

Minutes of the Planning Commission

Meeting Date: April 22, 2013 Called To Order At: 6:00 pm

PC Members	Present	Absent	Recused	Observed
Chris Dermody, Chair	X			
Jeff Bean	X			
Michael Smith	X			
David Barber	X			
Peter Ford	X			
Ryan Doyle	X			

A. DESIGN ADVISORY SEGMENT

- 1. 7-15 Center Street – Peter and Evelyn Martin** – Applicant requests a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Administrator for façade alterations. This property is located in the DR-1 Traditional Downtown design review district.

Brad Lanute gave a brief overview of the application. Evelyn Martin gave a presentation of her proposal.

Peter Ford made the motion to approve the proposal as presented. David Barber seconded the motion with all in favor.

PC Members	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Abstain
Chris Dermody, Chair					
Jeff Bean			X		
Michael Smith			X		
David Barber		X	X		
Peter Ford	X		X		
Ryan Doyle			X		

- 2. 94 N. Main Street – Vesna Bozic** – Applicant requests a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Administrator for façade alterations. This property is located in the DR-1 Traditional Downtown design review district.

Brad Lanute gave an overview of the submitted application. Vesna Bozic presented her proposal.

Peter Ford made the motion to approve the application as presented. The motion was seconded by Jeff Bean with all in favor, with the exception of Ryan Doyle.

PC Members	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Abstain
Chris Dermody, Chair					
Jeff Bean		X	X		
Michael Smith			X		

David Barber			X		
Peter Ford	X		X		
Ryan Doyle				X	

3. Questions and Discussion for Zoning Administrator

Ryan Doyle asked whether there will be a period of time where the interpretations of the new zoning administrator can be assessed regarding the new signage rules. Chip Sawyer stated that there will be quarterly reports of approvals presented to the Board. Brad Lanute stated that he will be working with Michelle to thoroughly review the new regulations, and stated that there are numerous examples of good signs that have been approved by the DAB on file.

Peter Ford stated that he has reservations regarding whether the new zoning administrator will have the resources to do everything that is in their prevue from enforcement to interpreting regulations, to administrating the permit process. He stated that the board should rethink the whole questions of giving up signage review. Chris Dermody stated that if the board wants to go in that direction than the board should consider thinking about splitting up the DAB and PC into boards with different memberships.

B. PLANNING SEGMENT

1. Discussion of Form Based Code Draft

Chip Sawyer led the discussion regarding the comments received from the Planning Commission on the FBC draft. A memo was sent to the board with discussion points prior to the meeting.

Chip Sawyer explained that staff continues to recommend not requiring a functional second story. David Barber stated his opposition to this recommendation and gave the example of the Handy lot at the corner of Fairfield. Peter Ford asked whether there are any other precedents for this in other Cities. Jeff Bean said that he agrees that the market poses a problem, but we should consider having specific zones that would require specific height provisions. Chip Sawyer explained that staff is not recommending that false facades be allowed, but instead fully enclosed buildings that look like two stories from the outside of the building. Jeff Bean said that we should discuss triggers for when the market is good enough to require it. Laz Scangas said that he hopes that the City would focus on filling the current second and third floors of existing buildings first. Michael Smith said that this is problematic because it takes a significant amount of money to bring these buildings up to code. Laz Scangas said that if you start requiring second and third floors, the existing buildings are going to fall apart. Michael Smith stated that this is comparable to the low-income housing that is drawing away revenues from land lords whose buildings are falling apart. Laz Scangas stated that when they search for second and third floor office space, and there were very limited options. Chris Dermody asked whether there would be any bridges built from the new parking garage to

building on Main Street. David Barber gave an example of how an elevator could be built adjacent to the Main Street buildings and includes bridges.

Chip Sawyer explained that there are some service-industrial uses included in the FBC district, and that they want to balance the aesthetics along the frontage of main corridors while understanding that the form and design of industrial uses are limited by its functions. In order to do, triggers have been adopted such that these uses would be reviewed by the development review board. Chip Sawyer said that a related part of this question is in regard to whether this new code would eliminate certain uses from areas on Federal Street that would be industrial. He said that it is questionable as to whether the current residential areas on Federal Street in the FBC district are viable for industrial uses given the space constraints of the lot and the railroad as well as whether we want to push out residential on the opposite side of the street. Laz Scangas said that he thinks business or mix-use could be viable in that area, but not residential alone. Jeff Bean stated his concerns that we need to also think about the planned Federal Street corridor project and how it will affect the traffic on that street and what is appropriate for the use given that traffic. Peter Ford stated that he sees Federal Street residential only as adjunct to small business development such as a creative zone attractive to young entrepreneurs and artists.

Chip Sawyer explained that staff feels that the current block style form is capable of meeting the requirements for an apartment style building as described by board members, but if there is an additional form the board is looking for staff can work on it. David Barber stated that the apartment building is a different form that should deserve its own form due to the interior amenities and use. Chip Sawyer responded that the outside form of the downtown block style should suffice, and that staff is trying to make our code as simple and effective as possible.

Greta spoke to the questions about the outbuilding standards. She stated that currently the only manners in which outbuildings are regulated are with regard to the setbacks. Chip Sawyer asked the board what is the main concern of the board with regard to outbuildings. Peter Ford said that his biggest concern with outbuildings is their placement, and in particular the proximity to property lines. Chris Dermody stated that perhaps we should have the setback requirements be proportional to the size of the lot because there are a lot of small parcels that would be zoned out of the ability to have outbuildings. Ryan Doyle stated that outbuildings should be able to touch other buildings as long as there are no issues with water drainage. David Barber said that he would agree with Ryan Doyle because there are a lot of small parcels. Greta reminded the board that the FBC zone includes very few on residential areas. Jeff Bean stated that we should act carefully with these sort of rules because overregulation could push residents to leave the City. Ryan Doyle stated that continuity of design between primary and outbuildings would be a good way to protect neighboring properties.

Chip Sawyer spoke to the issue of solar panels, and how state statutes restrict the ability of local zoning to regulate solar panels.

Laz Scangas spoke to the possibility of requiring railroad architecture motifs. He stated that the properties with this type of architecture were very limited and many of those buildings no longer exist. Jeff Bean stated that he thinks the Mylan expansions could have easily included such elements. David Barber stated that his primary issue is the how Redwood Plaza and Hunt Plaza interact with the street and its parking-centric form. Jeff Bean stated that we should try to encourage Lake Street to look like it used to look like. Chris Dermody said that there may be issues with economic viability due to automobile dependency that has grown over the years.

Greta Brunswick stated that the townhouse form has not been fully developed and drafted. She said that there is currently a collection of images to provide a point for discussion to begin. David Barber and Jeff Bean both suggested that Hudson Street, Maiden Lane and Hoyt Street could be good streets for townhouse style form. Peter Ford said that this form would provide a fine way to attract young higher income residents. He also said that it might be nice to have provisions that would provide greenspace in the back yard. Ryan Doyle had concerns about town houses placed right up against the sidewalk. He said he would prefer more of a setback than some of the pictures provided. Jeff Bean asked if these areas would be considered for residential use only. Greta Brunswick responded that no, these regulations will be regulating form, and not use.

Chip Sawyer discussed the idea of requiring a 3-D rendering of elevations. He stated that staff would like to discuss this with local consultants if they have this capability, and furthermore figure out in what situations this would be most appropriate. Peter Ford said that for the owl club application the board did not get one of the facades, the percentage of green space. He said that the drawings need to be certified by licensed architects and engineers. David Barber said that it should be required for major site plan reviews.

Laz Scangas spoke to the inconsistencies in what the DAB accepts as complete project proposals. He pointed out the difference between the application materials between his client, and the other application reviewed previous in the meeting. He stated that the board really needs to be consistent. Brad Lanute stated that the application requirements for site plans are much more explicit in the regulations, while the requirements for architectural elevations are not spelled out leading to inconsistencies in the quality of application submissions. He stated that its important to consider making the DAB application requirements more explicit while taking considerations to not discourage upkeep and renovations to facades requiring DAB review. He said that if anything is going to have to change, it will have to be Section 705 (B), but it will be a tough battle because there are facades in the downtown that people would prefer to see rehabbed. Chip Sawyer stated that this could be seen as an economic barrier. Michael Smith asked how much the colored rendering cost. Laz Scangas responded that the application submitted tonight was \$500. Chris Dermody stated that we need to think about what could be appropriate triggers that would require more detail in applications.

David Barber asked whether just painting the building would need DAB approval or should be exempt. He stated that paint only changes should be exempt. Laz Scangas

agreed. Peter Ford stated that he would like to know if other towns with historic districts in Vermont regulate paint.

Jeff Bean stated that it would be difficult to ask the applicant to provide a 3-D model without the City providing some of the necessary data, and the City does have that data – it is just not being used.

Chip Sawyer explained that the paid work of the FBC project members will end by May 17. He asked the board whether they wanted to have an additional Planning Commission meeting to go over the regulations in a working meeting only related to the FBC draft. The board decided that they would meet to discuss the FBC draft on Thursday May 2nd at 6 pm.

2. Presentation on Roles of Planning Commission and Design Advisory Board

This presentation was recessed until May 20th.

3. Discussion with Northwest Regional Planning Commission

The presentation was recessed until May 20th.

C. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Meeting Minutes – March 25, 2013 & April 15, 2013

This topic was not taken up for discussion.

2. Planning & Development Update

Chip Sawyer gave an update on the streetscape project. He stated that it is going along well. Peter Ford asked whether there was a bike lane planned. Chip Sawyer responded that they would be using sharrows, a white stencil indicating that bikers can share the entire lane with vehicles. Ryan Doyle asked whether the new pavement would reach up to City Hall steps. Chip Sawyer responded no, that area would be renovated along with the future City Hall redesign proposal. Jeff Bean asked whether the alley way on the south side of City Hall would be shut down. Chip Sawyer responded yes.

Chip Sawyer reminded the board that Brad Lanute would be departing from his position as of Friday April 26th.

3. Other

This topic was not taken up for discussion.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Michael Smith, seconded by David Barber with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Brad Lanute, minute taker.