

From: Carrie Vibert March 16, 2012 10:14:23 AM
Subject: Design Review Board Minutes 01/24/2012 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_DesignMin
Cc:

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MINUTES
JANUARY 24, 2012
REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Emil Dahlquist, Chairman, called the Design Review Board meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. The following members were present: Anthony Drapelick, Rick Schoenhardt, William Gardner, Kevin E. Gray, Charles Stephenson, and John Stewart. Also in attendance were Hiram Peck, Director of Planning, Janis Prifti, Clerk, and other interested parties.

II. APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES

Chairman Dahlquist appointed Commissioner Drapelick as an alternate for Commissioner Naccarato.

III. PRESENTATION(s), DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE VOTE

a. Application of Thomas Evans, Owner, for redevelopment of existing structures on the property located at 132 Hopmeadow Street (Map F18, Block 154, Lot 006), B-1

Dale Cutler of Kenyon & Cutler Architects represented Tom Evans, owner of 132 Hopmeadow Street. He provided a photo of an existing building to be demolished and stated a barn is also on the property. He said the proposal is for two buildings replacing the 1 1/2 story structure with another 1 1/2 story structure. He showed the Hopmeadow Street which begins at 1 1/2 stories breaking down to 1 story in the rear of the building and as it moves toward the north. He said the proposed building's features are similar to the 138 Hopmeadow yellow building, but will have more finished development of the gables trim and porch which becomes the main entrance to the building. He stated the proposed barn building in the rear is a reconstruction of the existing building at 1 1/2 stories and about the same size to be used in conjunction with the front building tenant, e.g. bicycle or ski shop. He said the barn was kept to maintain the agricultural feel.

Regarding square footage and the need for parking spaces, they tried to maximize parking.

Regarding the site plan, Chairman Dahlquist commented the 36-foot wide entrance with two lanes exiting and one entering is an enormous size for a retail store. Mr. Evans said making a left-hand turn can back up traffic exiting. Chairman Dahlquist said the driveway is very close to the building and asked if consideration had been given to relocating the driveway to the north side of the property. Mr. Evans said retail customers would almost be past the building going north in deciding whether to enter; he has no plans to acquire the neighboring property. Chairman Dahlquist stated the architecture is nicely conceived, but the concern is the ability to maneuver around the site.

Commissioner Stewart stated the 36-foot wide driveway would be considered excessive by the SBC; also, a problem is created at the entrance with parking spaces on the southwest side directly in line with entering vehicles - with no painted lines or curb line, the cars move toward handicapped parking creating a dangerous situation and the possibility of a car driving into a car parked in a handicapped space. He added on the eastern side of the parking lot 15 feet off the property line, it bends into the side of the very nice building with the possibility of a large vehicle hitting the side of the building - if it was rotated to 20 to 24-feet, it would pull that corner away from the barn which looks better and develops the opportunity for some screening. Regarding the small 9-foot size of the pervious paver area, he suggested doing the whole back parking lot in this wetland area from the south face of the barn with the eastern curb line parallel to the western curb line in order to gain a significant advantage. He added the entrance is very awkward leaving an extremely narrow area in front of the building which does not do justice to the attractive building; to invite people in, parking so close to the building runs counter to that idea. He said the primary issue is to remove any potential conflict as an accident would shut the whole parking lot down.

Mr. Peck said regarding the impervious area at 138 Hopmeadow, the existing rain garden may not work well with the extremely high groundwater and the owner had run the drainage across the street; Rich Sawitzke is reviewing their drainage plan currently.

Commissioner Stephenson agreed the buildings are very handsome, but would like to see the attractive barn more visible from the road. He added the 36-foot wide entrance and exit is excessive and precludes meaningful landscaping on the south side of the building which is viewed coming southbound; the Town's goal is to soften buildings in Town with landscaping to maintain the rural theme. He said the site is very awkward now, but with a standard narrow-width entry, as you pass the building the entry

could bend toward the north side of the property with the barn visible from the street and traffic flow and safety improved. Commissioner Drapelick agreed with these issues and felt people would park on the south side of the building eliminating the rationale for the 36-foot wide entry - 5 to 7 cars could park there. Commissioner Rice agreed there should be two lanes for entry/exit.

Regarding a walkway in front of the building and access to the porch, Mr. Cutler stated the porch is decorative and will not function as an entrance and no walkway is planned. He said they would review all the comments and work on the site plan. Mr. Evans said the wider parking lot in the back was planned to accommodate large delivery trucks. Commissioner Stewart reiterated the lack of protection for the building with regard to snow being plowed into the building or large vehicles hitting the building.

Commissioner Stephenson made a motion that the Design Review Board finds specific parts of this Application inconsistent with the intent and principles of the Guidelines for community design and recommends denial to the Zoning Commission. The Design Review Board further recommends that this Application be revised and resubmitted to be more in conformance with the Guidelines of community design with specific attention to the site layout of buildings, parking, and driveways, as presented on drawing titled Site Plan Map F18, Block 154, Lot 006, Drawing No. 1, dated January 17, 2012. Commissioner Schoenhardt seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

Chairman Dahlquist added a design note that the issues the DRB has are specific to site organization, disposition of parking spaces and potential for unsafe site conditions. He said the recommendation is that the site be redesigned; the architecture is viewed as appropriate and well-done and supported by the DRB. Regarding Mr. Evans' site across the street going to the Zoning Commission, Chairman Dahlquist asked Mr. Evans to come to the DRB for an informal review. Mr. Evans stated they are still working on the plan and will discuss with Zoning site use and general architecture, but so far there is only a site sketch. He said they would like to have an informal review with DRB when their plans progress further.

b. Application of Thomas Earl, Owner, and Ronald Bomengen, Agent, for site plan approval for the construction of student residences on the property located at Westminster School, 995 Hopmeadow Street (Map H07, Block 103, Lot 034)

Mr. Earl stated he is not the Owner but the Business Manager of the School; they would like to begin the project in March 2012 and plan on 16 months to build 3 new dorms, take down 2 older dorms, take down some old faculty housing, and build some new faculty housing. He introduced Kent Schwendy a

principal of Fuss & O'Neill, who is their site planner.

Mr. Schwendy described the current site Master Plan which began in the 1990's on Perkin Memorial Drive with the construction of Edge House Dormitory. This application is the next phase in campus evolution with construction of 3 dormitories in the same style as Edge House. He described the main campus quad area and layout. He stated this significant project will be done in multiple phases, including building 3 new dormitories, 2 new carriage houses with 5-stall garages with faculty parking on top, five 2-car garages with storage above, and a 1-stall garage with storage above. He said in the spring/summer, they plan to build 2 dormitories, 1 carriage house, and 1 or 2 garages.

Mr. Schwendy said the idea is to create a more organic feel to the quad and the world renowned architectural firm of Lorrie Olin Group developed the campus master plan. He stated the buildings will be 3-story wooden frame structures with the same type of stucco and wood trim finish as Edge House, but slightly larger at 31,500 sq. ft., due to code changes and lessons learned. He said there will be 48 or 49 beds, depending on the mix of singles and doubles. He showed a photo of Edge House, which is the dorm model, although some of the massing will differ with dormers spread further apart, roof-line adjustments, and height 2 1/2 feet below variance restrictions. He showed the carriage house elevations, stating they do not look like a garage, but rather like a large house with the second story for faculty housing and more of a home look with architecturally-featured doors and dormer. He said the idea is to break up the mass of the dorms by staggering the buildings behind and between with views of different buildings to provide more architectural unity to the site.

Regarding floor plans, he said there is a combination of 1 and 2-bedroom units with 4 faculty apartments of 1 and 2 bedrooms with exterior and interior entrances and a study separating them for meeting with students.

He said a lot of thought went into giving the buildings essentially 4 fronts. He showed the roof and layout plan for the carriage houses, the garage plans with habitable spaces above and more detailing than the typical garage, and a 3D rendering by the Gunn Partnership of the site and proposed buildings. He said when the first 2 new dorms are completed, Andrews and Squibb Dorms will be demolished; when the 3rd dorm is built, Milliken Dorm will be demolished; several houses will also be demolished to allow construction of the new dorms; they cannot demolish the old structures until the new ones are built. He said the new dorms and carriage houses will use geothermal heating and air conditioning, with the dorms having supplemental boilers due to the number of showers and heavy hot water use.

Chairman Dahlquist inquired about the transition from the rectilinear organization of the village campus to a more curvilinear look. Mr. Schwendy said it is a longer-term plan to complete the oval and move to a less formal organic campus quad living area, but it does not exist in this phase of the plan because building access must be maintained. The Commissioners discussed with Mr. Schwendy their impressions regarding the organization and presentation of the Campus Master Plan. He said eventually a return curved loop will be built as a pedestrian way with parking eventually only for faculty on campus. He showed an example of the lamp posts which will be the same as currently on campus with a possible change in the future to color high pressure sodium. Chairman Dahlquist stated the Commission discourages using monochromatic yellow lights. He said they will pull the road back somewhat to get a real T intersection to go toward the Athletic Center providing a real sense of arrival. Commissioner Stephenson asked where visitors would park to visit Building 43. Mr. Schwendy said there are extra spaces outside the garages, and if the garages are not yet built, there will be parking on the circle; the spaces are for the apartments and to discourage people coming and parking on campus. He said they want parking to be functional, but with no extra pavement - they will have the same pervious surface before and after completion of the Master Plan. He said they are starting to get erosion from runoff on the steep hillside so the plans include a lot of infiltration. Mr. Earl said on move-in day, people will park on the green and along the road with room for cars to pass; the circular road is two-way.

Commissioner Gray made a motion that the Design Review Board finds the application to be substantially consistent with the intent and principles of the Guidelines for community design and recommends approval as presented by Construction Document Sheet GI-001 through Drawing A3.2 dated 12/22/11. Commissioner Drapelick seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

Chairman Dahlquist made a design note that the DRB appreciates the effort put into this presentation in terms of the quality of the design, the organization of the drawings, as well as the continued consistency in all Westminster presentations.

IV. DISCUSSION

a. Update on Town Center Guidelines

Mr. Peck said he should receive an update by the end-week from Nori Winter's office regarding the timeframe for the next steps. Chairman Dahlquist said it should be on the next agenda for discussion. Mr. Peck said they had anticipated hearing back from Mr. Winter by the end of

January and will distribute the focus group information to everyone who participated as soon as it is received.

b. Budget Discussion

Mr. Peck said it is important for Board members to support this year's budget, which holds no big surprises. He said the budget includes: the Economic Development Commission marketing study, in order for them to make suggestions to developers for different areas of Town; the proposed cost of appraisal for the parking lots; creation of the village districts - Tariffville, Weatogue, and West Simsbury. He invited the Commissioners to attend the budget workshops. He said the proposed project costs involved are small and hopefully the Board of Selectmen will move them forward. He said one of the largest budget costs comes from the requirement to publish legal notices in the newspaper - last year, over \$6,000 went to The Hartford Courant. Regarding village districts, he said Tariffville has been discussing it for a long time; it is part of the implementation of the Plan of Development and a number of things have already been implemented; the budget allocates a total of \$15,000 for a consultant to do this work, or \$5,000 for each village area.

V. CORRESPONDENCE

Chairman Dahlquist commented that the Commissioners were up for reappointment on 1/23 and will wait for an official letter from Carolyn Keily.

VI. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Peck said the Planning Commission is working on finalizing the Subdivision Regulations in conjunction with the Town Attorney's approval; the Zoning Commission is also working to get those regulations implemented, including the Town Center Zone and references to the Low Impact Development Study finished in September.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of December 13, 2011

Commissioner Gray made a motion to approve the December 13, 2011, minutes. Commissioner Gardner seconded the motion, and it was passed with Commissioners Schoenhardt and Stewart abstaining.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Gardner made a motion to hear public comment. Commissioner Drapelick seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

Chairman Dahlquist invited public comment for three minutes. Sue Bemara (?) said informal reviews are positive for developers and residents and she finds it inconsistent that the informal process is not implemented for all projects - she asked if there is any way to make that happen. Chairman Dahlquist stated the Town Center Guidelines have language, but as an advisory committee, DRB has no authority to place it in the Zoning Regulations. The Commissioners stated they always encourage informal hearings and working through Mr. Peck, informal presentations are suggested, but cannot be enforced. She stated it is frustrating when the residents disagree with the Zoning Commission. The Commissioners suggested she speak to the Zoning Commission, as DRB has no regulatory authority.

Commissioner Gray noted the bridge for the Library project is in place and was significantly improved with brownstone abutments and probably will not require redoing it in the future. Commissioner Stewart said because of good planning, the bridge was originally designed as a functioning structure with end walls, proper area-way below it, carries cars and pedestrians, and fulfills ADA requirements; also they minimized grading in the paths, and used all native plants. Mr. Peck said the bridge can be linked to the pond in the future; removal of the section of pathway from the end of the parking lot into the middle, as recommended by this Board not to be implemented, is how the approval survived.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Gardner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m. Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

Emil Dahlquist, Chairman