

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

Approved

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

Call to Order:

The July 13, 2010 meeting of the Montpelier Design Review Committee was called to order by Stephen Everett, Chair, at 5:30 P.M.

I. 112 State Street – CIV/DCD
Applicant: John Kerin Signs
Owner: Peoples United Bank
Signage

Mr. Everett asked him to summarize the changes to the application.

Mr. Gilbertson asked if the letters were applied cutouts, decals or painted on.

Mr. Kerin replied they are called plate letters which are attached to the panel so they will have some depth to it. They are aluminum letters. These signs are all being sent to him by a subcontractor and they install them. At the last meeting there was a question about square footage and he came up with about 63 ½ square feet, which included all of the signs.

Mr. Gilbertson said he still has a real problem with the silver color. He looked at the Community Bank which has a very small sign. It is in the downtown and not near the State House and in the sign band of a storefront. He looked at the Chittenden signs and they are carefully designed and built signs with really nice colors. It fits in with the Capitol as being very subdued. He appreciates them bringing the sample in.

Mr. Kerin said he could understand their concern about it clashing but the objective of a sign is not to hide it.

Mr. Gilbertson said he didn't think the Chittenden Bank signs are hidden at all. You can read them driving by. In terms of signage for a bank like that he would say virtually all of the people who go there know exactly where they are going and don't look at the sign. It isn't like they are trying to grab business off the street.

Mr. Kerin said if the letters hadn't been carved into the building originally then there would be no need for that big backer panel to hide that.

Mr. Gilbertson said it is a challenge for a designer to come up with some signs that fit in a lot better with the area and the Capitol building.

Mr. White said one thing he does like about the change is the consistency between all of the signs being the same graphic design as opposed to block letters on the building. If he compares the building signs existing to new side by side he doesn't think they are going backwards as far as appearance. You can argue that the silver is too shiny, but he personally doesn't have a huge problem with it. Typically, silver signs aren't polished every day and dull down over time. It's a nice fresh graphic.

The committee reviewed the sign criteria.

- 1 (a). Preservation or reconstruction of the appropriate historic style if the proposed project is in the Historic District where or involves an historic structure. This is not a historic structure and not applicable.
- 1 (b). Harmony of exterior design with other properties in the district. Acceptable. Mr. Gilbertson said it isn't acceptable for the signs with him. The state buildings have their own uniform sign procedure. Ms. Coffee said she didn't think the building mounted signs conform with the other properties in the district. Mr. Duggan said that is his problem as well. He doesn't have a problem with the post mounted signs, but he is having a hard time coming to grips with these two attached to the building. Jay White said he thinks there is something nice about the Chittenden Bank block letters cut in as part of the history of the building much like the Smith Block. Once the building is built it is kind of carved in stone what that building is. Over the decades as the building use changes it is still gets known as that same building. Mr. Gilbertson said he thinks it will always be known as the Chittenden Bank Building. A representative from Peoples United Bank said he disagrees and that the sign on the bank should reflect the business that it is representing while not destroying the original block letters that are engraved in the building. The fact of the matter is that bank acquisitions and mergers happen almost on a daily business, and they will probably be back here in another year with another company. They aren't defacing or totally destroying what is already there but just covering it over with something that reflects what their business is. It ties in nicely with the rest of the signs that will be there anyway. It is a fairly new building anyway with no historic value whatsoever. Mr. Everett said he would concur with that as well.

Mr. White said he isn't saying he would vote against it.

Mr. Everett said the vote would be 3 to 2 against.

- 1 (c) Compatibility of proposed exterior materials with other properties in the district. We can't fault the materials because the materials are common. Mr. Gilbertson said he doesn't have a problem with the metal; it's the color of the metal. He finds that unacceptable.

Mr. Duggan said he would find it acceptable except for being applied to the building. Then it would be unacceptable. Mr. White said because the Chittenden Bank is not removed but just covered up it is reversible.
- 1 (d) Compatibility of proposed landscaping doesn't apply.
- 1 (e) The location and appearance of all utilities. There is no lighting proposed so that doesn't apply.
- 1 (f) Recognition of and respect for view corridors and significant vistas including gateway Views of the city and State House. Acceptable.
2. Conformance with Cityscape placement and design recommendations. Placement would be acceptable because it is within an existing sign band.

Compatibility with subject property and adjacent properties. Mr. Gilbertson said no. James Duggan and Kate Coffey also said no. Mr. DeSmet said that might be the only commercial building in the Civic District, and that is the only building that the CV-I regulations apply to so it is hard to say it is incompatible with the building. Mr. Everett said that in that particular case it is not applicable because there are no adjacent buildings.

Shall not obscure significant architectural details. It only hides the engraved letters. It doesn't hide any other architectural details.

Acceptable consistency and uniformity of multiple signs in CB-II and OP are not applicable.

Illumination is not applicable.

Pennants and banners are not applicable.

Individual letters are affixed, painted or engraved directly on the building or structure is encouraged. In this case they are covering them up. Mr. Duggan said this sign doesn't have direct letters mounted to it. One thing he would like to see as a condition regardless of the vote, because the DRB has been known to vote other than the DRC's recommendations, is if and when the sign is installed those block letters aren't damaged, that they can find places between the letters to get the pins in.

Mr. Kerin said that should be possible.

Mr. Duggan said if the sign comes off there won't be parts of the letter missing.

Mr. Kerin said generally the pins would be on the top and bottom.

Mr. Duggan said he would like to make certain that the lettering isn't damaged in the process of installation. No pins attaching the sign to the building go through the lettering.

Mr. Everett asked the question, all in favor of the application as proposed. The vote was 3 to 2 against. He can take it to the Development Review Board if he chooses. The only main people had was with the signs attached to the building

Mr. Gilbertson left the meeting after the vote.

II. 29 Corse Street – LDR/DCD

Applicant: Michael Russell

Owner: Dave Pelletier/Jeannie Ellis

Replace Siding.

Michael Russell appeared before the DRC representing Dave Pelletier and Jeannie Ellis. He presented a letter from David to the committee. The only thing they want to do is take off the siding and replace it. It is in bad disrepair. They want to replace with vertical siding with the rough side out and have it stained. He showed samples of the siding replacement and the colors.

Mr. Everett inquired if this building was on the National Register.

Mr. DeSmet replied it is not. The last few houses going towards the park aren't. They are in the Design Control District but not on the National Register.

Mr. Duggan asked why the change from shingles to shiplap.

Mr. Russell said it is the client's personal choice. That is what they asked for.

Ms. Coffee asked if the existing siding was water damaged.

Mr. Russell replied it is. It is in very bad disrepair all the way around.

Ms. Coffee asked if he didn't have anything from keeping the rain from splashing back up isn't this going to do the same thing.

Mr. Russell said there would be oil stains penetrating the wood to protect it.

Mr. White asked if he was going to take off the existing shingles.

Mr. Russell replied yes.

Mr. White asked how he was treating the window extensions and casings. Are they going to be removed and set back so they will protrude forward?

Mr. Russell said they will only be removed if they are damaged.

Mr. White said in effect they are changing the trim so it has a shadow band.

Mr. Russell replied that is correct and it will be painted the same color as the window casing.

Mr. White asked if they were changing the colors or keeping the white.

Mr. Russell replied it is still going to be white.

Mr. Everett asked if XPS foam vapor permeable.

Mr. Russell replied it has very little permeability. The walls of the house are about 60 percent not insulated so it is a step by step process to get the house where it should be.

Mr. Everett said if it is low permeability what do they do with the moisture that is coming from the inside out.

Mr. Russell said there is no vapor barrier on the inside. When you put foam on the outside of the house you move the dew point of the wall further out to the outside of the house so any moisture that gets in there will dry to the inside of the house.

Ms. Coffee said with the vertical siding she was confused about how the strapping affected that.

Mr. Russell said it is horizontal strapping. They take half inch pressure treated plywood and rip down so it is a vertical breathing space. There is ventilation going on the back side.

Ms. Coffee asked how far up from the ground does the siding stop.

Mr. Russell said there are about 12 inches from the ground to the siding.

Mr. Everett inquired if there was a screening put on the venting to prevent ants from creating colonies up inside.

Mr. Russell replied yes.

Mr. Duggan asked if no moisture would build up on the back side of the siding.

Mr. Russell said there is full breathing and full ventilation from top to bottom.

Mr. Everett asked if he had any idea of when the house was built based on construction.

Mr. Russell said he thinks part of it was built in the 40's and then it has been added on to at different times after that. There are different types of framing throughout.

Mr. White said in this case it is the owner's choice because of the location and there is really no historic precedent for this particular type and style of house having cedar shingles on it. The cedar shingles that are there seem to be less exposed. Therefore, if the owners would like to do vertical natural wood siding it is one of those cases where it is their house and he doesn't see where it would bother anybody else. He would vote for the application.

Mr. Duggan said he would agree with that. He isn't so comfortable having to build out around the windows, especially overhanging top of the case. It will look awkward.

Mr. Russell said there are vinyl windows in the house right now so at some point they might want to replace the windows. They have a limited budget for the project and trying to do the best they can right now.

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

III. 11 Baldwin Street – CIV/DCD
Applicant/Owner: Ernest Gibson
Replace Existing Roof.
Contractor: Keith Schumacher

11 Baldwin Street is on the west side of the State House about half way down towards Bailey Avenue. They purchased the property in 1972. When they moved in the property around them was almost all owned for residential purposes and since then just about every property on the street have become owned the state. They are the only residence at the present time. There is a law office and then on the corner of Bailey Avenue there is an apartment house. He doesn't know when the slate roof was put on the house. In recent years they have noticed pieces of slate on the ground after the snow leaves. A couple of roofers have advised them that the slate should probably be removed because it is showing wear and tear. They first were going to replace it with slate. Clancy said there wouldn't be a permit needed if they replaced like with like. Later they changed their minds and decided they would go with Echo Star and Clancy has a sample of that. It comes in 9 different colors. They picked the black blend to stay the same color as the slate. They received an estimate from Keith and one other person. They completed a zoning permit application so now they are here to see if the DRC will approve the change they hope to make. The Echo Star is a tile. It is flexible and wears well. It will come with a 50-year warranty and it is supposed to sustain winds up to 110 mph. It is a strong material but much lighter in weight than slate. There are supposedly no freeze or thaw problems with this material. It is possible they might have the job done over the course of two summers and might do it just one time.

Mr. Duggan asked if there was another roof below the slate. Are there cedar shingles? Can you see the roof sheeting from the attic?

Mr. Gibson said Keith has been on the roof and he may know.

Keith Schumacher said he doesn't think there is anything below there. It is just boards. There is a big copper eave flashing, and that is where the main problem lies. The eave flashing is full of holes. Also it is shedding slate. It is starting to leak badly. It needs something soon.

Mr. Everett asked if the size of the slate on the roof now a uniform size.

Mr. Schumacher replied it is a one size slate. It's about 18 x 12.

Mr. Everett asked if the proposed material matched in terms of size.

Mr. Schumacher said it is almost exactly.

Mr. Everett asked what is the actual material that the tile is made of.

Mr. Schumacher replied it is a combination of recycled plastic and rubber. He has done a couple of these before, one on 6 First Avenue. It is very soft and flexible. You can cut it with a utility knife. It is a great product; it is recycled.

Mr. Duggan said on the proposal it states that the estimate for the Eco Star comes near to the cost of the slate. What is the difference in price? Also, are you talking about when he is making those cost comparisons if it is just to take the existing slate off and reapply it?

Mr. Schumacher said they haven't really talked the specific details with the reroofing of slate potential. If they were doing slate the roof could be removed and mixed in with existing salvage slate from one of the quarries in southern Vermont. It could be done. They don't have a price on it yet. To replace the slate roof with slate and copper, which is what is there now, would be at least \$12,000 to \$15,000 more than what they are looking at.

Mr. White said he would suggest a whole different approach. He has had a fair amount of experience with repairing existing slate roofs. There is no way he could ever approve even removing the slate roof to replace it with new slate. It needs to be repaired in place, and it is feasible to do that. The way to do it is to start with some of the preservation briefs. There are a lot of manuals about how to prepare existing slate roofs without taking off the other slates and insert some new slates where there is some missing. What causes slate roofs to fail is never the slate but always the connectors which usually rust out. If you use new connectors or stainless steel or copper connectors then you don't have the problem and it will last another 100 years. He suspects this is the original slate roof, and he suspects it was quarried in Montpelier probably at Sabin's Pasture.

Mr. Duggan said he doubted that because that slate is junk. It looks like it's Munson black.

Mr. White said he thinks the slate could be matched with a new slate from another quarry or salvage slates from another property. He thinks one reason this committee was established was to preserve the integrity of historic properties in Montpelier. The Gibson's property is probably one of the most historic properties in Montpelier so he would encourage him to repair the existing roof. He doesn't have a

problem replacing the copper snow guard. He could slip that up underneath, and he could approve that. He could not approve this product on that roof.

Mr. Duggan said he would like to echo that comment. If we look at the National Register under nomination 2 it says gable roof sheet and slate. He looked at it this afternoon and there are some slates that are missing, but he thinks in general he has a pretty relatively uniform roof surface. A lot of times roofs that are overloaded when the framing is undersized for the weight of slate you get a lot of ridges and valleys in there. It looked like it could hold up another 100 years worth of roofing. The primary façade would be his interest to absolutely retain the slate and repair. As Jay said, it is the fasteners and the flashing that go out first. To achieve that if there was an opportunity to harvest some of this slate off the back side of the roof and use it on the front, and then supplement a new slate that wouldn't have to be an exact match you would then have a nice uniform roof on the primary façade. He would encourage that as well because he thinks this roof can be easily repaired rather than replaced.

Mr. White said it would probably be for less money than what is proposed.

Mr. Duggan said this product has improved some but he is still suspect to it. One of the problems is that on a hot summer day the plastic tends to curl which he won't get with slate. For him the biggest issue is replacing the original material with what he feels is an incompatible replacement.

Mr. Burkholder said his only concern would be the structure of the roof itself and whether that has been compromised causing the existing slate to fail. It looks like the roof lines are actually pretty true, but the weight of the slate over years of Vermont's harsh climate may have done some structural damage.

Mr. Everett asked if there was any pattern of leaking inside the attic they can detect.

Mr. Schumacher said it is leaking in different areas that Ernest is more aware of than he is. One of the things they were hoping to do is to get a look at the boards underneath and find out how good or bad things are beneath, find out how much damage is being done to the structure. They wanted to make sure that the structural integrity of the rafters was still in good shape which was one of the reasons they thought it would be nice to excavate down and find out what was underneath. There are some areas that have been leaking more than others. Over the garage is an add on in the back.

Mr. DeSmet said the entry says 1850 and 1900 so that might mean that part of it was built 50 years later.

Mr. Schumacher said he thinks there is a lot more sagging and settling of the roof area that isn't in the image but where the garage and entry way is in the back. It really isn't a problem with repairing what is there at all. It's not that hard to do. They could replace all of the copper and find a suitable match slate wise, do all of the repair and it would look essentially like it does now except for new copper. The copper could even be pre-aged or treatments done to the copper to make it older. That's really not a problem. The main problem is the back where all of the damage to the eave flashing and the leakage over the years, by the time you get all of that metal ripped off the edge you are talking about a great number of slates adjoining all of that metal that needs to come off. By the time they were going to do that they thought they could do the whole thing and it would be a great asset to the community. He would love to do it in a salvage slate, but he certainly isn't opposed to trying to repair what is there and finding a match. He thinks they could find a slate match of the same color and size and the work would be almost the same as doing a complete replacement. He thought he would be happier getting a new roof out of it.

Mr. Everett asked if he was confident if patching the slate on the front would solve all of the leaking problems.

Mr. Gibson said he doubts it.

Mr. Schumacher replied it would have to be reflashed. All of the eave flashing and chimney flashing would have to come off, and in that process they would be taking off a lot of slate.

Mr. White said he would be working towards repairing versus replacement and the overall costs would be less. The results for the city and the owner would be significantly better. He would let the flashing still be copper. If they were in agreement with that, then they could just repair what is there and they wouldn't need to get a permit from anybody. He would need a permit for what they are proposing here and he wouldn't vote for it. He doesn't think most of the members would vote for it.

Mr. Everett said they could say because this is a significant structure and it has a history and on the National Register, and as Jamie says the Register specifically refers to the slate roof, he would encourage him to stick with the slate. As they start thinking about doing repairs with the flashing on the eaves he may get a good idea of what is underneath. They may want to save the slate, do any repairs that are necessary, and re-slate it. He would imagine they could save enough of the slate to redo the front with the original slates using new fasteners.

Mr. White said if there was significant damage in the roofing boards they would be able to see it from inside the attic they would see it. If they aren't seeing it now they can assume it is in pretty good shape. He thinks he is to be commended for maintaining the structure of the house.

Mr. Everett asked if he would like to table it and advise Clancy of what he would like to do.

Mr. Gibson replied he would.

Mr. Everett said the applicant has requested tabling the application.

Mr. Duggan moved tabling the application with Mr. White seconding the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 5 to 0.

IV. 106 East State Street – HDR/DCD

Applicant/Owner: Gary Schy
Multiple exterior renovations.

Withdrawn.

Approval of May 25 and June 15, 2010 Minutes:

Mr. Duggan and Mr. White moved approval of the May 25, 2010 minutes. They were approved on a vote of 4 to 0.

Upon motions made by Mr. Duggan and Mr. White the June 15, 2010 minutes were approved on a vote of 5 to 0.

Adjournment:

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

Respectfully submitted,
Clancy DeSmet
Planning and Zoning Administrator

Transcribed by: Joan Clack