washington Parkway with drive-thru tellers and found that all of them have some form of open/close signs above their drive-thru kiosks. In the case of the other banks (Wachovia, PNC and Bank of America), none of their drive-thru signs are visible from the Parkway. Staff does not object to the retention of these functional signs, but recommends that the illumination on the signs be lowered so that the visibility from the Parkway, especially during night-time hours, is much more subtle. Staff can assist the applicant in the field to determine the appropriate lighting level.

The National Park Service generally comments on all projects located on the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The NPS commented on each of the two previous proposals – the signs installed without BAR approval, as well as the application which went to the Board in January, which they felt was a significant improvement over the installed signs.

Because of the amount of time the unapproved signs have been in place, Staff recommends that the Board require a shorter-than-average time frame (60 days instead of the usual one year approval) for the installation of the new signs and the removal of the unapproved Capital One Bank signs.

**STAFF**

Stephanie Sample, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning

Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

**IV. 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 A building permit is required for the monument signs.

National Park Service:

See attached letters.

**IMAGES**



Figure 1: Previous Chevy Chase Bank sign and proposed Capital One Bank sign – Wilkes Street.



Figure 2: Previous Chevy Chase Bank sign and proposed Capital One Bank sign – Washington Street.



Figure 3: Previous drive-up teller express sign and proposed directional sign.





Figure 4: Previous and proposed ATM header sign – drive-thru kiosk (1).



Figure 5: Previous and proposed ATM header sign – drive-thru kiosk (2).



Figure 6: Previous and proposed ATM header sign – Wilkes Street walk up.

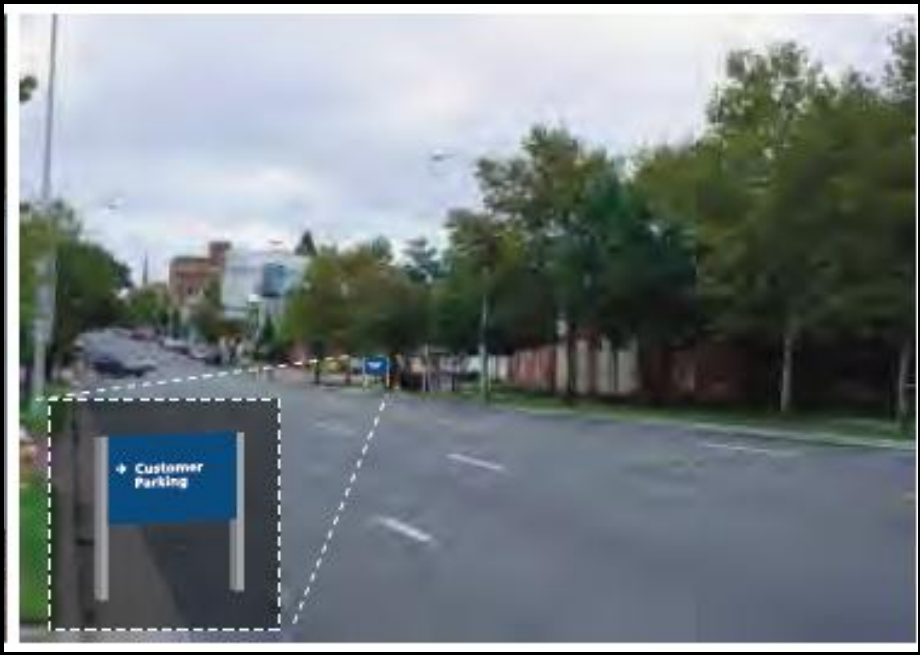


Figure 7: Proposed customer parking sign on Washington Street (1).



Figure 8: Proposed customer parking sign on Washington Street (2).



Figure 9: Proposed customer parking sign on bank property (3).

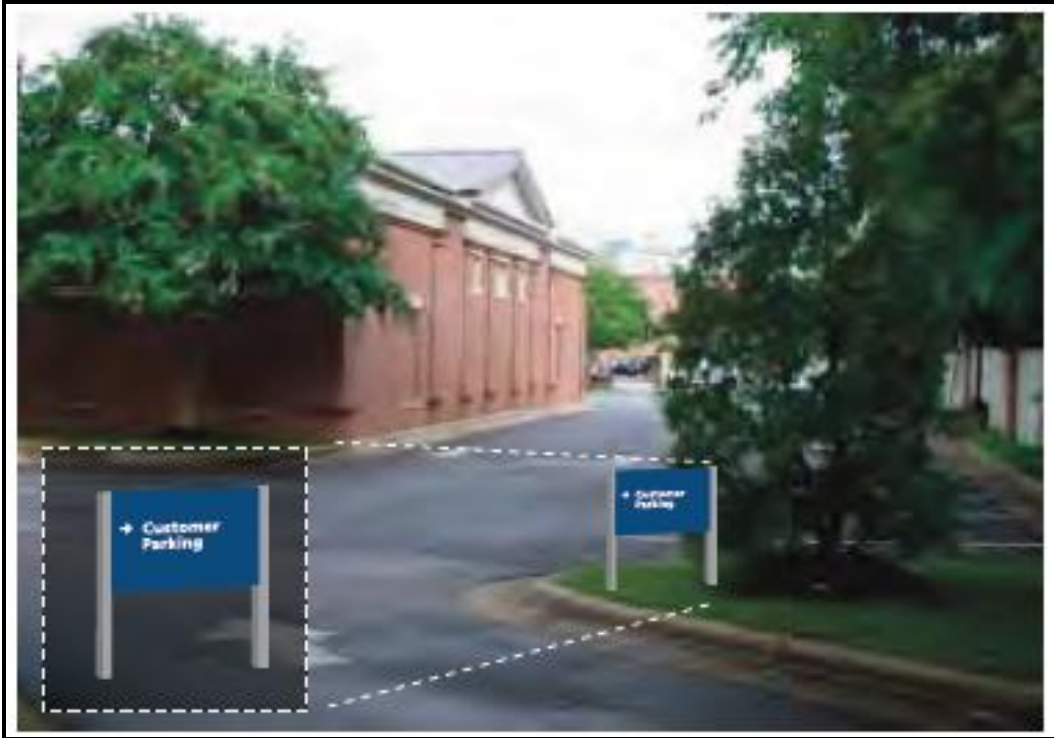


Figure 10: Proposed customer parking sign on bank property (4).



Figure 11: Proposed door graphics (on Washington Street and Wilkes Street Entrances)



Figure 12: Existing and proposed ATM open sign.



Figure 13: Photo of existing illuminated walk-up ATM.

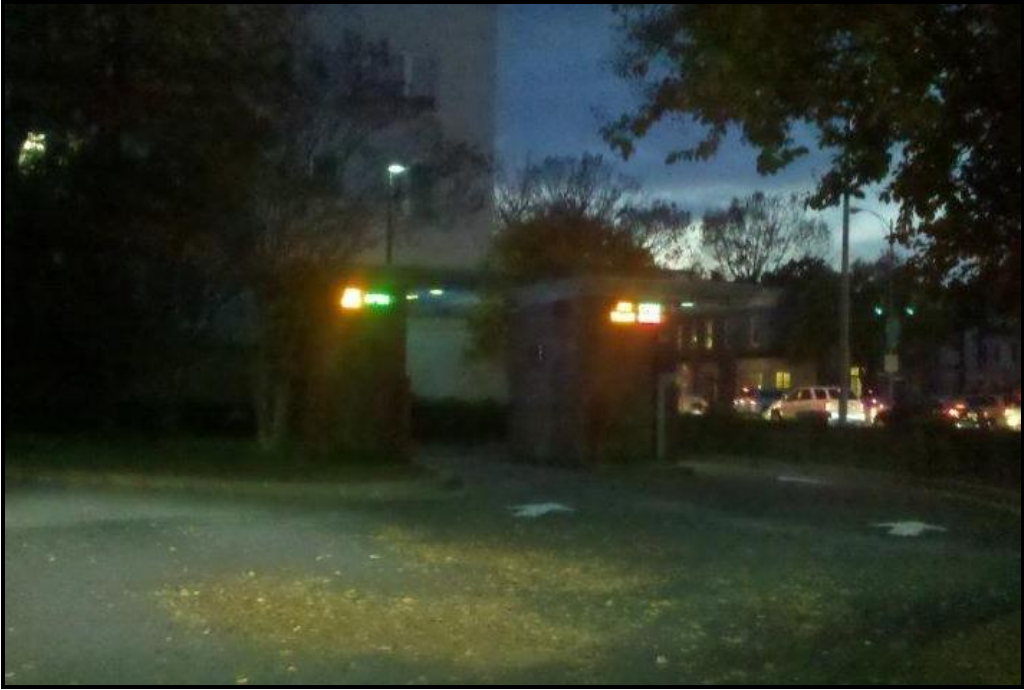


Figure 14: Photo of existing ATM/Teller open signs.



Figure 15: Close up photo of existing ATM/Teller sign.