

Montpelier Design Review Committee
September 23, 2008
Council Chambers, City Hall

Approved

Present: Margot George, Chair; Stephen Everett, Vice Chair; Eric Gilbertson, Nancy Mears, and Guy Tapper.
Staff: Clancy DeSmet, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Call to Order:

Margot George, Chair, called the September 23, 2008 meeting of the Design Review Committee to order at 5:30 P.M. Ms. George explained that the Design Review Committee is advisory to the Development Review Board. The Committee will be looking at their application as it relates to the design review criteria. They will be reviewing the notes provided and asking clarifying questions about the proposal. The Committee's minutes and voting action will be sent on to the Development Review Board for their meeting on October 6th.

I. 5 High School Drive – GB/DCD/FP

Applicant: Montpelier Public Schools/Peter Evans

Owner: City of Montpelier

Storage Shed

Interested Parties: Tom Sabo & Matt McLane

Guy Tapper is the "point person" from the Committee on this application. They want to put up a storage shed for equipment used in the biology school greenhouse. They reviewed the greenhouse and are glad to see it is doing nicely. This is going to be attached directly to the building and is not a separate structure.

Mr. Sabo said their thinking at this point is they would not attach it to the building. The building it would be next to is refrigeration storage. It is where the high school's freezer and cooler are located, and directly in back of the shed as it is oriented is the electrical room for those particular refrigeration units. The chances of that particular building changing are slim, but different refrigeration systems and technologies change over time. The thought was not to attach it in case there were changes to that particular building. Mr. McLane said it would be abutting, but not physically attached.

Ms. George asked how many feet between the two buildings.

Mr. Sabo said at the most it would be a foot away.

Mr. McLane said there are two different structures.

Mr. Sabo said the thought with the accessory storage shed was to try to make it as connected aesthetically as the greenhouse. One of the whole premises around the greenhouse operation and the related agricultural plots where students are growing vegetables is the whole idea of trying to maintain an ethic of local and sustainable practices along the way, so they are trying to use local materials.

Mr. Everett asked what was going in the storage shed.

Mr. McLane said gardening/farm implements, hoes, rakes, wheelbarrows and shovels.

Mr. Everett asked if they were all going to be used in the greenhouse.

Mr. McLane said in front of the greenhouse and just adjacent to the new tool shed are two different garden plots, so the whole triangle here has been cultivated with red potatoes, onions, and squash. The implements that are needed to do that as this point stay in the greenhouse and get taken in and out every day. That was the reason for building the tool shed.

Mr. Everett asked if there was any reason not to attach it to the greenhouse.

Mr. Sabo said behind the greenhouse there is a gutter system where they put rain water. Each side there is the polycarbon glass where the sun comes through. The south side is all glass, and there is glass on the front half of both ends with doors on both ends.

Mr. Gilbertson said there are actually two different roof styles. There will be three different roofs there.

Mr. Everett said the walk-in freezer doesn't show on the drawing.

Ms. Mears asked what was the reasoning for wanting the shed close to the freezer.

Mr. Sabo said the location of the shed is built on a number of nuances. One is snow removal and where snow can actually be placed in terms of fire access. He talked to Don Lorinovich about where the fire road goes around. There are just certain places where students walk between the library entrance and there are athletic fields in the area, so there is question about encroaching on areas where fans watch games and where teams practice. They are also more and more cultivating pieces of the school's property. It is in the shadow of the shed and doesn't get in the way of any emergency exits or plowing. They brought the grounds chief and custodians over and they seemed to agree it was a suitable spot for the shed. It's adjacent to the new potato patch and easy access to the tools.

Mr. Everett said another solution to the roof line piece would be to make this a shed roof so it will be the same pitch. It will be a little more compatible.

Mr. Sabo said one of the things that will be present through this whole process is that the students through the drafting and woodworking class will be building this structure. Foster Hill Builders will be working along with the students in the construction of the shed. One of the thoughts about doing this sort of design was it to give the kids an opportunity to really understand how a roof system is developed. There are educational pieces built in, and those were considered in the design.

Ms. Mears said this seems to be a little stand alone building. Why does it have to be abutted up against a building that is not very nice anyway?

Mr. Sabo said she is right, the structure is ugly. It's not even painted the same color as the rest of the school. The greenhouse is attractive, and the design, color and type of wood they are using would blend in with that.

Ms. George asked what the siding on the building with the freezer was.

Mr. Sabo said it is T-111.

Ms. George said they are proposing to use rough pine.

Mr. Sabo replied it is the same as the greenhouse. The only thing that really does stand out different is the freezer shed.

Ms. George said there are different roof lines. Mr. Everett said he would prefer matching the shed roof. Ms. Mears said she thinks that is a wrong idea. If that is a bad building, then we don't necessarily want to match a bad building. If you have design students doing this and want to make it a lovely little building, then her feeling is to make it pull apart from it. If you are creating a little garden compound, then have it relate to the greenhouse rather than the refrigeration building.

Mr. Everett asked if there were any windows going into the shed.

Mr. Sabo replied no because there is no need for it.

Ms. George said she prefers the roof blending with the other roofs. If the other building's siding is T-111 is a relatively decent siding they could be using. She asked if they were going to paint or stain the rough pine wood.

Mr. Sabo said it would be the same color as the greenhouse. The refrigeration shed is brown. They want it the same color as the greenhouse, which is the same as the rest of the bricks all around.

Mr. Gilbertson said he liked the idea of the students building the gable roof and learning how to do it. This is an obscure enough location that it isn't going to show. The greenhouse will eclipse it.

Mr. Tapper said he would prefer the shed roof to match the profile next to it, but he would say that it's not a major issue. The roof is fine.

Ms. George asked what the roofing material was. Mr. McLane said it would be metal roofing.

Ms. George said they had talked about some alternatives. She asked if they had any wish to stay with what they had proposed or do they want to make changes.

Mr. McLane said he agrees that the T-111 is a decent siding. Going back to the idea of teaching kids how to use local materials and supporting the local economy he would hope they could use siding that was felled, trucked and milled in the area. That would be an important piece. Mr. Sabo said the T-111 would be inconsistent with the mission of the entire project, and would be seen that way to most folks and the students. He would very much like to use the local lumber which would be of the same appearance as the greenhouse.

Mr. Gilbertson said that made a lot of sense. T-111 seems to deteriorate pretty quickly. Try using shiplap.

The Design Review Committee reviewed the design criteria and found it acceptable. The application was approved unanimously on a vote of 5 to 0.

II. 77 Barre Street – CB-I/DCD

Applicant: Chad Hewitt

Owner: Duplessis, Powers & Berndt

Window replacement.

Interested Party: Fred Duplessis

The applicant is replacing three round top windows on the second floor, which are in the front, and then he is replacing the remaining the four windows on the first floor that were not done during the first application. Then, there are two windows on the west side down Barre Street and two windows on the east side on the porch with the same type of windows approved in January. They are a cumulus grey color.

Mr. Duplessis said they were replacing every window they didn't the first time.

Ms. George said starting with the three round top windows on the front are the only round type windows they have. Then, they are replacing the remaining four windows on the first floor not done. Mr. Duplessis said these are on the side of the building that is next to 79 Barre Street and two in the back off the porch. They are on the ground floor level.

Ms. George said right now these are all existing single pane 6 over 6 windows with wooden storms. Mr. Duplessis said that was correct.

Ms. George asked if they were using the same manufacturer they did the last time. Mr. Duplessis replied they were. They were very pleased with them.

Ms. George said when they replaced the first batch of windows with replacements that matched. Mr. Duplessis said yes. His understanding is they were going to be replaced exactly with what is there now. The Committee's goal for the historic district is to try to maintain or preserve the original design.

Mr. Duplessis said that is their understanding as well.

Ms. George said they could have the application reflect the fact that he is replacing his windows with in-kind and they are all 6 over 6. The Committee's goal is to replicate the muntin profile. They will discover at Marvin windows that you do have a choice of muntin profiles. The muntin is indeed the divider between the glass and their contractor Dan Clar will be able to replicate as close as possible the muntin profile.

Mr. Gilbertson said he had a question on the round top windows. He shows a square top on the drawings with rounded glass. The window itself is not rounded, just the glass panes are. Ms. George said it is a real rounded window on the front. The drawing doesn't show that. Mr. Duplessis said whatever is up there is being replaced with the same kind.

The Design Review Committee reviewed the design review criteria. They have found it acceptable that the window styles will be duplicated as existing windows in all instances. The duplication of the original historic materials is the goal of the district. There have been no optional changes. They have just clarified the windows he is using with the materials and colors. The application as submitted passed on a unanimous vote of 5 to 0.

III. 41 College Street – HDR/DCD

Applicant: Anthony Bean

Owner: Vermont College of Fine Arts

Placement of a steel structure on an existing concrete bunker

Ms. George said the applicant is Anthony Bean from the Vermont College of Fine Arts at 41 College Street. She asked him to tell where the steel structure is going to be located.

Mr. Bean said it is going behind the Bishop-Hatch dormitory which borders the Sabin's Pasture lot. It is going on top of an existing bunker which stores safety materials and hazmat materials. It's not anywhere near College Hall. They are going to use the vertical siding and have a garage door. Mr. Bean said the color is going to be Sahara tan.

Ms. George asked if they had explored any idea of something other than this building.

Mr. Bean said this building has a good warranty on it and won't rust. It is made of galvalume – 80 percent aluminum and 20 percent zinc. They send a heavier gauge metal here for Vermont.

Ms. George asked if there was any other structure that looked like this on campus. Mr. Bean replied no. She asked if they had found any other structure like this in the design control district. Mr. Bean replied no. He thought this would meet their needs. They are only going to use it to store extra furniture and maybe seasonal equipment.

Mr. Everett asked if it was supposed to be insulated.

Mr. Bean replied no.

Mr. Everett asked if he had any experience with condensation on the inside of one of these storage units. Mr. Bean said no.

Mr. Everett said he knows of people who have built these and ended up taking them down because of condensation issues.

Mr. Bean said there is no heat.

Mr. Everett said that would be one concern in terms of utility. The second concern is that there is nothing like that on the hill of the same architecture. It is incongruous.

Ms. George said she has a real problem with it, too. It is probably a great choice and relatively inexpensive, but the College for years and years has done their best to make it be good looking structures, whether they are sheds or whatever. She is wondering if there is some other design that has a pitched roof or in some way relates to the buildings on the campus.

Mr. Everett said they already have a foundation. Mr. Bean replied yes. The size is 16 x 24 foot. It's about the size of a two-car garage, and they do have pre-fab kits on two-car garages with wooden siding and a pitched roof. There are a lot of garage buildings in that neighborhood.

Mr. Bean said he was thinking about the upkeep on it and the maintenance on this building.

Mr. Gilbertson said they have a one-story building and painting it is not a big deal. If you use stained siding, they won't have to paint it for 20 years. He really has a problem with a very industrial building. If Paul Ibey wanted to put up a building like this down on Barre Street it matches what he has, but in this neighborhood, although it is not terribly visible, it is not a good idea, particularly since it is a fine arts school.

Ms. Mears said she would hate to see something like this there. She believes there are a lot of other options and to keep in mind this is a fine arts school. This seems very temporary to her. The idea of storing something like furniture in one of these kinds of buildings it would end up not being feasible.

The Design Review Committee reviewed the criteria. They would be glad to see him come back in with another idea or concept to look at.

Regarding the harmony of the exterior design with other properties in the district, they are having a hard time finding anything that matches.

Regarding the compatibility of the proposed exterior materials with other properties in the district, there really aren't any metal sided buildings other than on Stone Cutter's Way which is particularly zoned as an industrial area and also in the historic district but throughout the rest of the district a metal sided building is hard to come by.

Mr. Gilbertson said this structure would be appropriate in an industrial zone or Stone Cutter's Way, and he wouldn't have any problem with it there.

With regard to the prevention of the use of incompatible designs, buildings, color schemes or materials, this is where we are at. A domed shaped metal structure does not complement the existing college buildings and campus.

Mr. Gilbert asked if there were going to be lights and electric power in a storage unit. Mr. Bean said no, not in the future.

Mr. Everett said when he comes back with a different proposal he should include what he wants to do for stairs.

The application failed on a 0 to 5 vote.

Ms. George said he is welcome to go the Development Review Board and they will receive the DRC's notes and understand their reasons, but they would also be glad to have him come back with another proposal that would work for the neighborhood.

IV. 144 Main Street – CB-II/DCD/FP

Applicant: Flor Diaz-Smith

Owner: Gerald Tarrant

Conversion of a carriage house to office and residential.

The DRC has the description of the National Register of Historic Places. She asked the applicant to go through the details of the project.

Mr. Tarrant said he purchased the property in October 2007 and it consisted of three buildings. The Gothic green building at 144 Main Street, which is a residential and commercial building right now. It is a nice historic building. The building behind it is a 1960's apartment building. The third building is the carriage house which is empty, and has been empty for some time. It was used by the prior owner as a workshop, and it has a bathroom, running water and space heater in it. Other than that, it is pretty original. There appears to have been alterations due to the flood, and he thinks it was the 1927 flood. There are some structural things that need to be repaired, such as bricks, etc.

Mr. Tarrant said he would like to have a residence on the top floor and have commercial space on the bottom floor. The carriage doors will be retained as they are, and they will use the front entrance as it is. The only alteration to the building would be a doorway to the back and have a small deck because there is no front yard, side yard or back yard. It is a dark building and historic building. The concerns from the beginning are that it would be very dark unless they had a yard, and since there is no space the only place to have a little yard would be to have a small deck. Since virtually every building along there has a deck, it seems to be consistent with that concept.

Ms. Diaz-Smith said they would like to add more parking.

Mr. Gilbertson said if they are changing the landscape that is one of the criteria.

Ms. Diaz-Smith said there is one existing tree they don't want to lose. Originally, the building had 8 parking spaces and they want 17. If they are going to redo the carriage house they need an extra 3 spaces. Instead of having a raised curb they were talking about having two granite posts and have this marked on the concrete. We would still have the bulb outs and landscape those.

Ms. George said currently it is just wide open. She asked if the driveway was going to be wider.

Ms. Diaz-Smith said no.

Ms. George asked if they were reducing the size of the grass in front.

Ms. Diaz-Smith said they were reducing the size of the grass in the front, unless they stay with the amount of parking right now.

Ms. George said they don't currently use parking at the back of the building. Right now people do park in front of the carriage house.

Ms. George asked how many residential units in the building.

Mr. Tarrant said downstairs there is just one business and then there are three residential units upstairs. In the back building, the mansard building, there are six apartments.

Ms. George asked if this whole area was going to serve the front building, back building and the carriage house. Mr. Tarrant said it had to. There are three parking spaces on the other side and Vitl has agreed in the future to put their three cars there.

In the front there is an existing light fixture they are going to take out and put a transom above the door. They are adding two light fixtures on the front and one in the back.

In the back they want to have a door with some glass because they need more light. They want a deck or balcony in the back. They want the door for a secondary exit so the offices can exit in the front and the residents use the back entrance. The balcony would be wrought iron and the flooring of the balcony be made of wood.

They would like to add a chimney so there is a fireplace or woodstove up here. They would try to match the original chimney by the cupola. Ms. George said they would need to have that in their drawings when go before the Development Review Board.

Mr. Tarrant said the primary reason for a lot of the renovations is to make the house very energy efficient and tight, but at the same time retain all of the historic aspects. With that window the idea is to keep it on rollers and maybe put new rollers on and glass in front of it. The door opens from the inside and it is not tight. The only way to deal with it is on the outside.

Mr. Gilbertson said that was a good solution. They did that over in Waterbury in a carriage house, just put the window in the front and the occupant in the summer can slide it open and get the light.

Ms. Diaz-Smith said the window doesn't really do anything but provide character. The main thing is to have the egress for the tenant to meet code.

Ms. Mears asked how high off the ground would the window be.

Mr. Tarrant from Black River Design said the side of the slate roof comes down on the side of the building, so if you are standing on the second floor where the windows are. Originally, his foretaste was to have two decks because he wanted a deck for the top and he couldn't do it because the roof came down. Flor Diaz-Smith said they could still do it on the first floor, so the way she designed it works nicely.

Mr. DeSmet said they will also need a variance for the flood plain.

Ms. George asked where the windows would be going.

Ms. Diaz-Smith replied they are replacing the existing two windows in the back. The existing windows are not in good shape at all. They are 2 over 2 right now, and they want to put in 6 over 6 windows in for replacement.

Ms. George asked if they had some historic photographs that lead them to believe they should be 6 over 6.

Mr. Tarrant said they didn't know for sure, but they are going to check on that. They could easily do 2 over 2, which would be compatible with the other side. Mr. Everett said 2 over 2 would be appropriate.

Ms. Mears asked what kind of business they envisioned being there.

Mr. Tarrant said Vital is interested in staying. Right now it is just open office space.

Mr. Gilbertson said down at the Billings Farm they used the horse stalls to create cubicles.

Mr. Tarrant said he went by the Barre Fire Department and they have the old carriage doors.

Mr. Gilbertson said at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library they bought light tubes that are flexible tubing.

Mr. Tarrant said the second floor has two bedrooms and a loft, and they are going to put in little steps in to get up to the loft, which now just has a ladder. From the loft you can get up to the cupola.

Ms. George said they could put an optional change in the application for sky lights.

Mr. Tarrant said he thinks this building needs to get back into use so something will happen in the next few years. There is some structural work on the basement to do.

Ms. George asked how the big doors were going to be used.

Mr. Tarrant said the whole door will open. That is how they are now. The outside appearance will remain the same.

Mr. Tarrant said while they are before the Committee could they ask for three skylights.

Ms. George said she has written in the number 3.

Ms. George said while they didn't have the landscaping plan in front of them they have described shrubs and trees. Their goal in Montpelier is obviously to try to start hiding the parking lots.

Ms. Diaz-Smith said in the front they would put in some shrubbery and some evergreens, and perhaps a small stonewall.

Mr. Tarrant said he could put up a picket fence up with shrubbery or flowers in front of it for the summer and have a fence in the winter. He might even at some point put a stonewall in. He would like to cover up the parking too, but he also would like to the view of the white doors to the carriage house. Four to five feet would be fine.

The DRC reviewed the design review criteria and found the application met all relevant criteria. The application with optional changes was approved on a unanimous vote of 5 to 0.

Approval of September 9, 2008 Minutes:

Margot George, Stephen Everett and Guy Tapper were present at the September 9th meeting and they approved the minutes on a vote of 3 to 0.

Adjournment:

The Design Review Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clancy DeSmet
Planning and Zoning Administrator