

From: Lois Laczko May 27, 2009 3:30:01 PM
Subject: Design Review Board Minutes 05/12/2009 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_DesignMin
Cc:

ADOPTED

Design Review Board Minutes
May 12, 2009
Regular Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Dahlquist called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. The following members were present: John Stewart, Rita Bond, Charles Stephenson, Rick Schoenhardt, Anthony Drapelick, John Carroll, Kevin Gray and Mark Naccarato. Also present was Hiram Peck, Director of Planning.

II. APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES

Chairman Dahlquist appointed Commissioner Bond to serve in the absence of Commissioner Gardner.

III. PRESENTATION(s), DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE VOTE

- a. Application of Steven Stang, Owner, Ryan Jones, Agent, for Signage at The Mill at 2 t
on property located at 2 Tunxis Road (The Mill at Tariffville). I-2 Zone

Mr. Jones stated that he would like to open up a 32 seat restaurant at this location. The restaurant will be open Wednesday through Saturday for dinner only. He stated that he is proposing to put a 36" x 20" sign on the front of the building between the two windows. The sign will be wood. The letters will be carved into the wood and painted. One black goose neck light will illuminate the sign.

Chairman Dahlquist questioned if Mr. Jones had samples to show the Board. Mr. Jones distributed color samples of the sign and showed a picture of the lighting and where the sign would be going. Commissioner Drapelick questioned if the sign could be seen from the road. Mr. Jones stated that

he is not depending upon signage for his business. The sign is only for directing people to the entrance of the restaurant.

Commissioner Carroll questioned if the portico would remain at the entrance of the building. Mr. Jones stated that it would remain. Commissioner Carroll suggested lighting on the columns of the portico in order to light the steps for safety reasons.

Chairman Dahlquist questioned if the building would require handicapped access. Mr. Jones stated that they will have a handicapped restroom in the restaurant, although the Building Official did not say anything about the entrance.

Commissioner Naccarato stated that the design and graphics are understated on this building, which is refreshing. He stated that the only criticism that he has is the height of the sign on the building between the windows. He feels that the sign is too low, especially with the light over the top. Mr. Jones stated that he cannot go too much higher with the sign because of the stone on top of the windows.

Commissioner Stewart 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 intent and principles of the Guidelines for Community Design and recommends approval with the following amendments: that the location of the light be centered between the two lintels above the two windows and that the light is centered between the two lintels; the location of the center line of the sign shall be consistent with the center line of the two upper glazed panes and parallel to the lintel connecting the two lintels. Commissioner Drapelick seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

b. Application of Mirza M. Akhtar, A.N.D. Management, LLC, Owner, for Signage at the Gulf Express on property located at 125 West Street. B-2 Zone

Chairman Dahlquist questioned if the freestanding sign at this location came to the DRB. Mr. Peck stated that the previous sign was a pre-existing, non-conforming sign. There has been a long history with regard to courts and appeals. They have asked the applicant to provide the Town with the dimensions of the sign that is in place and as long as it is equal to or less than the previous sign, it will be fine.

Mr. Akhtar stated that the proposed sign will be above the entrance. He has chosen option #2 from the options that Gulf has given him, although the sign will not be illuminated. He stated that there is no signage on the canopy.

Commissioner Gray questioned how high the opening was where the proposed sign would be mounted. Mr. Akhtar stated that the opening is more than three feet; the sign will fit in this location. Commissioner Stewart stated that the sign looks like it will be relieved away from the face of the building. It appears that when someone is opening the door, they would look up right through the sign. He feels that because the sign will not be illuminated, the sign would be more appropriate to be mounted flush against the building. Mr. Akhtar stated that as long as it is mounted securely to the building, it would be fine if it is flush. He stated that he does not have to use the brackets that are supplied with the sign.

Commissioner Naccarato stated that he feels this sign will look like it should be lit, although it will not be. He feels that this is a ready-made sign that will look applied to the building; it does not compliment the architecture. It looks forced and somewhat inappropriate for the rest of the building. Also, the thickness creates issues that it is in competition with the rest of the façade. Also, the colors are very strong and are not in keeping with the rest of the palette of the building. Mr. Akhtar stated that he does not have the option of changing these colors; they are the colors of the company.

Chairman Dahlquist stated that the Board needs to look at Option #1, Option #2 or neither.

Mr. Akhtar stated that the freestanding sign in front of the building is for the gas station. This proposed sign is for the Gulf Express store.

Commissioner Stephenson stated that the panel of the building that the sign will be mounted on, the 10' sign appears to be to the outside of the darker frame. This sign is a full ten feet; this sign is larger and will not fit into this area.

Commissioner Stewart stated that the proposed sign does not fit into this space. He stated that he did not want to see this type of sign for what the DRB already approved for this site. He feels the sign is awkward and inappropriate. Commissioner Drapelick stated that the design of the sign does not fit well with the building.

Chairman Dahlquist stated his concerns regarding the size of the sign and the manner in which it is attached to the building. Another concern is the appropriateness of the materials and graphics on the sign in relation to the building itself. He stated that this proposed sign does not appear to conform in any manner. There is no drawing for the Board to look at that shows how this proposed sign will fit on the building. He is also concerned with the colors and graphics of the sign. Commissioner

Stephenson stated that the DRB has supported branding in the past. Whether the Board likes the colors or not on this building, there is a certain degree of expression that should be allowed, although he does feel that the shape and size of the sign are inappropriate for this building and this use. Chairman Dahlquist stated that he would not object to the colors.

Commissioner Schoenhardt suggested that Mr. Akhtar ask Gulf to manufacture another sign for him that is smaller. Mr. Akhtar stated that they also have a sign that is 8'4" x 2'4" that he would be able to use.

Commissioner Drapelick questioned if the arch on the sign was necessary. Mr. Akhtar stated that this is the logo of the company.

Chairman Dahlquist stated that he is concerned with the vinyl composition of the sign. The Design Guidelines discourage polished surfaces for signs, although he is aware that the vinyl was approved for the freestanding sign for this location.

Commissioner Stewart suggested that the applicant come back with a smaller sign; with the graphics showing the sign in the location; a prep sheet that specifically states how close the sign can be put to the face of the building; and an alternative to the vinyl material.

Chairman Dahlquist stated that there are too many questions that the Board has and there is a lot of doubt as to where the sign will be going and what it will look like for the DRB to give an approval. He encouraged Mr. Akhtar to come back before this Commission when he has this information. Chairman Dahlquist stated that he feels that the Board should make a motion because the applicant is on the schedule to go to the Zoning Commission prior to the next DRB meeting. He stated that the Zoning Commission will make their own decision on the signage; the applicant can go to the Zoning Commission without a recommendation from the DRB.

Commissioner Bond questioned if Mr. Akhtar would be hindered from opening his store without this sign. Mr. Akhtar stated that he could open without the sign or he may get a temporary sign if necessary.

Chairman Dahlquist stated that he feels there is insufficient information by the applicant, although he feels that a motion should be made. The Board agreed.

Commissioner Stephenson made a motion that the following referral be made to the Zoning Commission: 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. The Design Review Board further recommends that this application be revised and

resubmitted to be more in conformance with the Guidelines for Community Design with specific attention to: 1) the size. The Board understands that an 8'4" long sign of similar design is available; 2) attention be given to the mounting of the sign with the goal of having the sign mounted as tightly against the building as possible; 3) the materials selected for the design, to the extent possible, be more consistent with the Design Guidelines to avoid a shiny vinyl finish; 4) it would be helpful to have a scale drawing of the face of the building showing the sign, the scale and the location. Commissioner Gray seconded the motion.

Commissioner Carroll stated that when the applicant comes back, he would like to see two renderings. He would like to see the sign in the upper rectangle and the bottom rectangle above the door.

The motion was unanimously approved.

IV. DISCUSSION

Incentive Housing Zone Update

Mr. Peck distributed a memo from Concord Square Planning & Development to the Board members. He stated that the first cut has been done on the properties that were recommended for this study under the Incentive Housing Zone Statute. The map shows the six sites that were selected. If time and money allow, other sites could be studied. These properties represent different types of sites. The Tariffville Mill site is a site that has been suggested for live/work type housing units. This study will develop a regulation with design guidelines; this will go forward as an amendment to the Zoning Regulations.

Mr. Peck stated that there are several sites in the center of Town under consideration. The consultant has suggested that the Center should be an incentive housing zone with sub-zones. One site that will be included in the study is the Simscroft site. Site F on the map, which is at the corner of Plank Hill Road, is a very small site that will be in the study. This site needs to be sensitively designed, so if something is proposed there, it would be sensitively integrated in the proper context of the surrounding residents. Site N on the map is the Ensign Bickford property behind the Mill. There is as much as 11 acres available for this type of housing as well. If this site is approved, the owner is ready to begin a project in the very near future. Site L on the map, which is the Northeast Utilities property, is a large open space with proximity to Route 10; there is the potential for a significant number of units at this location.

Mr. Peck stated that this is a study only. This study may find that some of these green tier properties may not be eligible for this type of

housing. He stated that this legislation provides the potential for mixing housing with other types of development.

Mr. Peck stated that this memo, map and matrix by Concord Square provides a good basis to start looking at these sites. Concord Square is also very interested in the Charrette process; they would like to be involved in as much as the sites in the Town Center could be included and discussed as part of the overall design.

Regarding the timeframe, Mr. Peck stated that he would like this to be completed by October, including the regulation.

Charrette Subcommittee Update

Mr. Peck stated that the Charrette will be taking place from September 11th through September 16th. The Charrette will start on a Friday night; Saturday morning will be the initial public meeting. The process will continue through Sunday with a second public meeting on Monday. A third public meeting will be held on Wednesday.

Mr. Peck stated that he is expecting to get the contract from Code Studio tomorrow. As soon as this is received, it will be reviewed by the Town Attorney. Mr. Peck stated that there is a great deal of background work to do prior to September. Town staff will be gathering a lot of this needed information to send to the consultant in order to minimize costs.

Chairman Dahlquist questioned if there were any changes to the RFP. Mr. Peck stated that the Town had many questions. Code Studios will answer these questions in their cover letter as well as the contract.

Chairman Dahlquist stated that the DRB will want to prepare things prior to the Charrette regarding concerns they may have. He stated that he will put something together for the Board's review.

Planned Area Development (PAD) Update

Mr. Peck stated that the revised draft of the PAD Regulation was sent out to the Subcommittee members. The Subcommittee will be meeting this Thursday afternoon, and again for the next two consecutive Thursdays after that. Scott Barnett will be the Chairman for this group. The members will be going through the whole document several times so everyone has a chance to discuss the issues. The goal is to have a public meeting by early June and a public hearing by the third week in June.

Mr. Peck stated that he will be giving the DRB a regular update at their meetings.

V. CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Peck stated that there will be a Visualizing Density Seminar this week. Sustainability and smart growth will be discussed at this seminar. Tomorrow is the last day to register.

VI. STAFF REPORTS

There were none.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of April 28, 2009 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Drapelick made a motion to approve the April 28, 2009 minutes as written. Commissioner Schoenhardt seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Drapelick made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m. Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.