

**MINUTES OF THE  
GASTOWN HISTORIC AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**APRIL 17, 2013**

A Regular Meeting of the Gastown Historic Area Planning Committee was held on Wednesday, April 17, 2013 at 4:00 p.m., at the Water Street Café, 300 Water Street, Vancouver, BC.

**PRESENT:** Carol Sill, Community Resident Owner, Chair  
Glenda Bartosh, Local Property Owner  
Alan Davies, Community Architect  
Jim Lehto, Community Heritage Representative  
Nic Meyer, Community Hospitality  
Ashley Pope, Community Architect  
Glade Schoenfeld, Community Engineer  
Tony Tang, Councillor, Liaison to GHAPC (arrived 4:13 pm)

**ABSENT:** Will Beale, Community Resident Tenant  
Chris Fair, Community Business Representative, Vice Chair

**ALSO PRESENT:** Ian Cooper, City of Vancouver, Planner  
Holly Foxcroft, MCIP  
Zlatan Jankovic, Heritage Planner  
Cameron Owen, IBI/HB Architects

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Linda Tylla, Raincoast Ventures Ltd.

Chair Sill called the meeting to order at approximately 4:00 p.m.

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda for the regular meeting scheduled April 17, 2013, was accepted as circulated.

**Adoption of Minutes (February 20 and March 20)**

**MOVED by Jim Lehto**  
**SECONDED by Glenda Bartosh**

THAT the minutes of the February 20, 2013 meeting of the Gastown Heritage Area Planning Committee be ratified as amended at the March 20, 2013 meeting.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**MOVED by Alan Davies**  
**SECONDED by Jim Lehto**

THAT the minutes of the March 20, 2013 meeting of the Gastown Heritage Area Planning Committee be adopted as amended: Page 1, second paragraph be changed to read:

*"Potential conflict of interest relative to an application considered at the previous meeting was commented on regarding the SRO project: 54 E. Cordova St. - Cordova Residences - DE 416524 - C (VHR); and 110 Water Street - Gastown Hotel -DE 416394. Alan Davies disclosed that his firm one of the firms involved in submitting a competing RFP for the SRO project, which was not selected. This will apply to future BC Housing Initiatives SRO submissions to GHAPC."*

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**MOVED by Jim Lehto**  
**SECONDED by Glenda Bartosh**

THAT the following motion from the March 20, 2013 meeting of the Gastown Heritage Area Planning Committee be ratified:

*"THAT the Gastown Heritage Area Planning Committee strongly supports the application for 320 Abbott Street - C (VHR), M and the efforts shown to preserve, restore and renovate the façade of the building."*

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Councillor Tony Tang arrived 4:13 p.m.

**1) City of Vancouver Sign By-law Review - Stakeholder Invitation Text and Project Overview**

Zlatan Jankovic, Heritage Planner, introduced the item and the team from IBI/HB Architects. He also introduced Ian Cooper, City of Vancouver, Planner, and Holly Foxcroft, MCIP.

Cameron Owen, IBI/HB Architects provided an overhead presentation, "City of Vancouver Sign By-law Review - Stakeholder Invitation Text and Project Overview", noting the following.

The City of Vancouver is planning to develop a new, comprehensive Sign By-law that will incorporate other City of Vancouver sign policies and regulations,

streamline the application and approvals process, and address items not currently addressed, such as current and emerging technologies. The project will be undertaken between January 2013 and January 2014.

IBI Group has been hired by the City to manage this process, and in the first phase we are gathering information on the current state of signage in Vancouver, including issues identified by internal and external stakeholders. Following that, a best practices review will be conducted considering the local context and a Sign By-law will be developed.

The existing Sign By-law has been in place since 1974, and has not undergone substantive updates since that time. The impetus for updating the Sign By-law derives from the need for an all-encompassing strategy that streamlines the approvals process and provides mechanisms for current or emerging digital or technological practices.

The City of Vancouver currently regulates signs through the implementation of the current sign bylaw via Development Services, specifically Permits and Licensing, as well as the Department of Engineering (temporary, movable signs in the right of way), Parks Board (parks signage), and Vancouver Public Library (library signage). Consequently, the application of sign design standards across the departments and agencies is segmented, producing an inconsistent application of signage across the City.

The current signage approvals process is fraught with challenges, as the Sign By-law does not adequately address the current state of signage. As a result, approximately 100 sign applications are referred to the Board of Variance for their approval, complexifying the application process and timeline for applicants, and intensively using staff time.

Since the adoption of the Sign By-law there have been significant technological advances in signage, most notably the digitization of signage. Digital signs, typically billboards of fascia, can be monochromatic or high definition digital (HDD). The existing Sign By-law does not have regulations that govern the use of HDD signs. The nature of these signs (illuminated, animated/moving, and multiple sources of advertising content e.g. third party advertising) require regulatory consideration that does not currently exist in the Sign By-law.

Outputs from the Sign By-Law review project will also be provided that relate to the City's current corporate naming and revenue generation policies.

The Gastown Historic Area Planning Committee were invited to share their insights into the issues, concerns and ideas about signage in Vancouver, especially in the historic area of Gastown to inform the development of policies to regulate signage.

The Committee was presented several questions to which they provided the following comments and further questions:

1. What are the most common issues that you confront with the existing bylaw?

- i. Signage is not often seen with application package.
  - ii. Signage is only seen as a separate application if it is a projecting or blade sign.
2. Does the existing Sign Bylaw adequately address heritage sign considerations in Gastown?
- i. Because GHAPC exists, and has for some time, its recommendations tend to override some signage considerations not addressed in the Bylaw.
3. Is the existing Sign bylaw at odds with the conservation of Gastown heritage signs? Are there gaps in the bylaw with respect to Gastown heritage signs?
4. What issues have arisen in the past between the sign bylaw and the designation of Gastown as a municipal and national heritage area?
- i. The bylaw does not necessarily address fonts and other qualities that influence the character of the sign.
  - ii. The bylaw should consider the unique nature of Gastown and honour the current guidelines, so that even if the GHAPC were dissolved, the considerations would exist because of special status.
  - iii. Have special guidelines for Gastown - refer to guidelines in the bylaw.
  - iv. Signs should enhance the historic area ambiance.
  - v. Signs currently get approved that so clearly do not match the heritage nature of the area.
  - vi. What is your thinking that has led you to develop these questions?
  - vii. Signage is not included in the architectural package.
  - viii. Heritage areas should be treated as development permit issues. Signs are very important. They affect the character of the style. There is an issue of where the signs go and are located on the building.
  - ix. Signage plans should be submitted as part of the DP application.
  - x. For digital and backlit signs, a DPA would deal with that very quickly.
  - xi. Gastown should continue to evolve and be current - but just be discrete. Neon signs were not current with this area for its original nature.
  - xii. How do you regulate good taste?
  - xiii. How do you regulate the types of digital, etc. what is the follow up?
  - xiv. How will the City apply heritage guidelines and other regulations that apply in Gastown to the sign bylaw?
  - xv. Heritage cannot be digitized.
  - xvi. Heritage areas should be able to be prescriptive as to what is allowed.
  - xvii. The desire is to preserve the turn of century feel and have high quality signs.
  - xviii. No digital signs in Gastown - never. Projected signs would be acceptable.
  - xix. Do not want to see digital signs at all in Gastown.
  - xx. Materiality sometimes is not as important as how the sign is used or projected or the light levels.
  - xxi. Generally opposed to flashy signs as they are distracting to drivers and neighbours.

- xxii. Digital signs would need to be about scale in this neighborhood, and intensity, size, hours of operation, brightness, etc., would need to be taken into consideration.
- xxiii. Perhaps it should be considered like the busking program - no amplification is allowed to preserve the streetscape. Signs should be subservient to façades and the street walk. Signs should highlight façades but not destroy or overwhelm them.
- xxiv. A sign should not conceal character-defining elements.
- xxv. Digital signs could be sympathetic.
- xxvi. Only good process will resolve and good enforcement will be required.
- xxvii. Do not damage or distract from heritage nature of building. Digital is not designed to blend in but to really stand out.

5) What principles should shape the development of a new sign bylaw?

- xxviii. With regard to temporary signage on hoardings while projects are being branded, would not want to see the sign bylaw limit what can be included in that.
- xxix. Would like businesses that are obscured during construction be allowed to have signage outside hoarding to ensure that business is still visible.
- xxx. Could the maintenance of awnings be enforced through the bylaw?
- xxxi. What can be done to ensure that the new bylaw would be implemented as intended?
- xxxii. Would like the new bylaw to have "teeth" to deal with non-compliance.
- xxxiii. If there was a sign bylaw infraction - could you divert funds from the infraction amount to public art?
- xxxiv. Consider incentivizing owners to recreate original signage, as a separate program from the bylaw. It could cross reference the bylaw.
- xxxv. Identifying signs that have heritage value in themselves.

The consultant group will return to the Committee in early summer for additional discussion.

**Next Meeting:**

DATE: May 15, 2013

TIME: 4:00 p.m.

PLACE: Water Street Café, 300 Water Street, Vancouver, BC.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

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