

**Montpelier Design Review Committee**  
**August 12, 2008**  
**Memorial Room, City Hall**

*Approved*

**Present:** Margot George, Chair; Stephen Everett, Vice Chair; Soren Pfeffer, and James Duggan.  
Staff: Audra Brown, Planning and Zoning Assistant

**Call to Order:**

Ms. George, Chair, called the meeting of the Design Review Committee to order for Tuesday, August 12, 2008 at 5:30 P.M.

**Review of June 30, 2008 Minutes:**

The minutes of June 30, 2008 were approved on a 4-0 vote with minor changes.

**I. 118 Main Street – CB-I/DCD**

Applicant: New England Culinary Institute

Owner: Jeffrey Nick/N & M Real Estate, LLC

Replacing three sections of siding, three windows and adding a security door to top of fire escape.

Interested Party: Will Colgan

Ms. George explained the advisory role of the Design Review Committee to the Development Review Board.

Ms. George said the siding material they will be replacing the old siding with is of the same size clapboard. He is going to replace white with red. There is the back of the building next to the driveway to Onion River Sports. That is a white wall which they want to replace with red.

Mr. Colgan said the building you see with the chimney is Yankee Spirits at 126 Main Street. The white siding is really the opposite wall of the 118 Main Street second floor, so this faces north. That faces towards the white church. They want to paint it red.

There are two pictures of the front of the restaurant. One is what it would look like from the street, and then another picture of the roof looking back where all of the utilities are. It is the solid vertical wall between the third floor of Paul Sykas' building and their building. That, too, will be a red vinyl fabric. Mr. Colgan said this now is kind of like a particle board and doesn't hold up to the weather.

Ms. George said vinyl under any circumstance is not an historical material nor is it showing that it is an material for the installation they are about to put in again. Why should the DRC consider vinyl to be the material of choice?

Mr. Colgan replied he was just going to replace it with white and do it under maintenance, but the guy who is doing the work said the white is really ugly. You should get red and it will be fit so much better. He just wants to change the color of the existing material. To do it in clapboards wouldn't be cost effective.

Mr. Duggan asked what was below, brick?.

Mr. Colgan said there is wood in there. They tried to just repair the white on the southern side.

Ms. George said they want to add wire security door at the top of the fire escape.

Mr. Colgan said the kids go up on the roof and there is residue from parties. The back of 126 Main Street has a fire escape there. He has spoken with Glenn Moore and some Labor and Industry people, and the fire escape is important to have. They have talked about raising it up and lowering it down and tried putting chains across the bottom along with no trespassing signs.

Ms. George asked if the fire escape served the second floor building or the third floor building.

Mr. Colgan said it will serve the back side of Paul Sykas' building.

Ms. George said the reality is if someone can hang off the edge and drop down without dropping more than 20 feet you don't need a fire escape. Mr. Colgan said Glenn Moore is saying since it is there that is his call. What he would like to do, since the gates at the bottom don't work, is to install a wire fence with a door located at the top of the stairs opening out with a lock on it that their maintenance people and service companies can access. Anybody swinging out through the gate can open it and get out, but the kids can't climb in.

Ms. George asked if they were amending their proposal today to add 6 feet of fence on either side. Mr. Colgan replied yes. That would deter them from climbing around the door. Ms. George inquired what is there now. Mr. Colgan said there is a metal railing.

Ms. George asked if they saw this as a big problem. Mr. Colgan said if kids are running around on the roof they can fall into the river. They haven't done any damage yet. They have spray painted some things and left some beer cans up there. He sees it as not a good thing to have kids up there running around. If he could do something to stop it he would feel better.

Mr. Duggan asked if there were any motion lights back there. Mr. Colgan said no. There are street lights and it is pretty well lit. He knows the police have chased kids off the roof in the past. The police just say to put a chain across the bottom with a no trespassing sign. It's not a necessity thing. The only reason he is doing this is because he sees the potential for an accident.

Mr. Duggan said it's not a primary façade. His only concern is that it is going to look like a backstop from the dimensions he has heard. He is wondering in the winter how visual it will be.

Mr. Colgan said right now there are spruce trees so it will look the same as it does now.

Ms. George asked who is in charge of maintaining the landscaping in the little island, NECI or the bank. Mr. Everett said that is Paul Sykas' property.

Ms. George said the third item is they want to side over two windows and one door. Mr. Colgan said starting on the façade facing Onion River Sports. There are two windows underneath the exhaust fans. They are not used because they are behind the exhaust hood. Since they are not being used there is no reason to replicate them, and they would probably just run the siding over them.

Mr. Colgan said on the other façade they are going to replace the three windows with windows the same size, but they are proposing to use double hung. The door does not serve any purpose so they are going to run the siding over that. There is no analogy for it inside the building.

Ms. George asked what happens at the bottom of the door.

Mr. Colgan said it is a membrane roof so they would probably have to run the siding down there. They just want to make it weather tight.

Mr. Duggan asked if the fire escape will only serve egress through the windows. Mr. Colgan replied yes, at 126 Main Street. It certainly doesn't do it now because you can't get out the door.

Ms. George said as they go down the application the only recommendation the DRC has discussed is the chain link fence be black. That would be an adjustment to the scope of the proposal. Mr. Colgan agreed that would look better. Ms. George said they would also like the gated door to be black also.

The Design Review Committee reviewed the criteria. Ms. George said should they take down the siding and discover they have a brick wall, what then? Mr. Colgan said he would have to evaluate the integrity of the brick

wall and how much brick is there. Mr. Everett said if they find brick underneath the siding all efforts should be made to restore the brick if it is economically feasible. Mr. Colgan replied he knew the back of the building is brick and they had to rebuild the whole back of the wall. The DRC's goal within the city is to maintain and actually improve the historic integrity of the city.

Ms. George said the optional changes are going to be the brick siding, and the adjustment made is the chain link fence and door will be black.

The application as amended passed on a favorable vote of 4 to 0.

**II. 31 Barre Street – CB-I/DCD**

Applicant: Kevin Casey

Owner: Jeffrey Jacobs

Repainting building and adding shutters.

Interested Party: Jesse Jacobs

Ms. George recused herself from acting on the application and Steve Everett will be acting chair.

Jesse Jacobs said they would like to change the colors on the front of 31 Barre Street from the white and green that it is now to the fieldstone grey as shown on the postcard and the black.

Mr. Everett asked if the siding color was different from the frieze board. Mr. Jacobs said he didn't believe so. He believes the texture appears to be different.

Mr. Jacobs said they want to put the shutters back on, which they do have in the basement, accented in black with the grey fieldstone. The windows that are shuttered are the second and third floors.

Mr. Everett asked if the siding on the building now is aluminum. Mr. Jacobs replied yes. Mr. Everett asked if he was going to paint that, or take it off and see what they find underneath. Mr. Jacobs said at this point they are planning on keeping it as it is. At this point they are only proposing to repaint the front.

Mr. Duggan inquired if the sides were to remain white, and Mr. Jacobs replied that was correct. All of the accents such as the shutters and trim are going to be changed from green to black. The aluminum siding, which is white right now, is going to stay white. The front of the building is wooden.

Mr. Duggan asked if there were an option to paint the side grey. Mr. Jacobs said they weren't planning on doing that.

Mr. Everett asked if there was any reason not to paint the sides with the fieldstone grey color to match. Mr. Jacobs said it seemed like a bad idea to paint over the aluminum, and in terms of replacing the aluminum it wasn't going to be cost effective.

Mr. Duggan said personally he thinks it is going to look awful having a front façade that pops out and then something completely different on the sides of the building.

Mr. Pfeffer said he had never seen a building like that except for only temporarily.

Mr. Duggan said he thinks the aluminum would take paint. Is the paint peeling off of it now?

Mr. Everett asked if there would be any other accent color. What color would the posts be? Will they go back to a whiter color or are they going to be black?

Mr. Jacobs said they had considered painting them black.

Mr. Everett asked Mr. Jacobs if it was his decision to not paint the sides of the building. Mr. Jacobs said that was Jeff's. He has the final word in most decisions.

Mr. Everett asked members how they felt about painting the front of the building and not the sides. The other option would be to give him the prerogative to paint the sides at any point he chooses within the next two years because when he paints the front and puts the shutters up it is going to look so good he might change his mind and want to paint the sides, especially if someone would spray it.

Mr. Duggan said because of the design and how it has the three dormers on the front and the design of the hip roof, he doesn't have much concern for the palette or how many colors he uses but would like to see the whole building be painted the same so it looks unified. He wouldn't have any objection to have that as an option, and in fact would encourage it.

Mr. Pfeffer said he agrees. He thinks it will look kind of funny having the front be a darker color and the sides being white. Having the trim be a lighter color would definitely help that.

Mr. Duggan said there isn't a maintenance issue at the moment. If the paint were peeling off and something had to be done about the way this looks would be a different thing.

Mr. Pfeffer said he personally would rather see it stay white than have it two colors. Mr. Duggan said he agreed.

Mr. Pfeffer said he didn't know he would vote against it, but it just seems like a strange thing to do. Mr. Duggan said he would strongly encourage an option/preference to unify the whole building.

The DRC reviewed the criteria. The building is listed on the National Register. There are recommendations of an addition color of vellum, or similar off white color be applied to exterior trim, porch posts, fascia, frieze boards to duplicate original color scheme. Adjustments to the scope of proposal is a recommendation at applicant's discretion to paint sides of the building to match the front.

The proposal passed on a favorable vote of 3 to 0, with Margot George recusing.

Margot George resumed role of Chair.

### **Other Business:**

State and Main Streets – CB-I/DCD

Local First Vermont – White flags in front of various buildings

Applicant: Karen Vogan

She apologized for the lack of photos to show the DRC.

Local First Vermont is a nonprofit organization. There are about 175 business members around the state. Earlier this spring there was some interest from a couple of business owners to display flags with logos. They ordered 25 flags and sold them to various businesses around the state, and she sold 3 to businesses in Montpelier – one to Capitol Grounds, one to The Pink Shutter, and the other to Bear Pond Books. She said she is coming to the DRC to find out whether they can actually hang them in front of their businesses. She would assume they would come in every night and be placed back out in the morning. The flag is 3' x 5' so it would need a 6 foot pole to hang the flag. She would assume they would put the bracket high enough so the flag wasn't hanging down and obstructing anybody's view.

Mr. Duggan asked if each person who bought a flag would have to make arrangements to have a bracket attached. Ms. Vogan replied yes.

Mr. Duggan asked if she had already purchased the flags of this size. Ms. Vogan replied they had purchased 25 of them. Mr. Duggan said his initial reaction to the size he sees here is a little big.

Mr. Duggan asked if there was the possibility to reduce the size of this flag to just what the image is, and also at the same time has another perpendicular piece which will actually make it rigid on the top so that it drapes so you can read it. He thinks this is a great idea and he likes the concept of it.

Ms. Vogan said if that was the direction they were going in she would be inclined to go with a smaller flag.

Ms. George said she is having a hard time with this concept. Even if the flags were smaller she thinks we are inviting the whole town to put out all of these little flags and we already have the banners, which are really attractive, in town. There has been a similar situation where there are people who are part of the Vermont Fresh Networks, and what they end up having is just a small sign in their window. But it's not a big flag attached to a building. She doesn't think this is something that our downtown wants to get involved in. It is one thing to have a store sign that are all different and we thought of that as a form of signage, but to suddenly have everybody having the same flag in front of every business doesn't fit. She sees it as visual clutter. She isn't sure Montpelier needs this.

Ms. George said there is nothing stopping anybody from hanging this on the inside of their store window, so it's not like somebody couldn't decide to devote that big a piece of fabric to put in their window.

Ms. Vogan said she understands what they are saying. She will put out a statewide e-mail to all of their members across the state. She doesn't have any problem collecting the three flags she sold in Montpelier.

**Review of July 15, 2008 Minutes:**

The minutes of the July 15, 2008 DRC meeting were approved with minor changes on a vote of 4 to 0.

**Review of July 29, 2008 Minutes:**

The minutes of the July 29, 2008 DRC meeting were approved with minor changes on a vote of 4 to 0.

**Streamlining Design Review Committee Process:**

At the July 29<sup>th</sup> DRC meeting Gwen attended the meeting and she thought as part of streamlining their meetings it would be helpful if one of the members would take more responsibility – but not all of the responsibility – for each project so when they meet there is actually one person who has visited the site and really looked at it so when they came to the meeting and thought through the criteria they would have in their mind how it does or doesn't fit. It is not meant for any of the other members to take responsibility because we all are supposed to be visiting the sites.

Gwen Hallsmith, Director of Planning and Community Development, said part of what she has observed sitting through the meetings is when it comes time to review the criteria and the DRC to come to a sense of how the application meets the criteria there is a lot of information that seems as an observer to be very subjective. In fact, a lot of the information that should be part of the criteria is objective. The attempt was to have some preparation work done prior to the meeting. How is it consistent with other similar things in town? Just to get one person to do a little more thinking about that before the meeting, then you would have some subjective information to consider. For example, at last meeting with the City Hall Plaza, how does this compare with other similar installations in town? There is the State House, Christ Church, and a few other public buildings with fronts. How does it compare it with those treatments? It's easy enough to think about that in advance and put together a list of similar places. It is a lot for Clancy to do all by himself. If one person each time could take one project and think about the stuff in advance, or look for trouble spots when they visit the site, then we would have a little more objective information and there would be somebody presenting information to the group about their particular take on the findings. Not to say they are the final word.

Mr. Duggan said that could potentially put the person who did it in a position that their judgment could be called into question as being subjective.

Ms. Hallsmith said that is true, and it can anyway.

Mr. Everett said usually it is easier to be objective when the applicant has a complete application and if they actually have a copy of the criteria to review and submit cut sheets, complete colors and all of the details.

Ms. Hallsmith said one of the other suggestions they had at the meeting was to retrofit the applications so they had to answer the criteria.

Ms. George said that is pretty daunting, but they could evolve to that level. At this point just to get them to present the application. On the Barre Street application they had a picture of all of the adjoining buildings. Did that come earlier or later in the game?

Audra Brown from Planning said she called the applicant and said it would be helpful if they had pictures of how that building relates to the other buildings.

Ms. George said the reality is it says it right in the application that we need pictures of adjoining buildings.

Ms. Hallsmith said when she was dealing with the Randolph Select Board they were dealing with too much information each meeting and the meetings went longer than they wanted. A lot of the decision making, because there was too much information all at once, wasn't the best all of the time. Each of the members of the Select Board had their own portfolios at each of the meetings.

Ms. George said the goal of this group is that they all look at the properties.

Ms. Hallsmith said then they would come to the meeting just a little bit better prepared when the application is in front of them.

The DRC discussed the logistics of having their meetings televised.

**Adjournment:**

The Design Review Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Audra Brown  
Planning & Zoning Assistant