



TOWN HALL  
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DRB Memorandum #2011-02

**Memo to:** Bonnie Weeks, Building Commissioner  
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director  
**From:** Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner  
**Subject:** DRB Meeting – February 8, 2011

The Tuesday, February 8, 2011, meeting of the Design Review Board began at 6:37 p.m. in the Lower Meeting Room, Bangs Center. Design Review Board members Janet Winston (Chair), Jonathan Salvon, Michael Hanke and Kathryn Grandonico were present.

Also present were Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner; Duncan Ferguson of Ferguson Signs, for Studio E; You-Pan Tzeng and Hilary Black for 79 Taylor Street; Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director, Diana Stein, Select Board member, and members of the Historical Commission (Lyle Denit, Betty Sharpe, Lynda Faye, Jim Wald and Michael Hanke) for the Town Flag.

**DRB 2011-00013, Duncan Ferguson for Studio E – 9 East Pleasant Street – Review of proposed signs**

***Recommended approval with conditions***

Duncan Ferguson presented the application. Studio E is a hair studio that is proposing to operate a business on the second floor of the building owned by Laird Summerlin at 9 East Pleasant Street, next to the Carriage Shops.

The applicant is proposing two signs – window lettering and a sign over the doorway. The window lettering is proposed to be white vinyl lettering on glass, with no borders. Studio E's logo actually contains both gold and black along with white, but gold and black do not show up well on a glass window. It is important to have the words "hair care" and "waxing" on the sign because the name "Studio E" does not indicate what services are offered. The space is awkwardly located in the corner on the second floor and therefore two signs are needed to direct people to the space. The area of the window lettering plus the sign is less than 10% of the total wall area controlled by the tenant.

Mr. Ferguson noted that the tenant of the space below has too many signs and the façade looks cluttered. He has asked the landlord to have the lower tenant remove the banner signs to reduce the clutter. In response to a question, he stated that the plastic muntins in the window on the entry door are not removable. They are sandwiched between two panes of glass.

The sign over the doorway will be an aluminum sign with black "J" molding around the edges. It will have a neat, professional look. Mr. Ferguson noted that there is enough room on the sign to include a second name if the space next door (on the second floor) becomes occupied. Mr. Hanke encouraged the applicant to consider using the original logo on the sign over the doorway. The replacement design is not as sophisticated, he said. The proposed sign has 3 typefaces while the original logo only has 2. Even though the words at the bottom are somewhat unreadable, they are more attractive, graphically, than the proposed lettering. In addition, the gold and black of the original logo would be handsome. Other Board members agreed. The Board further suggested that the words "hair care" and "waxing" on the doorway sign be in black letters on a white background in the same font as the "E" in the logo and the words "second floor" be in white lettering on black background.

**Conditions:**

- 1) Use the original logo for the aluminum sign above the door, including the colors of white, black and gold;
- 2) The words “hair care” and “waxing” should be in black letters on a white background;
- 3) The words “Second Floor” should be reversed (white letters on a black background);
- 4) Use only two typefaces on the sign above the door, as in the original logo;
- 5) On the window, do not reverse the words “hair care” and “waxing”, but leave them in white lettering on the glass window.

**SPR 2011-00006/M7471, 79 Taylor Street, You-Pan Tzeng** – continued from January 11, 2011 – at the request of the Planning Board, review in accordance with Design Review standards and criteria, of proposal to create a two-family detached dwelling in the R-G Zoning District (Map 14B, Parcel 78)

Having met with the Design Review Board on January 11, Mr. Tzeng was returning to present the changes that he had made in his proposal, based on the DRB’s recommendations. He noted that many of the things that the Design Review Board had asked him to do at the January 11, 2011 meeting he had accomplished.

Mr. Tzeng noted that he had added a porch along the Taylor Street side of the building to bring the two parts of the structure together. He had removed the “walk-through”. The houses were now solidly together, he said. He submitted an image of the front of the house with landscaping. He distributed a new landscaping plan. He had investigated the possibility of removing the asbestos siding and replacing it with HardiePlank. His investigations convinced him that he could not afford to do this. Removal and replacement of asbestos has very specific requirements.

Ms. Winston asked how long asbestos shingles could remain safely in place. Mr. Tzeng stated that if they are not friable, they can remain in place for a long time. Mr. Salvon [an architect with Kuhn Riddle Architects] confirmed that asbestos shingles are extremely durable.

Ms. Winston stated that the addition of the porch, the frieze on the new structure and changes to the roof looked good and made the building fit into the neighborhood better. She asked about the addition of window frames for the existing building. Mr. Tzeng didn’t want to add window frames because of a fear of disturbing the asbestos.

Mr. Salvon stated that the changes were an improvement and noted that with a bigger budget, more could be done.

Mr. Hanke stated that the finishes still didn’t fit in with the neighborhood. The asbestos doesn’t fit in with the surrounding houses which are finished with superior materials. The additional unit will also mean more cars and will generate more garbage, he noted.

Ms. Brestrup noted that she had received an email (through Mr. Tzeng) from Dan Newberry of The Home Store which dealt with the issue of replacing the asbestos siding. Ms. Brestrup passed a copy of the email to Ms. Winston. The members of the DRB did not have an opportunity to read this email at or before the meeting. The information from Mr. Newberry showed that replacing the asbestos siding is complicated and has stringent requirements.

Mr. Hanke acknowledged that the massing of the revised structure was good. However, he wished that more could be done. The landscaping will help because there is no landscaping now.

Mr. Tzeng stated that he had a good management company.

Ms. Black referred to Plan P-1, the Site Plan. Students now park in front of the building. The Site Plan provides a bigger, more organized parking area. The addition will improve the neighborhood by making the site more organized and hiding the parking.

Ms. Winston asked about the siding on the addition. Ms. Black explained that the new addition was proposed to have 4” vinyl siding “clapboards”. The existing building has 7” wide x 4’ long asbestos siding boards. The rendering does not show a good picture of the asbestos boards. Ms. Black showed samples of the proposed vinyl siding.

Ms. Winston stated that vinyl is unattractive and shows dents. She asked if wooden clapboards could be used on the addition.

Ms. Grandonico asked if the paint on the existing structure would match the siding on the proposed structure.

Ms. Black stated that the siding will be chosen to match the color of the existing house. She noted that the cost of HardiePlank is 2 or 3 times that of vinyl siding. Mr. Tzeng noted that vinyl siding is long-lasting and low maintenance. Mr. Hanke stated that vinyl siding doesn't fit in the neighborhood.

Mr. Salvon noted that the landscaping plan has improved. Ms. Grandonico asked if some taller shrubs could be planted along Taylor Street, in the vicinity of the proposed dogwood and maple. Ms. Winston suggested that more screening, in the form of shrubs, be added to the west side of the new addition to screen the cars from the street and from the neighbors.

Mr. Salvon stated that he was pleased with the improvements that have been made to the plan, especially the porches and the massing. He acknowledged that the cost of replacing the asbestos is high. He stated that if the addition is "over-improved" it will contrast too much with the existing structure. He suggested trying to build a "decent, restrained" addition.

Mr. Tucker noted that some types of Barberry are invasive. He encouraged the applicant to choose non-invasive plantings, perhaps Blueberry in place of Barberry, since both have a distinctive reddish fall color.

Board members recommended that the applicant consider planting a large tree near the corner of High Street and Taylor Street. Mr. Tucker stated that a tree would be better than shrubs near the corner, since it would not block people's clear sight around the corner.

The Board reviewed the Recommendations from the January 11, 2011 meeting, acknowledged that some of the recommendations had been satisfied and some still needed consideration:

**Recommendations (from January 11, 2011 DRB meeting – updated February 8, 2011)**

1. Add a porch along the front of the building or at least over the entry doors to break up the flat façade and make the overall structure more compatible with other houses in the neighborhood; **DONE**
2. Add trim boards, corner boards and a "frieze" or horizontal cross-piece along the gable ends; **DONE**
3. Replace the asbestos siding on the existing structure so that the siding on both structures will match; **STILL RECOMMENDED**
4. Use HardiePlank or wooden clapboards rather than vinyl; **STILL RECOMMENDED**
5. Use Azek or wood for trim boards and corner boards if vinyl siding is used; **STILL RECOMMENDED**
6. Add more defined window frames and shutters; **STILL RECOMMENDED**
7. Make the connection between the two structures more substantial; **DONE**
8. Develop a landscaping plan for the property, including some large trees; **DONE, BUT STILL RECOMMEND ADDING MORE SHRUBS AND A LARGE TREE**
9. Replace the metal handrails with railings that are more compatible in material and style with the existing structure and the surrounding neighborhood; **DONE**
10. Study the window pattern of the existing structure and try to emulate it in the new addition; **DONE**
11. Consult an architect to help make the building more compatible with its surroundings. **DONE**

**Joint Meeting with Historical Commission – review of proposed town flag designs**

Mr. Tucker explained the timeline and process for flag design outlined by the Select Board, including the public solicitation of designs, review by the Historical Commission and the Design Review Board with recommendations to the Select Board and then a final decision by the Select Board. The plan had been to develop the design to a certain point and then send it to a designer [associated with a flag company].

Mr. Tucker questioned the turn that the discussion had taken at a recent DRB meeting when Board members expressed a preference to redesign the town seal and perhaps hold a new competition. He encouraged the DRB and the Historical Commission members to consider proceeding with the process that was currently underway and redesign the flag within the current process.

Mr. Tucker has asked local illustrator, Nancy Haver, who recently had an exhibition of her work in Town Hall, to give him a quote for redesigning the flag.

Mr. Tucker said that the expectation had been that there would be a set of recommendations from the Historical Commission and the DRB to the Select Board on how to proceed.

He distributed copies of a booklet on flag design. He also distributed sketches showing how the current design could be improved.

Ms. Stein stated that the design process had started last summer. The Select Board had publicized it. Scott Merzbach wrote two articles in the Gazette and Bulletin. The project was initiated by Representative Ellen Story, who was concerned that there was no flag for Amherst in the State House. The response to the competition was poor, she said, so she is not eager to go back and try another one.

Ms. Stein didn't know where the money would come from to design the flag, although she suggested that the flag company that she has contacted may have a professional artist on staff. The flag for the State House would cost about \$800 to \$1,000 to produce, she estimated. The Rotary Club may be interested in sponsoring the cost of a flag for the town.

The designer at the flag company would be likely to refine the design that we give them rather than redesign the flag for us. Ms. Stein showed a copy of an early town seal. Mr. Tucker noted that this seal was used to emboss paper and was not meant to be displayed in a larger format.

Ms. Stein stated that she supported the use of the book and plow on the town flag. However the current rendition of the plow was not recognizable.

Mr. Wald stated that an Amherst art professor had designed the carved wood town seal that hangs in the Town Room, in 1959. It was later voted as the town seal.

Ms. Faye noted the direction for the design should be "the simpler the better". The current plow is too complicated. We need a design that is simple, direct and clear, she said.

Mr. Denit noted that the original competition, which he had entered, had criteria including the use of the book and plow and certain words. The criteria would need to change if we are to have a new competition.

Ms. Faye noted that the criteria allowed for another design besides the seal.

Ms. Grandonico asked about the colors and suggested that we strive for a more agrarian design and color scheme and perhaps show the furrows that the plow was turning over, along with the plow. Ms. Winston suggested that the furrows could be placed near the mountain range.

Mr. Hanke supported the 5 rules for flag design contained in the flag design pamphlet and asked why the seal needed to be on the flag.

Ms. Stein said that the flag would at least need to say "Amherst". All municipal flags contain the name of the town or city. They will hang in the Great Hall of Flags and need to be recognized as coming from a certain municipality.

Mr. Denit suggested that Amherst look at the flag of California which has bold letters along the bottom as well as a graphic image which is recognizable.

Ms. Stein supports using an image than conveys a sky and a green field.

Ms. Sharpe recommended that the town have a designer prepare a flag design rather than trying to do it by committee.

Mr. Hanke stated that he wouldn't object to the use of a revised town seal on the flag if it were to be used only on the flag. He is concerned that a redesigned town seal will take on a life of its own and be used beyond the flag on other town installations.

Mr. Salvon recommended having a professional designer design a town flag with direction from the Historical Commission and the Design Review Board.

Mr. Tucker suggested that the group consider using another symbol on the flag, such as the weather vane on top of Town Hall. It is in the form of a pennant with an “A” carved in it. He suggested that we could raise money for a graphic artist to prepare a design.

Ms. Sharpe stated that the word “Amherst” and the date of founding need to be on the flag, but she was unsure about the seal.

There was support for the idea of using the weather vane, for using the book and plow and for incorporating an image of a mountain range.

Ms. Stein stated that the flag company had a “set-up” charge of \$80 and would charge \$276 for one standard flag. The more flags we purchase the less the cost is per flag.

Board members mentioned the names of artists who might be interested. DRB members will inquire among the people they know.

Ms. Stein stated that there is now no set timeline for designing the flag.

Ms. Winston stated that “we need to get someone to design something that represents Amherst in a way that we are proud of”.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:16 p.m.

Cc: Janet Winston, DRB  
Kathryn Grandonico, DRB  
Jonathan Salvon, DRB  
Derek Noble, DRB  
Michael Hanke, DRB  
Jim Wald, Select Board Liaison  
Jeff Bagg, Senior Planner  
Nate Malloy, Associate Planner  
Duncan Ferguson, Applicant  
You-Pan Tzeng, Applicant  
Planning Board members