

Montpelier Design Review Committee
April 14, 2009
City Council Chambers, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

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

Call to Order:

The meeting of the April 14, 2009 Montpelier Design Review Committee was called to order at 5:30 P.M.

I. 78 Barre Street – CB-II/DCD

Applicant: Steve Ribolini

Owner: Sally Longhi

Replace 26 windows.

Mr. Ribolini said 78 Barre Street is a brick building and they are doing a project for the owner. They are removing all of the windows which have fallen apart and replacing them with double hung vinyl which is bronze on the outside and white on the inside.

Mr. Everett inquired what the manufacturer's name was.

Mr. Ribolini said they are Farley windows. It's the series 3000.

Mr. Everett asked if they had any idea what the cost per window is.

Mr. Ribolini replied it is \$270.

Mr. Everett inquired if the storm windows would remain.

Mr. Ribolini said they would be removed because they are the old aluminum storms.

Mr. Everett asked if he had any idea what the original date of the building is.

Mr. Ribolini said he did not.

Mr. Gilbertson said he would guess 1880.

Mr. Everett asked why he chose bronze. It looks like the current windows are green.

Mr. Ribolini said he didn't think they were all the same color. They did a job similar to this in St. Johnsbury and the bronze windows looked real nice with the brick.

Mr. Everett said he thinks for a building of that age bronze is not a color that matches. There is the dark green, called Vermont green, and if they are available in that color they should look at that. Does the glass area change at all? Vinyl windows are out in front for the long term they probably aren't the greatest choice because they sometimes make it to 20 years, and often don't. Vinyl degrades with age. They would be much better off with a vinyl clad or metal clad window.

Mr. Duggan said Mr. Ribolini said a lot of the windows were deteriorating. Can they still be repaired? What sort of deterioration do they have?

Mr. Ribolini said the sash itself is loose from the glass. It's not just putty. The whole thing is rotten because they have been wet so much. They don't stay up and slam down. They have replaced panes of glass over the years from that.

Mr. Duggan asked if they were being replaced for the main reason of their condition. That is a lot of windows. He wonders if they have looked at other ways to repair them. Is this because of energy as well?

Mr. Ribolini replied it does deal with energy some. They should be a lot tighter than the old windows. Most of them are loose. Some storms are missing over the years. Of course, there are the pane issues on the old windows.

Mr. Duggan said he thinks a lot of that stuff can be managed. He wonders if keeping the wooden windows and maintaining them and getting better storm windows would be a better option. He doesn't think vinyl is a great choice, especially in a masonry building. Masonry tends to expand and contract at a lot of different rates.

Mr. Everett asked if anyone had checked on any alternative materials or types of windows.

Mr. Ribolini said they looked into a replacement made by another company through Allen Lumber that he believes was a clad on the outside with wood on the inside. The other factor is cost. They are probably double the cost.

Mr. Gilbertson asked if he thought the windows are not repairable if somebody rebuilt them and there is so much wood gone from rot.

Mr. Ribolini said it would probably cost three times the money. Instead of a \$7,000 project it would cost \$20,000 to rebuild what is there.

Mr. Duggan said that is also choosing to replace 26 windows at once. He took a look at the windows from the street and he thought they were in a repairable condition. He thinks right now there is a rush to replace windows in the name of energy efficiency. Some of them probably have a good service life left and others might be candidates for replacement. He would prefer a different option than replacing with vinyl.

Mr. Ribolini said the house next to it has all vinyl windows. It's in the same neighborhood.

Mr. Everett inquired when that was done.

Mr. Ribolini said within the last few years.

Mr. DeSmet said the house has vinyl siding, too.

Mr. Everett said he wasn't aware that it came up for review that he was aware of. They would need a building permit for that, wouldn't they?

Mr. DeSmet replied yes. It's in the Design Review District and would need a zoning permit, but a single family dwelling wouldn't need a building permit for replacement windows.

Ms. Mears said vinyl isn't a good environmental choice, either. If you are thinking about costs, but if you put the extra money up front and think about how long it is going to last it probably evens out if you get the better quality window.

Mr. Everett inquired if the other window he compared a Marvin window.

Mr. Ribolini replied it was.

Mr. Everett said there is also a Pella window out that is not nearly as pricey, which is quite good, and a number of the high end builders are using those now as replacements. They are metal clad in multiple color choices with a wooden interior, either primed or natural color inside.

Mr. Ribolini said that is an option. The owner of the building who asked him to put the windows in he told her he needed to get a permit.

Mr. Tapper said he would agree with the consensus around the table that a metal clad or wooden window would be preferable to vinyl for a number of reasons. He would certainly suggest that the options be explored with the owner.

Mr. Ribolini said they had that price from Allen Lumber. It is about \$5,000 in materials for the vinyl. That would probably raise the project by about \$4,000 or \$5,000.

Mr. Gilbertson said the repair of the windows should be investigated and the best replacement fix is if they can't be repaired is to find wood sash and put new storms on like it is to replicate what is there. He knows that Design Review doesn't always follow the standards, so it is a design review issue. In a quality old building you should make a quality investment in whatever you put in it. From an appearance standpoint they shouldn't be bronze; they should be a dark green. It looks like the cornice has green trim on it as well.

Mr. Ribolini said it is a greenish-blue color.

Mr. Duggan said they were missing a lot of paint.

Ms. Mears inquired if the building was apartments.

Mr. Ribolini replied yes. There are three apartments, one on the second floor and two on the third.

Mr. Duggan said he would agree with everything Eric Gilbertson said as far as preferences. It would be nice to look to see if anything could be repaired and retained just because they are there and with a little maintenance they can be made workable again. If they needed to be replaced, he would prefer to see a wooden window go in with a storm. Metal clad with wood on the inside is about as far as he would be comfortable recommending. He realizes there are vinyl windows right next door, but they don't need to keep making the same mistakes as far as choosing materials.

Mr. Everett said it sounds like the people next door did their work without any permits.

Ms. Mears said it is a totally different building.

Mr. Duggan said it should be green because that would match well and it is a common color scheme for that type of building.

Mr. Ribolini said the only reason they are recommending storms is because they put a wooden window in.

Mr. Duggan said the storm window will protect it. Even with the vinyl windows they are proposing, they are not insulated glass.

Mr. Ribolini said they are insulated.

Mr. Duggan said there have been a lot of studies that show that once the gasket breaks down the window has to be replaced itself, so he would prefer not to see any newer vinyl windows in the district at all. He is open to the replacements.

Mr. Everett said he would certainly condition any window having the same glass size that these have – not almost, but the same.

Ms. Mears said she would reiterate what everybody said around the table, that vinyl is not a good choice for this building. She likes what Eric saying about this being a quality old building and should have quality materials. She understands the whole cost difference, which is always an issue, but if you have a budget of \$7,000 then see what you can get that is good quality for that amount and come back another time to do the rest. Do the project in different stages as opposed to blowing the whole budget on a low quality material.

Mr. Everett said he would concur with other people who have made comments. His own personal experience, as well as seeing other peoples' experience in the district, he has no problem with the replacement, especially if the existing sash are damaged because he has priced out what it would cost to actually rebuild the original windows with new material and it was more than buying a top quality window. Looking at it historically, obviously 100 years ago nobody had storm windows. They just had whatever was there for a sash, and that is part of the reason they did wear out, especially sashes that had been there for 100 years because the weather was at it for the first 50 years before somebody put storm windows on there. He would concur that the better material is either a wooden window or metal clad. Metal cladding has a very long term warranty on it in terms of durability as well as the paint color because it is an anodized process. In addition to Marvin, there are two other manufacturers – Brownington and Pella – who make a less costly window that is still a quality window. Obviously the Marvin window is probably the top choice. Their profile matches most of the historic profiles and window sashes. All of the other two are pretty close and certainly would be a good alternative if cost is an issue on this particular project. He would reiterate what Nancy Mears said that even if it were his own building just looking at the criteria the Committee has to review he would pick a better window and do a half or two thirds of the building now. There is two years once the permission is given and the project is approved to complete it. He could do it in stages.

Mr. Everett said he isn't sure where he wants to go from here. It sounds like as presented it probably would not be approved by the DRC. The Design Review Committee is advisory to the Development Review Board. The Committee can review the criteria and vote on the application as it is.

Mr. Ribolini said he would like to speak with the owner.

Mr. Gilbertson suggested the Committee table the application and come back with a proposal based on the Committee's comments.

Mr. Everett asked to check on the alternative products.

Mr. Ribolini said maybe they could do the front side this year and another side next year.

Mr. Everett said he inherited a building that somebody had replaced a half dozen vinyl windows. It is out of the Design Review District and he had to replace them all because they didn't hold up. The glass lost the seal. The problem with the vinyl is over the years it becomes unstable. The ultra violet light deteriorates the material, and once the material is unstable the glass seal cracks and there is moisture inside the glass. If you try to replace the sash you can't do it. You have to get another whole unit. Actually, those windows lasted about 8 years.

Mr. Ribolini said he has some other apartments and some that do have vinyl windows in them that were there before he bought them. One has been there for close to 20 years and they have had trouble with just two windows.

Mr. Gilbertson said that is the usual good life of a vinyl window, 20 years. When you think these windows have probably been here over 100 years, no wonder there are some issues.

Mr. Everett said a lot of it depends upon exposure, especially with a vinyl window. Eastern and southern exposures get more sun and the vinyl has a shorter life span.

Mr. Gilbertson moved the DRC table the application. The Design Review Committee tabled the application on a vote of 5 to 0.

II. 89 Main Street – CB-I/DCD

Applicant: The Skinny Pancake

Owner: City Center Associates

Outdoor seating and sign.

Interested Party: Benjamin Adler

Mr. Everett explained the advisory role of the Design Review Committee to the Development Review Board. He said because the building is in the Design Review District the Committee reviews any proposed changes to the exterior of the building including the application for the exterior sign and upper patio. They will review that based on criteria that has been outlined. Their vote is advisory to the Development Review Board and they would meet with them next Monday.

Benjamin Adler, one of the owners of the Skinny Pancake, along with his brother and head chef Tim Collins, said they have one location in Burlington. They opened it about two years ago, which was after five years of running a cart on Church Street and three years of driving a school bus to festivals. It has been a gradual growth process.

The Skinny Pancake is a crepe, so they do mostly crepes. They have a serious emphasis on using local foods. The crepes are very versatile so they can do breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert. They also serve coffee and tea. In Burlington they also have a beer and wine license so they will apply for one in Montpelier.

It is a very small space and they hope to have some extra seats outside to supplement the inside. They would be applying for an outdoor consumption permit for alcohol.

They are applying for a sign as well as putting some tables and chairs outside. The sign is going to be built by Kendrick Glaeser who is a sign builder in Burlington. There is a sample of the sign itself and a picture of the sign placed on the building. It is supposed to go right over the ghosting of the old sign.

Mr. Duggan said the Committee would review the sign first.

Mr. Adler said they are going to put the lights that Ben and Jerry's had back on the sign. They gave him the lights when they finalized their agreement.

Mr. Gilbertson asked if the sign itself fit within the sign band. In the pictures it isn't clear that is the case. It fits within the band with some clearance above and below the circle.

Mr. Adler said he was very clear with Mr. Glaeser that the sign has to fit within the sign band. Their sign in Burlington is just the circular part and larger, so he redesigned this one to fit with the code in Montpelier. In the picture you can see that the bottom of the sign is threatening the border of the band, and that is just the limitations of his abilities to do graphic work.

Mr. Duggan asked if we knew what height the sign band is. The sign says three feet.

Mr. Gilbertson said the band itself, if you look at the material on the band, is 6 inch stock, so that is roughly 36 inches from top to bottom. That would mean that even if the outer circumference of that touches or is just inside the band that means that 99.9 percent of the sign is on the right portion of it. He said for fitting purposes they would want to give themselves a little leeway. You don't want to find out you have a quarter inch too much sign. Perhaps the sign should be 34 inches if the band is 36 inches and there should be an inch clearance on either side. That sign band is so big that it makes a lot of sense to fill it up.

Mr. Duggan said it would be really nice not to see the ghosting around the corner. If they could paint that it would accent the sign. There are three flagpoles up above and perhaps the sign could be centered. He asked how the lights would interact with the sign. Are they going to be on either side of the sign or behind it? Are they goosenecks?

Mr. DeSmet said they were gooseneck lights.

The Committee told Mr. Adler they thought it was great they were going into that space because it was a loss to Montpelier's downtown to lose Ben and Jerry's.

Mr. Adler said they realized that Ben and Jerry's left so they will try to honor their spirit.

The DRC reviewed the sign criteria and found it acceptable. It should be noted the applicant can reinstall the former gooseneck lights. An adjustment to the scope is that the sign will be redesigned regarding diameter of circular element on the sign so it will be within the sign band.

Mr. Adler said from a business perspective he didn't know what the impact of shrinking the sign would be. There's the notion that bigger is always better except there is a limit to that.

Mr. Gilbertson said he would just give the applicant an alternative to choose to make the circle a reasonable size based on the sign design.

Mr. Duggan said right now the sign will stick out from the sign board an inch. He wants to know if the molding around the sign band sticks out more than a couple of inches.

Mr. Duggan said he now has two adjustments written down – one says the sign will be redesigned to fit within the sign band and another one that says the applicant can choose to make the sign larger as appropriate.

Ms. Mears said she would like to see the sign within the sign band.

Mr. Gilbertson said he really likes to see innovation and variation in the downtown signs. He likes the variety.

Mr. Duggan said the second adjustment is that the ghosting of the former sign will be painted.

Mr. Gilbertson said the whole sign band should be painted.

Mr. Duggan said the sign band will be painted to match.

The sign portion of the application was approved on a vote of 4 to 0 by the Design Review Committee.

The DRC then reviewed the outdoor seating portion of the application. The Skinny Pancake is requesting the right to set up tables and chairs on the preexisting patio. They want a total of 5 tables and 12 chairs. The space will be separated with a physical barrier in keeping with outside consumption alcohol requirements.

Mr. Duggan said he knows it isn't the DRC's purview as to whether this is an acceptable use or not, but it has already been approved by Glenn Moore.

Mr. DeSmet said the applicant has talked to Glenn Moore about this and he approved.

Mr. Duggan asked if they would take out the poles every morning and bring them in every evening. Are they talking about permanently closing off the entrance?

Mr. Adler said in the winter it is useless so the stuff would be removed during the winter.

Mr. Duggan asked if there was any adjustment under the large stone base under the tables. There is some really uneven ground and it is going to be hard to keep the tables level. Does he envision putting umbrellas over the top of the tables?

Mr. Adler said the base they are looking at is in Burlington. When the sun is beating down he thinks people appreciate umbrellas. They take them in and out based on how cold or warm it is.

Mr. Gilbertson said he thinks umbrellas and tables are fine.

Ms. Mears said she was concerned it was all going to fit with the umbrellas up.

Mr. Adler said they probably wouldn't put umbrellas on every table.

Mr. Gilbertson asked if they were adding any lighting for night dining.

Mr. Adler said they didn't have any current plans or intentions to light it for night dining. There will be lighting coming from inside and street lighting. They don't light their outside tables in Burlington, either.

Mr. Gilbertson said it is great to have stuff going out on the street. The difference between Montpelier's downtown and Barre's downtown is dramatic. If you drive through Barre at 8:00 o'clock at night there is nobody out on the street. When you come to Montpelier there are couples and a lot of activity out on the street at night.

Mr. Tapper said he has a real problem from a design standpoint closing off a set of stairs.

Mr. DeSmet said the main reason is to keep the alcohol sales from being on the sidewalk.

Mr. Gilbertson said he would have an issue with it if they were still using the main entrance. It's only to go be up during June, July, August, September and probably part of October.

Mr. Adler said from a business perspective he is looking to get more tables out there. He thought he could put some kind of planters to make it look less awkward.

Ms. Mears suggested he put potted plants on the steps.

Mr. Tapper said something should be out by the street.

Mr. Gilbertson said they could put a variety of plants on the steps going down and it would create a nice green piece.

Mr. Duggan said an adjustment to the scope could be install seasonal potted plants on the blocked stairs. There are moveable barriers connected by chains. Umbrellas are okay.

The Design Review Committee reviewed the criteria.

Mr. Gilbertson asked if the umbrellas were going to be plain.

Mr. Adler said they receive them from a distributor. This year the umbrellas say Long Trail on them.

Mr. Gilbertson said that should be included because that is an issue with the signage.

Mr. Adler said they couldn't go buy them because they are expensive.

Mr. Gilbertson said that is an issue because they are actually adding to the signage.

Mr. Duggan asked if they could consider solid color umbrellas without any logos.

Mr. Adler said they would probably have fewer umbrellas. They tend to run about \$200 apiece. He appreciates that concern. They just replaced the umbrellas from last year and the signs on the nice new umbrellas say Sam Adams. If he were to look into just sewing a respectful patch over it of a consistent size, would they approve that?

Mr. Duggan said they could even get a patch of their logo, The Skinny Pancake.

Mr. Gilbertson replied that would be more acceptable, especially if it were small.

The application for The Skinny Pancake was approved on a vote of 4 to 0.

Approval of March 24, 2009 Minutes:

There weren't enough members who had attended the March 24th meeting present to approve the March 24th Minutes so they were postponed.

Adjournment:

Upon motion by Nancy Mears and Eric Gilbertson the Design Review Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clancy DeSmet
Planning and Zoning Administrator

Transcribed by: Joan Clack