



TOWN HALL
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002-2351

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
(413) 259-3040
(413) 259-2410 [Fax]
planning@amherstma.gov

September 7, 2010

DRB Memorandum #2010-9

Memo to: Bonnie Weeks, Building Commissioner
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
From: Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Subject: DRB Meeting – August 31, 2010

The Tuesday, August 31, 2010, meeting of the Design Review Board began at 6:30 p.m. in the First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall.

Design Review members Janet Winston (Chair), Jonathan Salvon, Katherine Grandonico, Derek Noble and Michael Hanke were present.

Also present were Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner, Reza Rahmani for Lit Restaurant, Linda Chalfant, Director of LSSE, Bill Gillen of Ford Gillen Architects, Joe Lucas of Graphic Impact Signs for That's a Wrap, Pat Boni of Saxton Signs for People's United Bank, Ron Bohonowicz, Director of Facilities for the Town of Amherst, and Kyle Wilson and Dave Williams for Archipelago Investments, LLC.

DRB 2011-00005, Reza Rahmani for Lit – 41 Boltwood Walk/23-25 North Pleasant Street (rear) – Review of proposed new double doors, new awning and sign

Recommended approval with conditions

Ms. Grandonico recused herself from the discussion. Reza Rahmani presented the application. The new, proposed restaurant named "Lit" will be located underneath Moti's Restaurant, in the space formerly occupied by J's Cuisine. The applicant is proposing to install two 36" doors, with a window on each side. The need for double doors is a result of Building Code requirements having to do with the use group category. There will be two additional points of egress on the side of the building across from Thai Corner. Lit is a separate restaurant from Moti's.

Ms. Winston thought that the symmetry of the placement of the doors between the two windows worked well.

There will be no lighting other than the two proposed wall sconces. The doors will have an oxidized copper surface.

Mr. Noble noted that the proposed entrance has a contemporary feel and he suggested that a more contemporary light fixture be chosen. The symmetrical entrance is good and makes the entrance look bigger.

Mr. Reza agreed that he could consider a new light fixture. He wants copper fixtures to match the doors.

Ms. Winston agreed that more modern light fixtures would be more compatible and noted that the understated logo on the awning worked well.

Mr. Noble offered to send Mr. Rahmani some catalog cuts on a more appropriate light fixture.

Conditions

- 1) That the applicant should consider choosing a more contemporary style for the light fixtures (wall sconces).

DRB 2011-00006, Town of Amherst LSSE – Community Field Comfort Station, corner of Mattoon Street and Triangle Street – Review of addition to existing comfort station and site improvements

Recommended approval with conditions

Bill Gillen presented the application.

There is currently a small (20' x 20') comfort station at Community Field. The applicant is proposing to construct a 7 foot addition to the north side of the building and reconfigure the interior. The building has a “low profile” and is not noticeable. The renovated building will have two handicapped-accessible toilets and a storage area. The existing building is concrete block, painted dark red. The addition will also be built of concrete block. There will be new signs to meet handicapped requirements, including Braille and raised letters. Glass block windows will be added to the façade to increase the natural light coming into the building. The roof shingles will be a dark color to go with the dark red of the building. There will be new lights in the soffit overhang. The building is normally open from the start of baseball season until the end of football season. It is not heated and is generally not open at night.

The site work will consist of regrading the walkway to provide handicapped access from the “kiddie pool” area. There will be no changes to the parking. Shrubs will be planted near the entrances to the rest rooms, for privacy. The walkway will be asphalt.

Mr. Hanke noted that the renovated building will be not much different from the existing building, but the existing color is a “dead” color that has no life. He recommended that LSSE consider painting the building a more welcoming color.

There was further discussion about the colors of the building. Ms. Winston recommended that students or LSSE participants be involved in painting the building and that they be encouraged to use creativity. She suggested that plywood panels could be mounted on the building, that the students could paint the panels and that the panels could be removed and changed from time to time. She also suggested that the colors of the doors could be more welcoming. Mr. Hanke recommended putting something on the doors that relates to baseball. He suggested the use of graphics on the building, possibly on a vinyl material that could be adhered to the surface of the building.

Mr. Salvon agreed that the existing color was not welcoming and asked that the applicant come back to the Design Review Board once colors had been chosen for the façade and the roof.

Conditions

- 1) That the applicant should consider using more welcoming colors for the building and doors, and possibly use some graphics that relate to the use of the field, both on the building or on the doors;
- 2) That the applicant should return to the Design Review Board to present information on colors for the façade and roof.

DRB 2011-00007, Graphic Impact Signs for That’s a Wrap – 23-25 North Pleasant Street – Review of proposed new awning with sign

Recommended approval without conditions

Joe Lucas of Graphic Impact Signs presented the application. The awning will be an internally illuminated black vinyl awning that will also serve as a sign. The lettering and logo will be made of translucent vinyl that can be read at night because of the internal illumination. The black portion of the awning will be opaque. That’s a Wrap is a “small town” franchise, with other locations in Williamstown, Dalton and Pittsfield. The proposed awning is typical of those in the other locations. The bottom of the awning will project 16” off the face of the building. The internal illumination will cast a diffuse light on the entryway. The awning will be the only signage for now. The awning is similar in size to the Ritz Camera sign.

Board members commented that the awning was an interesting architectural shape, that the graphics are appropriate to the clientele and that they thought that the internal illumination worked well.

DRB 2011-00008, Saxton Sign Corp. for People's United Bank (formerly The Bank of Western Massachusetts)
– 25 East Pleasant Street – Review of proposed replacement signs

Recommended approval with conditions

Pat Boni of Saxton Signs presented the application. The proposed signs for People's United Bank will replace existing signs on the former Bank of Western Massachusetts building at 25 East Pleasant Street. Mr. Boni described each proposed sign and gave its dimensions, comparing each sign to the dimensions of the sign that it would be replacing. In all cases the proposed signs are less than or equal to the size of the existing signs. The new signs will consist of blue letters and a red oval graphic symbol. The letters and the graphic symbol will be internally illuminated. The existing signs have "halo" lighting.

Ms. Grandonico noted that the colors of the proposed signs are a bit bright and she was concerned about their brightness once they were illuminated.

Mr. Noble and Mr. Salvon noted that some of the proposed signs seemed to be cramped in their new spaces. They recommended that there should be more space at the top and bottom of each sign to fit the signs better onto the building facades. Mr. Noble recommended that there be a 4 inch space between the top of the signs and the top of the building panels and that there be a similar 4 inch space at the bottom of the signs.

The Board members discussed mounting of the new signs. The letters will be mounted individually. The existing façade panels can be patched and repainted or replaced so that existing mounting holes do not show.

Board members preferred the darker colors of the signs proposed for the parking lot. Mr. Boni stated that the color of these parking lot signs is closer to the real color of the proposed signs.

Conditions

- 1) That the applicant should consider sizing the new signs to allow a 4 inch gap at the top and bottom of each sign so that each sign fits appropriately on the building façade.

DRB 2011-00009, Ronald Bohonowicz for South Amherst School – 1001 South East Street – Review of new front entry door and new parking lot

Recommended approval with conditions.

Ron Bohonowicz presented the application. Because of budget cuts, there was a decision to combine the East Street School facility with the South Amherst School facility. The combined facility will be called the South East Campus. There will be a total of 40 students at the Campus. This combination will save the school system \$180,000 per year. The proposed work will improve handicapped accessibility as well as provide more parking on site. The proposed improvements are two-fold:

- 1) Replace entry door – two 28" doors will be replaced by one stationary door and one 30" door;
- 2) Add parking – there are existing spaces in the center of the South Amherst Common that are used by people associated with the school and parking at the back of the school as well. Teachers use the parking spaces in back of the school. The proposal involves adding parking spaces on the north side of the building. The parking spaces may initially be TRG (trap rock gravel) and be paved with asphalt at a later date, when the town is doing other paving.

Mr. Bohonowicz stated that the existing entry doors are metal. The proposed entry doors would be insulated hollow metal doors.

Mr. Noble asked if the new doors could be glass doors instead of metal. Ms. Grandonico noted that glass doors would be safer because people entering and exiting would be able to see each other. Mr. Bohonowicz agreed to consider installing glass doors.

Mr. Bohonowicz stated that the haybale silt fence shown on the plans will be removed after construction is completed.

Mr. Salvon asked if a crosswalk could be painted on the road from the South Amherst Common parking area to the school to make crossing safer. Mr. Bohonowicz agreed that he would look into this recommendation.

Ms. Winston asked about space for outdoor activities and whether play space would be lost by the addition of parking. Mr. Bohonowicz noted that there is a large field located to the south of the school building where the students play.

Conditions

- 1) The applicant should consider installing glass doors at the entrance, in place of metal;
- 2) The applicant should request that a crosswalk be painted on the road, to make the crossing from the South Amherst Common parking area to the school safer.

DRB 2011-00010, Ronald Bohonowicz for Bangs Center – 70 Boltwood Walk – Review of new proposal to re-pave and re-landscape the pedestrian plaza at the west entrance

Recommended approval without conditions.

Ron Bohonowicz presented the application. The Bangs Center was an old school building. The front walk area was redone in the 1980's. Locust trees planted at that time are causing the sidewalk to heave, resulting in tripping hazards. Several seniors have fallen as a result of these hazards. Mr. Bohonowicz has worked with the DPW to prepare design drawings for a new plaza area in front of the building. Although the whole area is town property, the portion of the plaza from the curb line to the building is associated with the Bangs Center.

In preparing the design, Mr. Bohonowicz met with staff and seniors at the Bangs Center to find out what would work for them. The grade of the sidewalk, which is steep in places, can be kept under 5% with the new design. The purpose of the project is to improve safety. Most of the area will be poured concrete. The concrete will be slightly tinted ("sandstone" color or "beige") since bright white concrete bothers seniors' eyes. The concrete will be installed in 16' x 16' panels. The "dimpled" pavers are required for people who are blind. The benches will be similar to those installed throughout the downtown area, except that they will have more arm-rests to help seniors to get up and down and to discourage sleeping on the benches.

Ms. Grandonico asked if there were "ribbed" tiles with grooves for wheelchairs that could be used in place of the "dimpled" tiles. No one was aware of the availability of this type of product.

The trees will be installed in tree pits that will be lower than the surrounding areas in order to keep the roots down so that they won't heave the sidewalk. A wrought iron railing will be installed around these tree pits for safety. The tree pits will have raised edges, approximately 12" off the pavement.

Ms. Grandonico asked about the diameter of the light projection from light fixtures. Mr. Bohonowicz stated that the lighted areas will be similar to what they are currently. There will also be lighting under the eaves of the building. More sconces may be added to the building wall to improve lighting at the building. The brick edging that is typical of the downtown area will be placed on poured concrete channels to keep it from settling.

Ms. Grandonico asked about the choice of tree species. She noted that New York City often uses Ginkgos because they do not hide the buildings and signs. Mr. Bohonowicz stated that there is already shade from the buildings in the area and from the large tree at the funeral home. He would like to use a smaller shade tree rather than a larger one.

Mr. Noble noted that he liked the fact that Mr. Bohonowicz had spoken with others to get input about the design. He liked the slight change in pavement color at the entrance because it helps to define the entrance and he acknowledged that white concrete is hard on seniors' eyes.

Old Business

DRB 2010-00002, 43-51 North Pleasant Street, Archipelago Investments, LLC for Boltwood Place - mixed-use, LEED-certified building in downtown Amherst on the lot with Judie's Restaurant; ground floor retail/commercial with residential units above. Review of façade treatment and site improvements in accordance with conditions established at DRB meeting on November 3, 2009

Recommended approval without conditions

Dave Williams and Kyle Wilson presented new information on façade treatment and other proposed changes. There have been improvements made to the building and the façade since the last meeting with the Design Review Board. The interiors have been rearranged. The eight-foot setback from Judie’s rear wall is considered a fire hazard (a chimney) by the Fire Department and the Building Commissioner. This eight-foot space is being eliminated and there will be no separation between the buildings, except on the first floor. The rear side of Judie’s is being reconstructed to accommodate this change.

The interior stairs have been moved to the north side of the building. All of the units will have south or east exposure. All bedrooms will have exterior light sources. The units will each be about 1,000 square feet. Most interested tenants want two-bedroom, two-bath units.

There will be fire-treated natural western red cedar on the south and east sides of the building. The south façade will retain its warmth. The building will be sprinklered. There was discussion about access for fire trucks.

Multiple options were considered for the north and west facades in an effort to break up the façade horizontally and vertically. A fiber-cement product (Shera Splendid Plank) is being proposed. It will be used horizontally and vertically on the north and west facades. It resembles wood. It will be painted to match the western red cedar on the south and east facades. If western red cedar is not allowed on the south and east facades for building code issues, the fiber-cement product will be used.

The windows will be recessed, providing the illusion of a balcony.

The ground floor retail area will be smaller because of the new stair core and the plan to construct a storage area for tenants. The retail space will be limited to 720 square feet. The functional utility areas of the building will also be visible on the ground floor.

Ms. Winston noted that the applicants had done a lot of research and that the building looks interesting with the proposed new windows. She complimented the applicants on the subtle material and color changes and on revealing the functional utility area in the corner.

Ms. Grandonico asked about curtains on the south wall. There was discussion about whether the curtains would be supplied by the developer or by the tenants and what this would do to the look of the building. Mr. Williams stated that the developers would provide the curtains to give the building a uniform look.

Ms. Winston noted that a Mondrian-like [multi-color] appearance for the south façade might be interesting.

The windows will be able to slide open and there will be gates or railings to act as safety devices to keep people from falling.

Mr. Noble complimented the applicants on the resolution of the façade design.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Future Meetings Tuesday, September 21 at 6:00 p.m.
 Tuesday, October 5 at 6:00 p.m.
 Tuesday, October 19 at 6:00 p.m.

Cc:	Janet Winston, DRB	Reza Rahmani, Applicant
	Jim Wald, DRB & HC	Linda Chalfant, Director of LSSE, Applicant
	Kathryn Grandonico, DRB	Graphic Impact Signs, Applicant
	Jonathan Salvon, DRB	Saxton Signs Corp., Applicant
	Derek Noble, DRB	Ronald Bohonowicz, Applicant
	Michael Hanke, DRB	Kyle Wilson, Applicant
	Nate Malloy, Associate Planner	Jeffrey Bagg, Senior Planner