MSA Memo

To:	Village of Palmyra Planning Commission
From:	John Schwartz
Subject:	115 Third Street – American Legion Hall Reconstruction and Façade Review / Conditional Use Permit
Date:	October 13, 2026

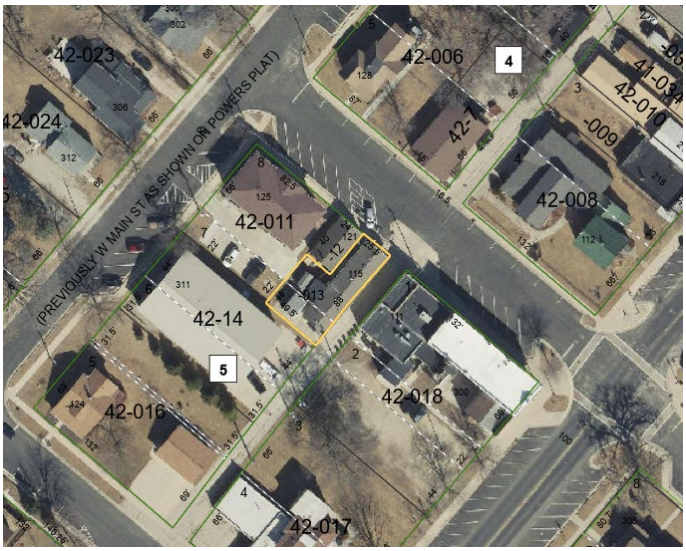
Request

Thomas-Holcomb Post 304, Inc., represented by Commander Donald J. Rutkowski, is requesting approval of a Conditional Use Permit and associated façade/site plan review for the American Legion Hall at 115 Third Street. The project is part of a reconstruction effort following fire damage. The building cannot be restored to its original appearance, so a revised façade is proposed. The building will remain within its existing footprint and continue to be used as an American Legion Hall.

Under §17.05(7)(d), new construction, additions, and exterior remodeling in the B1 District require conditional use review.

Background

Owner/Applicant: Thomas-Holcomb Post 304, Inc.
Applicant Representative: Donald J. Rutkowski
Property Location: 115 Third Street
Existing and Proposed Zoning: B1 Central Business District
Parcel Number: 171-0516-2242-013
Aerial view of parcel and street view image:





The new proposed façade is a blue lower wall section with a vertical siding pattern, a red upper wall section with a shingle-style pattern, white trim, ground-level windows, an entrance door, flag, and an American Legion sign. *Proposed design shown below:*



Compliance with Design Standards and Guidelines

The Zoning Code contains both guidelines and standards for building design. Guidelines are aspects of design which the Village Code encourages but does not require conformance to. Standards indicate it is required, unless Plan Commission grants a waiver. Plan Commission should determine if these are met, and if not, they can be addressed via either adding conditions to the approval or denying the application.

Relevant ordinance language is listed below. My opinion is listed after each condition in bold text. Certain items have been highlighted for emphasis.

§17.10(10)(c) — Building Design [guidelines]

1. Building Height. Building heights should be consistent within a given block. Stand alone commercial buildings are encouraged to establish a one-and-a-half (1.5) story presence. This can be accomplished by increasing the overall height of the building, by raising a cornice above the roofline, or providing a pitched roof. **Condition Met - The raised front wall provides a taller street presence.**
2. Exterior Building Walls. All new non-residential buildings are encouraged to utilize details or changes in materials to create a discernible base, middle, and top. Larger industrial buildings should have a small office component fronting the public street. **Condition Met – lower and upper sections distinguished.**
3. Roofline. Parapet walls with cornices are encouraged. Cosmetic “fake” parapets and facades, if used, should be designed three-dimensionally to hide their “fake” characteristics (as they usually lack depth). **Condition Met – Parapet wall is provided along front façade.**
4. Facades. The base of the building should include elements that relate to the human scale. These include doors, windows, texture, projections, awnings, ornamentation, etc. All building faces should use design features (i.e. window proportions, expression of structural bays, etc.) similar to the primary front façade. Secondary facades facing a public street (corner building) are encouraged to incorporate the same materials and design elements (proportions, scale, windows, doors, etc.) as the primary façade. If a change of design or material is desired, make the transition at an architectural feature, such as a column, structural bay articulation,

protruding/receding building plane, etc. **Condition Met – windows, entrance provided for pedestrians**

5. Windows and Doors. The use of reflective or dark-tinted glass on the front façade is discouraged, especially at the ground level. A minimum of two (2) feet is desired between the glass and any interior dividers to allow for product display. **Condition Met**
6. Projections
   a. The use of ground floor awnings and canopies are encouraged.
   b. Awning colors should relate to and complement the primary colors of the building façade.
   c. Glowing awnings (backlight, light shows through the material) are discouraged. Preferred lighting methods include lighting fixtures directed down onto the awning or light fixtures beneath the awning directed towards the sidewalk.
   d. Awnings using wood or shingle components are discouraged. Cloth, vinyl, and metal are the preferred awning materials.

   All Conditions Not Applicable – no awning or canopy.
7. Colors and Materials.
   a. Day-glow, fluorescent or neon, colors are strongly discouraged. Bright colors should not be used as the primary facade color, but rather as a secondary color to highlight expression lines or details
   b. Preferred exterior finish materials include kiln-fired brick, stucco, terra cotta, wood siding and details, and fiber cement siding.
   c. Using vinyl siding as primary building material on the front facade is strongly discouraged.
   d. EIFS (Exterior Insulation and Finish System) is discouraged as a principle facade material, especially at ground level where susceptible to damage, but is acceptable above the ground floor and as an accent material.
   e. Gravel aggregate materials, stone or cultured stone in a random ashlar pattern, rough-sawn wood siding, polished stone, and panelized products are strongly discouraged as exterior building materials.

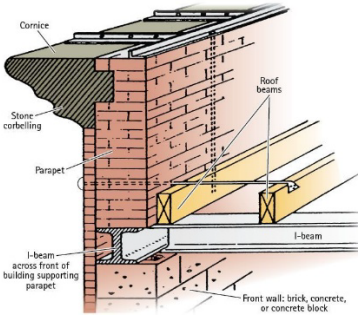
   Plan Commission to determine if (a) is met – substantial red upper wall could be considered against bright color guideline
8. Corporate Identity. Buildings should be easily utilized for a wide variety of businesses, avoiding franchise design that signifies a particular brand or product. Corporate identity should be apparent yet reserved in its display. **Condition Met**

§17.10(10)(d) — Standards

1. Building Height. Refer to the bulk regulations described in Section 17.05(6). For B1, Table 17.05-B lists the maximum principal building height as 42 feet. **Condition Met**
2. Exterior Building Walls. All building walls shall have architectural interest and variety to avoid the effect of a single, long or massive wall with no relation to human scale. Any building with a total width equal to or greater than its height shall utilize one or more of the following techniques:
   a. Expressions of structural bays
   b. Variations in material,
   c. Variation in the building plane. Where a commercial or industrial building abuts residential zoning districts, the building shall use the same architectural materials on all sides of the building.

   Condition Met - The contrasting lower and upper wall sections establish architectural interest through differing materials, colors, and pattern orientations.

3. Roofline. A positive visual termination at the top of the building shall be established, using either a pitched roof with gable(s) facing the street or a flat roof with a defined cornice. Pitched roofs shall have a slope no less than 5:12. Where a commercial or industrial building abuts a residential zoning districts, the building shall have pitched roofs matching the roof lines of adjoin residential structures. **Condition Generally Met – Building shows small upper trim, but not a fully defined cornice. Looking at the other buildings in downtown Palmyra, I would argue that this design is generally in line with the established architectural character; some have decorative/prominent cornices but some just have a simple trim line like this one does. The white/stepped trim does seem to provide a clear visual termination.**





4. Facades. A discernible "base" shall be established. The base shall be at least two (2) feet in height, but may include the entire first floor. Buildings to be used primarily for industrial uses are excluded from this standard. **Condition Met - The contrasting colors/materiality of the lower and upper wall portions establishes a clear base.**
5. Windows and Doors. Facades within 80 feet of a public street shall be comprised of at least thirty (30) percent clear glass measured from two (2) to ten (10) feet above the ground. Buildings to be used primarily for industrial uses may meet this thirty percent threshold using the entire façade (rather than between two and ten feet). **Condition Not Met – Plan Commission should either recommend this requirement be waived or recommend requiring additional glass on the front façade. Current proposal appears roughly 15-20% glass within that 2-10 ft range. Since the proposed use is not a commercial store, an exception is justifiable. Rough estimation of applicable area:**



6. Building Entrances. A minimum of one (1) functional building entrance shall be provided along the building façade facing the street. Buildings that face multiple streets shall provide an entrance facing the more prominent of the two streets. **Condition Met**
7. Projections. Awnings/canopies shall be at least three (3) feet in depth and the underside of the projection shall be at least eight (8) feet above the sidewalk. **Not applicable – No canopy or awning shown**
8. Colors and Materials. No building shall be permitted the design or exterior appearance which is of such unorthodox or abnormal character in relation to the surroundings as to be unsightly or offensive to generally accepted taste. Additional, no building shall be permitted the design or exterior appearance which is so identical with those adjoining as to create excessive monotony and drabness. **Condition Met – front façade is varied and consistent with Palmyra's downtown character.**

MSA Recommendation

MSA recommends approval of the Conditional Use Permit and associated façade/site plan subject to the following conditions:

1. Approved scope and permits. Construction shall conform to the approved plans. Changes beyond the reviewed scope shall be submitted for further review, and all required permits shall be obtained before the work they authorize begins.

LEAVE AS A CONDITION OF APPROVAL, OR RECOMMEND THE BOARD EXEMPTS STANDARD #5:

2. Clear glass requirement. Prior to final Village Board approval, the plans shall be revised as necessary to provide at least 30 percent clear glass within the façade area between two and ten feet above ground on each façade within 80 feet of a public street. Dimensioned elevations and glazing calculations shall be submitted for verification by the Zoning Administrator.

OPTIONAL TO INCLUDE, IF PLAN COMMISSION BELIEVES GUIDELINE #7(a) IS NOT FULLY MET:

3. Upper façade color. The applicant is encouraged to revise the red upper wall to a more muted, less saturated color. A proposed color sample should be submitted to the Zoning Administrator for review prior to final Village Board approval.

Sincerely,

John Schwartz | Assistant Planner
MSA Professional Services, Inc.
100% Employee Owned
+1 (608) 355-8955