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Cc:

ADOPTED

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MINUTES
MARCH 22, 2011
REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Emil Dahlquist, Chairman, called the regular meeting of the Design Review Board to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Simsbury Town Offices. The following members and alternates were present: William Gardner, Richard Schoenhardt, John Stewart, Anthony Drapelick, Rita Bond, and John Carroll. Also in attendance were Hiram Peck, Director of Planning, and other interested parties.

II. APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES

Chairman Dahlquist appointed Commissioner Bond to serve in the absence of Commissioner Stephenson, Commissioner Stewart to serve in the absence of Commissioner Gray, and Commissioner Drapelick to serve in the absence of Commissioner Naccarato.

III. PRESENTATION(s)

a. Application of Gus Jasinski, Manager of Construction and Design Services, Ensign-Bickford Realty, Owner, Ronald Janeczko, Landworks Development, LLC, Agent, for a Site Plan Approval for the proposed development of townhouses and apartments on property located on Parcels 19, 21, and 24 Grist Mill Road, and a Site Plan Modification for the Old Mill on 67, 75 – 77 West Street. PAD Zone

Ron Janeczko, Landworks Development, LLC, spoke on behalf of this application. Also, in attendance was Jack Kemper, Architect, and Chris Ferrero, Landscape Architect/Land Planner. Mr. Janeczko said that they would start from where they left off the last time they met, which was in August, 2010. He said that they have met with the neighbors and currently everyone likes what they have come up with. He will have both Mr. Ferrero and Mr. Kemper go over the boards with the Design Review Board and

audience.

Mr. Ferrero, spoke of how the current plan looks amazingly similar to the master plan. He said that it is almost rare that it works out like that. They had been at a very preliminary stage with some heavy duty issues (i.e. environmental, slope, etc.) and the master plan has retained dimensionally almost all of the characteristics that had originally been presented to the Design Review Board in August of last year. Mr. Ferrero said that the open space system, and the concept of it, both today and in the future is fundamentally the same, whereby the connections are made by the environmental system (east west basis). They are also leaving room for the future bike trail all the way to Stratton Brook. He said that all of the components, whether for now or in the future, have been built into this final plan.

Mr. Ferrero said that last time they spoke of what they would be doing with the mill. Fundamentally, the building is going to remain, but be rehabilitated into a commercial use with possibly a restaurant and some office space. They will need to accommodate parking, and they need to redo the parking and circulation system that currently exists at that location. The primary change associated with that is basically the existing wall (he showed location on a plan) will be removed and a new wall will be placed a few feet in back of the location of the now existing wall. Mr. Ferrero showed the Design Review Board members photographs of the system showing the existing wall and existing driveway that passes through the front. Also, he showed a cross section of the relationship between West Street (paved section), the property line and the new wall that is about 15-feet off the property line. He said that they do not need a guard rail, but from a stand point of pedestrian safety they will be putting wrought iron ornamental fencing up on top.

Mr. Ferrero showed a series of photos around the site mainly focused on the views from West Street into the site across the pond. He said that the pond is lined with unkempt vegetation such as knot-weed and other invasives. This will be cleaned up as part of the project. The entire bank has not had any maintenance for a lot of years. Some of the trees are in good shape and will be kept. The process at the pond will be cleaning up and augmenting. The big thing with respect to that system will be getting rid of the entire existing pavement then that location becomes the lower open space connection between the eastern parts of the site and the western part of the site (he showed location on plans). The two components that comprise the hillside are a big environmental system rain garden and the hillside itself. Mr. Ferrero showed on a plan where an entire bank will have to be re-graded. The landscape plan fundamentally revegetates that entire bank. The intent is to have a highly filtered view to the pond from the town houses. The views also from West Street, to some extent, are maintained

with respect to seeing vegetation first and not the units first. He showed some cross sections to substantiate this.

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Mr. Ferrero discussed the center green. It is a good size space, but the buildings are pretty tall. There is a scale issue that they are trying to resolve, and also, at the same time, trying to resolve the clients desire to put patios and grills, etc. in the green, and the desire to use it for what it was committed to be used for at the beginning, which was part of a storm water management plan. They have had to try and incorporate this concept of rain gardens taking runoff from all the adjacent pavements into the space, and yet, also maintain some modicum of both open lawn and paved area where they could have the flexibility of grills, etc. He said that from a grading perspective this is where some detail had to change a little. The site fluffs off a bit to the west. The buildings being the width they are in relationship to the parking garages in the back, and the need to provide handicap accessibility to some of the first floors, limits you in terms of being able to make up grade at any sort of transition. He said that you end up with fill areas and cut areas. He showed on the plan where they would be making up the grade. The space contains a sitting wall of a couple of feet, and a heavily landscaped slope up to the side walk.

Mr. Ferrero said that Grist Mill Road is really the spine of the development. They went through great pains in the concept plan to get rid of the cars behind the buildings before they entered the primary space. The only cars that are actually going to be moving through Grist Mill Road are the residents associated with one building (showed on plan). All other automobiles are off of Grist Mill Road before they get there. Grist Mill Road, in the future, may be a bike path that will connect with Stratton Brook and eventually into downtown. He passed out handouts to give the Design Review Board a sense of the scale of the buildings that he is speaking of. The idea is to make the street look like a streetscape, not the back yards of units, and also create a pedestrian friendly environment. There will be sidewalks on both sides. The birch lawn (big green) will be used as an organizing element for the entire place. This is the dominant visual element when you come in.

Chairman Dahlquist asked if the on-street parking was gone. Mr. Ferrero said that there was a real concern from some of the abutters (showed on plan) regarding striping and doing jogs in/out with the tree wells that made it look like more like a parking lot that they have to drive through

to get to their buildings versus just a town road that may (or may not) have parking on it. He said that they took those notches and straightened everything out so there still is a 30-foot wide paved road and there could be on-street parking. Also, instead of every 100-feet or so having a tree the entire strip up and down will be planted with trees. There is now double the number of street trees. The Design Review Board discussed the issue of on-street parking.

Mr. Ferrero discussed trying to open access for the first floor units towards Grist Mill. They have evolved the architecture and changed everything from town homes above two flats and garages to all flats. There is now an elevator core in every building. They have access front and back. In the front of every building is a double door main entrance that brings you by sidewalk to Grist Mill Road, and to the interior of the site. This will encourage the use of Grist Mill Road from time to time for visitors.

Chairman Dahlquist asked what their ideal schedule is going forward. Mr. Janeczko said that originally this was going to be presented to the Zoning Commission on the 18th of April, but it is Passover and their legal team leader, Dan Kleinman, is going to be out of town celebrating Passover with his family. The only meeting date prior to that for Zoning is April 4th. Chairman Dahlquist said they want to accommodate their schedule so if it requires having a special DRB meeting they can try and work that out. Chairman Dahlquist wants to be sure that the applicant has a chance to cover all their information.

Jack Kemper, Architect, said that they did not render the Grist Mill as it is already there. The changes on that are in the packet that the Design Review Board members received. The only difference from what was originally proposed is that they have added some windows to the south side of the restaurant and the south west side of the restaurant facing the pond. Also, they will leave the tunnel (access pass doors) in, but they will be managed better. Mr. Kemper showed the Design Review Board the color pallet that was selected for the town homes and apartment buildings. He said that when they were before the Design Review Board earlier they spoke about varying textures and colors to help differentiate the buildings. The apartment buildings were a huge challenge once they added the elevator because you have to meet handicap accessibility codes. Now everything has in the buildings has to be handicapped accessible. He said that they tried to come up with some color schemes and a real heavy landscaping plan, which Chris Ferrero's rendering shows. Mr. Kemper said that they tried to give the town houses more variations within the units. They played with the roof lines to get them to read as separate units and he said that they are looking to take the stone band across the whole bottom level of the front and the back of the buildings. Mr. Kemper said that they tried to get the feel of the E-B homes that you drive by to get into the development with the brownstone

foundations and the simple forms. He said that proportion worked for them. They are still trying to keep the separate decks with stone piers. Mr. Kemper said that there is daylight going into the basements, but they are not walkouts. There are windows, but no access from the outside. One of the reasons for that is that they do not want people to exit their unit into the rain garden or into the steep slope as you go to the east. Windows will bring natural light into the lower units. He said that there also no exits from the decks. Your outdoor space is on the deck. Mr. Kemper showed a

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rendering of the main intersection that showed a stone wall and the mail boxes (mail center). There is a terrace that goes around it. Mr. Kemper showed a sample of the brownstone saying that the manufacturers will custom make whatever color they want. There will be some variety between the town homes and the apartment buildings. The apartment buildings will have corner boards that are the siding color and the windows and window trim will be different. The town homes will be a little bit different, but the roofing and stone will be consistent throughout the project. Commissioner Bond asked if the doors are white. Mr. Kemper said yes. The garage doors are looking to match the stone and the doors are looking to be white.

A two dimensional non-perspective was shown to give a sense of the spacing and the heights. It gave a sense of how they were breaking it up with some stone wall elements, the courtyards, street trees, and flowering trees. Mr. Kemper said that one of the things that changed on the buildings is that the HVAC units are now part of the balconies. They are working to take the railing across to incorporate that better into the architecture.

Chairman Dahlquist commended the applicants for all the information that has come in and for keeping the Board up to date. They have responded to everything that DRB has asked for in the terms of materials and in terms of views. He thanked them for making the Design Review Board's life a little bit easier. Mr. Janeczko said that other Boards and Commissions have mentioned they have set the bar for a PAD application. Chairman Dahlquist also thanked them for being so responsive to a lot of the Design Review Board's comments and answering their questions. He said that there are a lot of very positive things going on. The environmental issues are terrific with what they have done, and he has heard good things from the Conservation Commission. Chairman Dahlquist said from his perspective they have probably resolved 85% of the issues they had. From the beginning the thing that struck him every time he went by the site was the issue of what are the six buildings going to look like as you pass by on West Street. Now understanding what has to happen in this process in terms of preparing the

land (removing the trees, regarding to some extent), looking at the massing of the buildings with the notion of taking a very good design and repeating it six times, and also taking into account the selection of different materials and colors on the facades he thinks that it is going to appear to be a kind of a solid wall placed fairly close together. In many respects it is going to look a lot like the project at the end of West Street (Hop Meadow Place). One of the big differences is that you approach this one at the second floor level, which is going to be kind of raised up above the pond. Chairman Dahlquist said that the street and landscaping is extraordinary.

Commissioner Drapelick said that at the last meeting there was a discussion on trying to break up the four units together. He asked if they could possibly place a couple of two's and a six. The six's could be done in the back where they cannot be seen and the two's and the four's up front where they could be seen. Mr. Ferrero said that they had looked at all sorts of configurations and found a variety of problems. The spacing would become an issue. Right now there are four spaces between buildings. If the buildings are broken up more then they would have five or six spaces between buildings. If you have a bunch of two's between each pair you will have a space, and another six unit building could not be forced into the twisting landscape. He said that they are now riding on the existing parking lot because they do not want to go down the slope towards the stream, or disturb more vegetation. The four building piece really fits into the twisting movement, and minimizes the number of spaces between buildings. He said that in the end they focused on making the buildings look broken up. If the front is broken up, the back also has to be broken up. A question was asked regarding what would be seen from West Street. The response was that the buildings are going to be located a couple of hundred feet from West Street and will be massed by the vegetation.

Chairman Dahlquist said that the Grist Mill Pond is an icon in the environment of Simsbury and it does have a natural background. He said that with whatever development is done in the back, everything possible should be done to mitigate the dramatic change of the pond.

The Commissioners and the applicants continued the discussion on the condos, apartments, and the Mill.

Chairman Dahlquist asked if they could come back to continue this discussion, as the applicants have not heard from everyone on the Board, and this evening they are running short of time. The applicants said that they could return. A special meeting has been called for Tuesday, March 29th.

The Commissioners and the applicants continued the discussion on the

condos, apartments, and the Mill.

Chairman Dahlquist asked the applicant if they could come back to continue this discussion, as they have not heard from everyone on the Board and they are now running short on time for this meeting. The applicants said that they could come back. A special meeting has been called for Tuesday, March 29th.

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IV. DISCUSSION

a. Draft: Proposed Addition of DRB to Chapter 7 of the Simsbury Town Charter

Commissioner Carroll prepared proposed language on the Design Review Board's addition to Chapter 7 of the Town Charter. The Commissioners discussed the proposal. Commissioner Carroll said that by the Design Review Board saying that this is what we propose and what we want, it gives the Design Review Board a much better position to have it done. The next step will be to have this proposal placed on the Charter Revision Committee's agenda.

Commissioner Schoenhardt made a motion to approve the draft language that Commissioner Carroll has recommended, with changes as necessary to be submitted and filed in the future with the appropriate agencies, the proposed addition of the Design Review Board to Chapter 7 of The Simsbury Town Charter. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Drapelick and passed unanimously.

V. CORRESPONDENCE

None

VI. STAFF REPORTS

None

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of February 8, 2011, February 22, 2011, and March 8, 2011

The minutes of February 8, 2011 were tabled to the next meeting.

Commissioner Carroll moved to approve as submitted the minutes of February 22, 2011. The minutes were seconded by Commissioner Drapelick and passed unanimously.

A motion was made to approve as submitted the minutes of March 8, 2011. The minutes were seconded and passed with one abstention.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting ended at 7:00 p.m.

Emil Dahlquist, Chairman