



TOWN OF ACTON
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Planning Department

INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION

To: Planning Board **Date:** August 13, 2010
From: Kristin K. Alexander, AICP, Assistant Town Planner *KKA*
Subject: Powers Gallery Sign Special Permit – 144 Great Road

Location: 144 Great Road
Map and Parcel: F-4/35-2
Zoning: Limited Business (LB)
Request: a larger sign than allowed under Acton Zoning Bylaw Section 7.8.5.1
Applicant: Lawrence Powers, 7 Wilson Lane, Acton, MA
Property Owner: Bravery Realty Trust, Kimberly Powers, Trustee, Acton, MA
Public Hearing: **August 17, 2010 (7:45 PM)**
Decision Due: **October 13, 2010**

Background

Powers Gallery is proposing to replace its existing freestanding sign with a larger freestanding sign, consisting of a different color scheme (black background with gold lettering rather than white with black lettering), and in a different location on the property (further from the building; in the grass between the bushes). Powers Gallery would need a special permit from the Planning Board for the new sign because the maximum display area allowed for a freestanding sign under the Acton Zoning Bylaw (Bylaw) is 12 square feet (Bylaw Section 7.8.5.1) and Powers Gallery is proposing either a 15 square foot or 17.5 square foot sign (see comment #1 below). According to Lawrence Powers' 7/15/10 letter to the Planning Board, Powers Gallery is proposing a different and larger sign for aesthetic reasons, to allow slightly more visibility, and to help distinguish the gallery as a place of business and not a residence. There are currently no other signs on the property.

Comments

Other Town departments have reviewed the Powers Gallery Sign Special Permit application and their comments are attached. The departments that have commented appear to have no issues with the proposal.

The Planning Department does not object to the Powers Gallery Sign Special Permit proposal, but has the following questions and comments that should be addressed by the applicant:

1. The application form states the proposed sign will be 3 feet high by 5 feet wide. However, the Garrity Carved Signs Co. General Specifications sheet states the proposed sign will be 3 ½ feet high by 5 feet wide. All dimensions of the sign should be clarified and clearly shown

on the sign drawing so staff can confirm compliance with the sign height, width, depth, and display area requirements of the Bylaw. In addition, the sign drawing should be in color so staff and the Board can better visualize how the sign might appear on the site.

2. Will the freestanding sign be illuminated? If so, it should comply with Bylaw Section 7.4.3, Illumination.
3. Based on the site plan provided by the applicant, it appears the proposed sign will be located five feet from the front property line (Great Road right-of-way). If that is correct, the proposed sign location would comply with the Bylaw. Bylaw Section 7.8.2 states that no freestanding signs shall be erected within five feet of the road right-of-way (or further, if the sign is greater than five feet high).
4. Bylaw Section 7.8.3 requires the Powers Gallery freestanding sign to be integrated into the landscape design of the lot, centered within a minimum landscaped area: in this case, an area of 36 or 49 square feet (depending on the height of the sign), and planted and maintained with suitable vegetation including shrubs and flowering perennials surrounding the base of the freestanding sign. According to Section 7.8.3, the landscaped area may be provided as part of a landscaped area required under any other section of the Bylaw (e.g. site plan).

The proposed Powers Gallery freestanding sign is centrally located within an existing landscaped area on the lot that is greater than 49 square feet. The existing landscaping surrounding the freestanding sign location is grass with some small bushes. Staff recommends planting additional shrubs and perennials around the base of the Powers Gallery freestanding sign to soften the appearance of the sign and to better integrate the sign into the existing landscape design of the lot as described in the Bylaw Section 7.8.3.