

Village of Skaneateles
Historical Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 9, 2012

Present: Patricia Blackler, Chairman, HLPC
Karlene Miller, Member
Andrew Ramsgard, Member
Mona Smalley, Member

Dennis Dundon, Clerk to the Historical Commission

Irene Callisto, Applicant, Syracuse, New York
Dava Schmidt, Skaneateles

Absent: Katharine Dyson, Member
Dave Neibert, Member
Beverly White, Member
Carol Young, Member

Chairman Blackler acknowledged that the time for the Public Hearing on the application of Irene Callisto for 58 East Genesee Street had arrived. She noted that the Commission did not have a quorum of members present, and therefore would not be able to conduct the Hearing nor take any action this evening, unless another member arrived. But inasmuch as the members who were present had little background on the application, Chairman Blackler said that she would be please to hear from the Applicant.

Ms. Callisto stated, "The sign was originally installed in Burlington, VT, where Isadora started. There you installed the sign and put a permit in your window for 30 days, and if no one objects, then...So it's interesting. And in Armory Square, there's unfortunately, nothing. Certainly there were buildings in downtown Syracuse that are historic districts, too. When they are able to spray-paint their signage on Salina Street, on plywood, that was disturbing when I moved there. So [showing photographs] this is it in color, and those are the dimensions." Chairman Blackler asked, "And this is your Syracuse store?" Ms. Callisto replied, "Correct, I mean it's the store that's closed."

Member Smalley asked, "So it would be white, the sign?" Ms. Callisto said, "No. It was gold, but if you looked at it, it doesn't look real gold, now, it looks more metallic. Like I said we could hoist it over here if you want, and that way..." Chairman Blackler said, "On the application it says it's going to be black with gold." Ms. Callisto replied, "Right, but the more I looked at it, I'm thinking 'it's faded', so it's not exactly the same color. It's not offensive or anything." Member Smalley asked, "So the sign is gold and the black trim is around the edges?"

ms. Callisto said, "Yes. It's obviously three dimensional." Member Smalley asked, "How do you pronounce this?" Ms. Callisto said, "'Isadora'. I know everyone thought that the 'I' was a 'T', so oftentimes they would say 'Tisadora'."

Chairman Blackler asked, "Now these dimensions, that are written here; these are right?" Ms. Callisto said, "Yes." Chairman Blackler continued, "Now we're checking in to see if it's too big." Ms. Callisto said, "Oh, he measured that, when I brought it in; the person that I brought it to [referring to CEO D'Amico]." Chairman Blackler asked, "Did he say it was too big?" Mr. Dundon responded, "No, his only comment was that it had to go before the Commission."

Member Ramsgard asked "Well we can't open a public hearing?" Chairman Blackler said, "No, but if you have an opinion, she could take it with her." Member Ramsgard said, "Then I would like to do that. Are there going to be minutes of the meeting?" Mr. Dundon replied, "Of course." Chairman Blackler added, "Then a Public hearing would have to be held later." Ms. Callisto said, "Later, meaning..." Members Ramsgard and Smalley said, "Next month." Mr. Ramsgard said, "If we can get a quorum together, we can publish a meeting, it's already been published as a public hearing so we can keep it open, and as long as we can..." Mr. Dundon said, "The Hearing is not being opened, so you would have to publish again." Ms. Callisto asked, "Is anybody you can call, to see if they are on their way?" Chairman Blackler said, "No, they would be here." Member Smalley agreed.

Member Ramsgard said, "We, hopefully we have somebody coming, so I'll try to take up the time now. One of the results is that if someone does not come, then we have to republish. I would be willing to come back for a special meeting, outside of our monthly meeting, as long as we can get it published, because it's unfortunate that we don't have a quorum." Chairman Blackler asked, "How long do you have to wait before; how long is included in the lead time." Mr. Dundon said, "The statute says 15 days; I typically operate on at least five days before the hearing."

Member Ramsgard said, "How it has been handled in the past – a person or business can apply for a temporary signage permit, that's, I believe, 60 days. You can check with Adam D'Amico, and I think he should be able to give you a temporary signage permit, which would get you through the difference in time between when we can get a quorum here and when you can get out." Chairman Blackler said, "So if you put that sign up, it would be temporary, if you did it that way." Ms. Callisto said, "Here's the thing, the owner of the building, Carmen Logan, took off the awning in order, for me, because it was going to be either cleaned or replace it. He knows that the building needs to be; it's peeling, it's in disrepair. So he was going to do that, and I was going to put the sign up and then he was going to put his awning back up. So it's sort of like everything is like in a holding pattern, so he can like paint and repair the front of the building and then once it's approved, he can put his awning back up." Member Ramsgard said, "You can always put it in the window, temporarily." Ms. Callisto said, "I have a small sign in that window, but it says 'fine lingerie' on it and my sign doesn't say that. That was my very first sign that I had; and over the years I've carried other things other than just lingerie, so I don't want people thinking it's just lingerie. I'll just work with the small sign and maybe put up the other one temporarily." Chairman Blackler said, "But you would need to be aware that that's a temporary sign, because we haven't made our Certificate of Approval yet. It might be things that

we want to discuss that compromise. So if you want to put your sign up, that's ok, but you would have to realize that maybe you'd have to change it a little." Ms. Callisto said, "The way that I'm looking at it, it's better temporarily up there than on the floor in the store."

Chairman Blackler asked, "Andy do you have an opinion?" Member Ramsgard said, "In granting the Certificate of Approval for the Historic Board, where a proposed change in the sign includes the lettering, there is required to be a scale drawing showing the type of lettering, which you have submitted; all the dimensions, which you have; the colors, we typically want to have a paint color number, chip. You talked about repainting it?" Ms. Callisto said "I think that if you saw it, it doesn't look like it's in disrepair or anything. If you didn't know that it was gold..." Ms. Schmidt said, "I'd have to say that it's silver now." Chairman Blackler said, "Well, we have to see that. And how about the awning, are we going to talk about the awning too, now? And we'd have to know the colors of the awning." Ms. Callisto, "It's the same, it will be black." Chairman Blackler, "The whole awning is black?" Ms Callisto, "Yes. It's the same awning that was there." Chairman Blackler, "Yes. Well this is hard for everyone to remember exactly." Ms. Callisto, "There's the picture." Ms. Schmidt, "It is just being cleaned right now. It just had like green moss growing on it."

Chairman Blackler said, "So to have a public hearing we are going to have to have that, and we're going to have to have paint chips, and if you have paint chips, you're going to have to tell us exactly the number of the paint." Ms. Callisto said, "It's not paint. The signage is not paint." The Applicant offered to get the sign and the members said she did not need to do that today. Ms. Callisto said, "If it's temporarily up, you'll see it." Ms. Schmidt added, "As you are talking about all this stuff, it's helping her decide what she needs to bring in." Member Ramsgard said, "What's also important is to get descriptions of the materials that are used on the sign. Your sign is already created. Part of our duty as a Historic board is to keep an accurate record of the things that we do and what get's approved. Those principles have been lax, and we need to make sure that those things are more strictly followed now. And so that's why we need to have a color. Dava, I know that you are great with colors. If you don't know what the color is, give us a Benjamin Moore color number that's close; that matches what it is." Ms. Callisto said, "It's not paint – it's carved..." There was discussion about what the material may be (polycarbonate? fiberglass?) and how to find out what the sign was made from, who made the sign, and the ability to get more detail from the maker, because a description is required to be part of the application.

Member Ramsgard continued, "Another part of the application is to have a plan showing the location on the building, so that the provisions of the local law are followed through. It should be easy enough for you to do – take a picture of the sign and superimpose it somehow on the building, so that we can see that and have that as part of our record. It is supposed to be reasonably to scale."

Chairman Blackler stated that the members present should give their opinions. Member Smalley said, "I have an opinion. I really hate to say anything negative in view of past experiences, however I walked up and down the street today, and there isn't a sign on Genesee Street that looks at all like this particular sign. And it is completely out of sync with everything else that I see as far as signage on the buildings. That's my opinion. I did do a little thing that made the sign acceptable, in my eyes; I took the little balls off the thing that goes like so..." Ms. Callisto

identified it as “an Art Nouveau flourish.” Member Smalley continued, “And I took the squiggles off the Isadora sign. I could be happy with that.” Ms. Callisto said, “But wait a minute. After 30 years of branding myself with that logo, and I have suffered greatly for 30 years in retail, it’s branding. And everybody knows that logo. That’s what; you say you don’t see it up and down the street. Of course not. How many lingerie stores do you have? You don’t want everything to be exactly alike. It never was.”

Member Ramsgard cited the National Historic Preservation Brief No. 25 that deals specifically with historic signage, and new signs on historic buildings. Historic sign practices are frequently unsympathetic to the buildings. Rather than dictating uniform signs within commercial districts, the National Park Service encourages communities to promote diversity in signs – in sizes, types, colors, lighting, lettering and other qualities. It encourages business owners to choose signs that reflect their own taste, values and personalities. Signs are part of the overall graphic system for the building; signs should work with the building, rather than against it. Sign placement should not obscure significant features of the historic building. Signs above a storefront should fit within the historic signboard. [In Skaneateles that’s often called the frieze – that big black band that cate & sally had] The sign materials should be compatible with characteristics and style of the building’s period. New signs should be attached to the building carefully to prevent damage to the historic fabric and to ensure the safety of pedestrians. [Fittings should penetrate major mortar joints rather than the brick, and sign loads should be properly calculated and distributed.]

Chairman Blackler said, “I relate to what you said about being your sign, and logo for many years. This is not even under our rules, these are national suggestions. The Zoning is our rules. And we’re not making a decision tonight, but we do have opinions that I think are good for you to hear. Our own Zoning rules are a little bit more flexible.” Ms. Callisto said, “I understand completely, and I also understand that historically the way that signage used to be at the turn of the century was really outrageous – there was painting all over, big hands pointing this way and that way – they did everything. And if it had been around, neon would have been everywhere. It really was no holds barred.” Chairman Blackler said, “We don’t have exactly how your sign should be. The point is you are bringing us your opinion and we’re going to talk about it. The writing doesn’t affect me as negatively as maybe it affects somebody else here. Because it’s the kind of merchandise you have, it kind of relates to that; I can understand that completely. I wouldn’t want to change; I like the Isadora only, and in that font is fine with me.” Member Miller said, “I would too, but I hear what you are saying – this is your logo.” Ms. Schmidt said, “If you start carving out the flourishes, you are taking away the artistry – what is representing her style inside the store as well.”

Member Ramsgard said, “I think your sign is very nice, Irene. I think the historic preservation guidelines are very clear on how signage should reflect the business. If we followed only historically designed signage, we would be admitting to a lot of bad taste in many cases.”

Chairman Blackler asked, “What about the placement Andy?” Member Ramsgard replied, “That’s the thing I am most concerned about. I’m almost glad we don’t have a quorum because I would find it difficult to vote in favor of this as it is tonight. What we need for a complete application to understand your proposal and understanding how it fits, particularly with how the awning comes into play. I don’t understand the placement of the signage in respect to the plane

of the building.” Chairman Blackler said, “And we would also have to know exactly how it is to be attached.” Ms. Callistro said, “I haven’t even attempted it.” Ms. Schmidt said, “To me, it looks like it is going to go above the awning on the frieze.” Mr. Ramsgard said, “Right, but I remember the awning – it is pitched. And your flourish comes way down here. So you’re going to have a problem...” Ms. Schmidt said, “It can’t be where ‘cate&sally’ was, it needs to actually go up. It would be on the frieze.” Chairman Blackler said, “I think you’re right; it’s a good thing we’re having the discussion before the public hearing, because you don’t have some of the things we really need to see.”

Mr. Ramsgard said, “What would help us understand that, is to take a picture of the building, cut it off your business card and put it on and photocopy it. That’s really all it is that we’re looking for.” Ms. Callistro said, “But I’d have to blow it up to scale.” The members affirmed that it should be to scale. Member Ramsgard summarized, “That, along with the list of materials, color identified as close as possible, and how you put it relative to the awning and how it gets attached.” The members indicated that they cannot speak for the members who are not present tonight.

Ms. Callistro asked “Is it a matter of as long as it’s within the guidelines of size and placement...” Chairman Blackler said “We’re not going to make you change your sign.”

Member Smalley said, “I would like it better if it didn’t look like this.” Ms. Callistro replied, “Right, and I would like it better if I was a blonde. It’s opinion, and everyone’s entitled to it. But when opinion interferes with someone’s business and trying to continue what they have worked very hard at, then that kind of goes out the window.” Member Smalley said she didn’t know if it would come under the category of undue hardship. Ms. Callistro thought it definitely would.

Member Ramsgard said, “The issue at least for me is not your signage or not your logo or the esthetic that we saw, it is does it fit on the building within the scale. Because it may not fit. You might have to make a new sign. I would not allow my decision to be swayed by what looks historically appropriate just because you have a sign that came off another store. It might have to be scaled differently to fit the architecture of the building, and in my opinion, that’s the most important aspect for determining right or wrong for your sign.”

Chairman Blackler said, “We will work up making sure we have a quorum next time and also making sure we have the right amount of days.” Mr. Dundon said, “The next regular meeting is 13th of June.” Member Ramsgard supports a special meeting within the timetable for publishing. Mr. Dundon indicated that the earliest the meeting could be scheduled was Wednesday, May 23, 2012. To clear conflicts the members present agreed to a start time of 6 PM.

Member Ramsgard recapped the list of things the Applicant needs to produce for the hearing: color, size & location, how will it be attached and description of materials.

This discussion concluded and the Applicants departed at 8:09 PM.