

Historic District Review Committee

Staff Report
June 14, 2010

Action Item

CAPP 2010-0010 Waterford Foundation: Projecting Sign on the Old Mill in the Waterford Historic District: MCPI 303-36-0508.

Background

This application is for the retroactive approval of a projecting sign on the Old Mill located at 40105 Main Street in the Waterford Historic and Cultural Conservation District. The three story brick mill was constructed circa 1818 and served the surrounding area until the mill operation ceased in 1939. The Waterford Foundation owns the property and interprets the structure as part of a comprehensive public education program. The Old Mill is a contributing resource to the Waterford National Historic Landmark District. The National Trust for Historic Preservation holds an easement on the property. The application for retroactive approval of the existing interpretive sign includes an approval letter from the Trust.

The existing sign projects from the front the building, and hangs from a black metal bracket located near the bottom of the second story historic mill door. The applicant has stated in the Statement of Justification (SOJ) that the sign bracket has been in this location since the 1950's and once held a sign related to Waterford Fair activities. The current sign was designed to fit the bracket by the Waterford Foundation's Education Committee and functions as part of the historic interpretation of the building and its place in the village. The sign has been in place since 2000.

According to the Zoning Referral letter dated May 28, 2010, there are no zoning issues associated with this application.

Analysis

The proposed sign is evaluated against Chapter 8 of the Loudoun County Historic District Guidelines for the Waterford Historic District (Waterford Guidelines), which specifically addresses signs.

Design, Compatibility, and Execution

The sign design and bracket should reinforce and relate to the architectural character and era of the building while fitting into the building's design in a manner that does not obscure architectural elements. The sign should be readable and convey an image appropriate for the business. The Guidelines recommend employing design and sign professionals (Waterford Guidelines, Guidelines for Signs: Design, Compatibility, and Execution, Guidelines 1-4, p. 134).

The existing 27" x 30" double sided, wood sign is attached to a simple metal bracket and projects from the front of the Mill above the first floor mill door. The sign design is a stylized square. The black lettering relates to the font style and size found on the street signs in the village. The lettering is hand painted and simply states the name of the building and the dates of mill operation. The sign includes a hand painted sheaf of wheat, clearly relating the sign to the historic function of the building as a grist mill. The bracket design also denotes the function of the building as the scroll design terminates in the shape of a mill wheel. The sign does not obscure any architectural building features and meets this Guideline.

Size and Number

The Waterford Guidelines recommend limiting the number of signs to two or three, with only one wall sign per street frontage, to reduce visual clutter and be compatible with the building. The total size limit for all commercial signs per building is 50 square feet (Waterford Guidelines, Guidelines for Signs: Size and Number, Guidelines 1-3, p. 134).

This application relates to a single projecting sign located on the primary elevation of the building, and meets this Guideline.

Shape, Color, Materials, and Lighting

The sign shape should be appropriately shaped for its location, utilizing colors that complement the building. Traditional sign materials are recommended (Waterford Guidelines, Guidelines for Signs: Shape, Color, Materials, and Lighting, Guidelines 1, 3, 4, p. 135). Staff notes that the proposed sign will not be illuminated.

The hand painted wooden sign is a stylized square with flanged corners, painted white. The style, colors and materials complement the building and incorporate symbols relating to the historic function of the building as an operating mill meeting this Guideline.

Lettering Styles

The Guidelines suggest considering a font style that relates to the era of the building's architecture and is easy to read from a distance (Waterford Guidelines, Guidelines for Signs: Lettering Styles, Guidelines 1-2, p. 135).

As stated previously, the hand painted black lettering is simple, traditional, and legible. The font style and size is similar to that found on the street signs in the village and meets this Guideline. The sign is aesthetically pleasing and appropriate for the Mill and informational as the sign functions as part of the historic interpretation of the structure.

Findings

1. The design, size, number, shape, color, materials, letter font and location of the projecting sign and bracket on the Old Mill meet the Waterford Guidelines.

Recommendation

Staff recommends retroactive approval of the application.

Suggested Motions

- 1. I move that the Historic District Review Committee retroactively approve Certificate of Appropriateness 2010-0010 for a projecting sign at 40105 Main Street in accordance with the Loudoun County Historic District Guidelines for the Waterford Historic and Cultural Conservation District based on the finding that the design, size, number, shape, color, materials, letter font and location of the existing sign meets the Sign Guidelines for the Waterford District.*
- 2. I move that the Historic District Review Committee retroactively approve Certificate of Appropriateness 2010-0010 for a projecting sign at 40105 Main Street in accordance with the Loudoun County Historic District Guidelines for the Waterford Historic and Cultural Conservation District based on the finding that the design, size, number, shape, color, materials, letter font and location of the existing sign meets the Sign Guidelines for the Waterford District with the following conditions...*
- 3. I move alternate motion...*