



Design Review Board

Approved Meeting Minutes of April 5, 2021

The Amherst Design Review Board virtually met on ***Monday, April 5, 2021***, at **5:00 P.M.**

This meeting was recorded on Zoom and may be viewed on the Town of Amherst YouTube Channel. Click on the following link to access this meeting recording:

<https://youtu.be/BWUehe5vZ1M>

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Catharine Porter at 5:00 p.m. with the following members:

PRESENT: Catherine Porter, Chair; Erika Zekos; Jan Marquardt; and Lindsay Schnarr

ALSO PRESENT: Christine Brestrup, Planning Director; Maureen Pollock, Planner and staff liaison to the DAAC; and Applicant, Federico Mendiola;

At this Meeting, the Amherst Design Review Board will conduct the following business:

ANNOUNCEMENTS: None

NEW BUSINESS: None

APPLICATIONS:

- a. **DRB FY2021-09, Town of Amherst** – To review the proposed design alternatives for the Pomeroy Village Intersection Project, located at the intersection of **West Street (Route 116) and Pomeroy/West Pomeroy Streets**.

Project representative, Christine Brestrup, Planning Director was present.

Ms. Brestrup provided a presentation to the Board which included the following items: context of the Pomeroy Village Center and intersection; existing conditions and challenges at the West Street (Route 116) and Pomeroy/West Pomeroy Lanes intersection; info about the MassWorks grant and scope of work; intersection design alternatives for the Town to consider: enhanced intersection vs roundabout; questions for the Board's consideration; and outlines opportunities for future public engagement for this project.

Ms. Brestrup stated the scope of this intersection improvement project is to focus on enhancing traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian safety at the intersection of West Street and Pomeroy/West Pomeroy Lanes (Pomeroy Village Center).

Ms. Brestrup stated she is interested in hearing the Board's ideas, questions, concerns and comments on the improvements to the intersection. Stated the Town Council needs to decide by May/June 2021 on which design alternative should be selected: enhanced intersection or a roundabout. Once the Town Council makes their decision, the Town will hire a consultant to work with in designing the intersection improvements. Stated she will come back with a proposed intersection design once a formal designed plan is created. Asks that the Board refrain from construction detail questions, such as, how wide would the sidewalk be, until the Town is in the design phase of this project.

Ms. Zekos stated she often travels through this intersection by car; and sometimes travels through this intersection by bicycle during the warmer months. This intersection is very vehicle focused and not pedestrian and cyclist focused. Stated she is leaning towards supporting a roundabout, as the design alternative for this intersection. Stated she wants wider sidewalks, pedestrian activated signals, and bike lanes provided. Stated roundabouts are designed to slow vehicular traffic down and reduces carbon emissions. Stated pedestrian and cyclists' concerns should come first priority in considering the intersection improvements needed. Stated she acknowledges there are concerns expressed by persons with visual impairments regarding roundabouts. Suggested that splitter islands and crosswalks with pedestrian activated signals be added to the design.

Ms. Marquardt stated she has pretty extensive experience with roundabouts in the British Isles and some on the European continent. Stated that in her experience, she believes that a roundabout is a great way to slow down vehicular traffic, but they are bad for pedestrians and cyclists' safety. Similar to the Triangle Street intersection, stated the Pomeroy Village intersection is too small for a roundabout. Stated the Triangle Street roundabout is so small that it is difficult for drivers to know whether another driver is entering or exiting it, as there isn't enough time to observe.

Ms. Marquardt stated she prefers the way that the British design small intersections along open roads that have faster speeds. Stated these small highways sometimes go through villages at which point the road narrows down to two lanes and then the road widens again with more lanes as it exits the village center. Stated that the design narrowing the travel lane in order to slow down vehicular traffic also makes it safer for pedestrians to use the crosswalk. Stated she has found that 'entering village center, please drive slowly' signs and ~ 25mph speed limits signs, as well as having highly visible crosswalks and bike lanes are useful traffic calming measures.

Ms. Marquardt stated that she drives past this intersection. Stated she also walks around this area and thinks the public right-of-way along East Pomeroy Lane is in poor condition. Stated the road needs to be repaved and in place, such as over a bridge, there is no sidewalk on side of the road. During the winter, the sidewalk on the south side of the road stays too icy for pedestrians to use and they are forced to walk in the middle of the street.

Ms. Schnarr stated that this intersection provides a lot of vehicular access from various directions. Stated she has concerns about pedestrian safety if it is designed as a roundabout. Stated there is a good number of pedestrians who cross the street to go to the surrounding businesses and restaurants. Stated that this village center feels like a place where it could be really lovely and geared towards pedestrians.

Ms. Schnarr stated that there is a tendency for motorists to drive quickly through a roundabout, likely because the motorists are in a queued line to drive through the roundabout so often there's no expectation to slow down or stop traffic in order to allow a pedestrian to cross. Stated she has concerns about this. Ms. Schnarr stated there is a Montessori school close by to this intersection and wonders what kind of student foot traffic use this intersection to go/from school.

Ms. Zekos stated that the design intention of a roundabouts is to slow down vehicular traffic.

Ms. Porter stated that she is still deciding on which design alternative would make better sense at this intersection. Stated no matter which design is chosen, it will improve design aesthetics of this intersection.

Ms. Marquardt stated that regardless if this intersection has an enhanced intersection or a roundabout, crosswalks should be provided further away from the intersection, as a safety measure.

Ms. Brestrup asked the Board what do they think about the two design alternatives proposed in consideration of future development at the corner parcels to the intersection and vicinity parcels.

Ms. Zekos stated that as more development occurs on the parcels adjacent to this intersection, it will create a need for turning lane(s), which would have impacts to the corner parcels. Stated that this is something that intersection design will need to address. Stated the future development located at the corner parcels and surrounding parcels will need to have a coherent, static identity.

Ms. Brestrup stated she questions whether a roundabout might not be the best option for future development in/around the Pomeroy Village Center, especially as buildings, lots, and parking configurations of these parcels may change as they are redeveloped. For instance, the Town wants to encourage new developments to provide parking spaces behind the buildings, as opposed to the current parking patterns in this area.

Ms. Marquardt stated she agrees with Ms. Brestrup. Stated there needs to be enough space to allow sidewalks, street trees, and places for pedestrians to linger and gather. Waiting at stoplights is only one way this happens for both drivers and pedestrians.

Ms. Porter stated she is now ready to recommend that an enhanced intersection be designed instead of a roundabout. Stated that an enhanced intersection will provide a welcoming feeling that you are in village center.

Ms. Schnarr stated that she recommends that the Town conduct case studies of similar scale intersections with both an enhanced intersection and roundabout, from similar communities around the country, in order to help determine which design alternative is more appropriate for the Pomeroy Village Intersection.

DRB FY2021-11, Federico Mendiola – To review the proposed exterior changes to the building and property site, including signage, building wall color, and outdoor dining area for a proposed Class II Restaurant, located at **51 East Pleasant Street (11C-267)**.

Applicant and restaurant owner, Federico Mendiolar was present.

Mr. Mendiola stated he is a restaurant owner who owns other restaurants in Massachusetts and one in Connecticut. Stated the name of the existing restaurants is called Frontier Grill. The name of the proposed restaurant at 51 East Pleasant Street in Amherst is called Garcia's Restaurant. Stated he is planning to do interior renovations, tile replacements, maintain the two outdoor dining areas with installation of new tables, chairs, and umbrellas. Stated he proposes two identification signs over the two main door entrances to the restaurant. Stated the front lettering will state, "Garcia's" and will be colored red, and the side of the lettering will be colored black. The letters will be internally illuminated with LED lighting and will be on a timer for turning on and off. The proposed building wall color will be a yellow.

Ms. Porter stated she will be happy to see the existing purple color of the building wall be removed and replaced with a yellow color.

Ms. Porter asked about the parking for the restaurant. Mr. Mendiola responded, the on-site parking lot will be repaved. Stated there are 66 on-site parking spaces, including 4 ADA compliant parking spaces. Stated there is shared parking provided with the adjacent property located at 35 East Pleasant Street, behind the building which The Spoke currently occupies. Stated he will ask his employees to park in the shared parking lot located behind the building, located 35 East Pleasant Street.

Ms. Schnarr stated the proposed building wall color looks nice. Stated the color does not look too bright in the submitted rendering but wonders if the color will look differently when it is applied on the building wall.

Ms. Porter stated she likes the yellow color, as it looks more subdued.

Mr. Mendiola showed the Board different color swatches for consideration.

Ms. Schnarr stated she favors the color labelled as 'laser lemon' on the color swatch, over the other color samples provided. Stated, that being said, the color may not coordinate with colors on the surrounding properties.

Ms. Schnarr stated she likes a more muted gold for the building wall. Stated a yellow color that is too mustardy will not work well for this site.

Ms. Schnarr stated she recommends Mr. Mendiola to work with a designer from Kuhn Riddle for the selection and review of the building wall color; and to do a mock-up using paint on the building to ensure the color is handled appropriately. Stated they have the design expertise to select and review this.

Ms. Marquardt stated she agrees with Ms. Schnarr. Stated she has learned over the years that the color that you pick on the swatch is always more intense and brighter when it is applied onto the wall and is in the light, particularly outdoors. Stated she also recommends doing a mock-up of

colors on the building wall, and that they may want to paint white around mock-up to help visualize it in the light and get away from intense blue currently on walls.

Ms. Porter supports the recommendation for Mr. Mendiola to do a mock-up.

Ms. Zekos stated she recommends that the planting area in the center of tiled surface, adjacent to the main entrances, to be maintained. Stated she recommends planting along the edge of the low wall that separate the outdoor dining areas, as a way to break up all of the pavement.

Ms. Marquardt stated she supports the recommendation for plantings in the island and along the low walls.

Ms. Schnarr stated she agrees with other members that utilizing that square with maintaining and adding more plantings would be a nice way to introduce a bit more life to the corner. Stated she suggests removing some of the 2'x2' pavers in front of these low walls in order to provide more space for plantings.

Ms. Zekos stated she supports the recommendation for Mr. Mendiola to do a mock-up.

Ms. Porter stated she recommends a more specific planting plan be provided. Stated if the Board wants plantings it might be helpful to see exactly what the proposal would look like.

Ms. Zekos responded if Mr. Mendiola had to submit a planting plan, she would hate to delay the process for him.

Ms. Porter responded, there is planting and then there is planting. Stated plantings should be attractive and may change seasonally. Stated the existing plantings look pretty pathetic. Stated she definitely sees potential with Mr. Mendiola's proposal and that the Board should encourage it. Stated potted flowers could be provided which could be very nice.

Mr. Mendiola responded that he will provide plantings, as recommended.

MOTION: Moved by Ms. Marquardt, seconded by Ms. Zekos, and voted (4-0) to give a positive recommendation to the Building Commissioner for the Federico Mendiola's proposed exterior changes to the building and property site, including signage, building wall color, and outdoor dining area for a proposed Class II Restaurant, located at **51 East Pleasant Street (11C-267)**, as submitted, with the following suggestions:

1. Maintain the existing planting area located in the center of the area with pavers, adjacent to the main entrance to restaurant.
2. Provide plantings along the edge of the low walls that separate the outdoor dining areas from the main entrance area with pavers to the restaurant; and consider removing some of the 2'x2' pavers in front of these low walls in order to provide more space for plantings.
3. The applicant should work with Kuhn Riddle Architects to help select and review the color for the exterior building walls. As part of this selection and review process, conduct mock-ups by applying small color samples on

the exterior building wall in order to see the actual painted color on the building wall in relation to the surrounding buildings and colors, and in relation to the lighting and shading of the restaurant building.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

March 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes – The Board decided to hold off reviewing and approving these meeting minutes until the next meeting.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

Hilda Greenbaum, 298 Montague Road – Ms. Greenbaum stated she would like to share her experiences at the Triangle Street roundabout. Stated the trucks tend to avoid this roundabout as they have trouble maneuvering around it. Stated West Street (Route 116) has a lot of through truck traffic so ample space needs to be provided in order for them to maneuver around a roundabout. Stated signs leading up to the roundabout to inform drivers who has priority to enter; however, often drivers cut off one another because they don't understand the protocols.

OTHER BUSINESS NOT ANTICIPATED WITHIN 48 HOURS:

ADJOURN:

MOTION: Moved by Ms. Marquardt, seconded by Ms. Schnarr, and voted 4-0 to adjourn at 6:35pm.

CATHARINE PORTER, CHAIR
AMHERST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD