



TOWN HALL
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DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
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September 23, 2008

DRB Memorandum #2008-10

Memo to: Bonnie Weeks, Building Commissioner
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
From: Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Subject: DRB Recommendations of September 10, 2008

The Wednesday, September 10, 2008, meeting of the Design Review Board began at 7:32 p.m. in the office of the Planning Department. Members Anita Licis, Kathryn Grandonico, Lynda Faye and Jonathan Salvon were present, along with Senior Planner, Christine Brestrup. Board Member, Janet Winston arrived after the first appointment. Also present were Diana Stein, liaison for the Select Board, Barry Roberts and John Korpita, for Amherst Brewing Company, Jason Skeels, Town Engineer, and Walter Wolnik, interested citizen.

The Board turned to Appointments.

DRB #2009-00006, 24 North Pleasant Street, Amherst Brewing Company (John Korpita)

Recommended Approval of the proposed awning, with conditions.

John Korpita, owner of the Amherst Brewing Company, presented the application. Jonathan Salvon recused himself from discussions about the ABC proposal, since Kuhn Riddle had prepared the design drawings for ABC.

Amherst Brewing Company had submitted perspective views showing a new metal awning proposed to be installed over the existing outdoor dining area, to replace a canvas awning that has been in place for several years. In addition to replacing the existing awning, the new metal awning will extend south over a new entry into the restaurant. ABC is taking over the space formerly occupied by Mystery Train and plans to change the entry into their lower space as a result of this expansion. In addition to the new and extended awning, ABC is proposing that there be new signs integrated into the awning design to indicate to passersby where the entry to the new ABC space is located.

The Board members asked questions and commented about the existing and proposed awning, its supports, the brick columns and brick walls along the sidewalk edge and the supports themselves (why there were two supports in some places and only one support in other places). The Board members recommended that the applicant consider having all supports be double supports so that the entire façade reads as one unified design.

The Board members asked questions and commented about the signs and lettering shown as part of the awning on the perspective sketches. The applicant told the Board that the signs shown on the drawing were not exactly what he was proposing and that he hadn't yet worked out a sign design for the awning/canopy.

Mr. Korpita told the Board that the wording of the sign would change and the position of one of the signs would change as well. The Board recommended that all of the lettering on the new signs should be of the same font so as to present a unified appearance to the public. The Board also recommended that ABC consider having all of the lettering on the canopy be of the same color, again to unify the design. The Board members asked the applicant to return to meet with them once he had worked out a sign design.

The Board members asked questions about lighting of the area and whether new lights would be needed for the outdoor dining and the new entryway or whether the lighting would remain as it exists today. They discussed lighting alternatives with the applicant. The applicant told the Board that he hadn't yet determined what his lighting scheme would be. The Board members asked Mr. Korpita to meet with them again to present a lighting scheme once the lighting proposal had been worked out.

The Board suggested that wall sconces might work well under the awning/canopy and that a variety of different types of lighting would probably be necessary.

The Board asked about how to improve the visibility of the existing 3-D sign on the façade. They praised Mr. Korpita for having a beautiful sign and made some suggestions about how it could be made more visible to the public. Mr. Roberts, the owner of the building, noted that the applicant is planning to repaint the existing sign.

The Board asked about the color and finish of the roofing material. The applicant responded that the roof will be metal, with standing seams, that it will be gray in color to match the roof of the existing building and that the finish will be matte.

The Board members voted to recommend approval of the design for the awning/canopy with conditions.

Conditions

1. That the applicant shall return to the Board for review of the signs that are proposed to be part of the awning;
2. That the applicant shall return to the Board for review of the new lighting for the patio area and entryway;
3. That the applicant shall consider installing double posts along the entire façade, in keeping with the double posts that already exist along the patio area.

The applicant agreed to come back to meet with the Board on September 24th.

Old Business

Redesign of Intersection at Route 116 (West Street) and Pomeroy Lane (Pomeroy Village)

Ms. Brestrup showed the Board a copy of the Amherst Town Center Streetscape Design Guidelines Manual and noted that this manual would provide a good resource for the Board and the DPW in redesigning the Pomeroy Village intersection. Mr. Skeels pointed out that information in the manual was somewhat outdated with respect to the sidewalk paving pattern and the tactile pavers, but was otherwise up-to-date.

For the benefit of new members, Ms. Brestrup gave an overview of the work that has been done to date by the Amherst Public Works Department and by the Design Review Board regarding the redesign of the intersection at West Street and Pomeroy Lane.

Mr. Salvon presented a summary of the recent field meeting conducted by three Board members on September 8th. He stated that the Board had toured two legs of the intersection (north and west) and he described the high speeds of the traffic moving through the intersection. He noted that there is very little indication approaching the intersection from the north and west that a Village Center lies ahead.

Ms. Winston stated that there is a need for signs to tell drivers that they are approaching a business center. The views to the Village Center are blocked by a turn and a rise in the road when approaching from the north.

Ms. Licitis noted that there are other means (in addition to signs) to slow traffic and indicate that a village center is ahead. She referred to splitter islands and textured strips. She also noted that there are visibility problems caused by a rise in the road when approaching the intersection from the west. Mr. Skeels suggested that the Board look at the plans for the Atkins Corner roadway redesign with respect to proposed traffic-calming devices. He also reviewed the preliminary plans for Pomeroy Village prepared by the DPW for roadway and sidewalk improvements in the intersection.

The Board members discussed various options for traffic calming, such as signs on posts, signs painted on the pavement, reflective devices in the pavement and textured pavement. Ms. Faye cautioned that there was a need to be careful of visual clutter. Board members discussed signs stating something like "Slow – Entering Village".

Mr. Skeels stated that the existing streetlights in the village center are cobra-head style.

Mr. Wolnik mentioned that Rob Kusner, former Select Board member, was concerned about bike lanes. Mr. Kusner would like the vehicle travel lanes to be as narrow as possible in order to provide more room for bike lanes. The Board members noted that narrow travel lanes and the presence of bike lanes can act to slow people down.

Mr. Skeels stated that the vehicular signals and control box have been installed but the pedestrian signals have not been installed. He also noted that it would be very expensive to put the overhead wiring underground.

Board members discussed truck access to the Hess station and the fact that one of the entryways to the Hess station will be closed when the intersection is improved. Ms. Grandonico expressed concern for the operation of the Hess station.

Mr. Skeels stated that the sidewalk on the east side of West Street is proposed to extend to the 500 West Street "Courtyard" condominiums. There will be a 5' wide bike lane on each side of the road, the travel lanes will be 12' wide and the turning lanes will be 11' wide. The left turn lanes are very important for the function of the intersection. He also noted that, in some instances, the DPW has provided bike lanes that are narrower than 5' in width. A 2' wide "bump-out" on the sidewalk would be needed to provide space for benches. The sidewalk is shown at 5' wide on the plans. The property line on West Pomeroy, at the south edge of Slobody's land, is right at the edge of the parking lot, and a taking will be necessary to install a sidewalk or to do any other work there.

The Board discussed the issue of bus shelters, where they might be located and what style would be preferred. Mr. Skeels suggested that the Board look at the PVTA bus shelter in front of the post office downtown. He stated that it would be possible to do a slightly larger taking at the Sibie's property (south west corner of the intersection) in order to accommodate a bus shelter and that a bus shelter could be accommodated on the east side of the road by extending the island (in front of the retail building) farther to the north.

The Board members and Mr. Skeels discussed the possibility of installing a sidewalk along Pomeroy Lane in the direction of the South Amherst Common and along the east side of West Street, as far north as Crocker Farm School. In both cases there are streams and wetlands to be considered. In crossing a stream the width of the bridge needs to be twice as wide as the stream. In addition, land needs to be taken for replication of wetland resource areas. This makes stream crossings problematic.

Mr. Wolnik mentioned that Roy Rosenblatt, Director of Community Development, has been working on an affordable housing project at the southwest corner of the intersection (Map 19D, Parcel 287), behind the Slobody/Valley Transporter building. Street trees might be planted and other site amenities might be installed on West Pomeroy Lane in conjunction with this project.

Ms. Stein noted that any tree removal [on town property] would need to be reviewed by the Tree Warden and the Public Shade Tree Committee.

Ms. Licis stated that trees would provide shade for the walkways which are now very exposed to the sun.

Mr. Skeels noted that there is a sidewalk from the intersection to Glendale Road (to the south) and from the intersection to Carriage Lane (to the east). There is also a sidewalk along the south side of Pomeroy Lane east of the bridge over the stream. This sidewalk connects to the South Amherst Common. It is approximately one mile from Pomeroy Village to the historic South Amherst Common.

Mr. Skeels suggested that the Board aim for having 75% design plans ready by January or February of 2009. A set of 25% design plans could be shown to the public this fall. Mr. Skeels noted that the following committees and boards should be involved in review of the plans: Public Transportation Committee, Disability Access Advisory Committee, Public Works Committee and the Select Board.

Ms. Licis asked Mr. Skeels to provide the DRB with a plan showing existing conditions and another plan showing proposed improvements.

Ms. Faye asked how shade trees could be incorporated into the plan and noted that trees would be critical to the design. Mr. Skeels stated that, in his opinion, trees should be planted at the corners of the intersection and that tall, salt-tolerant trees are preferred, so that sight distance will not be impaired and so that the trees will survive. He recommended against small trees that bear fruit because the flowers and fruit attract insects.

The Board discussed a schedule of “next steps”. The schedule was established as follows:

- Wednesday, September 24th – DRB to work on its own (Mr. Skeels is not available.)
- Wednesday, October 1st – DRB to meet in the field to complete the site visit
- Thursday, October 16th – DRB to work with Mr. Skeels to develop plans
- Wednesday, October 22nd – DRB to meet again to discuss plans
- Thursday, October 30th – DRB to hold its first public meeting from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. to show the public preliminary plans and to collect public input (place to be announced)

Mr. Skeels will provide a clean plan for the Board’s use. Ms. Brestrup will ask Mike Olkin for a larger aerial photograph (1” = 20’). Ms. Brestrup will arrange to hold the public meeting in a large enough space – perhaps at Munson Library, Crocker Farm School or Town Hall.

The DRB will plan to give a Power Point presentation and have plans on Boards for discussion on October 30th. There will also be handouts at 11 x 17 or 8 ½ x 11.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Cc: Anita Licis, DRB member
Janet Winston, DRB member
Kathryn Grandonico, DRB member
Jonathan Salvon, DRB member
Lynda Faye, DRB member
Applicants:
John Korpita, Applicant
Barry Roberts, Building Owner
Carolyn Holstein, Zoning Staff Assistant
Jeffrey Bagg, Senior Planner
Jason Skeels, Town Engineer