

Montpelier Design Review Committee
October 3, 2006
Memorial Room, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Margot George, Chair; Stephen Everett, Vice Chair; Vicki Lane; Guy Tapper; and Daniel Richardson.
Stephanie Smith, Staff.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Stephen Everett, Vice Chair at 5:30 p.m.

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

101 Northfield Street

Applicant: Kuldeep Sharma

- Replacement of ground sign

Philip Zalinger appearing on behalf of COPS, Inc.

Mr. Zalinger said COPS, Inc. is the owner of the property at 101 Northfield Street. He said he was here to modify the applicant's filings. The applicant had been seeking a variance for a 37 square foot sign which comports with the sign that had been erected in the 1990's. The permit granted a variance for the installation of 32.5 square feet. COPS, Inc. took title to the property in 1998, and there were never any changes to the sign after 1998. It wasn't sometime in 2003 to 2005 that it was discovered that the existing sign did not comport with the permit that had been granted in the 1991. It was discovered that it was 37 square feet instead of 32.5 square feet. Because the sign was in place and already constructed the applicant determined they would seek a variance. The client has determined that it does not wish to seek a variance for a 37 square foot sign. It will modify the sign so it comports with the 32.5 square foot sign permit that was issued in 1991. The variance request is being withdrawn.

The applicant wishes to have the Design Review Committee take acknowledgment that the composition of the sign is going to change from the "wood" that was permitted in 1991 to a material that is referred to as white baked enamel aluminum, which essentially has been there for at least eight years. It had never been composed of wood though it had been permitted for white wood with the red vinyl letters. Mr. Zalinger said he wasn't sure if the DRC continues to have jurisdiction over the matter. All of the other visual substantive features of the sign are consistent with what is before you.

Mr. Everett said their biggest issue at the last Design Review Committee meeting with the applicant was with the size of the sign. It was permitted for 32.5 but they were looking to have it 37 square feet. Now they have come back and are proposing to modify it to the 32.5 square feet which was previously permitted. Mr. Richardson said that was his recollection as well. Ms. Smith reminded them there was the material change from wood to the white enamel aluminum

Ms. George asked if they were removing the variance. Ms. Smith said they are withdrawing the request for a variance. Mr. Zalinger said a 37 square foot sign required a variance. The client has determined that it is easier to change the size and shape of the sign. Ms. George asked if the sign is getting smaller. Mr. Everett said the sign is now down to the 32.5 square feet, which was previously permitted.

Ms. Smith said the composition of the sign is white baked enamel aluminum. Mr. Zalinger said he had talked to the person who designed the sign and they have determined there are methodologies through which the sign frame can be adopted to accommodate the smaller sign. It will be suspended from the top and sides of the frame, and will not be affixed to the bottom.

Ms. George said the sign is now down to the size that was originally permitted. She wanted to remind everyone that it is not the size that is in the current zoning. The current zoning has to be even smaller. The sign standards for the CB-II district are 6 square feet per sign, not to exceed 18 square feet total area per building. Ms. Smith said she believed a variance was granted to allow for the 32.5 square foot sign back in 1991. Mr. Everett said he believed the conversation was that if it was under the old permit and the sign stayed what it was permitted before, they wouldn't be seeking a variance or coming before the DRC for a new sign. The size would be what they were permitted for.

Mr. Zalinger said in the interest of full disclosure they want the DRC to know they are going to revert to the original permit. Full disclosure mandates that we tell you it is not going to be wood but the white enamel aluminum material. It will use the existing lighting. Ms. George said the original sign sketches show the little spotlights coming off the top. Ms. Smith said there are two 8 foot long fluorescent lights across the top, and that was how it was permitted originally. The sign will be externally lighted with two fluorescent fixtures using 8 foot long bulbs. The lighting was already permitted, so it shouldn't be up for discussion. Ms. Smith said the material of the sign is up for discussion.

Ms. George said we don't know about the paint, whether it is shiny white or matte white. Ms. Lane said if it is going to be lit it should be matte finish. Mr. Zalinger said the original permit didn't say the wood had to be painted flat white, enamel white or gloss white. It said white. Mr. Richardson said in this respect the DRC isn't bound by the old permit because we are talking about changing the materials. Mr. Zalinger said they aren't changing the color. Ms. Lane said she felt having it shiny and lit would defeat the purpose at night. She said it would glare too much. Mr. Everett said it wouldn't matter much with an 8 foot long fluorescent tube.

Mr. Everett asked if there was consensus from the DRC on the color – flat, semi, and glossy. Ms. George said she thought they had made great progress with gas stations using flat white so when their fluorescent lights are shining they aren't reflecting all over the place. If the applicant is using white, she would recommend it would be better to be flat rather than shiny. Ms. George said their biggest concern here is that this has been a grandfathered use in a residential neighborhood. This is the only business in a residential neighborhood, and anything we can do to help that building fit in with that neighborhood would be good. Mr. Everett said they could put it in as a recommendation to the Development Review Board.

Ms. Smith said this would be on the agenda for the Development Review Board at their next meeting. Mr. Zalinger asked what jurisdiction the Development Review Board had over this. Ms. Smith said they make the decision on applications in the Design Control District. The DRC is only advisory.

Mr. Everett said the last question on the application deals with the attachment. It is a metal frame that used to encompass the 37 sf sign and be in constant contact all the way around. Mr. Zalinger said his understanding from the person who is in charge of the sign is that rather than suspending it equally around it will be affix it at the top, around through the corners and down at each side. The void will be at the base of the sign where it will be less visually noticeable. It will have less impact at the base and not affect the structural soundness of the sign.

The DRC reviewed the criteria. The DRC recommends to the Development Review Board that the white base color of the sign should be a matte or flat finish.

Ms. George said under the original proposal the sign was set into a planter box. If you look at the photograph, it is indeed a planter box that the sign is sitting in. Perhaps, we could make a comment that the planter box will be retained and maintained.

The DRC voted unanimously 5-0 in favor of the Design Review for Sign Permit Application at 101 Northfield Street.

II. Design Review – AI-PUD

1 West Street

Applicant: New England Culinary Institute

- Installation of compressors on rear of building

Interested Party: Eric Seidel

Ms. George said she understands there are refrigeration units on the back of Dewey Hall. She said she noticed the noise level was red. She asked Mr. Seidel if he had received complaints from the neighbors. Mr. Seidel said he had received a complaint from Mr. Fechter. He asked Ron Lyon of DuBois & King to bring out a noise measuring machine and he has a report from him. The highest reading at Mr. Fechter's property line was 52db. with 1 unit running and 53db. with 2 units running.. The highest it can be is 55 db. Ms. George inquired if there was a way to make them quieter. Mr. Seidel said when you look at the photographs you'll notice there is a gap in the sound absorber panels that allows for some air flow between the two units. If we move those so they meet it might adversely affect their efficiency a bit. He said he is willing to give that a try to see if it makes a difference in noise.

The DRC reviewed the criteria. The application for 1 West Street was approved unanimously 5-0 by the Design Review Committee.

III. Design Review – CB-II/DCD

130 Main Street

Applicant: Unitarian Church of Montpelier

- Replacement of existing wall between church and river

Interested Party: Paul Ohlson

Guy Tapper recused himself from participation in this agenda item.

Ms. George briefed the applicant on the advisory role of the Design Review Committee and how they would work with Mr. Ohlson through the process to get his application approved.

Mr. Ohlson said the Unitarian Church had been aware that the retaining wall has been leaning for the past couple of years and have been working with the City of Montpelier, both Steve Gray and Todd Law. There is a culvert running through the wall that belongs to the city. What they haven't realized was just how much the wall has been leaning because it was well screened in vegetation. Todd Law came to see us in August and asked us to get rid of all of the growth so one could see the wall. There were trees growing from the side of it, trees growing from the riverbed, and trees growing on top of it. There were vines and other vegetation. They had a couple of work parties and cleaned it up. They found that in the last year the top of the wall in different places has moved about three feet toward the river and the bottom of the wall hasn't moved at all. Todd suggested replacing it, so we came to see Ms. Smith and start the permit process. Patrick Ross from the state has come by and said we could have our permit from the state in ten days, and that we really need to replace the wall.

Mr. Ohlson's concern is that the wall will fall into the river just as Steve Ribolini's wall a few hundred feet down the river has fallen. The church has had contractors come and look at it and have chosen Phil Willey who has a lot of experience doing this kind of work.

Mr. Ohlson said that it is going to be a total replacement of the wall. The wall is 118 feet long and between 7.5 and 9.5 feet high. One possibility would be to pour a concrete abutment down the length. The city and another engineer said that wasn't necessary. The proposed concrete blocks, which are 3' x 6' x 1.5' high, when placed appropriately on a good footing will be just as permanent as a concrete wall and they are half the price. There are two kinds of concrete blocks. One is made when concrete trucks come back from jobs and pour their excess into forms, and this is going to cost the church about \$40,000.

The other one is the architectural block, which is also poured concrete, but it is specifically poured for the purpose of going into block walls and has a higher strength, and looks significantly better. This block is going to

run about \$52,000, which for the church is a significant amount of money. The church said to come and see what you folks recommend.

Mr. Ohlson said they would not be altering the stream or encroaching on the stream bed in any way.

Ms. George inquired how they would do the work. Mr. Ohlson said the machines will be at the top. There will be folks at the bottom of the wall to pour the forms. The blocks don't interlock. The seams are staggered and it is built on a 2 degree incline against the bank. Mr. Ohlson said this spring water got in the parking lot, and as it goes toward the wall it goes behind the wall, goes through the wall and takes material with it and it freezes down there. They are going to have a fabric put down there so when water goes through the fabric will stop the particulate and matter, and the water will continue to go through. The wall is built in such manner that water could pass through it.

Ms. George asked about the culvert. Mr. Ohlson said the city is going to do its work around the culvert itself because the city has an easement for that. That is actually an underground brook that goes through the culvert year-round, which goes under the church. Mr. Ohlson said the contractor indicated it would be a 10-14 day process from start to finish on this project.

Ms. Lane said she was interested in the materials they use. The Unitarian Church is not the only building that has a rock wall along the river. Mr. Richardson said as opposed to other walls along the river that this is a high exposure area. He said he is certainly in favor of the textured rock because it is a stronger and more polished material. Because of the high exposure and public traffic going through, it would make a difference. Ms. George said the fact that it is near the church and of strong architectural value that the church in the long run will be more satisfied to have a good looking wall. She said she appreciates the fact that the church is willing to consider something that might cost more, but in the long end will be more aesthetically pleasing.

Mr. Richardson inquired if there were any plans for the top, where the vegetation has been ripped out. Mr. Ohlson said it is going to be seeded with grass. Mr. Richardson said the fact that it was going to remain exposed that he would prefer the textured concrete.

The Design Review Committee reviewed the criteria.

Evaluation Criteria:

- 1) *Preservation or reconstruction of the appropriate historic style if the proposed project is in the historic district or involves an historic structure.* Preservation of existing wall structure with new materials.
- 2) *Harmony of exterior design with other properties in the district.* Rusticated concrete retaining walls erected in district nearby.
- 3) *Compatibility of proposed exterior materials with other properties in the district.* See above. This higher end concrete block is the emerging preferred material in the downtown.
- 4) *Compatibility of the proposed landscaping with the district.* Area will be grassed over and fence reinstalled.
- 5) *Prevention of the use of incompatible designs, buildings, color schemes, or exterior materials.* Material imitates granite in color.
- 6) *Location and appearance of all utilities.* N/A.
- 7) *Recognition of and respect for view corridors and significant vistas including gateway views of the city and State House.* This is a highly visible stream bank and this treatment preserves existing riverbank sides and view of the North Branch from School Street. Textured block is preferable because of a formal uniform agreement. Blending with the natural wall.
- 8) *Project is not historically or architecturally significant.* A matter of engineering.
- 9) *No alternative to demolition is economically feasible.* Being rebuilt with modern materials.

After reviewing the criteria and discussions with Mr. Ohlson, the Design Review Committee approved the

application for the Unitarian Church at 130 Main Street favorably 4-0.

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

207 Barre Street

Applicant: Crystal Maderia

- Installation of one wall sign and one projecting sign

Interested Parties: Alanna Dorph & Crystal Maderia

Crystal Maderia said they wanted to replace the existing signs of Susan's Kitchen. They are using the existing bracket and hardware for the hanging sign. The wall sign is slightly larger than the existing one. The current wall mounted sign is 6'3" x 5' and the proposed sign is 7' x 4'2". It is slightly taller and narrower than the existing sign.

Ms. Smith said this is the Central Business-II District so, again, we run into a sign that was permitted and it is larger than what is allowed in the district today. Susan's Kitchen received a sign when this was considered the General Business District, and we have a permit on file for that. Now it's the Central Business-II District, but the application is for the replacement of a sign. The Central Business-II District extension occurred when Alan Lendway applied for the River Station complex. Susan's Kitchen sign is too big for CB-II. However, they are replacing the sign.

Ms. Maderia said the reason the sign dimensions are the way they are is because they have a piece of slate from a building on State Street which was given to them, and these are the dimensions of the slate. Ms. Lane inquired if this is really replacing a sign since it is a whole new business. Ms. Maderia said they did purchase her business and they are going to be continuing her business with a different name. There will be some added services, but it will be the same take-out, same phone number.

Ms. George said the background and body of the sign is the 3/8 inch black slate to be etched with the logo. The logo is going to be etched. The lettering, which is cut and brushed aluminum, will be attached to it with the letter of "café, catering, classes, and kitchen" painted on it. The web site is white and will be on the bottom of the wall sign. Then, there is a frame that is charcoal grey with a black pin stripe.

Ms. George asked why the two signs were so different. Ms. Maderia said coming from south on Barre Street the signs are almost right next to each other. The way they are positioned, it would be too repetitive. The hanging sign is very small, so they wanted the signs to complement each other.

Ms. George said the frame is aluminum, the back is black, and the lettering is white and catering orange. Ms. Smith said the sign size doesn't fit within the guidelines of CB-II, but the overall square footage of the sign will be smaller.

Mr. Everett said he would recommend as an option for the wall mounted sign, if there is not enough contrast with the silver lettering for Kismet we could give them the option to use one of the other colors, like the metallic pearlescent.

Ms. Maderia said the wall sign is just screwed into the building. They have a hardwood frame that the slate will be sitting in, and the frame will be attached to the building.

The DRC reviewed the evaluation criteria. The only optional change recommended to the applicants was the silver lettering on the wall sign to be changed to a metallic pearlescent. The application was approved 5-0.

Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes for the September 19, 2006 DRC meeting were approved 3-0. The Minutes of August 22, 2006 were approved by DRC 5-0.

Adjournment:

The Design Review Committee adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Smith
Administrative Officer

*Transcribed & Prepared by:
Joan Clack, City Clerk & Treasurer's Office*