

From: Carrie Vibert September 7, 2012 11:15:55 AM
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To: SimsburyCT_DesignMin
Cc:

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MINUTES
JULY 24, 2012
REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Emil Dahlquist, Chairman, called the Design Review Board (DRB) 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, William Gardner, Kevin E. Gray, Charles Stephenson, Rita Bond, and Mark Naccarato. Also in attendance were Hiram Peck, Director of Planning, Janis Prifti, Clerk, and other interested parties.

II. APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES

Chairman Dahlquist appointed Commissioner Bond to serve as an alternate for John Stewart and Commissioner Drapelick to serve as an alternate for Rick Schoenhardt.

III. PRESENTATION(s), DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE VOTE

1. Application #12-28 of Matt D'Amour of Big Y Foods, Inc., Agent for Simsbury Upper 7, LLC, Simsbury North, LLC, and Simsbury Middle 3, LLC, Owners, for Special Exceptions pursuant to Article 8, Section A(8), and Article 10, Sections E(5a, 5b) of the Simsbury Zoning Regulations and a Site Plan Approval on properties located at 1313 Hopmeadow Street (Map I05, Block 403, Lot 16), 1349 Hopmeadow Street (Map I05, Block 403, Lot 16A), and Hopmeadow Street (Map I05, Block 403, Lot 15-B). Zone B2.

Matt D'Amour, Director of Store Development for Big Y, stated they valued input received at previous informal meetings which was discussed by the company with strong attempts to incorporate all they could, including major structural redesign. He stated their store design, developed in the early 1990's as the country prepared for the Olympics, was to distinguish themselves in the marketplace as a world class establishment; the building's classical design is softened by New England influence and town identity. He stated their goal to provide any location with world class

service and products. He said changes will be offered and looked forward to DRB's assessment.

Matt Wittmer, Architect with phase zero design inc. of Simsbury, presented the Site Plan and landscaping plan and stated the Applicant's request for a vote this evening. Chairman Dahlquist concurred the Commission's intent to arrive at a motion. Mr. Wittmer described the Site Plan with potential entrance at the signaled intersection with an area of heavy landscaping. He said the building will be served by trucks in the back exiting onto Hopmeadow with a secondary slipway for traffic coming south to enter from Hopmeadow, creating sidewalk connections across Hopmeadow and a link to the rail trail in the east. He said they will provide pervious pavement and are working with DEEP in this Aquifer Protection Zone. He said they are looking at putting in lighting similar to Town Center, bike racks, benches, and other elements. He said along Hopmeadow would be a stone wall incorporating the brown stone on site with a buffer of plantings and trees along the street to mask the parking and building. He provided images of the further refined building incorporating 7-8 Commission suggested elements, including extending the canopy around corner and down the north and south sides to soften the elevations, which will be further hidden by topography and mature plantings and create a walkable area on the building's sides. He said the building has added the brownstone finishes, rather than brick veneer; the area of secondary ingress/egress is moved forward about 8 feet to create differentiation; internally lit signage has been removed; and he showed internal color treatments. He said the building can be exited on either side with the majority parking and entering in front.

Chairman Dahlquist discussed the Design Review Board's charge and specifically, the development context for the northern gateway of Town. He referenced the 2007 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), Pg. 85, "to guide new development to avoid establishment of one continuous strip development in this area"; key for this area is "creating a unifying feature that encourages new development to integrate with the pre-existing commercial development". Additionally, he said the Design Guidelines Character Section refers to the northern gateway as a potential village model. He listed vulnerabilities to change and issues including, "cultural qualities, losing unique community settlement patterns, scale and siting, continuity, loss of public landscapes, decline of neighborhood identity, visual qualities, inappropriate siting and scale of new buildings". Finally, he said the Rte. 10 Corridor Study, Section 3.4.7 "Northern Gateway..."; it has been noted through this planning process that the division for this area "is not strip-type development in which there are large setbacks leading to commercial strips with parking lots between the roadway and development", and consistent with the POCD, "provide for the concentration, organization, and intensification of development in walkable

nodes at appropriate intersections so as to cluster development in an effort to accomplish the objectives of open space and visual connection to the agrarian history." He said for the north end the Town has developed a policy of what it would like to see as a neighborhood center and DRB's charge is to see how this development fits and integrates into that design context. He said standard issues include the north end being a place, honoring the community, and functioning with vitality.

Chairman Dahlquist said siting of the building is a disconnect from the pre-existing established commercial development in the area. He said an idea from previous discussions that is not met is that buildings relate to streets and establish character through that connection; the street is a shared environment between pedestrians and vehicles distinguishing it from a corridor, which simply moves traffic through. He said other concerns include: the dominant feature of the parking area - the Guidelines call for having most parking on the side and rear of a building; and the rear parallel road, which was part of the Rte. 10 Corridor Study, was intended to allow connections between adjacent properties without entering Hopmeadow first. He said most importantly, there is a lack of local identity of the building in terms of suitable massing, size, and shape in a style consistent with traditional architectural styles for the area. He viewed this project as a game changer for the north end's future development and character and a full discussion is needed at this stage.

Rick Wagner of 152 Old Farms Road spoke representing his family's interest in the land at 1313 Hopmeadow, responding from the heart, as they have worked on this project the last 5 years. He said a big box in this area would not work nor fit his family's legacy. He said Big Y is a local company headquartered 25 miles away and has tried to fit in as much as possible without destroying their identity and he felt they have done a really good job. He said there are 6 additional acres to work with to make into a very walkable community. He commented how well Fitzgerald's fits into the goals of the Charrette, but this area is more suburban and rural and needs the investment of Big Y. Regarding the Rte. 10 Corridor Study, he said this parallel access road will remove Hopmeadow congestion. He said the 13 acres are intended to remain commercial land and there will be a vote for a PAD. Chairman Dahlquist thanked Mr. Wagner for his comments and stated the Commission has to be objective and consider this as a building on a site; the quality of the company is not the issue, but rather the form, shape, massing, and general direction the neighborhood has set.

Commissioner Stephenson thanked Mr. Wagner for his compelling comments and looked forward to Big Y's presence in Town stating his hope this can be worked out. He noted applicable sections of the 2001 Design Guidelines and offered the following comments:

Page 12, General Standards, "Maintain a spatial separation or landscape barrier between the parking area and the building" is something asked for in every project to avoid pavement running up to the building face.

Page 23, Form and Space, "Create variety using building clustering, surface recesses, projections, and open space breaks; honor local historic detailing with simple roof forms and shapes, avoid long, large unarticulated structures...". He appreciated the serious attempts at structural changes with the overhangs articulation.

Page 24, Architecture - Scale, Massing and Proportion, "Break larger building volumes into smaller forms to lessen the total building mass and to provide continuity with nearby patterns. Smaller forms could include projections (e.g. overhangs, awnings, etc.) or recesses (e.g. windows) on smaller buildings, or stepping back upper levels on larger buildings."

"Maintain proportions between building height, length and width consistent with prevailing architectural standards. Avoid distortion or exaggeration." He said the Big Y central entry structure shape and design could be viewed as an example of either distortion or some exaggeration.

Page 25, Rooflines, Facades and Entrances - he said this page opens with a question, "Are the rooflines simple, functional, and reflective of the broader community building stock?" which is most important in this case. He said the elevations in the presentation, particularly the side views, as approached from the north, the entry structure becomes more a stage setting than respecting the continuity of forms and shapes in Simsbury.

"Include architectural detailing and apply it consistently throughout the design. Ensure such detailing is compatible with the historical context." He commended the Applicant on moving in that direction.

"Avoid false detailing (e.g. mansard roofs, partial HVAC screens, truncated roof structures, etc.) which detracts from a building's integrity.

Observe historic precedents wherever possible."

He said these are in the regulations all applicants are asked to consider and are important to the precedent set here.

Mr. Wittmer stated the Design Guidelines were reviewed, and while the building type does not lend itself to breaking down massing, they have begun to modify the facade and to understand how the building is sited. He said with the uniqueness of the site's topography and landscaping combined with future development in the south, shoppers will not experience the north/south elevation. He said they will use the landscaping in front to

mask the parking, which this area of Hopmeadow suffers from; the building will be viewed through trees to break down the facade line. He said the Design Guidelines were not disregarded.

Regarding landscaping enhancing the building, Commissioner Naccarato asked if there is an example of a similar area development that could be looked at. Mr. Wittmer noted Glastonbury may have such a development and will get some information. He said this tenant has the resources to manage the landscaping. Commissioner Naccarato noted points of the Design Guidelines in looking at the building: on page 24, Scale, Massing and Proportion - breaking the larger volumes into smaller volumes; page 25, Rooflines, Facades and Entrances to include architectural detailing and apply it consistently throughout the design - he thought much of the articulation of the facade is on just one side and with the proposed access road, or currently going to the Skating Center, you would see the other facades of the building; page 26, Material, Color, Surface Texture, avoiding large unarticulated monolithic areas on street facades and to also coordinate all exterior elevations of the building to achieve continuity. He felt the current design falls short in these areas and expressed appreciation for the Applicant's response to date. Regarding the brownstone, Mr. Wittmer did not have a sample, but stated they will match the barn's foundation on the monument, wall, and facade of the building. He noted the north/south of the building are not on street frontage and will be visible from the access service road which will likely be at the level of the Skating Center or 8-10 feet higher than the building.

Commissioner Drapelick commented the facade of the building is the issue and suggested Big Y break up that long roof and change the building front to be less of a big box. He said the north end of Simsbury is not ready for a big mass. Mr. Wittmer said this is their branding identity for their buildings. Commissioner Drapelick suggested that if the entrance is the branding, then the rest of the store can be changed without losing the branding. Regarding the Holloway Plaza, Commissioner Stephenson said those are classic New England shapes on that structure as opposed to the stage-set entry of this building. Chairman Dahlquist stated the branding issue is in conflict with resolving the issue of reinforcing local identity. He added a good job has not been done in terms of separating pedestrians and vehicles in reaching the front entrance and walking several hundred feet across a parking lot to the front door is not desirable. Commissioner Gray stated he looked forward to shopping here, but the Design Guidelines, POCD, and Rte. 10 Corridor Study developed over a 12-year period for the Town state what is desired for this area and suggested the Applicant do more to make it consistent with these guidelines. Mr. Wittmer said this is the first project for this location and they have done due diligence to mask the streetscape and this will bring development to this corridor; the open space on the south could have smaller scale businesses to compliment this

store with traffic calming devices, landscaping on Hopmeadow, and the ability to deal with issues on the other side of Hopmeadow. He stated this would be a benefit to the community and its goals. Commissioner Bond commented the landscaping is fine, but is concerned with the monolithic roof line and the south/north exposures may require additional plantings to soften them. Commissioner Gardner's concern was what would pull you off the main road and into the parking lot for this store, rather than continuing on to Granby. He asked how it will all come together and how is the corridor broken into smaller pieces more amenable to human-size operation. Mr. Wittmer said they are looking to create a tree-lined boulevard with a wall masking the parking and other developers following on Hopmeadow, traffic calming, a signal light where currently parking is right up to the street. He said it will not be the Big Y north end, but a tree-lined avenue.

Chairman Dahlquist said he is invited to attend the Zoning Commission Public Hearing on 7/30/2012 for this Application, potentially to explain DRB's position.

The Commissioners reviewed and commented on their project checklist noting their concern about the long, flat, uninterrupted roofline. Commissioner Stephenson said the 2007 POCD states larger building footprints should be no greater than 5 times the building height and this is 12 times building height and encouraged the Applicant to break the scale down and use historically consistent roof shapes and designs. Chairman Dahlquist said DRB has 4 options: to approve the Application as presented; for the Applicant to make substantial modifications for DRB's further review; for DRB to recommend denying the project with specific reasons; or to make no decision.

Commissioner Stephenson made a motion for referral to the Zoning Commission that the Design Review Board finds this Application inconsistent with the intent and principles as stated in three important Town documents: the 2007 Simsbury Plan of Conservation and Development; the recently completed Simsbury Route 10 Corridor Study; and the Guidelines for Community Design. Accordingly, the Design Review Board recommends denial in its current form and further recommends this Application be revised and re-submitted more in conformance with the above-mentioned planning documents with specific attention to:

2007 Plan of Conservation and Development, Pages 88-89 - "Northern Gateway Desirable Performance Objectives", Item 4, "Form Context".

2011 Simsbury Route 10 Corridor Study - Chapter 3.4.7 "North Gateway Land Use and Urban Design Recommendations".

2001 Guidelines for Community Design:

Page 12, "General Standards"
Page 23, "Form and Space"
Page 24, "Architecture - Scale, Massing and Proportion"
Page 25, "Rooflines, Facades and Entrances"

This motion is made in reference to Big Y World Class Market Drawings LA-1, LS-1 & LS-2, GR-1, EC-1, UT-1, SD-1 thru SD-5, NT-1, PS-1, A-1.1, A-2.1 & A-2.2 dated 7/16/2012.

Commissioner Gray seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Chairman Dahlquist provided a design comment thanking the Applicants for the 2 informal meetings and discussion and said DRB is eager to see the project go forward and took this action reluctantly tonight. He said depending on what the Zoning Commission does, the DRB would like to work more closely together with the Applicant in the future.

2. Application #12-29 of Edward Pabich, Owner, for a Site Plan Amendment for the construction of a planter around sign on parking lot island on property located at 131 West Street (Map F11, Block 103, Lot 017). Zone B2.

Mr. Peck represented the Applicant, who was unable to attend. He said this area was all parking lot and the previous owner covered it with dirt. He said to date, attempts to grow plants have been unsuccessful and the current owner wants to create a kidney shaped planter with plants that will thrive. He said the planter does not encroach the right of way and is not further toward the road than the existing sign complying with Zoning. He said it is a maximum of 1 foot 8 inches high, the narrow end is 8 feet, the widest end 12 1/2 feet, and it is 27 feet 6 inches long. Commissioner Bond stated Junipers would overwhelm the planter quickly and suggested smaller and lower plants, e.g. seasonally changing perennials; also azaleas, hollies, etc. require partial shade and will not do well in this harsh environment. She suggested using plants that do well in full sun, prairie situations, and that will survive in an elevated bed. Mr. Peck did not know if the bed would be irrigated. The Commissioners had no concerns about the design.

Commissioner Bond made a motion for referral to the Zoning Commission that the Design Review Board finds this Application substantially consistent with the intent and principles of the Guidelines for Community Design and recommends approval with the following conditions: that plantings be used that are more suitable for the site that will take harsh conditions be substituted, and some of the incorporated plants will have seasonal interest.

Commissioner Stephenson seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

3. Drake Hill Mall revised landscaping plan

Gary Half provided the layout for the revised Drake Hill Mall landscaping plan improving on what was originally approved. He said they are using plants that are very tough and substituting Karl Foerster grass, about 3 feet tall, spaced to allow visibility in the little islands because it can take snow and come back in the spring. He said they are also using Junipers and clustering grasses; gravel areas on the building corners to take water; an area of flowering trees as listed on L.1; on the ellipse with 2 existing signs some Juniper and a grassy plant; and Shadblow under tall existing trees. Commissioner Bond said there is a Boxwood blight fungus that began in Europe which is harbored in Pachysandra and recommended removing it as there are currently no effective treatments. Regarding the corner near CVS and walking across the grass to the parking lot, Mr. Walker said they might bring mulch lower. Mr. Walker confirmed site lines at parking lot exits are not an issue.

Commissioner Stephenson made a motion for referral to the Zoning Commission that the Design Review Board finds the revised landscaping plan substantially consistent with the intent and principles of the Guidelines for Community Design and recommends approval as presented on Planting Plan Drawings L.1 for Drake Hill Mall dated 7/12/2012.

Commissioner Gray seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

V. DISCUSSION

Mr. Peck said regarding the Ethel Walker School Athletic Field Reconstruction, they want to install security cameras on poles in field corners, which will be somewhat disguised. The Commissioners indicated no problem with that.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

Regarding Drake Hill, Mr. Peck said 3 lantern lights were installed today. He said they brought in written proof today they have paid in advance for the pole in their driveway to be moved, but AT&T's Chief Engineer has no idea when it will be moved. He said the Zoning Commission will not issue any more CO's for the property until that is taken care of; also, the substantial site improvement bond will not be released until that is done, unless Zoning or the First Selectman changes their mind. He said Peach Wave is doing quite well, and where the sign ends up is not decided yet.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Peck said the Commissioners have been notified of the conference call details for the Design Guidelines, and the meeting will be in the Board of Ed Conference Room for those who want to come in. He is trying to set up video for the call as well.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of Special Meeting of July 10, 2012, and Regular Meeting of July 10, 2012

Commissioner Drapelick made a motion to approve the July 10, 2012, Special Meeting Minutes as written. Commissioner Gray seconded the motion, and it was passed with Commissioners Stephenson and Gardner abstaining.

Commissioner Drapelick made a motion to approve the July 10, 2012, Regular Meeting Minutes, with the deletion on Line 195, of "yellow S" and the insertion of "LOS". Commissioner Gray seconded the motion as amended, and it was passed with Commissioners Stephenson and Gardner abstaining.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Gray made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m. Commissioner Gardner seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

Kevin E. Gray, Secretary