

Montpelier Design Review Committee
May 27, 2008
Memorial Room, City Hall

Approved

Present: Margot George, Chair; Soren Pfeffer, Guy Tapper, and James Duggan.
Staff: Clancy DeSmet, Planning and Zoning Administrator.

Call to Order:

Margot George, Chair, called the meeting of the Montpelier Design Review Committee to order at 5:30 P.M. Ms. George explained the advisory role of the Committee and that the final decision will be made by the Development Review Board when they meet before them.

I. 2 Mather Terrace – MDR/DCD
Applicant: Dan and Carolyn Desch
Replacement of 30 windows.

The applicant is replacing 30 windows with aluminum clad 7/8ths simulated divided light with a spacer bar. The existing windows have white aluminum storms. Ms. George asked if they were able to choose a window that is the exact same size. Ms. Desch said they had. There are two types of windows she is reviewing and would like approval to use either one. One choice is to do a complete rip-out and replace exactly as is. The other is a replacement window where you just put in the frame and window into the existing frame. There is a very minor amount of loss of the actual window.

Ms. George said they are just changing the window sash as well as the side pieces. Why would she want to do a complete rip out?

Ms. Desch said it depends on what her contractor says would be the best way to go with energy efficiency. If they feel the wall needs insulation they may get the best value with a complete rip out, which wouldn't change the size of the window anyway. It would stay exactly the same as it is.

Ms. George said a complete rip out would mean she would lose the entire window sash. Ms. Desch said he would save all he could and then find some replacement that would be exactly the same.

Mr. Pfeffer said it is true there could be a situation where there is no insulation around the windows and there might be gaps. It would be a lot more work to tear it out. When you take out the existing sashes you could theoretically drill some holes and spray foam in the cavities and install the new window which would cover up the holes. That would be another option, which would be a lot easier than tearing them all off. They would be able to save a lot of trim. It would be starting from scratch having to prime it and paint it.

Mr. Duggan said he has installed the inserts and you don't lose much of the window. It would be nice if you could save some of the original windows in the front, but they will know better once they know what the insulation looks like.

Ms. George asked if they reached the conclusion they needed to change the windows because they had an energy study done. Ms. Desch said they initially started this whole process because on the third floor there are five windows on either side of the house. You cannot see the window from the interior of the house, and each of those rooms is getting really hot in the summer. It actually feels like the house is on fire when you touch the wall while the sun is hitting it. They painted a piece of plywood black and put it on the inside and wall boarded over that. Her husband has in an office in that room so it's a little uncomfortable. They are just pretend windows from the outside.

Ms. George asked if she was going to reinstall those windows, take off the black plywood and do that. Ms. Desch said her contractor said they should have an energy audit done.

Ms. George said statistics show if you have a tight regular window and a good storm window it's really about as good as all new windows. She suggested the applicant should be basing her decision on real good facts as to whether or not replacing 30 windows is really going to make a difference.

Ms. Desch said she was not coming in here thinking she is going to replace all 30 windows but wanted the option to do as many as she wants and not have to worry about coming back to the Committee.

Ms. George said the DRC's guidance is to change as little as possible to her building. Obviously, real windows with real divided lights are better than some newer version that doesn't authenticate. It sounds like they are doing their best to authenticate the window she has. The reality is the simulated divided light is a thermopane window with the three dimensional muntins on either side. The Committee would never approve an interior muntin. They have looked at Marvin windows. Have they looked at any other brands?

Ms. Desch said that is what she was told was the best for the replacement of historical type windows. Ms. George said there is another company in Vermont, Green Mountain Windows, which also makes windows. It sounds like the DRC is thinking a whole change of the window might be a little more damaging to the original window.

Mr. Pfeffer said replacing all of that will add to the cost. The top casing has a piece of molding on it, but it doesn't run down the sides or along the bottom. It is relatively flat stock. He would go with a replacement because it will save a lot of money and preserve all of the existing trim and detail.

Mr. Duggan thinks the Marvin inserts do not come with a full wooden sill. It is a thin profile frame so it's not like two separate sash and jam liners. It's a unit that sticks in. It goes on top of the wooden sill.

Ms. George said the applicant wants to have the option of also buying the whole package window which includes all of the elements.

Mr. Duggan said he would preserve the windows there but would go for a replacement unit rather than trying to replace the whole window because it would be cost prohibitive. Typically, you won't receive back an energy savings the cost for the replacement window in its life cycle and you won't get much of an increase in value with a glazer unit, especially if you aren't insulating the rest of the wall. The energy audit will give you a lot of information as to which ones you might want to start to look at. He isn't so concerned with the simulated divided light because of the storm window and the fact that by removing the aluminum storm you preserve the aesthetics.

Ms. George said you can tell from the conversation that the DRC is advising the applicant to stick with just replacing the sashes and retrofitting and doing the insulation by not replacing the whole unit. Would that be something she could agree to? Ms. Desch agreed.

Ms. George asked if she was getting them in white. Ms. Desch said it is an off white.

The DRC reviewed the criteria and found the application satisfactory.

Ms. George said the existing plan said they were looking for the replacement of 30 windows with aluminum clad 7/8ths simulated divided light with spacer bar. The DRC will confirm that it is just a sash replacement the Committee is accepting here today. Adjustment to the scope is a sash replacement only. The application was approved on a 4-0 vote.

II. 137 Barre Street – CB-II/DCD

Applicant: Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District

Construction of a handicap ramp and landscaping.

Applicant: Lisa Stewart

There is an apartment on the third floor and now they are ready to expand into that level.

Ms. Stewart said that actually there is a change of plan. They are planning to retain the residential apartment and add office space to the basement level. The basement level is basically above grade. It had windows in it at some point and the windows had been filled in. They would be reopening the windows and adding a couple of windows, laying down a concrete floor and sheet rocking.

Ms. George asked if the letter of April 29th is a moot point because it is talking about the third floor.

Ms. Stewart said it is dated, although it does also speak about trees and peak thermal efficiency so those pieces are still valid. However, as far as the renovation goes, those pieces are moot because they are keeping the third floor as a residential apartment and renovating the basement to offices.

Ms. George asked if she had talked with the Tree Board. Ms. Stewart replied no. The tree in the center will be retained and the other trees removed. Ms. George asked if anybody had given her advice on which would be the best tree to save. Ms. Stewart said their architect chose which trees to retain and remove. They have not talked to an arborist. As far as thinning the trees, their main idea was that some of the trees lean pretty heavily over the driveway and the parking area. Their main purpose was to remove those trees because if they receive a heavy snowfall or ice storm they are going to snap and fall on whatever happens to be in the driveway. They are completely open minded about which trees they retain and remove.

Mr. DeSmet asked if they revised the plans as well. Ms. Stewart said the plans were revised and hopefully the Committee has the right plans. Mr. DeSmet said he has April 28th plans.

Ms. Stewart said the plan she was sent in the packet are the correct plans. You can tell it is the right plan because there is a basement plan on the final page.

Mr. Pfeffer asked if they were going to access the basement from a spiral staircase. Ms. Stewart said yes, but there is also a separate means of egress. There is an existing door to the driveway.

Mr. Pfeffer asked why they were moving the existing stairs. Ms. Stewart said they are not aesthetically pleasing. It would not be a pleasant way for their staff to go to their offices. Ms. George said they could rebuild the staircase.

Ms. Stewart said it is very narrow, old and unattractive staircase that goes down into a utility space. That will remain a utility space. She would not want her staff going to their offices on that staircase.

Ms. George asked if that staircase enters into another part of the basement. Ms. Stewart replied yes, in the front. The Barre Street side would be utility space and the other part would be office space. The heating system is right above the utility space. What they are gaining is three rooms for offices.

Ms. George said there are two replacement windows in the existing blocked up opening. Before in the back of the building she only saw one opening.

Ms. Stewart said there are two replacements that are actually on the side of the building. There is one opening in the back and another window along the side. On the back there will only be one actual window. There is a double garage door that really isn't visible from the street. They would wall that and put three windows there instead of the garage door.

Mr. DeSmet said he didn't know they changed it that much. They warned it as a conversion. Originally it was conversion of the third floor, but now they are talking about exterior changes to the building. Ms. George said it also says they are going to be installing a handicapped ramp.

Ms. Stewart said their work schedule is the most important thing, so if they could approve part of it and work through approving the rest of it then at least pieces can get done. The handicapped ramp will come into the building on the right hand side onto the existing porch.

Ms. George said the porch itself has a right hand porch that sticks out from the building. The first three posts on the front of the building don't change at all, and then we lose the porch. Ms. Stewart said the porch currently wraps half way to the back of the building. Ms. George said the existing railing is going to stay right where it is on the right hand side of the building. They are building the ramp within the porch.

Ms. Stewart said on the left hand side there is another existing porch. The porch goes on both sides, so they are retaining that and just building a way to get up onto the porch. Ms. Stewart said it was her understanding that there was not going to be a significant change beyond cutting into the porch at a point and then using what exists. Ms. George said there has to be a railing because it is a handicapped ramp.

Mr. Pfeffer said there should also be a railing for the porch itself. Ms. George said they need that detail. The Committee needs to have all of the changes. They need a cut sheet on what that railing looks like.

The entrance door is a single width. Ms. George asked if it was wide enough for a wheel chair. Ms. Stewart said she was told it was wide enough. The DRC needs to see what they use for hardware on the door.

Ms. George says they are going to have a new walk paved with 3 inches of crushed slate on 12 inches of bank run gravel. Her concern about the landscaping is that it might be worth checking to see whether or not somebody who knows about trees could tell the applicant whether or not one of the trees is better to save than another. Clancy can put her in touch with the Tree Board, and there is a tree warden in Montpelier as well.

Ms. George asked if they were going to remove the wooden fire escape from the back of the building. Ms. Stewart said yes. That comes all the way from the third floor to the first. Ms. George asked why it was coming off. Ms. Stewart said it was not safe. It is not up to code. It is cost prohibitive to install a new one. They have received a variance to sprinker the building and not have a fire escape on the back.

They are going to redo the existing porch flooring on the other side with tongue in groove. That completes the exterior.

The overhanging trees are the ones on their property line, and then there are some additional trees between them and Stone Cutters Way. They are removing the three trees at the back left corner and the rest will be trimmed. All three trees lean far into the parking area. They are totally open minded about not removing trees at all.

Ms. George said the applicant could always start with the interior any time. This is a setback for time but doesn't stop you from doing the entire interior because the DRC doesn't review the interior.

Ms. George said the DRC suggests they look at the trees with the Tree Board. There are some large substantial trees, and Montpelier is losing its big trees in a big way and we are going to have left are fluffy little short maples. Just because a tree is tall and looks like it is about to crash down doesn't mean it is going to.

Mr. DeSmet said the applicant wouldn't have to go to the DRB for interior maintenance. The reason they have to go to the Development Review Board, other than to be advisory from this is because they were changing the use. If they weren't changing the use it could potentially be a site plan amendment. They would still have to come to the DRC for the design review stuff. Clancy said he would have to have known that by May 13th when it was warned.

Ms. Stewart asked what her next steps are. Mr. DeSmet said they need to know exactly what their proposal is. You can't change it on the fly.

Ms. Stewart said the proposal is to retain the residential apartment and renovate the basement. They heard from the Building Inspector that they have to install the handicapped access ramp. That is why they added the handicapped access ramp. They added the trees because some of the trees do overhang. Any of the exterior work they are willing to do without assuming they can get a variance to not do the handicapped access ramp.

Ms. George asked if she was pursuing that variance with the state board.

Ms. Stewart said she hasn't yet but might. Ms. George said the last time they did renovations on the building five years ago it wasn't a requirement then.

Mr. DeSmet said when they first came in and they talked about the number of parking spaces, they clearly had enough parking spaces to accommodate the people. Theoretically, they could amend her site plan. The applicant would have to come to the DRC for the exterior changes. The DRC needs more detail on the handicapped ramp, cut sheets for the windows and he will help her contact Geoff Beyer and the Tree Board to assess whether they need to thin the trees or remove them.

Mr. Duggan asked if there were any plans to add additional lighting or other utilities. Ms. Stewart said there is one additional light planned for near the handicapped access ramp. It would match the existing light that is currently over the front door, but that is the only additional exterior lighting they are considering. Ms. George said if they believe they can duplicate it bring in a picture of it. In the meantime the DRC can look at the site itself and look at the downstairs renovation. The DRC should familiarize itself with what is existing now.

Ms. George said they are going to table the application for now. They can get started with the inside renovations and everything on the outside needs to be reviewed.

III. 25 East State Street – CB-I/DCD

Applicant: Ron Sarquiz

Sign.

The sign is basically a piece of wood and around it are tiles. The letters are black. The sign will be lighted with two floodlights which pre-exist. The hardware was already on the building. The information is on both sides of the sign.

The DRC reviewed the sign criteria and found it met the applicant's sign met all requirements. The application as submitted was approved on a 4-0 vote.

Approval of April 29, 2008 Minutes:

The minutes of the April 29, 2008 Design Review Committee were approved on a 4-0 vote.

Adjournment:

On a vote of 4-0 the Design Review Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clancy DeSmet
Planning and Zoning Administrator