



TOWN HALL
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DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
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May 8, 2008

DRB Memorandum #2008-4

Memo to: Bonnie Weeks, Building Commissioner
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
From: Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Subject: DRB Recommendations of April 23, 2008

The Wednesday, April 23, 2008, meeting of the Design Review Board began at 7:30 p.m. in the Second Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall. Members Kathleen Fisher, Janet Winston and Anita Licis were present, along with Senior Planner, Christine Brestrup.

Also present were Tom Davies and Mark Andrews, for Amherst College, Simon Brighenti, Attorney for Omnipoint Communications, Inc., Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works, for the Town of Amherst, Jim Carlin of Ace Sign Co., for Bank of America, and Franklin Wells of the Public Transportation Committee.

The Board turned to Appointments.

DRB #2008-00009, 101 South Pleasant Street, Trustees of Amherst College, Hitchcock House

Recommended Approval of the addition and renovation to an existing 81-year old residence hall, including relocated parking lot, universally-accessible site improvements, site lighting and landscaping, as proposed. The Board questioned the use of synthetic slate for the roofing material. Synthetic slate is being proposed because of the addition of solar panels on the roof. Maintenance people will need to be able to walk on the roof to maintain the solar panels and traditional slate roofing is not durable enough to be walked on. Mr. Davies assured the Board members that there will be no visible difference between synthetic slate and traditional slate.

DRB #2008-00010, 740 Belchertown Road., Omnipoint Communications, Inc., Wireless Communications Tower at the Transfer Station

Recommended Approval of the 150-foot tall wireless communications tower and associated equipment and fencing, at the Town of Amherst Transfer Station, as proposed. Mr. Brighenti noted that the chosen location for the tower and equipment cabinets is near "Cell # 1" of the former landfill, which will help to hide the equipment and the base of the tower. The tower will be a straight monopole without guy-wires. There will be five (5) equipment cabinets at the base of the tower, located on pre-cast concrete pads. The area will be fenced, with gates accessible to Town public safety employees, DPW staff and Omnipoint employees. There will be no lighting except for a small safety light near the cabinets. There will be no light on the top of the tower. The tower will be a neutral gray, non-reflective color. The tower may be visible from some parts of town. Mr. Brighenti noted that Omnipoint Communications would be flying a balloon at the height of the proposed tower in early May, for purposes of photographing its visibility from a variety of locations in town. The photographs will be presented to the Zoning Board of Appeals at a public hearing.

DRB #2008-00011, 1 South Pleasant Street, John Stiltner of East Coast Sign Advertising, for Bank of America

Recommended that the proposed new signs and banners not be approved for the Bank of America building.

Mr. Carlin, speaking for East Coast Sign Advertising, on behalf of the Bank of America, described the proposed signs and banners.

The Board found, under Section 3.2041 of the Zoning Bylaw, as follows:

Section 3.2041, 2), Proportions – that the large red, interior-lit “cabinet” sign proposed for the entablature is too large and its proportions are not compatible with the architectural style and character of the building;

Section 3.2041, 8), Architectural and Site Details – that the proposed signs and banners are too large, numerous, and obtrusive, and are not compatible with the original International-Style architecture of the existing building, will not preserve and enhance the character of the surrounding area, and that the details of the signs and banners do not blend with their surroundings to create a diverse, functional and unified landscape;

Section 3.2041, 9), Signs – that the signs do not reflect the character of the structure or its surroundings and are too large and unable to remain subordinate to the architecture and larger streetscape; and that the choice of materials, color, size and method of illumination is not compatible with the architectural design style of the existing International-Style structure and those of other signs in the surroundings.

The Board members noted that the size and design character of the existing signs over the front door and on the entablature are preferable to the size and design of the proposed signs. In place of the large red cabinet sign on the entablature, the Board recommended that there be free-standing blue letters, off-set from the building, with the Bank of America flag logo at one end and lights mounted behind the letters, forming a silvery background or “halo” around the letters and logo. The Board recommended that the existing sign over the door remain as it is.

The Board also suggested that the sign “Customer Parking Only” not be installed because it will attract customers in cars to the small number of parking spaces behind the bank, increasing the frequency of traffic entering from and exiting onto Amity Street and causing conflicts with pedestrians and the buses and other vehicles that use Amity Street.

The Board members also noted that they had received many negative comments about the building-as-sign design of the new Bank of America kiosk at the corner of East Pleasant Street and Triangle Street. Citizens had stated that the building, with its bright red roof, and large, bright red signs, was incompatible with the surrounding residential and commercial buildings and landscape and was not appropriate for the site. Board members were concerned that the new sign installation would have the same characteristics as the kiosk at Triangle Street and would have a further negative impact on local opinion about the Bank of America and its building in the center of downtown Amherst.

DRB #2008-00012, 202 North Pleasant Street, Duncan Ferguson of Ferguson Signs, for Prep Cosmetics

In the absence of the applicant the DRB members did review and discuss the proposal for signs at 220 North Pleasant Street. Since the applicant was not present the Board members chose not to make formal recommendations at this time. However they did make the following informal comments, and one of the Board members prepared a sketch showing a suggested sign configuration.

- The Board would like a better representation of the color pink being proposed; the image submitted did not realistically represent the color;
- The Board suggests that the applicant choose one color for the signs, rather than using both pink and blue; the Board suggested that the blue color was more compatible with and will read better against the colors of the building which are a beige or gray, with white trim and a blue door;
- The two different fonts proposed for the two signs on the front of the building were not compatible with one another; the Board suggested that there be only one sign on the front of the building;
- The Board suggested that if one sign is to be proposed for the front of the building it should be more clearly associated with the door that enters into the space that will be occupied by Prep;
- The Board suggested that there be one sign on the front of the building and one sign on the side of the building, both blue, both oval in shape rather than round or rectangular, with the word “Prep” in the center and the word “Cosmetics” in an arc along the bottom.

The meeting ended at 9:12 p.m.

Cc: Kathleen Fisher, DRB member
Anita Licis, DRB member
Janet Winston, DRB member

Applicants:

Duncan Ferguson, Ferguson Signs
John Stiltner, East Coast Sign Advertising
Simon Brighenti, Omnipoint Communications
Tom Davies, Amherst College
Carolyn Holstein, Zoning Staff Assistant