

City of Salem Massachusetts
Public Meeting Minutes

Board or Committee: Design Review Board, Regular Meeting
Date and Time: Wednesday, June 24, 2026 at 6:00 pm
Meeting Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting
DRB Members Present: Chair Paul Durand, Daniel Estes, Catherine Miller, Marc Perras, and Sarah Tarbet
DRB Members Absent: Elizabeth Murray
Others Present: Stephanie Owens, Senior Planner
Recorder: Christine Petryszyn

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm. Roll call was taken.

Signs in the Urban Renewal Area

1. **100 Washington Street:** Black Cat

Dan Fury was present to discuss the sign proposal:

- Mr. Fury reported that per the board's recommendation, adjustments were made to the signage since the last meeting. The sign now more closely resembles the Black Cat Curiosity Shoppe signage and uses approved colors.
- Mr. Estes noted that the scale between the two signs seemed a bit off.
- Mr. Fury noted that the spaces are two different sizes, so they had to adjust for that.
- Mr. Perras said as long as the signs were both higher than 7'6", he was fine. Ms. Miller agreed.
- Ms. Miller said she appreciated the effort that was put into the signs.

There were no comments or questions from members of the public.

VOTE: Ms. Miller made a motion to approve with the sign and noted that the requirement for the sign to be installed at a height of eight feet was not appropriate accounting for the architecture of the building, the height of the entrance to the building is 7'10", which is less than eight feet.

Seconded by Perras.

Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Perras, Tarbet, and Durand. 5-0 in favor.

2. **11 Church Street:** Sinistry

Ken McTague was present to discuss the sign proposal:

- Mr. McTague said he is proposing the same treatment as the abutting signs, the black ACM board to cover the façade and new vinyl graphics.
- He noted that the Church Street side is a little awkward in that the entrance is not centered on the awning.

There were no comments or questions from members of the public.

VOTE: Mr. Perras made a motion to approve as submitted.

Seconded by Tarbet.

Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Perras, Tarbet, and Durand. 5-0 in favor.

3. **259 Essex Street: Warren Museum**

Ken McTague was present to discuss the sign proposal:

- Mr. McTague shared and reviewed the proposed image. It is the same size and bracket as the existing sign. It is slightly different share.
- It will be a carved, double-sided sign and will include a hanging entrance sign.
- Mr. McTague did know whether the owner was going to separately submit an application for the A-frames. He believes the owner may only be there for one season.
- The owner, Elton Casteo, noted that this is the only sign they have planned.

There were no comments or questions from members of the public.

VOTE: Ms. Miller made a motion to approve with the note that the museum would come back to the DRB if they decided they wanted an A-frame. The requirement for blade signs to be stationary was not appropriate for this sign for the following reason; the signs and brackets are sturdy so that the wind load and movement of the sign will be minimal. The requirement for blade signs to hang a distance of no less than 8 inches was not appropriate for these signs for the following reasons; the sign is in the downtown core, which is highly pedestrian-oriented; signs hanging close to the buildings cater to pedestrians; and signs nearby appear to have a hanging distance of 8 inches or less. The approval is a conditioned surety bond. The applicant shall adhere to the surety bond requirements found in the City of Salem Code of Ordinances, Section 4-47, Signs or Structures Over Public Ways.

Seconded by Perras.

Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Perras, Tarbet, and Durand. 5-0 in favor.

4. **24 Congress Street: Mexizol**

Ken McTague was present to discuss the sign proposal:

- Mr. McTague shared and reviewed the proposed image. It will be individual cut out PVC letters mounted on the brick. The sign will have black returns and gold leaf face. The window graphics have been scaled down. A stationary blade sign is also proposed. It is 21"x43" in size and will be mounted on the corner. It will be carved with a gold leaf on the sun.
- There are no blades signs currently existing on this building.
- Mr. McTague recommended the blade sign so that it was visible from the parking garage.
- The letters will be 1" thick. They will be stud mounted to the brick. The lights will remain.
- Ms. Miller thought the sign could be slightly smaller.
- The letters are not encroaching on the cornice. The sign is about 8' wide.

There were no comments or questions from members of the public.

- The window signage was originally at 21.7% of window space, so it has been reduced to roughly 11"x23" in size.
- The sun will have a black return with gold leaf on the face.

VOTE: Mr. Perras made a motion to approve as submitted. The applicant shall adhere to the surety bond requirements found in the City of Salem Code of Ordinances, Section 4-47, Signs or Structures Over Public Ways, especially in regard to the hanging sign.

Seconded by Estes.

Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Perras, Tarbet, and Durand. 5-0 in favor.

5. **60 Washington Street:** Odd Meter Coffee & Kitchen

Ken McTague was present to discuss the sign proposal:

- Mr. McTague shared a photo of the existing signage.
- He said that they are replacing the Au Gratin signage with the Odd Meter signage. It will be the same size. The second sign will say Coffee and Kitchen.
- It will be carved gold leaf on the blade sign and raised graphics on the façade panel.
- There will be two front doors.
- The property owner did not like the Melt Ice Cream shop sign. Ms. Owens said the updated Melt sign has a white background.

There were no comments or questions from members of the public.

- The owner did not want to move forward on window signs at this time.
- In response to Ms. Owen's question, Mr. McTague could not comment on the paint color difference in the photo and thought it might be an old photo. He said he would speak with the owner about doing a paint touch-up before the sign installation.

VOTE: Mr. Perras made a motion to approve as submitted with the intention of painting the green background to match. The requirement for blade signs to be stationary was not appropriate for these signs for the following reasons; the signs and brackets are sturdy so that the wind load and movement of the sign will be minimal. The requirement for blade signs to hang a distance of no less than 8 inches was not appropriate for these signs for the following reasons; the sign is in the downtown core, which is highly pedestrian-oriented; signs hanging close to the buildings cater to pedestrians, and that signs nearby appear to have a hanging distance of 8 inches or less. The applicant shall adhere to the surety bond requirements found in the City of Salem Code of Ordinances, Section 4-47, signs or structures over public ways.

Seconded by Miller.

Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Perras, Tarbet, and Durand. 5-0 in favor.

Projects in the Urban Renewal Area

There are no projects to review.

Projects Outside the Urban Renewal Area

1. **266 Canal Street:** Entrance Corridor – Review of interpretive signage.

Chris Koeplin and Kristen Poulin were present to discuss the proposal:

- Mr. Koeplin noted that it was 2 ½ years ago that the PUD was filed. They are now at completion and awaiting the Certificate of Occupancy.
- Mr. Koeplin said they would appreciate the DRB's input on the interpretative panel that features certain aspects of the abutting wetlands that are important to the environment in this area.
- The panels are vandal resistant, industrial-type that are used in urban environments.
- The proposed signage and language was shared.
- The signs would be 3.5 x 2' in size and made with aluminum. They would be a high-resolution print with powder coated finish and durable.
- Ms. Miller noted that she liked the sign and felt that these types of signs are important. She inquired about potential vandalism and an approach for repair and cleaning. Mr. Koeplin said they have 24/7 property management on site and that they would clean, repair and/or replace as needed.
- There are two signs; one in the middle of the site and the second on the north side which connects the property to the rail trail and overlooks Rosie's Pond.
- Mr. Perras asked if they were ADA compliant. Mr. Koeplin said he believes they would be wheelchair accessible.
- Mr. Perras said he was thinking of people who were visually impaired and whether they could run into the sign. A solution could be to drop down some verticals on the side.
- Ms. Poulin noted that the signs were designed by their landscape architect. The signs were approved as part of their PUD. Mr. Koeplin said they would ask their civil engineer about the issue.

There were no comments or questions from members of the public.

- Mr. Durand noted that the DRB is not approving the sign but sending comments to the Planning Board.

VOTE: Ms. Tarbet made a motion to acknowledge the DRB's review of the signs along with a comment about the accessibility of the signage.

Seconded by Perras.

Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Perras, Tarbet, and Durand. 5-0 in favor.

New / Old Business

1. Approval of Minutes:

a. May 20, 2026

- Ms. Miller noted the El Centro Project and the issue that their plan did not meet basic code requirements from grading. She requested that they resubmit some materials. She noted that the applicant did not address or change the ADA requirements on the riverwalk or the accessible slopes across the site. She said she spent an hour grading trying to grade the site but has not received anything back from the applicant that they used the information she provided. She said there is nothing in the minutes that provides guardrails if the grading was not done.
- Ms. Owens said the issue was brought forward to the Planning Board staff member and the applicant is being required to come back to the Planning Board.

- Ms. Miller was satisfied that another review will occur with the Planning Board.

VOTE: Ms. Miller made a motion to approve the May 20th meeting minutes.

Seconded by Estes.

Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Perras, Tarbet, and Durand. 5-0 in favor.

2. Staff updates, if any

Ms. Owens noted that there is a calendar invite for a joint meeting with the Planning Board on July 23rd at 6:30pm. This is the day after the DRB's regular meeting on July 22nd. Topics will include the 40R Smart Growth Overlay District at the Lifebridge Project, which is an adaptive reuse and new construction project. The DRB will have an individual review of the project at their August meeting. Ms. Owens will provide a memo outlining the design standards.

Ms. Owens noted that the DRB received a public comment via email regarding ADA from Heather Famico on June 10th. She wrote:

Good afternoon.

With June about halfway through, a lot of our restaurants have outdoor dining out again for this year. Unfortunately, a large majority of those remain in noncompliance with ADA. If you go by restaurants, you'll notice a lack of ADA tables, lack of a proper walkway, and in some cases, signage in the way.

Some have tables that are first glance look like they would be ADA until you realize there's an umbrella with a stand below it, making it so that clearance isn't present. Or places that have picnic tables with long benches on either side, which makes the table noncompliant, especially when the end is only about 6 inches past the frame.

This is the sixth year of increased outdoor dining. This is the sixth year I've written asking for ADA to be honored. I'm wondering what can be done to get these places up to code ASAP.

Or if places can be given 2 weeks to fix it, and then their outdoor dining gets shut down if they're not in compliance. I personally feel as though this isn't what Salem is all about. We promote ourselves as being age-friendly, as being a place for all, yet we give up parking spaces for outdoor dining that excludes people.

Please include this email within the public record for the next Disabilities Commission, SRA, and Design Review Board and Licensing Board meetings.

Respectfully,
Heather Famico.

Ms. Owens said the City's staff liaison for ADA Commission responded to the email.

ADA Compliance is enforced by the Building Department. If an issue is identified and not corrected, a warning is issued followed by the issuance of tickets until it is corrected. Ms. Owens will look into whether there are records of tickets in the City's system.

Ms. Owens noted that the DRB has a potential appointment for the DRB's vacant position and that will be on the July 8th SRA meeting agenda.

The enforcement tracking will continue to be included in the meeting minutes.

Upcoming Meetings

1. SRA: July 8
2. DRB: July 22

Adjournment

VOTE: Mr. Perras made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by: Miller. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 6:47PM.

Know your rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. c. 39 §23B and City Ordinance Sections 2-028 through 2-2033

Enforcement Tracking

Business	Item	Status
Ascend	Window clings	Emailed again on 6/12, observed again on 6/23
Witchside Tavern	Menu displays on brick facade	Denied permit in OpenGov in May. Observed again on 6/23
Salem Wax Museum	Cornice lights	Email response from property owner on 3/27, observed again on 6/23
Fountain Place	Tattered awning sign	Observed again on 6/23
World of Wizardry	Window cling on door – more than 20% coverage	Observed again on 6/23, Emailed on 6/24
Pirates Museum	String lights at cornice	Observed on 6/23, Emailed on 6/24
TruNorth Bank	Temporary banners	Observed on 6/23

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