

Town of Washington | Architectural Review Board Meeting Minutes | December 15, 2025

Present:

Wesley Kerr (ARB Member, Chair)
Dwight McNeill (ARB Member, Vice Chair)
Ryan Crabbe (ARB Member, Secretary)
Drew Mitchell (ARB Member)
Fred Catlin (ARB Member)

Call to Order

W. Kerr called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Proposal to Approve Agenda

W. Kerr called for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. D. Mitchell motioned to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

The Board reviewed prior meeting minutes and addressed outstanding approvals from earlier meetings referenced during discussion (including August minutes and another prior set that had not been actioned at the last meeting). A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Zoning Administrator Report

W. Kerr noted that the zoning administrator did not provide a report for the meeting.

Re: Old Business

The Chair noted that old business would be taken after new business due to agenda pacing.

New Business:

Item #1: Renewal of Expired COA - 567 Gay Street

- a. Background: The COA was previously approved, applicants were not present, no changes were submitted to the previously-approved COA.
- b. ARB Review and Member Discussion: The Board treated this as a renewal to allow completion of the work. A motion to renew the COA was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Item #2: Wall Sign Application - 261 Main Street

- a. Zoning Administrator Review: Zoning Administrator did not raise any zoning issues with the signage.
- b. Applicant Presentation: Applicant was not present for a presentation.
- c. Public Comment: W. Kerr opened the floor for public comment. No members of the public offered comments during the meeting.
- d. ARB Review and Member Discussion: Members noted ARB signage guidelines indicating wall signs should be painted wood. Members referenced a prior sign application for the same business/location where additional detail was requested. Without the applicant present and without a complete material/mounting description, members indicated the submission was not sufficiently ready for review.

F. Catlin motioned to defer the application pending additional detail and guidance to align with the signage guidelines. R. Crabbe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item #3: IALW Parking Lot Improvements including new Lighting and Fencing

- a. Zoning Administrator Review: The applicant had not yet updated the site plan to clearly include lighting locations.
- b. Applicant Presentation: Applicant presented revised parking lot lighting concept including a lantern-style fixture intended to be modified to reduce upward light (described as a capped/copper-top approach) and a downward-facing light source. Fixtures to be installed on low bases/walls (approx. 1–3 feet depending on grade), placed within circular parking lot islands outlined with cobblestone. Applicant described intent to plant mature trees over time for canopy and shielding. Fence lighting described as small, downward-facing solar fixtures, lowered to reduce glare and visibility to neighboring properties.
- c. Public Comment: A neighboring resident, Wendy Murdoch, raised concerns about existing and cumulative light pollution impacting her home, questioned whether the proposed fixture is truly dark-sky compliant, and requested consideration of dimming capability, motion-sensored operations, and lights turning off after certain hours or when the lot is not in use. A second neighboring resident, Joan Platt, stated she contacted the manufacturer and was told the fixture was not dark-sky compliant as shown; she requested visual documentation of the proposed modifications and expressed support for motion sensors/dimming.

d. ARB Review and Member Discussion: Members reiterated that dark-sky lighting is an intention/goal for the town, though not currently required by ordinance. Members requested additional documentation before acting, including clearer lighting specifications and drawings showing how the fixture will be modified (including bulb placement and shielding), confirmation of whether motion sensors and/or dimming can be integrated, and elevations showing the full installation (islands/bases/post/fixture/grades), rather than focusing on the fixture alone.

R. Crabbe motioned to table the application to give applicant time to explore a prototypical design drawing that possibly explores dark-sky compatibility and integration of motion sensor technology, plus to submit elevations for the parking light islands. D. Mitchell seconded. The motion passed 4-1 with W. Kerr voting no.

Old Business

Item #4: Request of the Rappahannock Association for Arts and Community (RAAC) for renovations and expansion to the Little Washington Theatre - 291 Gay Street

a. Zoning Administrator Review: Discussion noted certain nonconforming/grandfathered conditions applicable to the site, including signage; the zoning administrator indicated the proposed signage square footage appeared to be less than existing.

b. Applicant Presentation and Board Discussion: Matthew Black, President of the Rappahannock Association for Arts and community (RAAC), returned to address materials and design questions, including siding, windows, roof, exterior lighting, and signage.

Applicant presented HardiePlank siding (cedar-mill texture) with Boral trim (smooth). Applicant emphasized desire for consistent siding rather than patchwork replacement.

Applicant proposed wood interior windows with aluminum-clad exterior for reduced long-term maintenance. The Board discussed precedent in the historic district and discussed a compromise: wood windows on the first-floor front façade (street/eye-level), with aluminum-clad windows acceptable elsewhere.

Applicant confirmed continuation of asphalt shingles to match existing, citing cost and performance/noise concerns. Applicant emphasized intent to match existing shingles closely.

Applicant described downward-facing lighting with warmer color temperature, plus use of timers and motion sensors where appropriate. Members discussed certain proposed fixtures reading as contemporary and suggested exploring more traditional-looking options (including gooseneck fixtures) and/or painting fixtures to reduce visual prominence.

Applicant summarized intent to reduce overall signage and add “Little Washington Theatre” lettering above the marquee/canopy. Members discussed concerns around prominence, style, lighting, and precedent; applicant provided rationale tied to theatre tradition and community feedback from fundraising conversations.

- e. Public Comment: W. Kerr opened the floor for public comment. No members of the public offered comments during the meeting.

D. Mitchell motioned to approve the remaining application submissions as amended; amendments include the use of HardiePlank siding with Boral trim conforming with Department of Interior standards, wooden windows on the first floor front facade, gooseneck light fixtures over the doors (small black, 1940s style). There was consideration but no amendments made to the originally submitted signage package. F. Catlin seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-1 with R. Crabbe voting no.

Adjournment

W. Kerr motioned to adjourn the meeting. D. McNeill seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled ARB meeting will be held on January 19, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.