

Montpelier Design Review Committee
April 29, 2008
Memorial Room, City Hall

Approved

Present: Margot George, Chair; Stephen Everett, Vicki Lane, Soren Pfeffer, Guy Tapper, and James Duggan.
Staff: Clancy DeSmet, Planning and Zoning Administrator
Interested Parties: Ernest Gibson, Didi Brush, and Patrick McCoy.

Call to Order:

Margot George, Chair, called the meeting of the Montpelier Design Review Committee to order at 5:30 P.M.

I. 11 Baldwin Street – CIV

Applicant: Ernest and Charlotte Gibson

Repairing granite steps, installing handrail and replacing existing landscaping.

The applicants want to landscape a front yard and removing existing trees and shrubs and replacing them with new ones, and replacing the granite steps and handrails. Ms. George explained the committee members were going to review their plans according to the design review criteria within the Design Review District.

Ms. George said she has known the Gibson's for many years and Patrick McCoy has done work for her in the past. She said this would not alter in any way her decision relating to what they have proposed.

Mr. Gibson said Didi Brush may be joining the group. After they considered the plan they thought there needed to be some changes made. Their house has a slate roof that slopes towards the street and snow comes pounding down on the present bushes in front of the house. The snow has forced the bushes to grow towards the street. They wanted some bushes in front that would be inside the snow which would fall from the roof. They are hoping the snow will come down and bypass the bushes and lands in front of them. If it falls on the perennials that are in front of the bushes that won't hurt.

This project has been prompted by a number of different factors. One is the front walk. The front walk is hazardous in the wintertime. You go up 5 steps and there is a slanting slate walk to the next couple of steps, and the next level has a little bit of a slope before you come to the front porch steps. In the wintertime when there is snow on it the slate is slippery, and because it is sloped it is tricky. The mailman is the person who uses it the most. They usually go in the back door or side door. Also, the bottom step is badly slanted and needs to be reset. He has asked Patrick to design a plan to correct that situation.

Patrick McCoy said Ernest and Charlotte said they wanted to do something with the yard. Obviously, this is very old landscaping. The bushes are very woody and real old. What is not in the picture is a box elder that is tipping over. There are a bunch of overgrown lilacs. This is right in the driveway of the next abutting property. Also not in the picture is a 50 foot, or higher, spruce tree.

Mr. Gibson said when they moved in 35 years ago the height of the tree was almost up to the peak of the house, and now it is about 30 feet above the house. The tree has started to get diseased, and in the summertime it shows a lot of brown branches. Economically looking at this there is a lot of overgrown stuff so they looked to hiring Chris Covey and cut it down and chip it up. Mr. McCoy said he would be doing the excavating of all of the stones and talking to the City of Montpelier about the sewer and water lines marked. He would be doing the excavation and working with Keifer Brothers Landscaping with the planting. He would be working with Jim Keifer putting all of the original granite steps that are dilapidated back in place with minor changes. Instead of having two levels, there would be just one complete level. They would be using all of the existing material. There would be one extra piece of granite step to match the existing granite that is already there.

Mr. Gibson said the existing bushes are all diseased. Behind the Mugo Pine is a hemlock hedge and the hedge extends to both sides of the front door. That part of the hemlock hedge has all gone. It died and turned brown

and they had to take it out. On the right hand side there is a 3 or 4 foot segment that has lost all of its greenery, and it won't be very long before the hedge is all gone. The Mugo Pine develops brown spots during the summer, which is part of the disease. They want to take them out and replace it.

There is a lilac tree on the left they want to keep. Chris Covey said the box elder is a weed tree. It has gotten up close to telephone and electric lines on that side of the house, and they would like to take that out.

What they plan to plant in place of the spruce is a star magnolia which has beautiful white blossoms, and after they leave there is a nice leaf in its place. In front of the house they would like to plant some yews. There would be 5 in front of the house on both sides of the door. In front of those there would be about 10 low lying boxwood bushes. In front of the boxwood there would be daylilies and peonies. There would be 6 peonies and 24 daylilies, and the daylilies would wind around the side also. On the side there would be some hydrangea bushes. Under the star magnolia as groundcover there is vinca minor, which is a periwinkle flower. They wanted a lot of color in front of the house.

One of the members of the committee said he didn't think they had mentioned the replacement handrail. Ms. Brush said it is wobbly and needs to be replaced with a new and stronger one. Mr. McCoy said he had repaired it a few times. Mr. Gibson said they had the existing handrail put in after they moved in because there was none there.

Mr. Duggan said they mentioned reusing the existing granite steps. The steps above are wider. Mr. McCoy said they would have to go to Swenson Granite Company and buy one more existing smaller width step to get to the correct level. If they don't they would have to start cutting the bank to the appropriate grade, which would be a lot more work. They are going to buy one more existing granite piece to add one step. Currently, there are two steps up above and they are splitting them which will get them to a higher level.

Ms. Brush said the reason the depth of this planting bed is because of the snow fall of the roof has decimated the Mugo Pines. The trunks are about 7 feet from the foundation wall, but the actual branches come way out because they have been pushed over so far.

Mr. Duggan asked if there was any consideration of removing the asphalt skirt around the house. Mr. McCoy said he wouldn't recommend it because there is a partial stone foundation and about a 20 foot drop of water that back splashes there because of the slate roof. Ms. Brush said there is a very tall granite foundation wall behind it, which is quite handsome.

Ms. George suggested they talk about some alternatives to the handrail. She said this time around it doesn't sound like they want to go with the full filigree. It will be a subtle metal rail. Ms. Brush said it could have a gentle curve at the end and at the top where the wooden porch steps are. Essentially, the house is so handsome it doesn't need fancy railing. They are just talking about metal supports and a metal rail. They can provide a sample to the DRB, and for tonight they will vote on a metal rail. Mr. Everett said the rail should be the same, uniform with the post and top railing about the same diameter of 1.5 to 2 inches, something solid that is not going to rust out and get weak.

The DRC reviewed the criteria and found the application met the elements spelled out in the criteria. The application received approval on a 6-0 favorable vote.

Approval of April 15, 2008 DRC Minutes:

The minutes of the April 15, 2008 DRC were approved on a 4-0 vote with minor changes.

Adjournment:

The DRC adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Clancy DeSmet, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Transcribed by: Joan Clack