

Montpelier Design Review Committee
April 13, 2010
City Council Chambers, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Steve Everett, Chair; James Duggan, Vice Chair; Steven Burkholder, Jay White and Eric Gilbertson.
Staff: Clancy DeSmet, Planning and Zoning Administrator.

Call to Order:

The Design Review Committee of April 13, 2010 was called to order by Steve Everett, Chair, at 5:30 P.M.

I. 32 Main Street – CB-I/DCD

Applicant: Glenn Sturgis/Capitol Copy
Owner: Aubuchon Realty Company, Inc.
Sign.

Mr. Sturgis said he had a plan for an exterior sign for the front of his business. He is going to take down the shingle overhang and move the lid on the columns to the side so it frames the sign band. When they move the overhang there should be a sign band similar to or exactly like Petals and Things to the other side. This would fill recessed in with the frame made by the same company that made her sign. The frame would be the same width and the materials would be the same. He would like it to recess in completely. He thinks Aubuchon's nestled in well. He thinks that would look uniform with the people next to him.

Mr. Gilbertson said getting rid of the mansard is a good idea.

Mr. Everett asked if he had done any exploration to find out what is behind all the boards.

Mr. Sturgis said on the column he has, and there is a little bit of work to be done on the brick there but it isn't bad. At one time in the building it was glass so there is actually glass from the inside way up at the top because at one time the panes ran from the sidewalk all the way up to the granite slab. There is still glass up there. He is confident they will be able to fix the sign band in a way they will be able to adhere the sign to it and recess it in.

Mr. White said he thinks what he is proposing is a really good idea on the sign. He thinks it looks good. One concern he has is the masonry right behind the board on the sign is not the original masonry which you see in the photograph. Because it is separated the whole way down he thinks that a part of the application needs to include repointing and making sure that wide a brick is fully attached because otherwise they are creating a dangerous situation. The brick that is presently there is not the brick we see in the historic photograph. There is another brick that has been applied to it. The vertical joint between the exterior

width of brick and the original brick wall has separated. It could be that the plywood is helping to hold that in place. He is very concerned if they took the plywood off it just needs to include repair of that wall, which he thinks should be the owner's responsibility and not the applicant's responsibility. He thinks it is something they can request as a committee that it be a condition of his application.

Mr. Sturgis said he doesn't know what they are prepared to do.

Mr. White said he has worked with them on other projects. He doesn't know if he should recuse himself from this project because he has worked with Aubuchons on the restoration and expansion of their space into the Somers building. At the same time he is not being paid at all to consult on this sign or the wall. That project is finished so he feels like it is not a conflict of interest because it is in the city's interest to have it repaired properly. He doesn't have a problem volunteering his time approaching Abuchons and requesting that they repoint the brick. He thinks they will do that because they are planning to send their own workers back here to repair the entrance doors that were put in. Neither one of them operates properly. They will be coming back to repair those, and when they do that he would like them to repoint the wall. He doesn't see it as a big cost to the owner to make this building safe. First, he needs to find out whether the committee thinks he should recuse himself from voting on this project.

Mr. Everett said it is probably up to the applicant. He doesn't see any problem.

Mr. Gilbertson said repointing would help a lot.

Mr. White said he loves the sign Mr. Sturgis has proposed. The colors are good and the spacing is good.

Mr. Gilbertson said he is fine with the sign.

Mr. Burkholder asked if he was interested in any exterior lighting.

Mr. Sturgis said he isn't planning on any. He understands from reading the minutes that it is often allowed. If you want to put goosenecks up they can be included. He came with as simple a proposal as he could.

Mr. Everett asked Mr. White if he wanted to make a notation about repointing of the brick in terms of an adjustment or option. Mr. White said it should be a condition of the permit. The Committee would request that the owner repoint the brick to assure that it is safe, but they would not preclude the sign and the other changes because of that.

Mr. Gilbertson said he doesn't think they can determine who does the work to the building. We just care that it gets done.

Mr. Duggan said it would be better if it was toothed in. If that corner could be tightened up a little and not have a cold joint going all the way down it would be better.

Mr. White said taking the wood off it is going to be make it a little bit riskier for just coming down, and he doesn't think the owner would want that risk.

Mr. Duggan said he thinks there will be a number of bricks that need to be replaced because they are shot behind the wood, especially on the corner.

Mr. Everett said they can just say the brick needs to be put in a condition that is safe.

Mr. Duggan said he thinks it will tremendously improve the appearance of the storefront.

Mr. Everett said taking what they said, the committee requests that the owner of the building repair and repoint the brick with solder at the southeast corner of the building in conjunction with the cosmetic façade renovation to maintain the safety of the building, sidewalk and adjacent driveway. Because it is at the corner of the building Aubuchons would be very interested because if it is exposed and loose like that and if someone cut the corner on the driveway and bumped the building he isn't sure how stable that corner is.

Mr. Gilbertson asked Mr. Sturgis if he wanted an option to install gooseneck lights.

Mr. Sturgis said they could, but that isn't why he came to the committee.

Mr. Everett said they would put it in and then he wouldn't have to come back if he decided to do lighting at a later date.

Mr. White said his feeling on that because there is the granite band that it is a little bit trickier to put gooseneck lights on that building. He would probably vote against them if it is adequately lit with the street signage. He would rather not make an issue of it.

Mr. Sturgis said to just scratch it.

Mr. Duggan said they would almost have to be mounted on the ends of the sign.

The Design Committee reviewed the sign criteria.

Mr. Gilbertson said he would add a note that it restores the configuration of the original storefront and a historic sign band.

The DRC found the application acceptable and voted in favor for approval on a vote of 5 to 0.

Mr. White asked Mr. Sturgis if he had any objection to his contacting Aubuchon on his behalf about this.

Mr. Sturgis said he would contact Aubuchon.

II. 144 Elm Street – HDR/DCD

Applicant/Owner: Resurrection Baptist Church

Replace front door and carport wall.

Interested party: Roger McManis

Mr. McManis said they want to replace the double doors on the sanctuary. The current ones are hollow core wood doors and pretty deteriorated. They also want to put a wall in the back of the carport and replace the fencing with a solid wall. The contractor said it is just wooden fencing butted together. When the snow comes it piles up and the fence almost fell several times this winter because the ice gets so deep and slick out there. It melts underneath the fence.

Mr. Gilbertson asked if it was on the back side and not visible from the street.

Mr. McManis replied yes.

The contractor said it will be a little partition wall made out of treated wood. In between the partition and the plywood he has some rubber he is going to put down into the ground and that will keep it sealed.

Mr. Everett asked how he will face the partition wall. Will it just be boards or clapboards to match the siding? What will the appearance be from the back side?

The contractor replied that just because it was treated fencing they were going to put a treated piece of plywood up and they were going to paint it white.

Mr. White said the joints between the plywood would be just 4 x 8 sheets. Is that correct?

The contractor replied yes.

Mr. Duggan asked if they were going 6 feet tall.

The contractor said yes.

Mr. Everett asked if there was any reason they are going to leave it open, for air movement or light.

Mr. McManis said they use it in the summertime for a picnic area and that way they still get the breeze flowing through. It is quite comfortable there in the summertime. The Fire Marshalls started to give them issues if they closed it all the way. The Fire Marshall said they could close it all the way up, but they chose to leave it open. It is almost all the way to the back of the building. Cliff Street hill is right behind it.

Mr. Gilbertson said it would really help a lot if they put boards over the joints in the plywood. That would protect the fastenings and look a little more finished.

The contractor said the fencing is actually in fairly good shape.

Mr. White said if he was behind and looking at this and a neighbor he would think that the fencing that is there now is better than just a painted plywood fence. He could improve the painted plywood either by putting some battens between the joints and another one in between so you panelize it so there is a 2 foot space of plywood and then the battens, or just cover the whole thing with clapboards to match the rest of the garage.

Mr. Duggan said if the fence is good could they leave the fence intact and put the plywood on the inside and still get your membrane to keep it waterproofed as a fence.

The contractor said the framing on the inside is not all that great. They were going to replace the framing and do it right. The fencing is a 1 x 4 or 1 x 6 with a little edge on the top. They can use a bunch of that and put it back over the top of the plywood without any problem. They would paint it white at that point. He really doesn't have a problem doing the clapboards on it. He hasn't seen hardy plank around very much. Could he use the hardy plank instead of the clapboard? The hardy plank would take the bank better. The clapboard that is on it now is just cypress and it just peels off.

Mr. Everett said if they framed it up, if it is just a façade, they could use dimensional lumber and nail the hardy plank right onto that.

Mr. White said they would save the cost of the plywood. He wouldn't have any problem with that.

Mr. Duggan asked if it was wood siding.

The contractor replied yes.

Mr. White said the hardy plank is a prefinished durable material and would be less maintenance than the plywood would be. In five years it would still look pretty new.

Mr. Gilbertson said he thinks they could offer that as an alternate to the plywood.

Mr. White asked if they could amend the application to be the hardy plank similar to clapboards instead of the plywood.

Mr. McManis replied that was okay with him.

Mr. Duggan asked if they didn't want to consider the clapboards instead of using a replacement material. Would that be a compromise between the two? He would prefer not using the hardy plank. He understands it perhaps might be more durable, but if this were a vinyl siding he might think of that, but he would prefer to see wood used with wood.

Mr. Gilbertson said with this application he doesn't have any problem with hardy plank. He doesn't have any problem with panelizing the plywood in some way or putting the fence back up. If you just put a flat plywood wall the joints would start spreading, and if you don't cover up the top with something that is going to start coming apart even if it is treated. It just gives it a finished look.

Mr. Everett said he thinks the hardy plank is fine in this particular location. Once it is installed and trimmed the appearance will look exactly the same. You won't be able to tell the difference from 20 feet away. They will add it as an adjustment.

Mr. White said the doors are a molded fiberglass door with one window light in the middle. They are going to be painted the same blue as they have there now.

The contractor said by going with the fiberglass doors they can get it so they are both fire escapes. The doors will be painted to match the blue roof. There is also another door on another part of the building that is also the same blue color.

They made the adjustment to the scope of the proposal that the applicant is in agreement that the material to cover the exterior of the carport petition wall will be specified as hardy plank clapboard siding.

Mr. White said he had one comment on the description of the change. He thinks it also needs to include a trim cap of some type on top of the hardy plank.

The contractor said it would be capped and look nice.

Mr. Everett said he said in addition that trim cap will be installed to prevent moisture intrusion at the top of the wall. The Design Review Committee reviewed the criteria. The application was approved unanimously on a vote of 5 to 0.

III. 155 Main Street – HDR/DCD

Applicant/Owner: Montpelier Housing Authority

Solar collectors on south facing roof.

Interested Party: JoAnn Troiano

Mr. Gilbertson asked if they would be visible from the street.

Ms. Troiano said possibly one foot because they went up on the roof Easter Sunday and one of the trees needs to be trimmed. You would have to be quite far away from Pioneer Apartments to see them, but Gary Home will have the full benefit of seeing them as will a little bit of The Inn of Montpelier.

Mr. Everett said they won't run into the same problem they did in Brattleboro, will they?

Ms. Troiano said they got their historic credits approved and then later said they wanted to add solar hot water but it wasn't approved at the time. 58 Barre Street wants to use historic tax credits. She said they would never have decided to do this without receiving the stimulus money. With the priority of using it for energy efficiency they did the exit doors which were original 36 years ago and you could put your hands underneath the original doors. They upgraded the light fixtures in the apartments.

Mr. White said they sit on top of the roof and not on the mansard part.

Ms. Troiano said they are going to install a curbing at the top of the mansard. They are at a 45 degree angle.

Mr. Everett said they would only be visible at an angle coming down Main Street and then up off Baird Street.

Ms. Troiano said she didn't know if you could see them coming up Main Street unless you looked between the Gary Home and looked up. You could see them from Cliff Street. Even if you came down Elm Street and across the bridge you could see them a little bit.

Mr. Everett said they are all black anyway.

Mr. White said it is sometimes good if you see them because it shows you are trying to be energy efficient.

Ms. Troiano said it is the only building they have enough money to install them. They own or manage Lane Shops, Prospect Place, School Apartments, Cummings Street Apartments and we manage a couple more. They have been there 5 to 10 years.

The Design Review Committee reviewed the criteria and found the application acceptable on a vote of 5 to 0.

Review of March 23, 2010 Minutes:

Mr. White said he had a comment on the minutes on page 1. He said the lights are in the ground. Actually they aren't in the ground but about waist high. They didn't follow the recommendation on the lights over the new signs to use the same white lights that are on the façade. They have chosen to use an incandescent color compact fluorescent which doesn't really look bad, but it makes him think that it doesn't really matter what the DRC says because they will do what they want. They haven't changed the purple lights and he sees no indication they are going to leave them off or change them. They get their permit and do what they want. There doesn't seem to be any enforcement of anything.

Mr. Everett said that building is a mess anyway. It is always going to be ugly.

Mr. White said he thinks it looks better than it started, but it is frustrating when they spend time and they agree to do certain things and then it just doesn't happen.

Mr. Everett said that is important. If the permit process is to have some effect.

Mr. White said it really isn't fair to other applicants that really spend more money, do it right and correct things and they just do what they want. Mr. Everett said the fact they did it without getting approval blows the process.

Mr. White said they could have set the panels a little further and gotten just as much energy efficiency and there wouldn't have been an impact then.

Mr. Everett said they are probably just out of money. That project could have been done a year ago.

Upon motion by James Duggan and Jay White the minutes of March 23, 2010 were approved with the suggested change made by Mr. White on a vote of 4 to 0.

Adjournment:

Upon motion by James Duggan and Stephen Everett the Design Review Committee adjourned on a vote of 5 to 0.

Respectfully submitted,

Clancy DeSmet
Planning and Zoning Administrator

Transcribed by: Joan Clack