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NOV 13 2013

CITY OF SAUSALITO  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

TO: Planning Commission Chair Joan Cox, Commissioners Stafford Keegin, Vicki Nichols, and Susan Cleveland-Knowles.  
Historic Landmarks Board Chair Morgan Pierce, Members John McCoy, Carolyn Kiernat, Bernard Feeney, and Natascha Fraser.

CC: Jeremy Graves, Heidi Scoble, Adam Politzer

SUBJECT: Wayfinding Sign Proposal/Various Locations  
Design Review Permit. DR-SP 13-197  
Special Joint Meeting of the Planning Commission and the Historical Landmarks Board. November 13, 2013

FROM: Bill Werner, Vice-chair Planning Commission

DATE: November 13, 2013

Unfortunately, due to a prior commitment based on the original 2013 Planning Commission schedule, I will be absent from this meeting. I have, however, read the Staff Report for this Item and watched the video of the City Council meeting of July 9, 2013 at which the Proposal was discussed. Several issues are troubling to me.

A. Zoning Consistency. **Chapter 10.42 Sign and Awning Regulation**

1. **10.42.010 Purpose**

- D. To promote the use of signs and awnings that identify land uses and sites without creating distractions or confusion that may cause traffic or safety hazards.
- E. To protect and improve pedestrian and vehicular traffic safety by balancing the need for signs which facilitate the safe and smooth flow of traffic without an excess of signage which may distract motorists, overload their capacity to quickly receive information, visually obstruct traffic signs or otherwise create congestion and safety hazards.

**Comment:** The fact that these signs are proposed to be 7'-6" in height and have ten double sided placards facing both vehicular and pedestrian traffic will certainly contribute to the distraction of drivers who, at 25 miles per hour, are desperately trying to figure out if their destination is listed, while watching the stop signals, dodging pedestrians staring at their smart phones, avoiding wobbly tourist cyclists, and evading spandex road warriors exercising their sense of righteous entitlement while blasting through red lights.

- J. To serve the City's interests in maintaining and enhancing its visual appeal for residents, tourists and other visitors, by preventing the degradation of visual quality which can result from excess signage.

**Comment:** According to the Staff Report (Page 3), the only signage that will be removed under this proposal is "Existing City installed directional signage". Therefore, signs such as the illuminated "advertising" sign for the Spinnaker Restaurant at the intersection of Bridgeway and Anchor as well as any other non-city installed signs would remain to continue the existing sign pollution.

- K. To establish sign and awning regulations which are equitable to all businesses.

**Comment:** The six proposed locations hardly provide an opportunity that is "equitable to all businesses". How long will it be before equity requires signage locations at, among many others:

Bridgeway & Easterby for: Le Garage, 7-Eleven, Joanne's Print Shop, the Bay Model, Harmonia, Burkell Plumbing, etc.

Bridgeway & Spring for: Fred's, Saylor's, Hair Solutions, Family Chiropractic, etc.

Bridgeway & Harbor Drive for: Fish, Seahorse, West Marine, ICB Artists, Anchorage, Mollie Stones, WestAmerica Bank, etc.

Ad infinitum...

B. Definition of the sign(s)

1. The Staff Report chose to define the sign as a "Free-standing Special Sign" as noted in Section 10.42.070.Q (which, it should be noted, applies specifically to the "Sign Standards for the Historic Overlay District...")

**Comment:** This definition is more than just a little disingenuous. It does in fact obfuscate the applicable definitions of the Ordinance:

2. **10.42.030 Sign Definitions**

**Commercial Sign.** Any sign with wording, logo or other representation that directly or indirectly names, advertises or calls attention to a business, product, service or other commercial activity or which proposes a commercial transaction or relates primarily to commercial events.

**Freestanding Sign.** A sign not attached to any buildings and having its own support structure, including pole-mounted and monument signs.

**Monument Sign.** A self-supporting sign with its base in the ground.

**Off-premise Sign.** A sign directing attention to a business, service, product, or entertainment not sold or offered on the site where the sign is located, including billboards and other outdoor advertising signs.

**Comment:** All of the above definitions apply and each should be addressed – especially the "Off-premise Sign".

3. **10.42.060 Sign and Awning Standards**

- l. **Off-premise signs.** Off-premise sign that directs attention to a business, service, product, or entertainment not sold or offered on the premises on which the sign is located, shall not be permitted except for (1) public service signs, (2) signs necessary to direct attention to an establishment on a parcel that does not front on a street, and (3) temporary event signs.

**Comment:** It should also be noted that the Historic District Standards in **10.42.070.D Sign Types Strongly Discouraged**, includes:

**5. Freestanding signs, and**

**11. Off-premise signs.**

Until these issues are addressed, it seems premature to consider what, if any, benefits to the community are offered by these proposed signs. They appear less directional and wayfinding than promotional and advertising (in reality, they are mini-billboards). While lack of signage is often given on surveys as the reason businesses fail, it is more often a matter of quality of service, product selection and cost that is the cause. Providing city funded signage opportunities because some businesses hope it will increase their foot traffic and because similar signs exist in Healdsburg are probably not the best reasons to deviate from the established standards set to control physical and visual cluttering of the streets of Sausalito.