

Montpelier Design Review Committee
August 24, 2010
Community Room, Montpelier Police Department

Approved

Present: Stephen Everett, Chair; James Duggan, Vice Chair; Kate Coffey, Jay White and Muffie Conlon
Staff: Clancy DeSmet, Planning & Zoning Administrator

Call to Order:

Stephen Everett, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

I. 64 Main Street – CB-I/DCD

Applicant: Leslie Rabins – One More Time
Owner: Stephen Lewinstein
Sign

Ms. Rabins said the sign comes out to 61.3 square feet and they are allowed 188 square feet.

Mr. Everett asked if she knew what the amended height of the lettering is.

Ms. Rabins replied no.

Mr. Duggan said the way he visualizes this is one big sign. He is wondering if there are any other changes to the sign.

Ms. Rabins said they made it all a little smaller.

Mr. Everett said the individual pieces are smaller, but the sign is still stretched the entire length of the sign band.

Ms. Rabins replied it is the sign band. The store is 50 feet wide.

Mr. Everett said it is wide and they are allowed to use the band. However, in the criteria they use to evaluate the application one of the criteria is harmony of exterior design with other properties in the district. There is no other sign in the downtown that has 3 foot high lettering. The previous largest sign was Cool Jewels with 21 inch high lettering. Again, it is double the size.

Ms. Rabins replied it is just the caps. It would look funny if the caps were smaller than the lower case letters and they would look really funny in such a large sign band. She would have to change the font and have all of the letters large.

Mr. Duggan said looking back in the minutes from the last meeting one of the improvements or suggestions that a number of the members gave was to pull the sign in a little tighter.

Ms. Rabins replied they did.

Mr. Duggan said he doesn't really see that difference from what she presented here to what was originally presented. She has two storefronts essentially unified as one business. In some ways she has three different design elements. There are some icons on the left, the text in the front and then some more icons. A lot of the Committee feels there is a lot going on in the sign band. He wonders if there was any possibility of

something that might start to work within the elements there is to get rid of some of the icons and have lettering centered in the middle and some other icons on the other side of it. If you look at the front of the whole building you have actually got two separate facades going on within that one unit. That might be one way to respond to the placement of it. These letters are very large in comparison to other signs in the district. He wonders if they might all benefit from perhaps having a simple cutout of one of these letters, or all of them, and affixing them on the sign band so we can all do a site visit and take a look to see how they look in context. He is really uncomfortable voting for such large text and the sign that just seems out of context with the rest of the signage in that area.

Mr. White asked if his opinion would change if it was cut out full scale. That is a huge expense for the committee to approve it.

Mr. Duggan said perhaps some cardboard or newsprint for a sample would work. He is having a hard time visualizing this in scale to what he sees here. It might be a stronger image if it were pulled in a little tighter.

Ms. Conlon asked if the border colors were going to change.

Ms. Rabins said there is a slight border that will be blue. The background will be a pinkish gray.

Mr. Everett said this is actually a taller sign band than Cityscape recommends. They talk about information bands should be no longer than the overall length of the storefront. It should be either confined to the width of an existing band or should be no more than 2 feet 6 inches in height. Obviously, this sign band is larger than that.

Ms. Rabins added it is an existing sign band.

Mr. Everett said there is a sample where there is a sign band that the letters don't fill up the entire band and probably half the height of the band. That gives contrast and stands out as opposed to filling the entire band.

Ms. Rabins said it is because of the type of font it is. The caps are large but the other letters are quite small and do fill only half the band. When you put the smaller letters in the large band it is going to look funny.

Mr. White said he disagrees. The whole thing would look better if it was much smaller and would have more pop. It would be much more compatible with the criteria of blending with the rest of the building. If she were able to treat the two different storefronts as two different things, like Aubuchons has two different signs on their two different storefronts, both are compatible. It is nice to have the caps higher than the other letters, but the whole thing is too big. The whole thing should be about 75 percent of the size she is showing now. The Cool Jewels sign he wishes were a little smaller. It just feels and looks too big. The committee's whole role is not just the engineering of counting how many square inches there are on the sign but the whole presentation of the city as one looks it. His feeling with this sign is that it is too overwhelming as is the sign band itself so it is duplicating the same problem. It would look better if there was another border painted on within the existing border so the scale in the sign band itself came down some, and within that size the letters were smaller and icons smaller. The scale of the icons seems to be a huge range between the shoe size and the dress size and the chair size. It doesn't seem to have a consistency to it. He doesn't like the graphics as a presentation. It is out of proportion.

Ms. Rabins asked how he thinks it should be.

Mr. White said his focus would be to make the whole text smaller and the icons much smaller so they aren't so dominant. Therefore, she might even have more icons.

Ms. Rabins said they could take the recycled signs out and there would be more empty space.

Mr. White said it isn't just the amount of empty space. He thinks it is the whole composition of the graphic, and it isn't as good as it could be. Putting a border within the border so the scale of the sign band is more compatible with the rest of the street and then make the lettering fit within that form. It would be a bit more interesting with graphs and texts and not so many icons if any.

Ms. Rabins said she totally disagrees. According to Cityscape they suggest to do icons for businesses.

Mr. Duggan said she is also representing her business with six different icons. Do they have furniture in the store?

Ms. Rabins said they get furniture sometimes.

Mr. Duggan said he likes the use of the icons, but he personally thinks there a few too many. He suggested at the last meeting that everything be shrunk into proportion. He likes the font. He likes the fact there are stand alone letter. It makes a nice sign. Proportionally it is too large. There could be linear or vertical elements to break up the long horizontal band and it would be more appealing. He doesn't see a big difference from what they saw last time other than just a little more clarification of the colors.

Mr. White said regarding the colors he is concerned that the background color, which is pinkish gray, seems to be close to the color of the brick and he is afraid it would lose a lot of its impact.

Ms. Rabins said she didn't think so and it's quite different than brick. There is going to be a border.

Mr. Gilbertson said one option would be to do a double border. Since the lettering is outlined with a black outline she may want to think about doing a black outline for the border and then an inner border of the light blue. The light blue is not real compatible with the brick. A second border might help shrink the sign.

Since the sign person wasn't present at the meeting the DRC postponed the remainder of the application until she knows where he is.

The DRC resumed discussion of the application for One More Time at 64 Main Street.

Mr. Everett said there was some discussion about the size of the lettering.

Stephen Miller said the scale is 1 to 36.

Mr. Everett said there is 31.5 inches in height for the large lettering and 18 inches for the small letters.

Mr. White said this is a much bigger sign than Aubuchons.

Mr. DeSmet said the difference is that the Aubuchon sign was measured as a total face and not just the letters because it was a complete system rather than raised lettering. It isn't even the same comparison. The height of the Cool Jewels letters is 21 inches.

Mr. Everett said that is the largest sign in town in terms of lettering.

Mr. Duggan said he still feels the lettering and icons are too big and the sign would benefit from shrinking all of this proportionately. Is that anything the applicant is willing to look at?

Mr. Miller said he didn't know that he has any choice. He made a sketch like that and titled it lost in space because everything lost touch with everything else.

Mr. Duggan asked if that was something the committee could review and determine. That is something he would like to see. One of the suggestions he made before he arrived is if it would be possible to project on a piece of large white paper with a mockup of the letters so the DRC could review.

Mr. Miller replied that would be several hours work and he thinks it is an unreasonable request. They were given the figure of 118 square feet and this is just over half of that.

Mr. Duggan said they are within the constraints of Cityscape. The question is whether his design is acceptable, and he doesn't believe it is. He doesn't believe it is compatible. He thinks the committee has been very clear about what their issues are. If you go back and review the minutes there are very clear ways about how this design could be improved. He doesn't see any change other than the shrinking of some of the icons.

Mr. Miller said they are using a little over 60 square feet and they would like to use only 40. She has a huge shop.

Mr. Duggan said there is an overly large sign band but that doesn't mean it needs to be littered with lots of images.

Ms. Rabins said she sees it as art.

Mr. White said it seems odd she would want it that big because it cost more when it is that big and it overwhelms all of the other signs in the town.

Ms. Rabins said on that sign board if it were too little it would look funny.

Mr. Duggan said he disagrees and they aren't giving the DRC a chance to look at that in proportion like they have requested.

Mr. Miller said this is a fashion place and a little boldness is appropriate. What is the difference between boldness and bad taste? That is a very important question. He doesn't know what choice they have but to come up with another sketch.

Mr. White said they should vote on it and then they can go to the Development Review Board. The DRC can give them an opinion and they can take that to the Development Review Board. If they agree with the them then they could do exactly what they want to do, and if they agree with the DRC they could come back with something more reasonable.

Mr. Everett said the DRC is advisory to the Development Review Board. They would take a look at the application as proposed, review the criteria and vote for or against it. Either way they can go forward to the Development Review Board. The DRC's opinion is advisory and they go by the criteria outlined for them. They have accepted applications the DRC has denied.

Mr. Miller said he feels what they clearly want here is for things to be extremely small and spaced apart and really little.

Mr. Duggan said that is not it at all. If you go back and look at the minutes not only do they want things smaller but a tighter design that doesn't spread across the entire sign band. Yes, they have two storefronts and he appreciates the fact they have the windows filled with lots of wonderful things to look at. He believes it being painted is going to make it unified, but he thinks it creates an iconic image across the front of the façade that is really not compatible with other signs and other buildings in relationship to the Streetscape. As you stand and look down the street he feels it is going to be overpowering.

Mr. White said they have suggested they push back. He has not heard a single thing about trying it and it might be a good idea.

Mr. Miller said that would make a joke out of the size of the sign band. This is a shop that is 63 feet across.

Mr. Duggan said he feels enough dialogue has transpired and he would like to vote.

The DRC reviewed the sign criteria.

- 1 (a). Preservation or reconstruction of the appropriate historic style if the proposed project is in the Historic District or involves a historic structure. **Unacceptable.**
- 1 (b). Harmony of exterior design with other properties in the district. **Unacceptable.**
- 1 (c). Compatibility of proposed exterior materials with other properties in the district. **Materials are acceptable.**
- 1 (d). Compatibility of proposed landscaping with the district. **Not Applicable.**
- 1 (e). Prevention of the use of incompatible designs, buildings, color schemes or exterior materials. **Unacceptable because it is incompatible with other properties.**
- 1 (f) Location and appearance of all utilities. **Not Applicable.**
- 1 (g) Recognition of and respect for view corridors and significant vistas including gateway views of the city and State House. **Not Applicable.**
2. Conformance with Cityscape placement and design recommendations. **Not Acceptable.**

Ms. Rabins said she is confused why that isn't acceptable. She thought they met the Cityscape requirements. Mr. White said he thinks the issue is compatibility with the neighboring buildings. Mr. Duggan said this is outside of the appropriate size guidelines within Cityscape so regardless of the fact it is grandfathered it is not conforming to the criteria. Mr. Everett said it should be confined to the width of an existing band, defined by the architecture of the building, or should be no more than two feet six inches in height. Ms. Rabins said they conform to the existing sign band.

Mr. White said it probably is acceptable based on that criterion as far as being within the width of the band.

3. Compatibility with subject property and adjacent properties. **Unacceptable.**

4. Shall not obscure significant architectural details. **Acceptable.**
5. Consistency and uniformity of multiple signs in CB-II and OP. **Not Applicable.**
6. Illumination. **Not Applicable.**
7. Pennants and banners. **Not Applicable.**
8. Individual letters affixed, painted or engraved directly on the building.
Acceptable because they are individually affixed on to an existing sign band.

Based on the criteria the DRC reviewed the application and it was denied on a vote of 5 to 0. They can go to the Development Review Board which meets on September 7th.

II. 5 High School Drive – GB/DCD

Applicant: Friends of Central Vermont Tennis

Owner: Montpelier Recreation Dept. /City of Montpelier

Construct a pergola and sign at High School Tennis Courts.

Interested Parties: Dana McCarthy and Didi Brush

Dana McCarthy said she had some additional information for the DRC. She presented the committee a packet of photos. The first few photos are of the pergola. The last photos represented the sign location.

Didi Brush said she was here to talk about the pergola and planting plan which was part of the original approval. The seating area and the planting plan were part of the original proposal. She showed the plan to the DRC. When the excavation work for the tennis court was being done they added a sidewalk. They are working to get a concrete contractor lined up with some donations of either concrete or their labor. It's a 5 foot wide concrete sidewalk. There is a 6 foot opening into the gate that goes to the tennis court. On the plan they originally thought this would be 15 feet by 15 feet, which is what the DRC was told last year. It is going to be slightly smaller than that. After talking to the carpenter who is donating his services he indicated he wanted at least a foot overhang of the beams and the joists. The planting plan is slightly different from a year ago. It is all shrubs. In terms of the construction of the pergola she drew it as close as she could on the plan. They aren't

certain they will have the corner braces. They are sinking 6" x 6" pressure treated posts four or five feet deep at the corners. The detail she isn't clear on is whether that post is going to be in the concrete or outside.

Mr. Duggan said he believes it should be outside to prevent it from rotting.

Ms. Brush said it won't rot if it is that deep. Her understanding is if it is in the concrete and surrounded by the concrete, and 4 or 5 feet deep, it's not going to rot because there is very little way for moisture to get to it and it won't heave. The pad and the sidewalk are going to be 4 inches thick.

Mr. White said the floor of the pergola is really like a concrete sidewalk.

Ms. Brush said it is just a concrete pad with benches and strappings to add to the shade. This is partially a shade structure as well as a place to be and to sit. She is happy to report back to Clancy or this group about the actual construction detail about the posts, but the advice she was given by the builder was that he happens to not be a great fan of using sonotube. He prefers to sink them very deep. The goal is to get this completed for a Memorial Tennis Tournament on the 17th of September, but that may not happen.

Mr. White said she is proposing that the posts would go below frost level and they won't sit on any footing but just be the post surrounded with the dirt.

Ms. Brush said they may backfill with concrete.

Mr. White said moisture can easily go through concrete. There are two kinds of pressure treated wood. One is designed to be exposed above grade and one is designed to be varied.

They would need to use the kind that is designed to be varied in which case their plan will work. They should have a structural engineer calculate the size of the brace they are going to need on the corners because it can be easily top heavy. The knee braces will solve that problem. He thinks it is a nice thing to do and it looks very nice and he would vote to approve it. He just would want to make sure it is structurally appropriate for what they needed to do.

Ms. Coffey said when their pressure treated posts come up into the ground how will the cedar posts be attached?

Ms. Brush said the pressure treated posts will be at the corners and go to the top. The joists are going to be screwed through the posts. Everything but the posts will be white cedar and it is going to be rough cut. They are getting it from a place in Hardwick.

Ms. McCarthy said part of the group that is funding reconstruction of the tennis courts their plan is to help with the maintenance budget and to help the Recreation Department to continue to maintain these courts and the courts at the Rec field because the group that started out with this project strongly feels that was part of the problem, that whoever was in charge of the Rec Department said they didn't need to do it and let the courts go. It was a private effort that reconstructed the courts and they don't want to see it happen again. There is a group that is going to continue to maintain the courts.

Mr. White asked if the pergola was symmetrical in both directions.

Ms. McCarthy replied yes.

Ms. Brush said the pad is 14' x 14'. Therefore, the joists and beams will be 16'.

Mr. Everett said there are two criteria sheets to review, one for the pergola and one for the sign. There is a revised landscape plan for the pergola which is acceptable. The Design Review Committee reviewed the criteria for the pergola and found it acceptable on a vote of 5 to 0.

Mr. Everett asked the applicant to describe the sign.

Ms. McCarthy said just the logo will be on the sign. This is all mandated by the federal government. They have no control over the sign's size or what it says. The size of the sign is also mandated by the government which is 2' x 3'. It will be hung by the fence. Their preference is to put the sign by an entrance so people will see it. The Recreation Department is in charge of getting the sign made. It will probably be black lettering with a green logo.

Mr. White said in order to be consistent with what the committee requires of other applicants is they actually draw the sign so it has the lettering so they can see the proportions of it. He thinks the time to

review the sign is after the sign designer has done the work with the graphics, lettering. He moved the DRC table the sign until they come back with an application for the sign. Ms. Coffey seconded the motion. The next meeting the applicants will come back with the graphics for a sign on the 14th of September.

III. 8 Bailey Avenue – CB-II/DCD

Applicant/Owner: Vermont Land Trust

Replace two doors and one window.

Interested Party: Kris Hammer

The building originally was a garage and it was renovated with an apartment upstairs. The Land Trust purchased it in 1990 and got rid of the garage and put offices downstairs. The original door was a salvage door. It has single paned glass with no weather stripping and falling apart. It is really drafty so they wanted to replace the door with something that was more energy efficient. His recommendation was they use a fiberglass door because they tend to be more energy efficient than a wooden door. Either door is going to be painted. It probably wouldn't be frosted glass but plain clear single light insulated glass. That is on page 3 of the application. Does the city care if it is wood or fiberglass? From an appearance standpoint it would be the same. The fiberglass door is actually less expensive but also more energy efficient because of the foam core.

Mr. Duggan said on the Allen Lumber sheet there are some different style doors. Is that for a separate screen or for the glazing and the pattern of the door they are proposing? These appear to be Simpson doors. His personal preference would be to see a wood door but he wouldn't be opposed to a fiberglass door so long as it matched the existing door's panel and glazing pattern.

Mr. Hammer said that is not available in fiberglass. He doesn't know that the door is particular historic because the renovation was done in the early 90's. If they need to get a door that matches this door they can buy a wooden door.

Mr. White asked if this was on the back side of the building.

Mr. Hammer replied it is on the Bailey Avenue side. It is on the corner of Bailey and Baldwin. You can see the door from Baldwin Street. The other side is facing south so it isn't directly visible from the street.

Mr. White asked if he was replacing the door and the frame, or just the door itself. If he replaces the door and the frame as one new unit it could probably be weather stripped pretty easily. If you try to put a new door into an existing frame it is probably harder to weather strip it.

Mr. Hammer said it is a very tight fit. They would probably just replace the door unit.

Mr. White asked if there was a storm door they are proposing to go with this door.

Mr. DeSmet said it is for the kitchen entrance of the main house. They are replacing the screen door.

Mr. Hammer said right now there is just an aluminum screen on the front door which it is just worn out.

Mr. Everett said the last part of the application is replacing a window where the window AC unit is.

Mr. Hammer said that is an AC unit they no longer use because there is a system tied in with the furnace. That is on the Baldwin side. The main motivation for that window instead of just blocking it off is that there is a person who has a desk right there and it is a hole. It would provide some light and ventilation. It

would be an awning window. It is a small opening and they wouldn't want to make it any bigger because it is concrete there.

Mr. White said he believes it is a sliding window but he believes a sliding window would be better in this location.

Mr. Duggan asked if the window was vinyl, fiberglass or wood.

Mr. Hammer said it is probably vinyl. He would argue against wood because it is right on the grade there and you would need something that is rot resistant.

Mr. Duggan asked if he would consider fiberglass over vinyl.

Mr. Hammer said he would prefer fiberglass because it tends to be better from an energy standpoint.

Mr. White said if they used a Marvin awning fiberglass window by Integrity it would be better. A sliding window at that level is going to be a problem with the dirt in the tracks all of the time. It should be a fiberglass awning window. Mr. Duggan said he agrees with that.

Mr. Everett said he is making a note that the proposed window will be a fiberglass over wood frame awning style. The proposed carriage house door will be the style #7117.

Mr. Hammer asked if they could find the exact style in fiberglass would the DRC be okay with. He doesn't think it is available.

Mr. Everett said the proposed door could be an alternative fiberglass door to match the same style if available.

Mr. DeSmet said on the National Register the carriage house is 1981.

Mr. Hammer said it is a poured concrete foundation so it is a relatively new foundation. He thinks the door is way older than 1981 and probably a salvage door. It is a very old door.

Mr. Everett said the adjustments are the proposed window would be a fiberglass clad over wood sash awning style window, i.e. Marvin Integrity. The proposed carriage house door will be style # 7117 fir door unit or fiberglass to match the same style if available. The storm door is okay as proposed and as indicated on the description sheet.

The DRC reviewed the evaluation criteria and found the application acceptable on a vote of 5 to 0.

Adjournment:

Upon motion by Mr. Duggan and Mr. White the Design Review Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clancy DeSmet
Planning and Zoning Administrator
Transcribed by: Joan Clack