

Montpelier Development Review Board
August 15, 2011
City Council Chambers, City Hall

Approved

Present: Philip Zalinger, Chair, Daniel Richardson, Jack Lindley, Roger Cranse,
Elizabeth Koenig, Brian Lane-Karnas, Ali Sarafzadeh, and James LaMonda.
Staff: Clancy DeSmet, Planning & Zoning Administrator

Call to Order:

Mr. Zalinger, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Review and Approval of August 1, 2011 Minutes:

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Richardson and Mr. Lindley to approve the Minutes of August 1, 2011, the Minutes were adopted on a vote of 6 to 0.

Comments from the Chair:

Mr. Zalinger welcomed Brian Lane-Karnas to the Montpelier DRB. James LaMonda is the new alternate member.

I. 8 Bailey Avenue – CB-II/DCD

Owner/Applicant: Vermont Land Trust, Shelly Weeks
Design Review for Replacing Roof and Painting Building

Since the Design Review Committee has already examined the project the DRB reviews their recommendations and unless DRB members have questions or comments about the DRC's decision they normally don't take additional testimony or evidence. The staff report suggests that the DRC recommended that the applicant have the option of painting the gutters on the façade of the porches. They are to be painted to match the trim and the downspouts to match the color of the building itself. That is at the discretion of the applicant. They approved the proposal as was submitted.

Mr. Richardson asked if the applicant agreed with the adjustment.

Ms. Weeks replied yes and she has spoken with the painters since the meeting with the DRC.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Richardson and Mr. Lane-Karnas for design review approval at 8 Bailey Avenue for the Vermont Land Trust with the adjustment for the optional changed included, the DRB approved the application on a vote of 7 to 0.

II. 39 Main Street – CB-I/DCD

Owner: City of Montpelier
Applicant: Green Mountain Power, Don Lorraine
Design Review for Installing an Electric Car Charging Station at
Rear of the Building

Mr. Zalinger administered the oath to Mr. Lorraine from Green Mountain Power.

Mr. Zalinger said he has some questions about how the program is going to be introduced and continued over a period of time.

Mr. Lorraine said this is a pilot program that GMP is embarking on and installing three electric vehicle charging stations throughout their service territory. There are actually two locations in Chittenden County and it made sense to be on the I-89 corridor so they started engaging the City of Montpelier with conversations. They came to an agreement with the city to look at the City of Montpelier and identify a location. It really is a pilot installing a charging station in a spot that would make sense where people could leave their car. It's new technology so you would have to get the charger out there before the cars are going to be here so they have a place to go. They have also developed a web site to identify and track behavior patterns on what is or isn't working, how often they are charging their cars, and there is a whole communication package that goes along with the unit. They figured downtown would be a nice location and they worked with Public Works and city officials to try to identify a spot. They know that parking is a premium. They were hoping that the transit center was going to be built and they hoped to locate it there. It didn't work with the timeline but this is movable so they found a home here. Their hope is that someone would look on the web site and find out where the charging stations are throughout Vermont and plan their trips and be able to top off their vehicles.

Mr. Zalinger said one concern he has about the proposal is the use of the parking space. Will it be restricted to only cars that are using the recharging facility?

Mr. Lorraine replied no. It would be preferred to have a spot open so as people plan their trip it was open when they got here, but parking at a premium it isn't restricted. The signage says if you aren't charging your vehicle you have to feed the meters. There is demarcation there so it may tend to sway people to look to another spot, but if they do read the sign it doesn't say "Don't Park Here – Electric Charging Vehicles Only." It is for any use.

Mr. Zalinger said that is an important criterion for him because as much as thinks it is important to institutionally support this movement it is hard to do it on the backs of the folks who are not participating.

Ms. Koenig said she understands from the material that cars need to be parked there for at least two hours and upwards of five hours. Is that spot still a limited 2-hour maximum spot? Or, are electric vehicles going to be able to park there up to five hours.

Mr. Lorraine replied that a full charge could take up to five hours. If a vehicle was there and they were charging for a full five hours, and it was plugged in and it was charging, then they could be there for five hours. They engaged the Police Department on how this was going to work and got some feedback. That is why they were trying to come up with some language that said if you are not charging they must feed the meters.

Mr. Zalinger said Liz points out that the meters have a two-hour limit so if you are in an electric car and there charging, what happens to the meter?

Mr. Lorraine replied the meter is not fed if you are using the electric vehicle charger.

Mr. Zalinger inquired if there was a charge for charging.

Mr. Lorraine replied there is an electricity cost for charging. That is in the city's bill. However, in the proposal they are offsetting the charging costs by providing a 5 kW solar ray down on one of the public works garages. They will at least have the benefit of solar energy that is going to be offsetting the bill for the chargers. They estimate to break even at three to four years and that is subjective on the evolution of getting cars in Vermont. It could be much longer than that.

Mr. Zalinger asked if he understood he was suggesting that the city will be paying for the electricity that is used to charge the cars.

Mr. Lorraine replied that is correct

Mr. Zalinger said this is not within the purview or jurisdiction of the DRB but all of us just paid our tax bills today so they are all a little sensitive to the city footing the bill to charge every electric car that comes up the Interstate and decides they can stop here for a free charge.

Mr. Lorraine said one of the conditions of the contract is only free charging for a year and then after that it is negotiated and they are very sensitive to that. After a year they will see the use and come to further agreement on what is going to happen at that point.

Mr. Lindley said you come to Montpelier and get free electricity and free parking under this proposal. Is that correct?

Mr. Lorraine replied yes, while you are charging your vehicle; that is correct.

Mr. Lindley asked how many electrical cars are there that are going to partake of this.

Mr. Lorraine said to his knowledge there is not an electric vehicle besides plug-in hybrids that have batteries and some homemade versions registered in the state of Vermont yet.

Mr. Lindley asked if this project was anticipating there will be some, and if there are none in two years we are going to return it.

Mr. Lorraine said hopefully they will relocate it to another space that may not have the same impact that it does now. It is their hope that there will be electric vehicles out there in the future. Predictions are there will be.

Mr. Lindley said they all have hope. The question is the economics of it. Their guarantee is that it will be returned to the existing way it is now in two years if there is no participation. Is that correct?

Mr. Lorraine replied no. They get to negotiate after year one what conditions GMP and the City negotiated in terms of free charging for the first year. The meter still exists and the meter has to be fed or the Police Department will be looking at that for another source of revenue.

Mr. Sarafzadeh asked if they made a distinction between a plug-in hybrid and pure electric in terms of the user being able to use up that space. A plug-in hybrid presumably doesn't need the electric. It can ride on the gas engine if it needs to and he knows there are a whole bunch of plug-in hybrids coming into the market in the next two years. The pure electric benefit is already there.

Mr. Lorraine said there is a distinction. There is also for the Toyota Prius that you can get the extra battery packs which they have converted so they can plug those in with a regular 120 volt. It also has a level 2 charger for the Nissan Leaf and the Chevy Volt so it can do both. If you wanted to charge your batteries and you had a Toyota Prius with additional batteries it would be eligible for that as well.

Mr. Sarafzadeh said that a distinction has not been made between let's provide free parking and free electricity at the spot for a pure electric car. Any kind of plug-in, whether it's a hybrid or a pure electric can use this parking spot from what he understands. Is that correct?

Mr. Lorraine replied that is correct as long as they are using the charger at the time. While they are getting free charging now it's probably going to be a different model than a private entity. People are going to pay to charge. They can't just sit there without belonging to a membership and having a card because they can't release the plugs. They will need to belong to some type of association where they will receive a card in the mail to be able to activate that charging station.

Mr. Zalinger said he thinks it is apparent that the decision to go ahead with this project has already been made at the political arena.

Mr. Richardson moved for design review approval at 39 Main Street for the Green Mountain Power Corporation's station. Mr. Cranse seconded the motion.

Mr. Lane-Karnas said he had a design related question they hadn't gotten to yet. Is there a particular reason why the sign is 24 x 36? That seems a little bit out of scale to him versus the parking related signs that are back there.

Mr. Lorraine replied he didn't know why the sign was designed. He thinks it was more for the marketing to draw some attention to the charger itself, and with the sign being that large they could get some print on there that would work for identifying if you weren't charging.

Mr. Cranse said it is within the zoning regulation guidelines. A sign that size is permissible.

Mr. Richardson said it is a pilot project so it does have to draw attention to itself. Not only for people who are accustomed to the area but presumably visitors who would be coming in with their electric cars.

Mr. Zalinger said he thought the size was a little large but then he realized it is only going to face the parking space itself so he didn't consider it to be material.

Mr. Lane-Karnas said the area is currently in the flood zone. Clancy said under the new flood maps that it is actually possibly out of the flood hazard area. Have they considered any kind of flood proofing or shock protection in case the area does flood?

Mr. Lorraine replied these are outdoor units and it isn't going to disturb any flood path. It would be just like any of their services that are in basements right now. GMP would have to be called out and pulling any meter as they do when flooding occurs in Montpelier. They are usually the first line of defense. As soon as the charger makes disconnection it loses its power. It has to be plugged into the vehicle. That is part of the safety features. No electricity flows until it is plugged into the vehicle.

Mr. Zalinger pointed out that the charging station is at a higher elevation than the zoning office.

The motion to pass design review at 39 Main Street for the installation of an electric car charging station was approved on a vote of 6 to 1.

III. 1 Bailey Avenue – GB/DCD

Owner: Vermont State Employees Credit Union

Design Review for a Sign

Interested Parties: John Miller and Greg Stone

Mr. Zalinger administered the oath to John Miller and Greg Stone.

Mr. Miller said there was a lot discussed at the last meeting. Following the last meeting he received a directive to move heaven and earth to get a sign through the Board that everybody liked and was a gateway sign to Montpelier and concede to the concerns of the Board. VSECU is a generous and fully invested corporate citizen of Montpelier. They sponsor Central Vermont Humane Society. They are a major sponsor of Montpelier's Independence Day Celebration; a sponsor of Way to Go; they sponsor the Corporate Cup Challenge and the founding sponsor of Jump Start which is financial literacy for kids. In his mind they deserve some sort of identification in the city. They have said they are taking all of the considerations of this Board to heart. They have asked for one consideration which is that their corporate entity which presently exists in Burlington, Williston, Waterbury, Berlin and Rutland and approval is eminent now in Brattleboro of their corporate identity. They have asked that this Board allow them to display that in Montpelier rather than alter it in some manner. They have altered it in a number of manners that will please the Board quite a bit.

Number one problem was the size of the sign which he thinks was the biggest concern of the Board. Kevin came out saying this was a billboard. The sign that was 12 feet tall has now been reduced to 80 ½ inches tall, just a little over 6 feet which is exactly the same height as the Montpelier High School sign. He should note because the sign is only 4 feet wide that it is almost exactly half the width of the Montpelier High School sign. They are talking about a very small sign here for primary identification. He provided a panorama for everybody which is accurate as viewed from 150 feet which is the actual decision point in which one would be coming off Memorial Drive onto Bailey Avenue. The other direction is not as critical. There is a safety issue here in which the person would choose to turn into the high school or to turn into the Credit Union. What they are looking at is a very accurate depiction. They are all measured exactly to scale as to what the sign looks like from that point and what the Montpelier High School sign looks like from that point. They are equal distance from the point at which that decision has to be made. The actual size of the signs as viewed from this point can be mocked up in this room if they like.

Mr. Richardson said when he says 80.5 inches that is a 72 inch sign and an 8.5 inch base of what material?

Mr. Miller explained it will be plantings.

Secondly they address advertising. The Board didn't like the add-on sign that said 24 hour ATM which was below the original sign. It has been removed. There was discussion about the graphics. Instead of putting the logo flat on to the sign itself, the logo would be produced in three dimensions with a very interesting bevel which they have used before on a number of signs.

Mr. Richardson said the letters, VSECU, would be raised and the green background would be raised so there would actually be three layers.

Mr. Miller said there was some question about the colors and finishes. In the process of coming up with the signs they did a classification of metal finishes which goes from polished metals at the top to non-metallic at the bottom and still maintains the same range of colors.

Mr. Zalinger asked which material is used elsewhere on the signs.

Mr. Miller replied the one that is the second row up. They might get a much richer feel from the matte finish than from just the painted finish.

Mr. Miller said lighting was also brought up. He brought copies showing how the lighting is intended for the sign, which is an extremely low level of lighting. They are going to put a maximum hot spot of 10 foot

candles at the sign. A similar sign has been approved for Williston in an agricultural zone of 35 foot candles. That indicates just how softly lit this sign is. These are 40 watt halogen lights which creates the 8 foot candles maximum where the two cross. Two would be buried deep into the ground and create the beam spread pattern you see. The Dark Sky Society is the ones that are pushing for no lighting of signs period, and they recommend a maximum of 2.3 watts per square foot which would be taking these 40 watt fixtures and dropping them to 30 watts. They would agree to that, although we should understand the U.S. Pattern code has it three or four times that amount as the minimum for normal sign lighting. VSECU said they would be glad to turn these off when they are not open and have them on a light sensitive timer.

Mr. Zalinger said he is unclear about how many fixtures there are going to be.

Mr. Miller replied two on each side or four total. It would be focused only on the sign pointing away from the road on both sides achieving no foot candles at grade level and no foot candles at any property line or at any point where there would be a distraction.

Mr. Zalinger said that is really contrary to purpose of the sign in the first instance. They might want to rethink that. Making the public aware of the Credit Union's presence there and if you have an ATM he wouldn't think it would be to their benefit to turn the sign off as early as the close of business. Banker's hours are no longer bankers hours of old, but nonetheless it doesn't seem to provide much bang for the buck if they are going to put the sign in and turn it off at 6:00 P.M.

Mr. Miller said in Berlin they were given carte blanche to leave the sign on 24 hours a day because there is a 24 hour ATM there, which is a similar situation here. In terms of the public good and the public safety nobody is being bothered and the sign could certainly stay on for 24 hours a day. That being said, over the period of the sign has been up they now turn it off at 10:00 P.M. You aren't really advertising for people to come in. If you are going to use the ATM you know it is there, and if it is midnight or 2:00 A.M. they don't feel it is necessary to advertise that.

Mr. Lane-Karnas said on the new photo they are showing the sign from the front and the side. He said they are only proposing one sign.

Mr. Lindley said it is a major improvement.

Mr. Cranse said he was critical at the last meeting of the harmony and compatibility with the neighborhood. He thinks now it does meet those aesthetic criteria.

Mr. Zalinger said all of his objections have been met and satisfied, especially with the removal of the 24 hour ATM element of the sign. It is much more acceptable. Regarding the surface it is the applicant's preference to use the matte.

Mr. Miller replied there is nothing shiny about the sign.

Mr. Richardson moved for design review approval at 1 Bailey for the amended sign design for Vermont State Employees Credit Union with the condition that lights be turned off each night no later than 10:00 P.M. Mr. Sarafzadeh seconded the motion. The motion received approval on a vote of 7 to 0.

IV. 114 Main Street – CB-I/DCD

Applicant: Ly Ly Nail Salon, LLC, Dang Son

Owner: Raymond Alvarez

Design Review for a Sign

Permit #5944

Mr. Zalinger said this is continued from their August 1st meeting.

Mr. DeSmet said he included a picture. He visited the location and he cut off the phone number and put a wooden border around it.

Mr. Cranse and Mr. Lindley both agreed the sign was a big improvement.

Mr. Richardson moved to table the application until the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cranse.

Mr. Zalinger said he is uncertain why they need to continue it if they have a depiction of what the sign's appearance is going to be. It is obviously the same length as the prior sign and just the width.

Mr. Richardson and Mr. Cranse withdrew their motion to table.

Mr. Zalinger said he thinks the sign responds to the Board's comments from the last meeting.

Mr. Lane-Karnas moved they approve design review for the sign as revised at 114 Main Street and Mr. Cranse seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a vote of 6 to 0. Mr. Sarafzadeh voted no.

Adjournment:

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Lindley and Mr. Sarafzadeh the Development Review Board adjourned on a vote of 7 to 0.

Respectfully submitted,

Clancy DeSmet
Planning & Zoning Administrator

Transcribed by: Joan Clack