

Raleigh Appearance Commission – Outdoor Seating Design Review Committee
Minutes of the Meeting
Wednesday, February 10, 2016

Members Present: Brian O’Haver, Brandy Thompson, Jamie Ferguson, Rolf Blizzard, Candice Andre, Lauren Dickens, and Asa Fleming

Staff Present: Roberta Fox, Carter Pettibone, Dhanya Sandeep, and Martha Lobo

Brian O’Haver called the meeting to order at 3:02pm. He thanked everyone for attending what could be the last meeting of the committee. He went over the agenda and said there were four topics for the Commission to review as part of this working group.

Review and Approval of Minutes

Members made comments on the draft minutes and asked Staff to make the appropriate revisions. Rolf Blizzard moved to approve the minutes as amended and was seconded by Asa Fleming. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion

Roberta Fox began a presentation to start the discussion period of the meeting. She went over the items the committee had discussed previously. She then showed the members field survey photos of outdoor furnishings and reviewed the Committee’s comments from the last meeting. Discussion on street furnishings followed.

Rolf Blizzard gave a recap of his research into standards for outdoor furniture. He said manufacturers have no defined standard. One company uses a drop test to measure their own standard. He said some companies submit their specifications to the permitting agency, but that puts the onus on the permitting agency.

Discussion followed on the possibility of the City providing acceptable examples and/or having a number of set choices of outdoor furniture types to choose from, with the ability to have an approved equal.

The committee discussed the definition of commercial use, having applicants submit a photo or cut sheet of the proposed outdoor furniture with the application, and what would happen in terms of a grace or transition period for existing outdoor furniture once new regulations are approved.

Discussion followed regarding what constitute an approved alternate and what process an applicant would use to obtain the approval for an alternate. Brandy Thompson suggested that an alternative approval process could be used for existing outdoor furniture.

Other items discussed were whether stacking out of outdoor furniture should be discouraged or prohibited and whether stacking of furniture on private property adjacent to the right-of-way should be addressed in the recommendation.

Candice Andre suggested adding a rationale after each of the recommendations in the document to be submitted to Council.

Roberta Fox reviewed the committee's previous conversation regarding physical delineation and outdoor signage. The presentation included the current ordinance language, the design issues associated with outdoor signage, and a photo survey of existing conditions in Downtown. Discussion followed on issues related to physical delineation, including stanchions, and signage.

Attendees said they would like the ability to use stanchions, especially during special events. Discussion then followed regarding special events and whether recommendations for outdoor seating elements should be separate from those of normal business operations.

Ken Shugart (attendee) asked if other accessories in the right-of-way would be addressed. Committee members commented that the group should only cover things that were within their purview set by Council and that all permitted furnishings should fall into the design guidelines and be indicated on the permit.

Zach Medford (attendee) said he thought that if applicants wanted to use wood under these new regulations then there would be a lot of cases using the alternate process. Discussion on potential materials and a permitted height range followed.

Roberta Fox suggested the group discuss outdoor signage and develop ideas for draft language for it. She said she understood the committee's recommendation was to not have signage, but that might need to come back to the committee for additional consideration.

Candice Andre suggested adding a paragraph in the recommendation to Council that explains the rationale for making the recommendations, including decluttering and improving the streetscape.

Brian O'Haver suggested the group go back over the language for physical delineation. Discussion followed, including the adding the goal of discouraging stanchions. Roberta Fox said staff would compile the Committee's comments.

Lauren Dickens said that the group should develop design requirements for signage in case signage is needed.

Candice Andre suggested that if a sign is wanted or required, then it should follow the City sign requirements. Discussion followed regarding language to use for sign enforcement.

Attendees indicated they would like to have the option to use tabletop signage.

The Committee continued the discussion of physical delineation and recommended including an introductory paragraph to explain the recommendation to not require stanchions, meeting stricter design guidelines, yet still allowing differentiation and inclusion of custom/art elements. Members expressed a preference for the sidewalk medallions. An example medallion from Durham was passed around to the group. Discussion considered times at which a physical barrier would be beneficial and what criteria it should meet.

Roberta Fox read through previous comments from the Committee in regards to the signage requirements.

Rolf Blizzard recommended that the use of signage may be considered, if included in permit application, and should meet the specific guidelines. It should be limited to table top or included in menu or included on other regulatory signage

Ken Shugart addressed the committee and said that since the agenda mentioned “Streetscape Character Discussion” he thought the group should be discussing separate or additional recommendations that take into the special character of Fayetteville Street. Discussion followed regarding the character of Fayetteville Street and incorporating special recommendations for it.

Candice Andre suggested that one recommendation for further research should be looking at the possibility of having different treatments for different districts.

Will Marks (attendee) asked the committee to rethink the possibility of leaving outdoor furniture in place during non-business hours. Discussion followed regarding storing unused furniture in the right-of-way.

Roberta Fox read from the on-going list of ‘out-of-scope’ items that may be considered for additional research, but that the Committee would not be making recommendations on these items:

- Any further additions or alterations to the recommendations – the Committee wanted the ability to respond to any changes to their report proposed by staff or Council
- ADA impacts
- Additional guidelines per district (Fayetteville St, HODs)
- Method of calculating occupancy requirements
- Setback requirements
- ADA grates
- impact of large events
- Financial impacts of recommendations
- Storage of furniture

Rolf Blizzard moved to adjourn and was seconded by Asa Thompson. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:10pm.