

**Montpelier Design Review Committee**  
**May 10, 2011**  
**Memorial Room, City Hall**

*Subject to Review and Approval*

**Present:** Stephen Everett, Chair; James Duggan, Vice Chair; Eric Gilbertson, Kate Coffey and Zachary Brock.  
Staff: Clancy DeSmet, Planning & Zoning Administrator

**Call to Order:**

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

**I. 1 Granite Street – RIV/DCD**

Owner: Peter Merrill

Applicant: Dan Clar

Design Review for a Sign

Mr. Clar said the sign is the same dimensions, 48 x 30. The only change he is making is that instead of a projecting sign it will be surface mounted on the wall. It is the same light fixture as shown. Mr. Everett replied it looked nice and meets the criteria for size.

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

**II. 89 Barre Street – CB-I/DCD**

Owner: Stephen Ribolini

Applicant: Kelly Walsh for ORE/FRM & Matt Brittenham

Design Review for a Sign.

Kelly Walsh said they have a shared office space on Barre Street with Free Ride Montpelier and Onion River Exchange. There are two separate signs both made out of MDO plywood and are both 42" x 84" hung on the wall concurrent to one another. That is next to the auto parts store. Both signs will be painted.

Mr. Everett inquired if there was a border around the sign.

Ms. Walsh replied it was just the designer measuring the space. There is no border around the sign. The background for the Onion River sign is yellow.

Mr. Everett asked if any lighting was going to be used.

Ms. Walsh replied no.

The DRC reviewed the sign criteria and found the application as proposed favorable on a vote of 5 to 0.

**III. 575 Stone Cutters Way – RIV/DCD**

Owner/Applicant: Connor Brothers Stone Cutters, LLC

Design Review for Construction of a New Building

Interested Parties: Fred Connor, Didi Brush, Steve Connor

Fred Connor said this is the new City Turntable Park on Stone Cutters Way. The existing building has doubled the footprint of this building with the same square footage on two floors. They are proposing at the park parallel parking spaces and a sidewalk from Turntable Park to the Co-Op. They have shown their

underground utility connections for electric, water and sewer, and they are proposing a parking area that has 53 parking spaces, 4 of which straddle the Co-Op line. They are proposing to heat the property with propane so they have underground propane tanks that are screened. They have screened dumpsters and a bike rack. This building footprint is roughly half the size of what is currently on the site and it is a two-story clapboard sided building with a small cornice. It is an all black window sash and frame, and that is the correct frame style shown. They are also proposing a red stripe across the top of the building. They have membrane roofing for the main building and internal roof frames. They have a black standing seamed roof over the front entry.

Didi Brush said there were several things they were trying to achieve. They were trying to achieve some screening from the street and sidewalk and a softening of the very strongly rectangular box shaped building. Planting salt tolerant plants is one of her goals. They are considering blueberry bushes for the back, both low and higher ones. There is a ramp that comes off the sidewalk to access the front and the plantings are a mix of ornamental shrubs and a few low slow growing evergreens. They didn't want to plant trees in front of the building in order to allow for access for maintenance, painting, cleaning windows, etc. so everything here is about 6 feet or lower. There are hydrangeas, winterberry, etc. She included the plant list with the plan. There are four crab apple trees to match the trees across the road. This is a reflection of a little bit of what is in the front of the building. It is a long skinny strip and difficult to create much interest. She is hoping to create some accent to the entrance. It has to be reasonably low because the windows are at the low level and they don't want to block the window.

Mr. Everett asked if there was a walkway between the building and the river.

Mr. Connor replied there is a strip of grass about 10 feet wide but not a proposed trail. There is also a drainage element which is shown adjacent to the parking lot.

Mr. Everett asked what the total numbers of parking spaces were.

Mr. Connor replied 63.

Mr. Duggan said he presented a handsome well designed building. He feels one of the issues they are looking at is the use of incompatible designs. He questions if this building is suitable for the site. He feels this is a historically industrial and commercial type corridor. The design elements he sees he feels are more appropriate on Barre Street perhaps. That is one issue in the massing of the structure. His other areas he thinks could be improved are how it addresses the turntable adjacent to it. That is an important component of this corridor. He wonders if there is a way it could respond to that a little bit. He is also curious if there is any interest to enhance what is going on alongside the river. He asked if this was going to be an office building.

Mr. Connor replied they are requesting multiple uses.

Mr. Duggan said he feels the structure that is there now is a very large imposing structure and that there might be a way to respond to its massing and form that he isn't seeing in this design.

Mr. Connor said the existing building has a ridge height of 32 feet and this building is 29 feet. The existing building covered roughly double the mass so there is more of a vista of the river and better access to the park. It's a building design they have studied for too many months and arrived at this design.

Mr. Duggan asked if they were tied to a flat roof structure.

Mr. Connor replied they preferred it. They want to be able to very heavily insulate it and don't want any issues with icing. There are a number of downtown buildings that you have to dance around at certain times of the year and they don't want to have another one.

Ms. Coffey said she agrees with Jamie Duggan that she feels like this is a very well designed building and has a lot of features that work well together. She thinks the industrial nature of that area is a little simpler than what he has shown. She feels there are simpler details along the river corridor. Maybe the size of the clapboards could be smaller to give homage to the smaller clapboards of the era of the buildings there.

Mr. Brock asked if the parking was responding to any kind of zoning requirements.

Mr. Connor said the zoning looks at replacing the parking with in-kind.

Mr. Brock said at the adjacent parking lot at the Co-Op they made an effort to soften the paving by planting islands within it. He wonders if they could have something matching theirs.

Mr. Connor said the park and sidewalk design has been reviewed with Tom McArdle and he has asked for some revisions and they believe they have answered his concerns. They are trying to provide a pedestrian access from the Co-Op to downtown, and if they truncate it somewhere else in between people are walking on the road or behind cars.

Mr. Brock said maybe another option would be to eliminate the parallel parking.

Mr. Everett asked if there was one central elevator in the building.

Mr. Connor replied yes at the main entrance.

Mr. Duggan asked if he would be willing to consider the cement board with a flat surface and not the other surface. He thinks those materials would work well, but he doesn't think it is appropriate to mimic a material it is not. Is he really attached to having the wood grain look?

Mr. Connor replied personally he prefers it. Wood today is an inferior product and doesn't have anywhere near the life span. This is a far superior product.

Mr. Duggan replied this material is not maintenance free. Everything needs to be maintained.

Mr. Gilbertson said he thinks it is unfortunate that the Co-Op with all of the traffic it has faces a secondary façade entrance.

Mr. Connor replied they had to design it as if it is either a single tenant building or a 4 or 6 tenant building. They may be back with different ideas.

Mr. DeSmet said there are some design guidelines for the Riverfront District that indicate you are supposed to have the primary façade facing the street and the river.

Mr. Everett said there is also a fair amount of landscaping on both sides of the side entry as you are facing it from the Co-Op.

Mr. Gilbertson inquired how long the building was.

Mr. Connor replied 142 feet.

Mr. Gilbertson said the architecture is a modern style along Stone Cutters Way. The Co-Op is a modern building and Jeffords Office is a modern building. This building really does not fit that pattern of building in an industrial type. The façade facing the Co-Op is unfortunate. He doesn't care about the primary façade being on Stone Cutters Way. It is a big building for this style of building; 142 feet is a big building. It's half as big as the Salt Shed but the Salt Shed is one of those metal industrial buildings.

Mr. Everett asked what color the entry doors were.

Mr. Connor replied wine berry red. They also propose a 2 inch band of red up in the cornice.

Mr. Gilbert asked if he could tell him again why he isn't using a gable roof.

Mr. Connor said they know the challenge of the height, but primarily they just don't like ice problems. If they go with a standing seam they need to clear out an area around the perimeter which they don't have room to do because of the sidewalks.

Mr. Gilbertson said he agrees with Jamie on using the embossed party board. It is fake and you are trying to make it look like wood. He has an objection to making it look like wood.

Mr. Connor said he did a lot of historic preservation work and they were trying to make the whole building look historic. This is a brand new building. It reflects light differently with a satin sheen.

Mr. Duggan inquired about the design of the windows.

Mr. Connor showed a sample of the windows to the Committee.

Mr. Everett said there are a couple of options. They can review the criteria and either approve or disapprove the application.

John Osgood, one of the owners of 535 Stone Cutters Way, said he is sympathetic to the challenges of this site. There are some good reasons for having a flat roof. Snow is a problem coming off their roof and forces the closure of the sidewalk. For selfish reasons he is interested in seeing the best possible building next to them because it will enhance their building and the whole city. If you think about the opportunities this city gets to have new buildings, when was the last time when one was built? Maybe theirs was in terms of a significant commercial structure. This site is an exciting site. It could be very dynamic and interesting and could create more value to the owners if more time and effort was made in designing it. They want to see a new building there.

Liz Pritchard said she is just becoming aware of this project and she has looked briefly at the application. The history of that stretch of land along the river and she agrees that the building has a lot of merits. If you want more of an industrial complex to go with the history of that parcel then this building is more reflective of what you might see on Barre Street. There were some small residences down there at one time. This application looks residential and more like an apartment building or perhaps a commercial building in a downtown but not where you would find granite sheds and railroad activity. There is a challenge to come up with something if you are trying to create a new structure that reflects the historic context. It is a long narrow site with a long narrow building. Breaking it up into sections with more variety of windows and having grouped windows. She likes Jamie's comment about having the end of the building that is overlooking Turntable Park associated with that. It's an exciting opportunity and she hopes it will happen because a lot of efforts have been presented for a structure in that spot.

Mr. Everett thanked them for their input.

Mr. Everett said they may have to go through the criteria and take a poll on each item to see what the consensus of the group is in terms of the application.

Mr. Gilbertson said there are several things he has problems with. One is the lack of respect of their neighbors and the Turntable Park and Co-Op with facades with no real interest or design. Both of them just have flat metal doors and the Turntable Park side doesn't. There are probably some ways to fix that. On the front side of the building for the size and scale of the building the entranceway is small and minimal. Many industrial buildings had towers that went up for elevators or stairs and that would bump that part of the building out and they already have the footprint with the gable roof cover over the door. Essentially, everybody will be entering the building from the ends rather than straight in. The other thing he has talked about is the embossed board. It doesn't meet our standards because it is an artificial looking material.

Mr. Brock said he agrees with a lot of things the building at 535 Stone Cutters Way said. There are a lot of opportunities in this place to create some great places. There is a lot of opportunity to do something that will make this attractive to tenants. There are a lot of opportunities to work with the adjacent Turntable Park and a little more response to the site. The comment he made before about the parking he thinks it could be a little better.

Mr. Everett said it would be nice if something could be done with the entry facing the Co-Op. Most of the people who will be occupying the building would be entering from the direction of the Co-Op it would be nice if the entry could be made interesting with the landscaping. The same is true on the side where the Turntable Park is located. If that park is going to be a nice spot for people to have lunch or people walking from town towards the building they might enter on that side as well if they entered through the park. Visually it would be much more attractive to do something with that entry. He doesn't have any problem with the siding. New materials are being made all of the time. They are allowing solar panels and things that were never there 100 years ago. It's a different material that is made to look like wood, but he doesn't have any problem with that.

Mr. Duggan said he thinks this is a nice design but he doesn't believe that the exterior design is in harmony with the other properties in the district. There can be some improvements in massing and form and the ability to respond to some of the adjacent parcels, especially Turntable Park. It would be nice if there were some way to engage that, even with a bench

there or an entry with a large glass sidelight where you could sit and look out. The city has invested a lot of time and energy into enhancing Turntable Park and he would like to see this building respond to it a little more. To be in harmony with the design in this area of the district it should be a little simpler. He isn't suggesting that it need be unattractive in any way or not of a design that stands out, but there are ways to do that visually by not having all uniform windows across that great expanse. If they sectioned it off there could be a change in height. He had mentioned a gable roof. He isn't against a flat roof, but if a flat roof is part of the design he would like to see a little change. He feels the embossed wood grain is not compatible with the other exterior details. He has a problem with the finish.

Mr. Everett said their options are to go through the criteria to see if enough is acceptable to pass.

Mr. Connor said he doesn't take the constructive criticism the wrong way. He just thinks there is a difference between what he thinks is better versus meeting the criteria and regulations. He has had a number of conversations with Clancy and has read the criteria thoroughly.

Mr. Everett said 535 Stone Cutters Way went through the design review process.

Mr. DeSmet said it was historic design review but it wasn't necessarily the riverfront guidelines.

Mr. Everett reminded Mr. Connor the DRC is only advisory to the Development Review Board. Whether they approve it or not they can still go before the DRB with the project with or without any changes. The third option would be if the applicant thinks there are some things he could tweak to get a better shot at approval the application could be tabled and he can come back.

Mr. Connor added the difficulty they have with the two end facades is that depending on the tenant mix they are tenant driven and not office driven. They expect the tenants will demand certain things that go above and beyond what they have here.

Mr. Brock asked if he anticipated having tenants soon.

Mr. Connor replied it is all market driven.

Mr. Everett reviewed the criteria one by one and took a poll on how the committee stands on the application.

Mr. Gilbertson said there are standards for specific districts. Does the Riverfront District exclude the general criteria that are in design review?

Mr. DeSmet replied no, it is in addition to.

§ 305.f - Design Review Criteria.

1. Preservation or reconstruction of the appropriate historic style if the proposed project is in the Historic District or involves a historic structure. Not applicable. The district ends at Turntable Park.
2. Harmony of exterior design with other properties in the district. He finds it acceptable. It is a very similar layout design to the Clothespin Factory building.
3. Compatibility of proposed exterior materials with other properties in the district. They are talking about the Riverfront District in this particular location. He finds it is compatible with other buildings, including buildings that were there earlier than the Salt Shed. Mr. Gilbertson said his issue with the material is the embossing. Mr. Duggan added that is his issue as well. Mr. Everett said that seems to be the consensus of the proposed exterior materials which is the embossing on the finish. Personally he doesn't find that an issue. Mr. Brock said he agrees with Mr. Everett.
4. Compatibility of proposed landscaping within the district. All were in favor. Mr. Gilbertson said he would like to see further landscaping in the parking lot to make it more like the Co-Op. Mr. Everett said the advantage the Co-Op has is they have a wider space to do it. Mr. DeSmet said another thing to consider about the parking is they may not want the people going to the Co-Op to park there. If you create a space that is substantially what it is at the Co-Op people might assume they can park at this building. Mr. Gilbertson said there is some cooperation between the Pyralisk and the Co-Op now. There is shared parking. Mr. Brock thought it was unacceptable.
5. Prevention of the use of incompatible designs, buildings, color schemes or exterior materials. He asked members to raise their right hands if they found it acceptable or unacceptable.

6. Location and appearance of all utilities. Mr. Gilbertson said with utilities they usually look at lighting. He doesn't understand what the lighting is. He doesn't see any exterior lighting. Mr. Connor said it is shown on the site plan. There are two pole lights that light both an inside walk and the parking area. There is recessed lighting under the entry and lighting on each entry. It is centered on each door above the door. The lighting was unanimous and received approval.
7. Recognition of and respect for view corridors and significant vistas including gateway views of the city and State House. Mr. Duggan said he didn't find it acceptable. It is a view corridor down Stone Cutters Way and River Street. When he looks at the standards he feels it creates visually something that is not compatible. Ms. Coffey found it acceptable. Mr. Gilbertson said the massing of the building is not significantly different than the Salt Shed, but as you look down the corridor of Stone Cutters Way he thinks the façade is a problem. He looked at that other criteria. It's unacceptable to him. Mr. Connor said he would doubt that this is a capitol city gateway. Mr. Duggan said he would argue that it is a significant vista from both River Street and Stone Cutters Way.

Mr. Gilbertson said the DRC hasn't said the building in terms of mass and size is a problem. The problem is in the detailing.

Mr. Connor said before they embarked on this several month design effort it has its merit to save the existing steel.

Mr. Gilbertson said this is a tough site. In an overall way what he has done is acceptable and admirable. Some of the things could be tweaked a little bit to make it meet the criteria.

Mr. Duggan added this is a very difficult site to build to spec. He also understands the difficulty in coming up with a design without knowing type and quantity of tenants and their needs. This is the committee's opportunity to look at the structure and there are some small things that could happen to make it more compatible. Compatibility can be subjective but he thinks all of the members are applying the criteria in response to what they see here.

Mr. Brock said there may be ways to alter the building to make it more open to what else is on the site. How can you make a building be flexible with multiple types of tenants? The weakest part is just the entries and how you could make part of the site address the building a little more.

Mr. Gilbertson said he didn't know how the vote would go but they could take a straw vote.

Mr. Everett said the option would be to go back and tweak the entries and the siding.

Mr. Gilbertson said if it looks like it is going to be a no vote then they table the application and he can come back without a fee. Make the changes and come back.

Ms. Coffey said it isn't just the siding for her but the details seem a little more than they need to be.

Mr. Gilbertson said in terms of where their primary parking is people look at a really uninteresting façade. The main entry is way around corner.

Mr. Connor requested to table the application.

Mr. Everett said they would table the application based on the request of the applicant.

Mr. Gilbertson moved to table the application with Ms. Coffey seconding the motion. The motion was approved on a vote of 5 to 0.

**Review of March 15 and March 29, 2011 Minutes:**

Upon a motion by Mr. Duggan and Mr. Gilbertson the March 15, 2011 DRC Minutes were approved on a vote of 4 to 0.

Upon a motion by Mr. Gilbertson and Mr. Everett the March 29, 2011 DRC Minutes were approved on a vote of 3 to 0.

**Adjournment:**

Upon a motion by Mr. Duggan and Ms. Coffey DRC adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clancy DeSmet  
Planning & Zoning Administrator

Transcribed by: Joan Clack