

Minutes of the Planning Commission

Meeting Date: January 28, 2013 Called To Order At: 5:33 pm
Location: Saint Albans Town Education Center, 169 S. Main Street

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. 165 South Main Street – Saint Albans Town Educational Center** – Applicant requests a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Administrator for a free-standing sign. This property is located in the DR-4 Gateway Design Review District. Site visit and then continuation of review was conducted in City Hall Council Chambers.

A site visit was conducted by the planning commission and city staff to gather more information on the location of a proposed free-standing sign. Derek Madden of SATEC presented the proposed location of the new sign. The board discussed options of placing the sign on the south side of the access driveway. The meeting was recessed at 5:46 pm until reconvening at City Hall.

Meeting Date: January 28, 2013 Call to Order At: 6:00 pm
Location: City of Saint Albans, Council Chambers

B. CONTINUATION OF DESIGN ADVISORY SEGMENT

- 2. 165 South Main Street – Saint Albans Town Educational Center** – Applicant requests a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Administrator for a free-standing sign. This property is located in the DR-4 Gateway Design Review District. Site visit and then continuation of review was conducted in City Hall Council Chambers.

Jeff Bean made the motion to table the application until the applicant submits a revised site plan and has discussions with the zoning administration prior to coming back before the board. Ryan Doyle seconded the motion with all in favor.

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

- 3. 138 Federal Street – St. Albans Cooperative Creamery** – Applicant requests a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Administrator for a free-standing sign and building signs. This property is located in the S-IND zoning district.

Brad Lanute stated that the applicant is requesting a setback waiver for the free-standing sign. He stated that he conducted a site visit with the applicant to confirm that the proposed location would not hinder vehicular and pedestrian visibility at the access drive.

Mike Jansen of the Cooperative Creamery presented the application. Mike Jansen confirmed that the proposed location is not in the right-of-way and would not interfere with future Federal street infrastructure plans. Jeff Bean was concerned about the free-standing sign blocking the sight lines of vehicles stopped at the stop line. Mike Jansen stated that it was possible to move back a couple of feet, but any further and the slope of the land will reduce the visibility of the sign. Ryan Doyle asked for further dimensions of the stone planter. Mike Jansen stated that the stone planter has not been fully decided on in terms of dimensions at this time.

Ryan Doyle made the motion to accept the signs as presented waiving 8 feet of the 10 foot setback requirement for the freestanding sign. David Barber seconded the motion with three (3) in favor and one (1) against.

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

- 4. 260 North Main Street – Abbott Furniture Store.** Applicant requests a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Administrator for a building sign. This property is located in the DR-4 Gateway Design Review District.

A representative of the applicant did not attend the meeting. The application was tabled until the February meeting.

5. **191 Lake Street – Midas.** Applicant requests a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Administrator for a free-standing sign and building signs. This property is located in the DR-2 Downtown Expansion Design Review District.

Brad Lanute introduced the application. He stated that the dimensions given in the application for the rectangular wall sign included areas of the building that would not be considered part of the sign, and therefore the stated area was an overestimate. He also stated that the actual signage area for the sign in combination with the other wall sign would meet our sign area requirements. The board discussed whether the text of the building sign could be illuminated. Ryan Doyle stated that since only the lettering was lit and that there was a dark painted background, the building signs could be illuminated. Chris Wood stated that the Midas oval will not be illuminated.

David Barber made a motion to approve two wall signs presented with the conditions that the Midas oval is not lit, that the other lit wall signs may only be lit during business hours, and that the building signs were within the combined maximum signage area requirements. Peter Ford seconded the motion with all in favor.

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

Brad Lanute stated that the free-standing sign is a pre-existing sign that was permitted in 1992. He also stated that current sign is 19 feet in height while the maximum height of a freestanding sign is 12 feet in the business-1 district. Furthermore, the maximum height restriction of signs cannot be waived by the DAB or Zoning Administrator. Chris Wood stated that he is not proposing to have the freestanding sign illuminated. Chris Wood stated that he would be willing to shorten the sign to 12 feet.

David Barber made the motion to approve the freestanding sign amended to be a height of 12 feet or less and with the removal of the letter board portion. Peter Ford seconded the motion. Ryan Doyle asked whether it was nonconforming if it was reduced in height and not internally illuminated. Chris Dermody stated the sign was non-conforming because of height only. Chris Dermody recommended that the board defeat the motion because the applicant is entitled to the letter board. Peter Ford stated that he would prefer to eliminate any chance of the other tenant in the building using the freestanding sign and have only Midas represented by the sign. The vote went 2-3 and therefore failed.

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

David Barber	X		X		
Peter Ford		X	X		
Ryan Doyle				X	

Mr. Handy, the owner of the building stated that it would be inappropriate to consider the signage of another tenant that is not proposing a sign at this time.

Ryan Doyle made a motion to approve the free standing sign as presented with the exception that the sign is reduced in height to 12 feet or less, is not internally illuminated, and the letter board is reserved for the use of the Midas business and glad tidings only. Jeff Bean seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-2.

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

- 6. 109 North Main Street – 109 North Main Street, LLC.** Applicant requests recommendation to the Development Review Board for Design Review. This property is located in the DR-2 Downtown Expansion Design Review District.

Chip Sawyer, director of planning and development, went over the regulatory context of the application. He stated that since this is a project that is going before the Development Review Board (DRB) for site plan review, the DAB is making a recommendation on design for the DRB to consider during their site plan review process. Brad Lanute, zoning administrator, stated that he had reviewed the architectural elevations and site plan in the submitted application and found that the application meets all of the requirements of Section 705(B) and Section 706.

Laz Scangas, of Arnold and Scangas, represented the applicant as the project architect and presented the proposal to the DAB.

Chris Dermody stated that he liked the design except for the lack of windows on the building, especially on the Congress Street side. He feels that there could be a more human element to the design of the building. Laz Scangas stated that the lack of windows on Congress Street had to do with the orientation of the floor plan and the location of storage on the south side of the building. He stated that the absence of windows was compensated by the rhythm created by the recessed panels. Chris Dermody suggested that a false window could be an option, which could have display items.

David Barber suggested that the proposed design was in violation of Section 706(2)(D) which is large scale features or significant areas of blank wall are not permitted near the

front of the site or along the public right-of-way. He stated that the blank wall along Congress Street is clearly not permitted given the language of the ordinance.

Ryan Doyle reiterated the lack of fenestration on Congress Street. He also felt that false windows rather than display windows would suffice.

Jeff Bean stated that the Congress Street wall is serious size wall, and that the city already has a building on Center Street that has a serious blank wall that is hurting the rest of Center Street because of that wall. He stated that it is particularly not a pedestrian friendly environment as proposed, and will not be received well especially given the major sidewalk improvements that have just been made along Congress Street, unless some windows are added. He also felt that the false windows scenario would be a good option.

Peter Ford stated that this project is a very big mistake. He stated he would expect much more from Laz Scangas and Gordon Winters given the publicity of the newspaper. He stated that the building has a warehouse look that is going to be in one of the most prominent sites in this city. He stated that he does not understand how this could be the result of all the money that is going to be spent by the City. He stated it is going to create enormous traffic. Chris Dermody stated that this is not the area of DAB purview. Peter Ford cited 705(B)(3) as grounds for considering additional information such as traffic. He stated that you cannot divorce this proposal from all of the inherent problems that it will create – traffic being a primary one. Chip Sawyer stated there is a section that limits the DAB's overview to article 7, and article 7 is design review. It is not dealing with the other provisions of zoning. Peter Ford asked how the second story would be designed within the building. Laz Scangas stated that it will be contained within the building envelope and will not cover the entire area of the footprint of the building. Peter Ford stated that the building should be the crown jewel, but it is not. It is an ugly looking building.

Laz Scangas asked Gordon Winters if he would consider adding windows on Congress Street. Gordon Winters stated yes we can consider adding the windows. Gordon stated he was asked to make a building that looks like a two-story building and is reflective of the downtown and that is certainly his intent and the intent of the architect for this project. He stated he would be happy to take into consideration all of the comments.

David Barber stated that he realized that the proposed building is not a full two stories. He stated that he feels that this is in violation of Section 513, which requires new structures in the B-1 to be no less than two stories. He also stated that there was no definition for a story in the regulations and that the dictionary definition of the term story is a habitable floor. Therefore what is proposed does not create a continuous habitable floor across the entire footprint of the building. He thinks this is a bad precedent to set with other sites in the city with potential for similar development. Jeff Bean reiterated the same issue. Laz Scangas stated that the height of the building would allow for two stories if desired. David Barber stated that he understands that it is potentially possible to have a full floor, but that since the floor is not complete it is in violation of our regulations. Chip Sawyer stated that the intent of the regulations has to do with height not functionality of the story. Gordon Winters stated that they were going with a 20% mezzanine second story because of the

costs of the site and the building. He stated that they interpreted the regulations in terms of height of the building being two stories and not that the second story has to be a fully functional second story.

Lori Jordan, representing State Farm, stated that she is not opposed to the project, but feels that, as a former DAB member, this design is cold but could be made warmer with things such as awnings.

Ann Levy, resident of the city, stated that throughout time as cities grow, they grow up. However, she sees this city as growing out, and that all of the new buildings have been getting shorter in height and making car travel imperative. She stated she would like to see some more height to the building. She thinks that the applicant could further enhance the downtown with a functional second story.

Tim Smith, resident of the city, stated that everyone would like to have their ideal scenario, but forcing Ace to have a full functional second story is unrealistic. He stated that the building that the manure truck went through was a one story building with a fake second story façade that's not much different than what is being discussed here. He also stated that the landscaping may make the building more enticing. He stated that it would be unrealistic that all developers can fulfill everyone's wishes.

Chris Wood, city business owner, stated that there has to be some flexibility for the developers to compete with the big box stores.

Lori Jordan, stated that closing the door to the possibility to a second floor is not realistic and is shortsighted to not have a second floor. She stated that there should be another drawing force in the evening hours.

David Barber stated that there were some inconsistencies across the roofline of the main entrance relative to the rest of the Main Street roofline. He stated that this was inconsistent with other buildings in the downtown. He also stated that the stone at the base of the building is also inconsistent with the historic downtown architecture.

Ryan Doyle stated he thinks the building lacks character. He stated that there are very long walls without any details to break it up. He stated that there are features about every 30-40 feet that break up the space of the buildings in the downtown. He stated that looking at the building it does not look like a two story building. He stated it looks more like a Kinney building.

Peter Ford stated that he is really tired of seeing mediocrity in this City. He stated that it is a project that not only lacks character, but is an insult to the street. He stated that there is no landscaping, and that this building needs shrubbery to hide the bulk. He stated, this building is supposed to be part of streetscape and reflective of the character of the community, and it does not do that. And there is no way to soften this without a full redesign. He said it is not honky dory; it is not a good project. Peter Ford stated that people move to places because they are attractive and human scale, and that new buildings

should echo that demand. The city has just put in a new streetscape and this project does not fit those projects. He stated this is not the kind of place that he would want to move to if these were the sort of buildings in the downtown.

David Barber suggested that the small second story windows be paired together and positioned over the larger windows in order to help the rhythm of the façade.

Chris Dermody suggested that in moving forward, the DAB should put together a list of concerns about the project to be forwarded to the Development Review Board. Chris summarized the concerns of fenestration, more architectural emphasis of the second story, and a softening of the façade – possibly by awnings. Jeff Bean brought up the concern about the lack of an architectural focal point at the corner of the building on Congress and Main.

Ryan Doyle made the motion to have Brad Lanute draft the recommendations to the DRB based on the summary of concerns, and e-mail the draft to each of the board members for comment prior to submission to the DRB. Jeff Bean seconded it, with all in favor.

*Disclaimer the DAB did not cast a vote on the favorability or unfavorability of the proposal. The vote was only to refer recommendations to the DRB.

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

7. Questions and Discussion for Zoning Administrator

There were no questions or discussion.

C. Public Hearing and recommendation to council for bylaw revisions

1. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to take public comment and consider changes to the St. Albans City Land Development Regulations, including:
 - i. Section 403 – Home Occupations
 - ii. Section 404 – Home Industry
 - iii. Section 517 – Signs
 - iv. Section 519 – Performance Standards

Chip Sawyer and Brad Lanute explained the changes that were made to each of the sections based on the comments from Board members at the previous Planning

Commission meetings. Regarding signage Chris Dermody requested that the refresh rate be changed from 15 seconds to 30 seconds. Ryan Doyle requested that the dimensional requirements be changed from a per lot basis to a per business basis. There was no public comment given.

2. Consider edits to revisions and recommendation to City Council – D&V

Peter Ford made the motion to accept the revisions to Section 519 and recommend it to the City Council for adoption, seconded by David Barber with all in favor.

Peter Ford made the motion to accept the revisions to Section 517 and recommend it to the City Council for adoption, seconded by Ryan Doyle with all in favor.

David Barber made the motion to accept the revisions to Section 403 and 404 and recommend it to the City Council for adoption, seconded by Ryan Doyle with all in favor.

D. PLANNING SEGMENT

1. Staff Report on CIP

This agenda item was not discussed.

E. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Selection of Planning Commission Chair

Ryan Doyle Nominated Chris Dermody to remain as chair of the planning commission, Peter Ford seconded. There were no other nominations put forward. All were in favor of the motion.

2. Meeting Minutes – December 17, 2012

Peter Ford made the motion to accept the meeting minutes, seconded by David Barber, with all in favor, with the exception of Ryan Doyle who abstained.

F. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ryan Doyle , seconded by Jeff Bean with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:54pm.

Respectfully submitted, Brad Lanute, minute taker.