



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item  
Meeting of March 14, 2009**

**DATE:** February 25, 2009

**SUBJECT:** SP #153 RP MRP Courthouse, LLC; amend conditions to allow administrative re-facing of monument sign; 1310 N. Courthouse Rd. (RPC #18-003-108).

**Applicant:**

RP MRP Courthouse, LLC

**By:**

Nan E. Walsh, Esquire  
Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich & Walsh P.C.  
2200 Clarendon Boulevard, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

**C. M. RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the site plan amendment subject to one (1) amended condition and one (1) new condition.

**ISSUE:** This is a site plan amendment request to amend the conditions of the existing site plan in order to allow re-facing of signs on a vent structure at the site, and to clarify the types, sizes, and locations allowed for the signs; there are no issues.

**SUMMARY:** The applicant requests a site plan amendment to modify language regarding an existing monument sign at the former Verizon Building. The monument sign is part of a parking garage vent structure located at the plaza at the southeastern corner of the site. The applicant is requesting a change to the condition language to allow an administrative re-facing of the signs. The County Board approved an application in 1984 for Bell Atlantic to locate signs on this structure, as the primary tenant of the building at that time. The condition that permitted the Bell Atlantic signs references a specific drawing and mentions the sizes, designs, and colors of the signs. It is for this reason that an administrative change request to re-face the signs on the vent structure could not be approved. Staff is in support of this request to make the conditions governing signs on the vent structure less ambiguous. Therefore, staff recommends approval of this application subject to one (1) amended condition, and one (1) new condition.

County Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

County Attorney: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff: Matthew Pfeiffer, CPHD, Planning Division

PLA-5201

**BACKGROUND:** Site Plan (SP) #153 was approved by the County Board on November 20, 1979. The plan called for a 12-story office building and a 3-story underground parking garage for 1310 to 1314 North Courthouse Road, within the Courthouse Metro Station area. The site is described as follows:

Site: Located at 1310 N. Courthouse Rd., the site is bound as follows:

To the north:	Plaza; 14 <sup>th</sup> St. N; surface parking lot; County Government Offices, County Courthouse
To the west:	Office building; N. Veitch St.; high-rise residential buildings
To the east:	N. Courthouse Rd.; hotel building, office building; high-rise residential buildings
To the south:	13 <sup>th</sup> St. N; high-rise hotel and residential buildings; Rt. 50

Zoning: The site is zoned “C-O” Commercial Office Building, Hotel and Multiple-Family Dwelling Districts

Land Use: The site is designated on the General Land Use Plan (GLUP) as “High Office-Apartment-Hotel.”

Neighborhood: The site is located within the Clarendon-Courthouse Civic Association, and proximate to the Radnor/Ft. Myer Heights Civic Association.

**Approved Plans and Policies:** Zoning Ordinance Sections 25B, the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, and the *Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum*.

**Existing Development:** SP #153, consists of a 342,002 square foot office building; a 5,022 square foot plaza; and a 365,937 square-foot office building approved in 1989.

**DISCUSSION:** Five (5) years after the original approval, in 1984, the County Board approved a series of signs for the major tenant of the building, Bell Atlantic. Among various signs requiring County Board approval, including rooftop signs, the package included a request to erect signs on the four sides of an existing garage vent—a free standing structure located at the southwestern corner of the site, and facing Courthouse Road. The four signs approved were 54.75 sq. ft. each, for a total of 219 sq. ft. of sign area, and were placed at the top of each side of the cube-shaped vent structure. The following is the history of County Board and administrative action for the signs on the vent structure:

- In October, 1997, the County Board approved an increase in size of the four identification signs on the vent structure, in concert with a re-facing request to accommodate a change in Bell Atlantic’s logo. The signs increased to 99.48 sq. ft. each for a total of 397.92 sq. ft.

total. The request was approved because additional sign area was needed to accommodate the new Bell Atlantic logo.

- In 2001, when the Bell Atlantic company changed its name to Verizon, an administrative change was approved by the Zoning Administrator which allowed the signs to be re-faced with the new “Verizon” wording and logo. Administrative re-facing of signs is allowed as long as the size and locations of the signs are the same and the condition does not otherwise prohibit the re-facing. The administrative change was approved and the new “Verizon” signs were erected.
- In August, 2008, after Verizon had vacated its office space at 1310 N. Courthouse Rd., Arnold Worldwide, an advertizing and marketing firm which occupies approximately 23,000 sq. ft. of space in the building, applied for an administrative change to re-face the vent structure with their signs. As the signs were slightly smaller in size and contained the same general colors as the Verizon signs, the administrative change request was approved. However, shortly thereafter, Arnold indicated that it would not re-face the signs as approved. The building owner then submitted an administrative change request for Fitness First, a gym that occupies approximately 19,000 sq. ft. of space on the ground floor of the building, to re-face the signs with its wording and logo. This request was denied because of the colors of the proposed signs did not comport with the condition. Furthermore, the intent of the original County Board approval of the signs was to identify the building’s major tenant, not a retail tenant.

The applicant is requesting an amendment to the condition language that governs what types of signs are allowed on the vent structure. Staff recommends removing the language that specifically ties the color and designs of the signs to a specific drawing. Also, staff recommends the addition of a new condition that would clarify the type of signs to be allowed on the structure in any future re-facing. The applicant does not currently propose any signs on the structure, but the new condition language would establish parameters for administrative approval of any future signs.

Because the signs were originally approved as identification signs for the building, staff recommends prohibiting retail signs, and restricting them to either the wording and logo of the major office tenant of the building (as determined by the building owner), or a traditional building identification sign including the address of the building. The size and location of the signs are recommended to be kept the same as was approved by the County Board in 1997, which would allow reasonable re-facing requests.

**CONCLUSION:** The applicant is requesting a modification to condition language to allow a process for administrative re-facing of signs on an existing vent structure at the southeastern corner of the office building at 1310 N. Courthouse Rd. New condition language would restrict signs to primary office tenants or building identification signs, in keeping with prior County Board approval. Sign size and location would also be restricted to that which was previously approved by the County Board. Staff is in support of this request to make the conditions governing signs on the vent structure less ambiguous. Therefore, staff recommends approval of this application subject to one (1) amended condition, and one (1) new condition.

- **The following one (1) amended condition and one (1) new condition apply to signs on the vent structure at the southeastern corner of the building at 1310 North Courthouse Road only, and, while all conditions relating to Site Plan #153 remain in effect, insofar as there is a conflict between existing conditions regarding signs on the vent structure, and the following, the conditions for this site plan amendment will supersede any previously approved conditions:**

Amended Condition, Originally Approved by County Board October 28, 1997

1. The sizes, designs and colors of the signs shall be as shown on the accompanying graphics as prepared by the Acme Wiley Corporation, titled “E.005 Flexible Illum. Wall Sign/Letter Set (dated 7/14/97)”, “E.005 Flexible Illum Wall Signs (dated 7/14/97)” and ~~“Illum. Monument Sign”~~ and reviewed and approved by the County Board on November 8, 1997. The applicant agrees to turn off the two illuminated rooftop identification signs at 11:00 p.m. each night.

New Condition (applies to signs on the vent structure at the corner of 13<sup>th</sup> St. N. and N. Courthouse Rd.)

2. The applicant agrees that the following regulations shall apply to signs on the vent structure located at the southeastern corner of the site:
  - a. The location and placement of signs on the structure shall conform to documents submitted for previous County Board approval (Attachment A to County Board Agenda Item PLA-5201 for March 14, 2009 Meeting).
  - b. Sign area shall not exceed 100 square feet for each sign—or a total of 400 square feet for all signs on the structure. All signs on the vent structure are permitted to be illuminated.
  - c. All four signs shall have the same display; either the name and/or logo of either the primary office tenant or a major office tenant as determined by the Building Owner, or display building identification signs (i.e. building name or address). Retail signs shall not be displayed on the vent structure.
  - d. Changes to the design, color, and display of the signs may be approved administratively by the Zoning Administrator.

PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:

November 1979	Approved a site plan for an office building and parking garage.
May 1980	Approved a site plan amendment to incorporate an adjacent 5,022 square foot lot at 2046 and 2050 – 14 <sup>th</sup> St. N.
February 1984	Approved a site plan amendment for building identification signage
November 1984	Deferred a site plan amendment to convert 13,220 sq ft of retail/commercial space to office space (upper and lower lobby levels) to re-advertise application.
December 1984	Approved part of a site plan amendment request; approved conversion of 7,105 sq ft of retail/commercial to office space (upper lobby level) for a period of four years; denied conversion of 4,115 sq ft of retail/commercial to office space (lower lobby level).
April 1985	Deferred site plan amendment to convert 6,115 sq ft of lower lobby retail/commercial space, east side, to office GFA.
May 1986	Approved site plan amendment to convert 6,115 sq ft of lower lobby retail/commercial space, east side, to office GFA on a temporary basis until December 1988.
March 1989	Deferred a General Land Use Plan Amendment from “Public” to “High” Office-Apartment-Hotel; a rezoning request from “R-5”, “C-2” and “C-3” to “C-O”; a site plan amendment request to modify Condition #8 to permit conversion of 6,217 sq ft of retail/commercial space on the lower lobby level to office GFA; a site plan amendment to incorporate addition site area and permit construction of an eight-story office building consisting of 293,174 sq ft of office GFA (including approximately 17,000 sq ft of bonus density).
April 1989	Deferred the above requests
May 1989	Deferred the above requests

July 1989	Approved a General Land Use Plan Amendment from “Public” to “High” Office-Apartment-Hotel; a rezoning request from “R-5”, “C-2” and “C-3” to “C-O”; a site plan amendment request to modify Condition #8 to permit conversion of 6,217 sq ft of retail/commercial space on the lower lobby level to office GFA; a site plan amendment to incorporate addition site area and permit construction of a nine-story office building consisting of 365,000 sq ft of GFA (including approximately 33,000 sq ft of bonus density and 795 parking spaces).
March 1990	Deferred a site plan amendment request to amend Condition #45 to relocate 2,156 sq ft of retail GFA from Building Two to the plaza of Building One.
April 1990	Deferred a site plan amendment request as described above.
May 1990	Approved a site plan amendment request to amend Condition #45 to relocate 2,000 sq ft of retail GFA from Building Two to the plaza of Building One.
July 1990	Approved a parking reduction for Building Two; accepted withdrawal of a request to amend Condition #20 to permit the transformer ventilation grates to be located in the public plaza area.
May 1991	Deferred a site plan amendment request for a 67-ft high radio frequency antenna.
July 1991	Deferred the above request.
September 1991	Deferred the above request
November 1991	Accepted withdrawal of a request for a 67-ft high antenna.
November 1997	Approved a site plan amendment request for four building/wall mounted signs with logo, including two rooftop signs, one wall mounted sign above the main pedestrian entrance and one four-sided monument sign.
December 1997	Approved a site plan amendment request to amend Condition #42 to extend the required demolition date from December 13, 1997 to December 31, 1998 and to allow construction of the plaza to commence up to one year after the demolition.

July 1998	Deferred a site plan amendment request to the September, 12, 1998 County Board meeting.
September 1998	Deferred a site plan amendment request to the October 17, 1998 County board meeting.
October 1998	Deferred a site plan amendment request to the November 14, 1998 County Board meeting.
November 1998	Approved a site plan amendment request to modify condition language regarding the requirement for retail on the public plaza, and to extend the date of demolition to July 31, 1999.