



TOWN HALL
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DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
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May 4, 2011

DRB Memorandum #2011-05

Memo to: Bonnie Weeks, Building Commissioner
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
From: Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Subject: DRB Meeting – April 12, 2011

The Tuesday, April 12, 2011, meeting of the Design Review Board began at approximately 6:40 p.m. in the Lower Meeting Room, Bangs Center.

Design Review Board members Derek Noble and Jonathan Salvon were present. A quorum was not present. However, the two members who were there decided to proceed with the meeting, while not taking any votes. They did, however, offer recommendations to the applicants and to the permitting authorities. Also present were Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner, Leslie Arriola of the TCRC and applicants.

DRB 2011-00015 – Josh Breitner for Mango Mango, 61 Main Street – Review of plan and site furnishings for seasonal outdoor dining (Map 14A/Parcel 258, B-G Zoning District)

Recommended approval without conditions.

Josh Breitner presented the application. Mango Mango would like to place two tables and four chairs outside on the sidewalk, in front of the restaurant when seasonally appropriate. Mr. Breitner showed a photograph of the proposed tables and chairs. Mr. Salvon asked if the tables and chairs had been in this location before. Mr. Breitner stated that when Fresh Side was at this location it had offered seasonal outdoor dining as proposed. Mr. Noble and Mr. Salvon agreed that the proposal was satisfactory.

DRB 2011-00016 – Alvaro B. Ramos Jaco for Custom Made Signs in Wood, 233 North Pleasant Street (Carriage Shops), Suite 6 – Review of proposed sign (Map 11C/Parcel 278)

Recommended approval with conditions.

Mr. Jaco presented the application. The sign will be wood. It will be a “3D” sign, with a thickness of 3 inches. The colors will be black and white. The sign will be the approximate size of the existing sign for “Computers and More”, and will be mounted on the balcony, above the entry, in the same location as the existing sign. The sign will not be lit. Mr. Salvon asked if the 3D sign would show up better if it were mounted on a board. Mr. Salvon asked if there will be a sign on the door, noting that people who are walking by may not see the sign mounted on the balcony.

Conditions

- 1) That the applicant consider mounting the proposed sign on a backing board;
- 2) That the applicant consider installing a sign on the door, with a nice simple design, so that those walking by will be able to find the space.

DRB 2011-00017 – TMD Inc. d/b/a Olde Towne Tavern, 1 Pray Street (formerly Charlie’s) – Review of awnings with signs (Map 11C/Parcel 274)

Recommended approval with conditions.

The Design Review Board heard a presentation from Michael McLaughlin. Olde Towne Tavern is proposing to install three awnings, one over the entrance and one over each window on the west side of the building. They are also proposing to retain the existing (3) neon beer signs in the windows. The awnings will be lit from underneath. The awnings are proposed to have a maroon background with silver lettering and image. Mr. McLaughlin presented two designs for the awnings, one with an Old English style font and one with an Italic font. The Board members recommended that the applicant use the Italic font because it is easier to read.

Conditions

- 1) Consider making the stein larger on the awning over the door and move the letters “OTT” to the stein;
- 2) Consider putting the stein on the ends of the awnings;
- 3) Use the Italic font (Zapf Chancery ® medium italic) rather than the Old English font;
- 4) Consider using fewer neon signs because too much neon will take away from the appearance of the establishment.

[Note: The plan of signs prepared by Ace Signs, Incorporated, dated 4/14/11 incorporates the DRB recommendations for the awnings.]

Old Business

Proposed Town Flag – discussion of possible flag designer and schedule for flag design

Ms. Brestrup explained that members of the Select Board, Diana Stein and Jim Wald, had been in contact with well-known local artist, Barry Moser, to ask if he would be interested in designing a town flag for Amherst. Mr. Moser had expressed interest in this project, but had stated that he wouldn’t be available to work on it until the fall of 2011. Ms. Stein and Mr. Wald had asked Planning staff to check with the Design Review Board and the Historical Commission to ask if they would like to work with Mr. Moser on designing the town flag and to ask if waiting until the fall would be alright. Ms. Brestrup presented images of some of Mr. Moser’s work, obtained from the internet.

Mr. Salvon stated that he had no issue with waiting until fall and he was pleased that someone was willing to help us with the design. He noted that Mr. Moser’s work was very good and that it appeared that he could work in a number of different aesthetic media and modes.

Mr. Noble agreed that there was no hurry in getting the flag design done. The schedule was not based on the needs or desires of the DRB. He agreed that it would be better to take the time to have the design done correctly. He agreed that Mr. Moser was a good choice for a designer of the flag.

Ms. Arriola noted that Doreen St. John, a local graphic artist, had done the new logo for the Amherst Chamber of Commerce.

DRB 2011-00018 – Stacey Lennard for Youth Action Coalition, Amherst Cinema Building, 28 Amity Street – Review proposed mural for west side of building

Recommended approval with suggestions.

Stacey Lennard, Director of Youth Action Coalition, presented the application. Katie Richardson, Facilitator for the Coalition, Tabby (Tabitha) Klamm, a student, and Amilcar Shabazz, a student, aided in the presentation. Ms. Lennard showed images of previous public artwork that had been done by Youth Action Coalition, including an installation on the side of the block of stores containing Food for Thought Books. That installation is 45 feet long and is made with layered wood panels to create a 3D effect. The Coalition has also done a mural for the Amherst Regional High School, which is located in front of the cafeteria. That one contains metalwork as well.

She presented a pencil-sketch design of the proposed mural and three images of the mural as it might look on the west side of the building, in three different locations, one of which would overlap a vent. She stated that the mural would be about 80 square feet. There was discussion about whether this mural would be considered a work of art or a sign, based on zoning requirements. Ms. Brestrup stated that she had contacted Town Counsel, Joel Bard, to ask for his opinion on whether this mural would be considered a work of art or a sign, since it contains words. She had not yet gotten an answer at the time of the meeting.

The Coalition is proposing to create and install the mural. The mural will be painted on wood panels and will be mounted on a frame which will be mounted on the building wall. The Coalition has explored the possibility of using a type of cloth fabric and adhering the fabric to the brick wall, but the owner of the building, Barry Roberts, has expressed a preference for an installation that could be removed at a later date, if necessary. The cloth fabric method would not allow for removal.

Mr. Salvon commented that he liked the 3D quality of the proposed mural and that he would worry about adhering anything to the old brick wall. The brick may spall, among other things. The 3D mural on panels could be attached with screws to the wall.

Mr. Klamm noted that this mural would provide an opportunity to spread art around town. Mr. Shabazz hoped that it would inspire others to create art.

Mr. Salvon noted that if the mural is able to be removed, it could be relocated if the building is expanded in the future or if another building is built close by. The mural could be removed and relocated, if necessary.

The students and Ms. Lennard gave an explanation of the imagery contained in the mural. Among other things, they noted the following:

- An upside down Liberty Bell is included, with water spilling from the crack indicating new inspiration from the Founding Fathers;
- There are quotes from different people who are historically significant, with one from Emily Dickinson;
- There is a “rising political battlefield” in the lower right corner, with destructive forces depicted;
- The ground at the lower right dissolves into trash;
- The mural is in the shape of Hampshire County;
- There is an image of schools that need to be built;
- There are references to the movie “Pans Labyrinth”.

Mr. Salvon noted that the size of the text makes it challenging to read. Mr. Noble noted that there are different scales of perception and the closer you get the more you can understand. Mr. Shabazz noted that the words will draw people in to look more closely at the mural. Mr. Salvon suggested that the text should be bolder.

Ms. Brestrup noted that the work that is portrayed on the Food for Thought wall contains more uniform fields of color and that this makes it easier to read as a mural. She suggested that the pencil sketch could be transformed once the image becomes a mural and that areas that now contain many different shades of the same color could be simplified into more uniform colors on the wall. She suggested simplifying the graphics and the colors for greater ease of comprehension. Mr. Noble agreed that the pencil sketch contributed to the complication of the image and that once the image is painted, it will become easier to decipher.

Mr. Salvon noted that the relief will give the image coherence and will reinforce the formal themes.

Ms. Brestrup suggested using brighter colors rather than pastels, as has been done in the other Coalition installations.

Mr. Salvon suggested using variety and scale in the text, stating that this would draw people in to view the text more closely.

Ms. Klamm agreed that there will be more variation in the text, once it becomes part of the mural. The text will be stenciled or hand-drawn rather than typed, as it is on the sketch.

Mr. Noble suggested that the water at the bottom of the mural could be smoother and that texture in the paint could provide the graphic interest. He suggested getting the sense of movement by using layers of paint. He suggested making some of the inspirational quotes go upstream rather than having them all go in one direction.

Ms. Lennard commented that the left side of the mural is very well-articulated and depicts things that are going well. What is “not going well” is not well-articulated (on the right side).

Mr. Noble liked the fact that there was so much going on in the mural.

The students stated that they are trying to recruit painters from the High School, but noted that anyone can get involved in the painting. They want to get the community involved.

The unveiling of the mural will coincide with the opening of an art exhibit of student work at the Burnett Gallery in early June.

Ms. Lennard stated that there would be an additional plaque containing a legend and an explanation of the images and a statement about who created the mural. The Coalition will reach out to businesses for sponsoring. The businesses will get recognition on the plaque.

Mr. Noble noted that he liked the off-center location, over to the right side of the wall, thus avoiding the vent, however both he and Mr. Salvon were willing to leave it up to the artists to position the mural on the wall. They noted that the mural could bridge the joint between the two parts of the building.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:00 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
Josh Breitner for Mango Mango, Applicant
Alvaro B. Ramos Jaco for Custom Made Signs in Wood, Applicant
Michael McLaughlin for Olde Towne Tavern, Applicant
Stacey Lennard for Youth Action Coalition, Applicant
Diana Stein, Select Board