

Village of Skaneateles
Historical Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 12, 2011

In the matter of the application submitted by Joseph Viscomi, for Exit First Realty, for business signage over the front entrance of 32 East Genesee Street in the Village of Skaneateles.

Present: Charles Williams, Chairman
David Neibert, Member
Karlene Miller, Member
Pat Blackler, Member
Mona Smalley, Member
Beverly White, Member

Jorge Batlle, Clerk to the Historical Commission

Joseph Viscomi, Applicant

James Lanning, 12 Hannum Street
Robert Eggleston, Rickard Road
Lisa Riordan, E. Genesee Street

Absent: Andrew Ramsgard, Member
Katharine Dyson, Member

Chairman Williams opened the public hearing at 7:45pm announcing the application of Joseph Viscomi for 32 East Genesee Street. He said, "Joe has brought in the sign, and we've got a couple of pictures of the front of his building. It will hand in a similar spot."

Joe Viscomi said, "it is smaller than the *Realty USA* sign." Member Miller said, "I saw that on the note." The Chairman said, "you've seen the sign...there. You will use a couple of hangers going in to underside of the wood." Viscomi said, "they were already up." Member White asked, "has there been a sign there before?" Viscomi said, "there was a sign there before I occupied it." Member Blackler asked, "are you going to keep the sign above the hanging sign?" Viscomi replied, "I would like to." Member White asked for a clarification of the allowable signage for a business. Batlle explained that sign was broken up and considered it one whole sign because of it going along the façade, which had different levels. The amount of signage one can put on a building is proportional to the width of the building. (*Note: the previous Code Enforcement Officer reviewed this application.*) Member White continued, "I noticed that there was a sign above each window. I asked is that one sign or two signs. It's one sign. I don't think you should keep them. One above if you want to put a sign below that doesn't make any sense to me. it's pretty cluttered."

Viscomi approaching the table, "I'm going to clean it up. There is not going to be any sign, but that one would be gone. There is one over here that will be gone... it's just going to be like this and just one hanging." Member White said, "but this sign you want to keep." Viscomi said, "I would like to keep it." Member White said, "that's what I'm objecting to. Why would you have one *Exit* above and this hanging sign? I don't understand that."

Viscomi said, "this is a very small sign. It doesn't really say the name. It doesn't do much, I don't think." Member White said, "yes, but it's there. It does have your business (name) on it." Viscomi asked, "can we try it out and see what it looks like?" Member White said, "no. It doesn't make any difference to me. I can visualize what this is going to look like." Member Smalley said, "I have objected in the past because I really sort of admire the little fan window and the light fixture that hangs down there. As Joe pointed out to me, it's the same with the other sign, the *Realty USA* sign. But that doesn't look nice either because it covers the window."

Member Neibert said, "I personally don't like the idea of a sign hanging down within the door area, covering the transom and the lights and all that, when there's adequate space above it, where the sign is right now, to put a sign." Member Miller said, "and he's going to keep that sign up there." Member Neibert said, "to me, I would put that sign up there. It would obviously come down over the framing a little bit, because that's a deep because that's a deeper sign. At least it wouldn't extend below the door frame and into the doorway area. I think it looks tacky." Viscomi said, "I like your idea there. The problem is that this isn't that flush in there." Member Neibert said, "you would have to build it up, because people do that all the time with signs. They have to put a backing behind it to bring it out to this thickness. With a backing the whole sign would be where the *EXIT* sign is now. Obviously, that would extend down probably to the bottom edge of the door frame, but it wouldn't extend down below the door frame. I'm totally opposed to this *Realty USA* sign, the way that hangs down there, in front of the transom and the light fixture. I ruins the historical appearance of the building. It covers everything up that's beautiful about the building. I feel the same way about this." Member Smalley said, "if that light fixture was there, you could hang some Christmas ornaments on it. That would get people's attention."

Member Neibert said, "that's a beautiful building with the posts and you'd have a sign hanging down covering up that window and the light fixture. I think that sign could be put where you already have your *EXIT* sign. Put a backing behind it so that it's flush with what's down below, the framing. So, it's going to bring it out a little bit and it will be down a little bit. But, at least it's not going to extend within the doorway." Viscomi said, "I think what that's going to do is take away from this nice trim around here." Member Neibert said, "that's better than covering up the window and the light." Viscomi said, "this would be more of a permanent thing as opposed to a hanging thing. The hanging thing could be removed pretty easily." Member Neibert said, "I know but it won't be removed. If you have a sign there, it's going to stay there. You are not going to take the sign down, unless your business moves. They you would take it down." Viscomi said, "I did a trial run and I really liked the way it looked. I really liked it. it looked clean and crisp."

Chairman Williams said, "when Dave (Neibert) was talking about the backing for it, that would be along the sides and possibly across the top to keep weather and birds from out behind

it. So it would build up with the contour.” Member Neibert asked, “is this *EXIT* right here the same size as this? Or is this much bigger?” Member Miller said, “it’s bigger.” Member Neibert said, “I don’t mean the whole sign, I mean the actual name *EXIT* . Viscomi said, “it’s similar in size.” Member Neibert said, “so, it would fit very nicely in that spot, right where it is now. It would be a little bit bigger sign but it would be clean and not detracting from the historical beauty of that building.” Viscomi said, “I don’t own the building. I think the landlord wouldn’t like me modifying his façade there.” Chairman Williams said, “you wouldn’t be modifying any of the detailing on the building. You would make a contour that would fit over that on the back side.” Member Neibert said, “there would be no cutting of this. The sign would actually come out and extend down. It would be flush with this and then you’d have a backing – where this obviously goes back a bit, I would assume up here, you’d have a filler in here that brings the signs so it actually is just going to be attached. Nothing is going to be destroyed on the door frame. There’s no cutting or anything. The sign would just be attached to it.” The Chairman said, “just 2 mountings like you’ve got already there.”

Viscomi asked, “just screw it right into the wood?” Member White said, “yes, when the sign is taken down you fill the holes. It’s not a problem, I have to ask you why do you want another sign. You have right now 3 signs on your building. It gives your name twice.” Viscomi replied, “since I applied for this sign 7 years ago, we changed our logo, our colors. I’m not identified with just that. This is our logo now. Our logo has changed.” Member White said, “then why would you even want to keep this sign?” Viscomi said, “It didn’t look bad to me when it was hanging. If you don’t like it there, I’ll take it down. My application is asking for a hanging sign.” Member Neibert said, “I’m opposed to a hanging sign. I think you can take that sign and just mount it where you already have an existing sign. Like I said, put backer behind it to bring it out because it’s going to extend down a little bit. It’s still going to have basically the same appearance that it has now, except you are going have a little bigger sign. But, it’s still going to retain the clean look of the front of the building.” Member Miller said, “I have to agree.”

Member Blackler asked, “you said something about changing the logo? Is it the dot com is what you mean? The change – I can’t see any big change.” Viscomi said, “the colors.” Member Blackler asked, “your franchise now has a red behind it – the whole franchise?” Viscomi said, “yes.” Member Neibert said, “I don’t have a problem with the color or anything. That sign just needs to be put where the existing sign already is, instead of hanging in the doorway.” Member Miller said, “I like it better too. Would you have a problem with doing that?” Member Neibert said, “just take that and mount it.” Member White said, “it’s really pretty simple, Joe.” Member Neibert said, “just right over what you already have there. And all you need is some filler around the side primarily just to fill in the gap on the sides.” The Chairman said, “to keep birds and weather out.” Member Neibert said, “it would look nice right there (pointing on photo). It’s just going to be down a little bit farther. I’d rather have it cover this little bit of woodwork than to hang down into the doorway. To me, that’s the lesser of the evils.”

Viscomi said, “I’m concerned about the owner of the building’s reaction to that – mounted to the side.” Member Neibert said, “but, there’s already a sign there mounted to the building.” Member White said, “I don’t think you’ll have any problem with that.” Member Neibert said, “all you are doing is just changing the sign. You are not putting new sign up. There’s already a sign there. It’s just a matter of you changing the from that to that.” Member

Miller said, "I don't see how Rob Gregory would oppose that." Member Blackler said, "we can't assume that he's going to say." Viscomi said, "I just think that hanging is less obtrusive to the building."

Robert Eggleston asked, "is this a public hearing?" Lanning asked, "was there a motion to open the public hearing." Member Blackler said, "no, but we can have that." Lanning asked for a copy of the proposal. One was given to him. The Chairman opened the floor to comments.

Eggleston said, "I just like to put a thought into your mind that is why do we have the tail wag the dog? Just because there happens to be a sign a certain size, that happens to be signs used everywhere else, why are we not taking the strip that is architecturally intended for a sign, rearrange his information that he needs on it to make it fit the space? So, it looks like the sign was designed for the space. You could have the *EXIT FIRST* the logo up within that 10-12 inch space. You could have the *EXIT.com* on the side. I'm sure a competent sign designer could design a sign using the colors, using the images, that could fit the architecturally correct." Member White said, "that's a great idea." Member Miller asked, "across the front?" Eggleston said, "just over the pediment." Member White said, "it's too bad you've hid that one already made because we hadn't approved it yet." Member Miller said, "he could still use that if he didn't want to go with Bob Eggleston's idea." Member White said, "but, that's a good idea. I think I like that better."

Viscomi said, "this is a very expensive sign. I don't really want to reproduce it." Member Smalley said, "then put that one up." Member Neibert said, "I don't have a problem with that sign because it would be centered. *EXIT* would be centered in the middle of the doorway area. I realize it would come down a little bit. I don't think it's that obtrusive. If you do *EXIT.com* then you are going to have a long sign with *EXIT* to the side and *dot com* off to the right. To me, it wouldn't be balanced looking." Member Miller said, "he could use the sign he has and put it up above. The Chairman said, "good idea Bob, but I can't visualize it." Member Neibert said, "I know what he means, but it would be a long – in that space, instead of coming down and centered in front of the door."

Lanning said, "what is the height of the doorway? How tall is this? It's a fairly big doorway. Do you know what the percentage of coverage is? (Batlle said, 1 ½ times the width of the building. If the building is 10 feet wide you can do 15 square feet of sign) The *Realty USA* sign is that currently up now? (yes) And was that approved by the Historical Commission? How long was that?" Member Miller said, "I think about 100 years ago." Member Blackler said, "it was when they became *Realty World*." Lanning said, "and that also blocks the chandelier behind it? And was there opposition to that sign going up?" Member Blackler said, "we don't have that paperwork with us tonight." Lanning asked, "but it did receive approval from your Board?" Member Blackler said, "or it would be down." Lanning said, "I am confused as why there would be a discrepancy between the 2 proposals. They seem almost similar." Member Neibert said, "because the other one shouldn't be there either as far as I'm concerned." Member White said, "I agree." Member Neibert said, "two wrongs don't make a right." Lanning said, "it just seems inconsistent."

Viscomi said, "my sign is smaller. The other one was approved and I thought this was a shoe-in. I don't understand why it's not being approved." The Chairman said, "the sign itself is." Member Neibert said, "it's the location of the sign." The Chairman said, "the doorway is similar except that you are centered under the pediment here. (shows using photo) So, that really brings attention to it right up there." member Neibert said, "I think it's a great spot for a sign. You eye goes right to it." The Chairman said, "hanging to me would look much more temporary."

Member Smalley said, **"I move that we approve the sign to be located where the existing EXIT is presently located, rather than hanging in the doorway."**

Seconded by Member Miller. The vote was 5-0 in favor of the motion with Member Blackler abstaining. The hearing was closed at 8:07pm.

email to: Williams