Dear Cranston Planning Board Members:

I write to you regarding the Shriner's digital billboard installed on Broad Street near the intersection of Broad and Rhodes Place at the northern entrance to historic Pawtuxet Village. I have visited Pawtuxet Village many times and as one who values Rhode Island's historic villages, I have admired Pawtuxet's scenic qualities, village feel, and the ongoing revitalization of the area, both for commercial and residential use. In my opinion the Shriner's new sign is a huge step backward.

This sign is completely out of character with Pawtuxet village and Broad Street at an important entry to the village from the north. This high-tech, digital sign is a distracting nuisance and blight on Broad Street in close proximity to the Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet Gazabo which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is also located at the northern Broad Street entrance to Pawtuxet Village, which is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. (for a complete description of the Gazabo National Register listing go to:
https://preservation.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur406/files/pdfs_zips_downloads/national_pdfs/cranston/crns_rhodes-place_rhodes-on-the-pawtuxet.pdf )

Both the Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet Gazabo and Pawtuxet Village are significant character-defining elements of this section of Cranston, which visually connect residents and visitors to the history, charm, and sense of place of the area. From the north the sign blocks the view of the Gazebo and detracts from its historical setting.

The Gazebo, at the southwest corner of Rhodes Place and Broad Street, a short distance across Rhodes Place from the new sign, serves as the visual and historic entry point for the Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet complex and Pawtuxet Village as a whole. It is an open one story, gable-roofed, Victorian structure built in the late 1800's for streetcars traveling down to Pawtuxet Village from Providence. The Gazebo retains much of its original architectural style and because of its prominent location and architectural charm, it has long been a local landmark on Broad Street.

The sign's design as a large bright, ever-changing digital display of advertising events, both on-site and off-site, acts as a small billboard of advertising directly within the site lines of Broad Street and the historic Gazabo. The sign detracts from the visual quality and residential character of the street and creates a distraction due to its changing nature, which is not only incongruous to the historic setting but also a driving hazard. Too many, the sign has a negative visual impact upon the historic Gazabo and Pawtuxet Village.

I urge you to deny the Shriner's application for this sign.

Sincerely,

Richard C. Youngken