

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD
CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

NOTICE OF DECISION

Major Amendment #2

Case No.: #45
Premises: 5 Cambridge Parkway
Zoning District: Residence C-3A/PUD 2
Petitioner: Royal Sonesta Hotel
Application Date: October 2, 1984
Public Hearing: October 16, and November 13, 1984
Planning Board Decision: November 13, 1984
Date of Filing the Decision: November 28, 1984
Major Amendment #1: February 20, 1990
Major Amendment #2: August 18, 1992
Decision: GRANTED with conditions

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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Petition

Application for a Major Amendment to Permit #45 requesting certain variations from the dimensional standards of Article 7.000 to permit the erection of three signs in the entry courtyard off of Commercial Avenue: (1) waiver of the requirements of Section 7.16.5 to permit the application of the provisions of Section 7.16.22 to a Hotel use in a PUD 2 District, (2) waiver of requirements to permit an internally illuminated wall sign to exceed 30" in one dimension, Section 7.16.22 C, (3) waiver of requirements to permit internal illumination for a freestanding sign, Section 7.16.22 A.

Documents Submitted

1. Application, certified complete on August 4, 1992, with two sign elevations illustrating the proposed signs: drawings 4 and 5, Design Communications Limited, dated July 10, 1992.

Discussion

At a public hearing on August 18, 1992, the Cambridge Planning Board heard the request for the major amendment for signage at the Sonesta Hotel presented by Michael Levie, General Manager of the hotel. Mr. Levie discussed the proposal and presented the plans that had been developed, indicating that the details had been reviewed with Lester Barber and Roger Boothe of the Community Development Department. The purpose of the new signs is to provide clearer directions to the facilities of the hotel. There would be one freestanding sign for the hotel within the existing planting bed at the Land Boulevard entry; it would be back lit (letters and graphics only), dark green, and four feet tall. This sign is intended to be visible at a driver's eye level as the hotel entrance is approached from either direction. Two other identical signs are proposed for Davio's restaurant consisting of illuminated neon tubing which would be mounted on the inner wall of the entry courtyard. Mr. Levie indicated that the existing wall sign above the main entry to the hotel in the courtyard will be removed.

Mr. Boothe commented that the signs are a part of a larger program, including banners, which would make the hotel facade livelier and better coordinated and in keeping with the desired festive retail character of the area.

The Board discussed the banners, the locations of the signs within the courtyard, and other proposed improvements to the courtyard and building facade. There were no questions or comments from the public.

Findings

1. The hotel use, while technically a residential use in the Table of Use Regulations of the Zoning Ordinance, functions essentially as a commercial enterprise similar to the adjacent office and retail buildings. The provisions of Article 7.000 which require the application of residential district sign provisions to the hotel use in the PUD 2 District (although the commercial provisions would apply to the office building also in the PUD 2 District further down Land Boulevard in a location actually closer to residential use) produce an administrative anomaly not intended by the Zoning Ordinance and not serving the public interest.
2. The hotel and its accessory restaurant uses are intended by the city, in the advancement of the urban design plan for the East Cambridge waterfront, to function as commercial enterprises that welcome casual visitors not staying at the hotel.

3. The hotel design makes it difficult for those approaching in an automobile to easily identify the courtyard entry; the proposed signs identify the entry to the hotel and restaurant at a logical location while maintaining a certain discretion appropriate to the hotel use.
4. The neon wall signs are not a substantial detriment to the public good nor do they substantially derogate from the intent and purpose of the ordinance in regulating commercial signs in commercial and retail districts.
5. In addition the proposed freestanding sign, in its vulnerable location at the auto entry to the hotel, is designed with its light source internalized and less vulnerable to damage by automobiles.
6. The total amount of signage on the hotel site remains within the limit permitted in commercial districts.

Decision

Based on the above findings the Planning Board GRANTS the Major Amendment for certain variations from the sign ordinance as described above, subject to the following conditions and limitations. Voting in favor were P. Dietrich, H. Salemme, H. Russell, V. Mathias, and A. Cohn. C. Mieth abstained from the vote.

1. The final plans for the signs shall be consistent with details indicated in the application documents referenced above. Such plans shall be reviewed by the Community Development Department which shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the conditions of this decision have been met before issuance of any zoning permit.
2. The wall signs shall not be mounted higher than 20 feet.
3. Only the graphics on the freestanding sign shall be illuminated.

For the Planning Board,



Paul Dietrich, Chairman

A copy of this decision shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk. Appeals is any shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws and shall be filed within twenty (20) days of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the decision filed with the Office of the City Clerk on 8/25/92, by Elizabeth J. Malenfant, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referenced in the decision have likewise been filed with the City Clerk on such date.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of this decision. No Appeal has been filed.

City Clerk, City of Cambridge

Date