

From: Lois Laczko October 4, 2011 11:43:03 AM  
Subject: Design Review Board Minutes 09/13/2011 ADOPTED  
To: SimsburyCT\_DesignMin  
Cc:

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 13, 2011  
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: Rick Schoenhardt, John Carroll and John Stewart. Also in attendance was Hiram Peck, Director of Planning, and other interested parties.

II. APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES

III. DISCUSSION

a. Update on the Route 10 Traffic Corridor Study by CRCOG

Chairman Dahlquist welcomed the Commissioners back after a summer reprise and asked Hiram Peck to provide opening remarks. Mr. Peck said the Rte. 10 Corridor Study is proceeding and the Steering Committee met last Thursday to discuss revisions, including:

- 1) The extension of Wolcott Road;
- 2) The intersection of Nod Road which CRCOG still believes will cause a problem because of friction in the turn from Nod onto Rte. 185;
- 3) The potential for a schematic representing roads serving the south end and getting traffic off Rte. 10 should development occur; and
- 4) The possible extension of Iron Horse to the south behind the Bell property as a smaller scale service road to serve the back of the property in the future.

He said CRCOG will come back to the Steering Committee on 9/21/11 for a final meeting and then go to the Selectmen on 9/26/11 for review. The report will be used potentially for grants for constructing some of these future roads the Town would seek solely or as part of a public/private partnership.

Chairman Dahlquist said the most discussion was about Nod Road at the traffic light with Rte. 185 and the inhibiting effect on East Weatogue Road and impact on the Historic District. The original plan plugged in a roundabout at the end of East Weatogue providing more stacking room between East Weatogue and the bridge to relieve backup on Rte. 10, but without public support the idea changed to move it half way; however, the Farmington River Valley Watershed landowners protested reminding them of environmental sensitivity in terms of the oxbow and drainage. He said now they have gone to the 1998 Rte. 10 CROG Study which provides for moving Nod Road 100 feet east and creating another eastbound lane off the bridge allowing traffic to turn right onto Nod Road and then allowing two lanes from Nod Road up the hill to the tear drop intersection at East Weatogue with a proposed roundabout in lieu of the teardrop; DOTs around the country are typically replacing such antiquated intersections. Mr. Peck said the roundabout could be replaced by a light, or left as is, and realigning Nod Road's intersection with Rte. 185 could be a project on its own. Mr. Peck said the lane configuration going up the mountain is confusing and a simple roundabout would be fine. Chairman Dahlquist said the roundabout has a bypass with two lanes going up the hill to avoid interaction with East Weatogue, but there are three lanes up the hill and one downhill into the roundabout; a simple roundabout may be better. Mr. Peck said the design of the roundabout is really not a rotary. Commissioner ?? said that the proper space is needed because in Windsor they do not work well and trucks shortcut the cobbles. Mr. Peck said the intent of a small radius is to slow traffic. Chairman Dahlquist stated his reservation that putting in a light there essentially replicates Rte. 44 at the bottom of Avon Mountain. Mr. Peck stated there is a maintenance cost and an unattractive character to a light at the intersection; it may be a future

project. Chairman Dahlquist said since they already moved Nod Road away from the intersection, why not leave it the way it is.

Chairman Dahlquist stated his concern that creating another Iron Horse in terms of capacity and size further south, effectively extends a linear Town Center which is already twice as long as the urban planning standard of 100-125 acres, with 1/4 mile radius for walkability creating the same type of form-based zoning down to Simsmore Square. He said in the future that area will be developed, but there should be a Town Center clearly defined with a transition zone. He stated the Town Center has been fortunate to have the flood plain to the east, the mountain to the west, the very narrow wildlife sanctuary and the Westminster property to the north, with nothing constraining growth to the south which has been of benefit to the Town because it has a clear identity and potential for good dense development. His reservation is mostly about the unintended consequences of dense development discouraging walkability and too linear a Town Center; he would like to see nodes of development down Rte. 10 as opposed to one continuous

densely developed area. Mr. Peck said that flood plain and brownfield issues will come up; putting that extension off allows them to focus on high quality development in the center first. He said the Town site provides a link online to CRCOG's site to review the study and the office also has a paper copy for review.

b. Update on Town Center Design Guidelines

Mr. Peck provided an update on the Town Center Design Guidelines stating the Board of Selectmen last night agreed to accept gifts of donations allowing them to meet contractual requirements for Winter and Company's Design Guidelines Agreement; they now have all the money and the signed contract is on its way here. He does not have a specific schedule, but Mr. Winter will start looking at it by 9/15/11 and finish it by 6/30/12. He said they are required to come to Simsbury at least three times at the beginning, middle and end of the process; there will be other discussions and probably Web conferences here with them during the process with as many Boards and Commissions involved as possible. He said the Design Board will be key in its determination on where things go; similar to the Charette the process will involve property stakeholders with everyone on the same page using factual information and workable design. He will notify the Board as soon as he has a schedule.

Chairman Dahlquist stated the Board would like to be engaged from the outset before any work begins regarding how Mr. Winter sees the Design Guidelines working. Mr. Peck said they should know Mr. Winter's thinking before end-September. He said funding came initially from the budget and then private individuals, the Main Street Partnership provided several thousand dollars, Hoffman Auto Group, John Luckner sent funds from about 35 SHARE members; the total amount of the contract is \$52,365 and the report should allow for planning on some key sites and involve the landowners to move forward quickly.

Chairman Dahlquist noted the Senior Center hired Quisenberry Arcari Architects from Farmington to do an assessment study through Public Works to get Tom Arcari to investigate possible Senior Center sites in Town. He said the initial idea favors investigating expanding Eno Hall where the Senior Center and social services are currently located; this is an ideal location for a vital Town Center with residential components and the seniors like the historic building, although there are major problems in terms of circulation. He is on the Main Street Partnership Design Committee and attended a meeting where Mr. Arcari's analysis provided for an architectural solution in terms of a conceptual design by putting an addition on the Station Street north side of Eno with a pulloff on Station Street which would become a two-way street and enter the side of Eno through a glass atrium on the lower level; SCTV is agreeable to moving to

the addition below grade. He felt this has some great possibilities and the two-level parking deck in the rear of the building would have 76 spaces and is the least costly way to go; it is now up to the Public Building Committee to see how far they want to go with the design. Mr. Peck said there were good comparisons using towns of similar size and the design was extraordinarily good. Chairman Dahlquist said the Main Street Partnership went after grant money for doing an Eno District parking study to show how business owners can benefit in the middle of Town consistent with the form-based code for Town Center. A Commissioner liked the multi-level parking lot in this area and the openness of it and it can be done tastefully. Mr. Peck stated there is also the potential of extending the parking southward to the next property and getting property owners to agree to cooperate with each other and the benefits. Chairman Dahlquist reiterated that is what Main Street is working on.

c. Update on the Low Impact Development (LID) Guidelines

Mr. Peck said stormwater is important because a lot of the downtown area is impervious and they need to figure out how to handle it if it's going to become more impervious; there are potential ways to deal with it. He stated it is critical to look at stormwater in the context of a site, rather than applying a specific set of guidelines. He said consideration is being given to creating a Stormwater Bank or fund where the parties buy into a bank the Town controls to pay for additional treatment offsite, as necessary; he is not aware of any towns that have done it, but some States have. He said there is a lot of typical LID activity in terms of water quality renovation, rather than just taking the peak off it is now the rate and amount. He discussed the new asphalt at Drake Hill where no water came off the site and has a tremendous potential for the right sites. He is trying to set up a date for the final meeting around September 28 or 29 and must be to John by September 30th; then the draft will be submitted to all the Commissions and by October/November will be ready for adoption and incorporation into the Town Center Code.

Chairman Dahlquist stated that regarding Drake Hill Plaza the lighting fixtures approved by the Zoning Commission were to use existing shoeboxes which are still there, but they used lower Washingtonian pedestrian-level lights; Terry is coming for a meeting in two weeks to review that site as well as plans for lights for Apollo. Rich Sawitzke is working with her on this and there will be more discussion with the Drake Hill people regarding the differences. A Commissioner said that the problem is that a legacy fixture has been replaced.

d. Update on the Request for Charter Membership for the Design Review Board (DRB) with the Charter Revision Commission

Chairman Dahlquist stated that a month ago he and John Carroll were invited

to a meeting with the Charter Revision Commission to discuss why DRB needs more permanency as a board; the Board of Selectmen are meeting with the Charter Commission later tonight. He said a followup meeting with the Charter Commission is scheduled for 9/27/11 and includes Planning, Zoning and DRB to discuss the land use commissions and potentially combining some commissions. Chairman Dahlquist asked Mr. Peck to provide information on how many towns have DRBs and he found they typically vary greatly by town. He said Chairman Heagney asked them to go to the Board of Selectmen to get a letter saying they approve DRB's request for permanency; in a subsequent meeting with Selectman Glassman he stated his understanding that Charter Revision makes the request to the Board of Selectmen for DRB's Charter status and she said she would go over it with Bob DeCrescenzo, but Bob, who was at the meeting, sat quietly when Chairman Heagney asked for the information. Chairman Dahlquist will followup with Selectman Glassman, but his understanding is the right procedure is to have DRB make the case for Charter Revision and they decide whether they should be a charter member or permanent by ordinance, etc. and then it goes to the Board of Selectmen for their decision. Ultimately it goes to public vote, but the last time the Board of Selectmen voted not to recommend the revisions so it never went to a vote. He said the Charter Revision Commission presents in a public hearing their recommendations and the Board of Selectmen voted on whether to have a public vote and it was not passed on. Chairman Dahlquist expects support for the DRB proposal from Charter Revision as the ordinance process is different from the Charter; this is an important Board and should be recognized by Charter or left alone. Mr. Carroll said it is important all DRB members be involved and attend the meeting on 9/27/11. Mr. Carroll recommended a short bio on each member be provided showing their professional credentials and that they are contributing their knowledge, experience and education for the Town's benefit; all Commissioners agreed and requested confirmation of the meeting date and time. The Commissioners stated a point to be made is DRB has been functioning since 1988 with their work recognized by other professionals and to address any questions Charter Revision has. Chairman Dahlquist stated the tendency now is to merge Design with Regulation in a way that requires expertise in making evaluations. Other communities have used Simsbury's DRB guidelines as a model for their town.

e. The Dunkin Donuts Project Post-Construction Analysis

Chairman Dahlquist said it has proven beneficial to look at recently completed projects, like Dunkin Donuts, so that going forward a better job can be done asking questions for future projects. He said intercom sound for placing orders travels to the condo project behind the building so they hear the orders being placed; that was not anticipated.

A Commissioner said there must be a volume control to have that function at a lower level or there may be ways of buffering sound adjacent to a

residential zone that could have been required. Commissioner ?? said studies indicate it takes 30 feet to buffer sound. Commissioner ?? said rigid barriers like on highways or a fence with plantings on both sides could have been a potential solution. Commissioner ?? was on the Police Commission where noise abatement ordinances came up and ultimately it was decided enforcement was not possible, but technology has now improved to measure sound. He said DRB makes a referral to Zoning with specific design criteria and/or exceptions approved. Mr. Peck said Zoning listens to DRB's recommendations and makes an independent decision. Mr. Peck stated they can talk to Dunkin Donuts and ask them initially to turn down the outgoing sound, but it may be complicated and ineffective given angles and reflection of sound.

Chairman Dahlquist said their site is the only one in the area lit at night and a photometric analysis was provided with some hot spots indicated; however, the parking standard is largely in compliance. Commissioner Carroll said it is a public area and they may be using a bulb not specified; respecting dark skies, it may look good on paper, but not work well. Commissioner Schoenhardt said it is a difficult line for DRB to balance; unless there are many complaints, it is difficult to deal with. Commissioner Schoenhardt said he has heard from many people that it looks good and they like it, although the height of the building could have been reduced. Commissioner Stewart said the rain gardens are more or less ditches which they are not supposed to be, and the plantings are not good, but the Town cannot force a change; Dunkin Donuts would only go so far. Mr. Peck said the Zoning Enforcement Officer takes the approved site plan and goes to the site and makes a recommendation to the building official whether it complies. He said they may still have the ability to get additional plantings done as the landowner has been very responsive to specific suggestions. Mr. Peck reiterated the Zoning Commission listens to DRB's recommendations.

Chairman Dahlquist read a letter dated September 12, 2011 stating that the writer has been nearly broadsided in the morning by cars exiting Dunkin Donuts to the left onto Rte. 10 at high speed, and requesting the DRB review the exit routes (no left turn signs) with legal enforcement. Commissioner Schoenhardt said it is a state highway with no restricted sight lines and is under the jurisdiction of the traffic authority. Chairman Dahlquist stated appreciation for the comments received and they will be taken into account for future projects with room for further negotiations.

f. Open Discussion of Past or Future DRB Projects

Chairman Dahlquist stated that most exciting are the Design Guidelines coming down. He requested ideas on things for DRB to investigate.

Commissioner Carroll suggested discussing the Gateway Signs.

Although not on the Agenda, Chairman Dahlquist had asked the DRB to weigh in on the gateway sign location on Rte. 185. He said the Town has additional money to do a monument or pillar similar to Avon's Town sign. He stated there is a Gateway Sign Committee helping with the construction and four sites were identified on Rte. 185 as you enter from Bloomfield; there is current DOT right of way map and the monument must be on private property outside DOT, and the Town will then negotiate with the private land owner. He said a problem is how far away from the road is the right of way as it shouldn't be too far away and depends on right of way width and shouldn't be buried with a lot of trees having to be removed.

Commissioner ?? stated he liked the location at the bottom of the hill opposite Folly Farm or even on the island. Chairman Dahlquist said it would be viewed on the island as an obstacle if a car leaves the road. But he stated it currently has been decided it will go by Princess Lane.

Commissioner ?? said he doesn't like the Princess Lane environment if it is near the markers - it is an unattractive and uncomfortable site compared to the entrance on Rte. 10 which has openness and landscaping around it; he would like location B. further down with opportunity for planting around it instead of stuck on that corner. Chairman Dahlquist said four sites were identified but the problems with C. and D. is they are too close to the turn and you must be attentive when driving; B. got mixed up with the AT&T machine. Commissioner ?? suggested putting it between the two.

Commissioner Stewart said A. looks random and he likes C. because as you come down the hill you focus on the entrance to Simsbury and there is an opportunity for landscaping. Chairman Dahlquist will bring up DRB's concerns at the next meeting.

#### IV. CORRESPONDENCE

None

#### V. STAFF REPORT

None.

#### VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of June 28, 2011

With two Commissioners abstaining, the approval of the minutes was tabled until the next meeting with more Commissioners in attendance.

#### VII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Schoenhardt moved to adjourn the meeting at 7 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed unanimously.

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Emil Dahlquist, Chairman