

From: Lois Laczko March 16, 2009 1:32:00 PM
Subject: Design Review Board Minutes 02/24/2009 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_DesignMin
Cc:

ADOPTED

Design Review Board Minutes
February 24, 2009
Regular Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Dahlquist called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. The following members were present: Charles Stephenson, Kevin Gray, John Stewart, Anthony Drapelick and John Carroll. Also present were Howard Beach, Environmental Compliance Officer, and Alison Sturgeon, Commission Clerk.

II. APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES

Chairman Dahlquist appointed Commissioner Drapelick to serve in the absence of Commissioner Schoenhardt and Commissioner Carroll to serve in the absence of Commissioner Gardner.

III. INFORMAL DISCUSSION

a. Connecticut Light & Power representative to discuss electric and line upgrades along Hopmeadow Street.

Mr. Szymanski of Connecticut Light & Power, stated that he was advised by the Town Engineer to come before the Design Review Board. He stated that the current plan for the center of Town is to take the old wire out and put in new wire for reliability reasons. He stated that they will be starting this project around May 1st; the project will take until the summertime to complete.

Chairman Dahlquist questioned what CL&P requires, by law, from the Town. Mr. Szymanski stated that they like to go and approach the Towns to let them know what they will be doing. By State Statute, CL&P can do this work, although they like to get input from Towns in order to be sensitive to their issues. He stated that this project will be done along the CL&P

right-of-way. Chairman Dahlquist stated that the trees near this right-of-way that belong to the Town may be an issue.

Mr. Sacovitch, who is involved in the engineering part of this project, showed the Board aerial photos of where the project will be completed. He stated that the goal of this project is to improve reliability of the system for CL&P. This project was based on criteria; its number one purpose is to improve reliability to the circuit. The circuit is a distribution system to distribute electricity to the residents of Simsbury. He stated that the circuit in question is called the 43F2 circuit, which feeds down Routes 10/202 to the center of Town. This circuit, in the past year, has not performed very well. The benefits of this project are reliability benefits and improvements to the overall circuit, which will benefit Simsbury.

Commissioner Drapelick questioned what was currently unreliable. Mr. Sacovitch stated that reliability data has been collected on this circuit. They have also had several meetings with the Police Department to discuss this issue because the 43F2 circuit has had tree problems and several accidents by motor vehicles. He stated that this project is to put new "tree" lines with greater capacity through the center of Town. The project will start at the Simsbury Bank and will go down to Drake Hill Road; everything else will be left intact.

Mr. Sacovitch stated that there can be a benefit to the Town by CL&P improving the construction. By improving reliability through construction, pole heights need to be increased and there needs to be a higher aerial component between the top of the wire and any vegetation. He stated that vegetation and wire do not go well together. This project is to bring the poles to a modern standard and with the "tree" wire, which is insulated, will protect against outages.

Chairman Dahlquist questioned if this project was to primarily service the Town Center or to service other parts of Town through the Town Center. Mr. Sacovitch stated that both were correct. He stated that this would be the feed into Town; ultimately, this circuit is used to feed other areas within Town.

Chairman Dahlquist questioned what alternatives were considered other than going through the center of Town. Mr. Sacovitch stated that this is existing circuit that is being upgrading to the modern standard. They will be working with what is already there. Regarding the poles, he stated that they will be 6 ½ feet to 10 feet higher than they are currently.

Commissioner Stewart questioned if they would be taking these existing poles out and replacing them. Mr. Sacovitch stated that they would not be replacing every pole, only the ones deemed necessary. The necessary poles

would be replaced with wooden poles. Mr. Sacovitch stated that any pole that does not meet the requirements would be changed.

Chairman Dahlquist questioned if CL&P had a drafted plan for this project. Mr. Sacovitch stated that this project has been engineered.

Commissioner Drapelick questioned if CL&P had considered putting the utilities underground from the Simsbury Bank to Drake Hill Road. Mr. Sacovitch stated that this option would be extremely expensive.

Commissioner Stewart stated that Simsbury has spent a great deal of time and effort to develop a streetscape. The last thing Simsbury wants to see is this project go through and see higher poles after shorter poles that are already there. He stated that visually, this is not what Simsbury is looking for. He feels that this is a "patchwork" project.

Mr. Sacovitch stated that he has met with the Town Engineer and the Town Arborist. There are 4 poles out of 26 that are in question. He stated that 26 poles in total are being replaced. Four of these 26 poles have an issue. The main issue is trees because of the poles getting higher.

Commissioner Stewart questioned if all of the pole would need to be brought up to the height standard. Mr. Sacovitch stated that they would.

Mr. Sacovitch stated that CL&P is looking into changing the standard regarding the 4 poles because of the tree issues. Chairman Dahlquist questioned if the standard was flexible. Mr. Sacovitch stated that CL&P would be willing to work with the Town.

Mr. Sawitzke stated that he did meet with the construction designer for this project. There are 4 poles in conflict with the Sycamore trees. He has told CL&P that it is totally unacceptable to cut anything from these trees. Mr. Sawitzke stated that this project gives the Town the opportunity to discuss more options. Putting the utilities underground would not involve cutting any branches from the trees, although it would involve cutting through some of the roots. He stated that this is a very challenging issue.

Regarding options, Mr. Sawitzke stated that after talking with CL&P representatives, he learned that there is something called an express line. This is basically a primary wire that does not have any connections. He stated that this is something that they may want to consider along Iron Horse Boulevard; side streets could be tied in in the future. He stated that he does agree that the lights in the Town Center do go out quite often because these wires are not protected; there is a definite issue.

Regarding the poles, Mr. Sawitzke stated that they do need to be cleaned up and that CL&P cannot do this alone. This is an opportunity for the Town to make sure that they do not do any damage to the Sycamore trees and also to get the stage set for getting some of the systems underground and cleaned up.

Chairman Dahlquist questioned why CL&P needed to start this project by May 1st. Mr. Sacovitch stated that Northeast Utilities has decided on the start date. They would like this project to be completed prior to their summer peak.

Chairman Dahlquist questioned if they had seriously considered other options. Mr. Sacovitch stated that they are willing to work with these 4 pole areas in lowering their standards. He stated that the National Electric Safety Code sets the standards. CL&P standards are above and beyond this, which ensures public safety for residents and their employees; it will also improve reliability. He stated that regarding cleaning up the poles, aesthetically, both the Town and CL&P are on the same page.

Commissioner Stewart questioned how tall the new poles would need to be. Mr. Sacovitch stated that they need to be 45 feet tall. He stated that all 26 poles would need to be replaced in order to meet the height requirement. Commissioner Stewart stated his concerns regarding the existing poles being a different height from the new poles.

Commissioner Stephenson questioned if all of the wires would be at the same elevation relative to the ground. Mr. Sacovitch stated that they would be at the same elevation. He stated that in an ideal situation, there would not be more poles in place than there are now.

Mr. Roy stated that although they did not bring them today, CL&P does have pictures of every tree showing the width of the tree and the meters that would need to be cut, which was very helpful.

Chairman Dahlquist stated that this is an informal presentation. He stated that he is still unclear regarding what the Town Center will look like at the end of this project.

Mr. Allen, Arborist for CL&P, stated that Simsbury has many beautiful Sycamore trees. He stated that approximately every 5 years, CL&P has a trimming program. He stated that the trees in question will not need to be trimmed aggressively because they have been trimmed within the last 5 years. He stated that there would not be a lot of pruning needed in order to get the higher poles installed.

In response to a question from Chairman Dahlquist, Mr. Roy stated that this

proposal has not been accepted by the Town.

Chairman Dahlquist stated that he is very disappointed that he did not hear, during this presentation, any other alternatives that were explored. He stated that the other issue is with the higher lines and poles. The Design Review Board does not focus on the need for projects but how a project will be done. He stated that he is also troubled by the May 1st start date.

Mr. Sacovitch stated that he thought this meeting was to discuss the 4 areas of concern regarding the poles. He stated that he now better understands the DRB's concerns. He stated that CL&P is sure that these 4 areas can be under the standard and still accomplish the project.

Mr. Roy stated that the CL&P meeting that he attended with Mr. Sawitzke was to discuss their proposal and to look at what the process would be. CL&P was told that there were a number of Boards and Commissions that would need to approve the project. As Director of Public Works and as the Tree Warden, he does not approve projects; this is not his role and responsibility. He stated that he was at this meeting to provide guidance into what steps would be necessary.

Chairman Dahlquist asked that the CL&P representatives come back to the next meeting so that the Board members have time to go out and look at the poles. If this is not acceptable, they could make a motion tonight.

Commissioner Stephenson stated that the Director of Public Works and Mr. Sawitzke are aware of the DRB's concerns and interest regarding what Hopmeadow Street looks like. Throughout the presentation, he heard that CL&P is talking about one major piece of a complex system of wires that exist on these poles. He also understands from this presentation that, when it is done, there will be no more poles than there are now, possibly a few less poles, and that all of the wires, when they are in place, will be at the same relative elevation to the street. He stated that he has faith in the Town Engineer and Arborist to address the DRB's concerns. Chairman Dahlquist stated that the Town Engineer and Arborist do not have the authority to make these decisions.

Commissioner Carroll stated that he agreed with Commissioner Stephenson. He feels that Town staff should work with CL&P to make sure things get done the way they are proposing.

Commissioner Drapelick stated that he would like the opportunity to see the alternatives, even though they may be expensive. Mr. Sacovitch stated that they cannot make their customers go underground. If there are business owners who do not want to go underground, then the poles would need to

stay.

Commissioner Gray feels that they need to look long term. He stated that the Streetscape Committee and Charrette have both said that they want to get rid of the poles. The lines that are along Hopmeadow Street should be the minimum needed to provide the reliable service. The alternative of going off of Iron Horse and coming up side streets needs to be looked at. This is the long term goal of the Town. Mr. Sacovitch stated that they cannot serve their customers that are currently being serviced off of Hopmeadow if they were to go down Iron Horse Boulevard.

Commissioner Gray questioned how this project would affect the street lights. Mr. Sacovitch stated that currently, many of the streetlights have different hardware. He stated that they would be fine with making them match; they will work with the Town on this issue.

The CL&P representatives stated that they would be willing to come back to the next meeting to continue this discussion. Commissioner Stewart requested that the photographs of the trees be brought to the next meeting. He also suggested that they work with the Town Arborist regarding the issues and to try to come to a resolution.

b. Architectural review of emergency egress at One Massaco Street.

Jim Martocchio from Martocchio Music, stated that he has met with the Fire Marshal. They will be putting sprinklers in the house; all of the paperwork for this has been submitted to the State. He stated that the roofing will match the existing building and the structure will be painted white to match the building. He will be putting in trees and lattice near the stairwell. He will also be planting materials to grow up the lattice.

Commissioner Stephenson stated that he feels this is a big improvement from what was presented at the last meeting. Commissioner Stewart suggested using an English lattice, which would help incorporate it into the building. The lattice would be put in below the stairs to just above the ground on both sides.

Chairman Dahlquist stated that the major concern of the Design Review Board is the compatibility of the addition to the building, especially because of the exposure from Hopmeadow Street. He stated that the lattice work will help with this. He stated that the other critical issue is to paint this area white.

Chairman Dahlquist questioned if any lighting was being proposed. Mr. Martocchio stated that there will be emergency lighting inside the building

and he may put lighting on the exterior near the door.

Commissioner Gray made a motion to waive the formal application process. Commissioner Drapelick seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Stephenson made a motion that the following referral be made to the Zoning Commission: that the Design Review Board finds this application generally consistent with the Guidelines for Community Design, and recommends: approval pending the following – that modification(s) be made to this application to more closely align with the intent and principles of the Guidelines for Community Design as noted herein: 1) that there be horizontal and vertical white lattice work applied to the space under the upper portion of the stairway on both sides to the ground; 2) that the owner will be installing plant material to both grow on the lattice work as well as screen the stairway from the view from Hopmeadow Street; and 3) there is the understanding that there will be exterior lighting built into the ceiling both at the top landing and mid landing of the stairwell. Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

IV. DISCUSSION

Because of the time, Chairman Dahlquist stated that they would discuss these items at the next meeting.

Mr. Beach stated that there will be a joint meeting to discuss the Planned Area Development Regulation (PAD). Chairmen of Commissions, as well as Commission members, are welcome to attend this meeting. It will be held on March 10th at 6 p.m. Mr. Beach requested that comments be made in writing in order to get a consensus of opinions.

VI. STAFF REPORTS

There were none.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Dahlquist made one edit to the February 10, 2009 minutes.

Commissioner Carroll made a motion to approve the February 10, 2009 minutes as amended. Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Drapelick made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 p.m.

Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.