

Montpelier Design Review Committee
July 18, 2006
Memorial Room, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Margot George, Chair; Stephen Everett, Vice Chair; Eric Gilbertson;
Soren Pfeffer; Daniel Richardson
Staff: Kathy Swigon

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Margot George at 5:35 p.m.

Comments from the Chair:

Margot George said she would be leaving the meeting at 6:00 p.m. She reminded members they were working on the ordinances for both inspection and demolition tomorrow at noon. Just to clarify, it is for citywide demolition and not within just Design Review.

I. Design Review – CB-I/DCD

41 Elm Street

Applicant: Jon Winston

- o Replacement of window units

Interested Party: Jon Winston

Pam Root

Chair Margot George reminded Jon that the Design Review Committee is advisory to the Development Review Board. They are going to look at his application today.

Jon Winston said this is the Tim Ayer property at 41 Elm Street. This is the side that had formerly been the Blue Daisy. The application that had come to the Design Review Committee most recently was for an additional window placement. What they are hoping to do is change the two existing fixed glass windows within the same rough opening to operable Marvin windows with true lights. They would have a screen and they would be a true insulated glass. The wood interior on the outside would match the existing style that is currently on the building.

Presently, the larger of the two windows is broken; it is not safety or insulated glass. The owner had suggested they were going to replace both of those fixed glass units with insulated glass. He said they were going to take advantage of that and hopefully get credit for putting these in. It is going to be a restaurant with seating, and it is much better to have an operable rather than fixed window. He said they had looked at the adjacent buildings in the neighborhood and found similar windows right across the street. He said that the proposed windows would give the restaurant itself a more appealing entrance. The existing door will be reused and refinished and the broken glass replaced. . The motif of the restaurant itself is being done in the cottage design

Margot said her only concern is whether these windows would be appropriate for this building. She said the question is whether or not it is appropriate to deviate with this style window or not. Margot inquired whether there were any colors or paint schemes for the building. Mr. Winston said everything matches what exists presently. They are not at this point changing any colors. The only natural wood for the exterior is going to be the door, which remains as natural and is not painted now. It was done according to cityscape at the time.

The committee and the applicant discussed the possibility of including window boxes. It was agreed that they could be included as an adjustment to the application.

The committee reviewed the evaluation criteria. The application was approved unanimously with the adjustment that window boxes could be installed.

II. Design Review for Sign Permit Application – CB-I/DCD

41 Elm Street

Applicant: Jon Winston

- Replacement of 20" x 34" projecting sign
- Installation of wall sign on side of building

Tom Quinlan described the sign for the restaurant. He said it is a redwood sign 20" x 34". There is a hand-carved sculpted 2" thick bowl that is sculpted. The wrought iron work is hand-carved. The gold will be carved in. The green bowl is a 3-dimensional object. Again, they are trying to keep the period that Pam's restaurant is coming from. One sign will be in the same location where the Blue Daisy sign is now. It will be the same size, but they are changing the hanging hardware. The second sign is the wall sign facing the parking lot. It's about 9' off the ground and about 4' off the edge of the building and the sign is 30" x 72". The square footage meets the requirements. The wall sign will help lighten and brighten up that corner of the building coming down the street. It will have the restaurant's phone number on it.

Mr. Everett inquired if the lighting was going to be modified. Mr. Quinlan said he believed they were going to keep it like it is right now. They have talked about changing the lighting, but they haven't found the period lighting they are looking for. Pam Root said they are looking to put spot lights on the sign eventually. Mr. Quinlan said the existing lighting will not be used, nor will it be reproduced with another fixture. There will be mini spot lights that will illuminate the sign. They will mount two wooden blocks in the clapboard. The lighting will be wall mounted on wooden blocks, with black fixtures with 40-60 watt bulbs. Similarly, on the side of the building the same type of lighting will be used. They will be the existing gooseneck light fixtures on the side of the building. Pam Root said that they will be painted to match the building color.

Margot asked the Committee if there were any concerns with the application. One of the members said he felt the sign would help liven up the side of the street. Right now it is just a big empty parking lot with a big blank wall. Margot suggested they talk to the owner of the parking lot about the sign to see what its lighting might invite for what is not parking for the restaurant. Mr. Quinlan said they would do that. The parking lot belongs to the barbershop.

- 1) The committee reviewed the evaluation criteria and the sign, with the change to the lighting was approved unanimously 5-0.

Margot George left the meeting and Steve Everett assumed duties of Chair.

III. Design Review for Sign Permit Application – CB-II/DCD

101 Northfield Street

Applicant: Kuldeep Sharma

- Installation of ground sign

The applicant explained that the sign is an EconoLodge sign. It is designed to the specifications mandated by Choice Hotels International. Ms. Swigon said she had the minutes from the last time the DRC reviewed this application. The previous sign on the property was replaced with one of the same size, but the sign that sign was replacing was actually too large. It exceeded the permit for the original sign, and that is why there was an application for a larger sign. Even though they were replacing it with a sign of the same size, it was to legalize the fact that the sign was larger than had previously been approved.

The Committee expressed concerns about a 37 square foot sign adjacent to a residential neighborhood. It was noted that Ms. Smith required a permit to replace the sign because the original sign did not comply with the permit. It was noted that the applicant could reduce the size of the sign to the old permitted size, which was 32.5 square feet. But, if that was done, the metal surround that exists out there couldn't be used. The other alternative would be to request approval for the increased size of the sign.

The sign that is being proposed in the application is 49.5 "high and 89.5" wide. Ms. Swigon said the current sign standards would require an even smaller sign, so the applicant has requested a variance for the size of the sign. They have the ability to replace the sign at the size that was previously permitted even though that would exceed the sign standards.

Mr. Everett said what they are proposing is 36.97 square feet. That's close to 37 square feet. He asked the DRC members what their feelings were about the application. Mr. Gilbertson said he was concerned about the size. That sign leads right into a residential neighborhood. Mr. Richardson said he also had a problem with this. Variances are really only granted by necessity. He said this is a great opportunity to come up with a new sign that conforms to the zoning rather than keeping the existing nonconforming use.

Kathy Swigon said the sign standards for a CB-II district for a ground sign is 6 square feet per side, not to exceed 18 square feet total area per building. That limitation is significantly smaller than than the existing or proposed sign.

Eric Gilbertson said the DRC guidelines don't allow internally lit plastic signs. You can light them from the outside, but you can't have lights inside. Kathy said the original sign sketches show the little spot lights coming off the top. Mr. Everett said the guidelines will not allow internally lit plastic signs. They just aren't allowed in a historic district.

Mr. Gilbertson said he felt the sign should be as small as possible to be functional. Since there is already a permit for the 32.5 square foot sign, he doesn't think it should be any larger. Mr. Everett said that was grandfathered in, and the current regulations are for a much smaller sign. He said the best chance for getting it approved would be to stay within the 32.5 square feet.

Dan Richardson said he thought the Courts have been fairly consistent in their ruling that zoning is to bring grandfathered uses into conformance. Mr. Richardson said he doesn't see that the DRC has the legal basis to approve this. Variances are granted by necessity. Not that the DRC is granting a variance, but that is what we are bound by with the sign regulations, which is the standard size.

Steve Everett asked if we could stay within the pre-approved sign, and Dan said yes. What the record shows the sign permitted for back in 1991 was 5' x 6.5', with the total height not to exceed 10'. If there was a sign proposed within that scope, which is essentially what you have been permitted for, theoretically you wouldn't even have to come before us. But, if you are going to come with this proposal that is exceeding the permit, and exceeding the zoning regulated sign usage, then that is not something we can approve with the jurisdiction of the Design Review Committee.

Steve Everett said the applicant's option at this point, if you would be willing to stay within the 32.5 feet, we could possibly approve that but nothing larger than that. Again, we could turn down the application. We are advisory to the Development Review Board who makes the final decision. The DRC could either approve the 32.5 square feet, which is in existence, or, at least my feeling from the other board members, the larger sign would not be approved. This doesn't prevent you from going to the Development Review Board. The Design Review Committee can approve the smaller sign. You can see if you can get a smaller sign from Econo Lodge.

It is the DRC's understanding that if you replaced the sign with a 32.5 square foot size, which you already have a permit for, you wouldn't necessarily have to come before us again. It would be up to the staff and Development Review Board. The Design Review Committee is simply advisory. We are saying that anything larger than that would have to go to the Development Review Board, and the DRC won't approve it.

Ms. Swigon said the applicant could ask the committee if they were willing to table it for a future meeting if more time was needed to think about the options. If you want more time to think about it, that is an option. She said that the committee was giving an indication that it would not give a favorable recommendation for a larger sign.

Mr. Everett told the applicant the Design Review Committee would table the application and suggested that the applicant call Kathy Swigon to reschedule. If you want to come back with the same proposal, you can do that. Or, if you want to come back with a modified proposal, you can do that.

IV. Discussion – Alan Goldman 7 Court Street

Alan said the City of Montpelier has been trying to encourage mixed use of buildings so he has been looking at making the third floor residential space. He said he would like to take out the fire escape and install a deck. Alan showed the Design Review Committee a drawing of the building next door showing the elevator shaft. The building next door the brick first floor is curved arches.

Eric Gilbertson inquired if he was required to do anything in lieu of the fire escape if he removes it, or is just part of the deck system. Alan said it is just part of the deck structure. Alan said the building is listed on the historic register.

Steve Everett suggested perhaps he could do something with wrought iron. Eric Gilbertson said he thought pulling it back from the existing towers would help. It makes it a little less transparent to have it not so deep.

There was general agreement that the deck should have a roof.

Mr. Richardson suggested to Alan that he could paint on architectural details consistent with cityscape recommendations. Even just painting the concrete would help. Alan said he appreciated the Design Review Committee's recommendations and feedback.

V. Design Review – HDR/DCD

1-3 Cliff Street

Applicant: Peter Hack

- Renovations including repair and replacement of porch, railings and posts, attic ventilation, windows, siding and painting

Peter said the property is in pretty good shape. Most of the clapboards are there. The trim was white and clapboards were maroon. Peter said one of the requirements for today was a paint description and color chips, which he wasn't sure of in his application. He said he didn't know how definite it was what they decide on colors today. There are three different sidings and trims, so there is a lot of opportunity. We chose a brown with a darker brown for the trim. Steve Everett said he prefers lighter colors for the trim because it highlights the details of the building better.

Mr. Hack said that the railings on the porch need to be 42" high. Dan Richardson said the balusters look skinny and tall if they go to 42". To get it up to code may create a different effect. He said that other property owners have added another rail to give it a two-tiered effect and bring the railings up to code. It creates an interesting effect. An example to look for that is the one up on the corner of East State and College Streets at the NECI building which is being renovated. They did an interesting job with these curved balustrades. Eric Gilbertson said people have also used simple pipe rails over the top. Peter said he just walked down Court Street, and their porch railings are all low. They are all commercial buildings. The committee told him it was just a matter of time before they would have to be replaced and brought up to code. Either insurance companies or regulators catch up with them.

Peter said he had put in new sills and jacked the place up and worked on the foundation. He is doing all of the structural work now, and putting in some interior partitions. Before long he is going to be repairing the siding. He is planning replacing the porch in-kind. The only difference is that the deck would be pressure treated. He is replacing the asphalt roof as close to the original as possible.

Peter said the steel posts will be replaced with square posts under that. He doesn't know if he can get square posts tall enough. He can chamfer the edges if necessary. Supporting the porch were round steel posts. The committee was in general agreement that round steel posts would work fine with the project.

Peter said the half rounds in the annex were windows, but there was nothing there now. They were covered over. There is no frame, and nothing was left. There is a good sized attic space up there. Peter said he proposed to put half round vents there to keep the shape and adding ventilation to the attic. If he adds louvers there will be more than adequate ventilation. That is one area he asked that he could continue vinyl. Wood is much more expensive than the vinyl. Eric Gilbertson said they should match the space.

Ms. Swigon said she was keeping track of things that require application and things that don't. She said that the replacement of the steel posts with with 4 x 4's would need an application, but there was a suggestion to keep the steel posts. Kathy said the half rounds aren't there right now, so there will need to be an application. Looking at the application form, there are going to be new entry doors. It's a two-paneled half glass door. Mr. Hack said he is proposing a fiberglass door, which is durable. It will be insulated. Two of the doors were wood flat doors with a wooden frame. They were basically destroyed. There is one original wooden door he is going to save. He is going to salvage that door.

Steve Everett said that without knowing the specific color scheme and the detail of the deck railing, should the DRC approve everything else and have him come back. He should come back in two weeks with the color scheme and deck rail.

Kathy said they have room on the schedule in two weeks. Mr. Everett said the Committee is pretty much in consensus at this point. The only two areas left would be the paint colors: what they are and where they are going; and the railing detail.

One of the members asked Pete what kind of windows he was going to put in. Pete said he didn't mention that in the application because he didn't have a selection at the time. The City of Montpelier and Historic Preservation have pretty similar requirements. You have to replace wood for wood. There is no vinyl. One of the members said vinyl windows are junk and only have a life span of 20 to 25 years. Once water gets in, it doesn't get out and you lose your seal. Marvin windows last for 40 years. Pete said his understanding was that he couldn't have anything but wood. The strict rules are from the Park Service, and they are helping him with the application. All wood windows are cost prohibitive at this point. They do allow the existing storms, which are aluminum storm windows. They are all there, but most of the glass is broken. Most of the wood sashes for the windows are there, and he will refurbish those.

Mr. Everett said the question is, do you want to go forward with what you have, or is it in your interest to table this for two weeks. Basically, what they are talking about is the paint colors and railing detail. Ms. Swigon said he would have to submit another application. If you go ahead with what you have now, they will make the recommendation for what you have. Then, you would have to come back with a new application and a new fee of \$57 again.

Mr. Everett asked if they would be favorable to a straw vote on the items they had approved, and then table it for the paint colors and railing detail. The committee was unanimously in approval of tabling the application for two weeks, and then voting on the whole application when the paint colors and railing detail had been decided.

Minutes

Daniel Richardson Moved to accept the minutes of June 6 and 20, and July 5, 2006 to approved. Eric Gilbertson Seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Adjournment

The Design Review Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Swigon
Administrative Officer
Prepared by: Joan Clack
City Clerk & Treasurer's Office