



TOWN HALL
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002-2351

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

December 20, 2010

DRB Memorandum #2010-11

Memo to: Bonnie Weeks, Building Commissioner
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
Select Board

From: Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner

Subject: Design Review Board and Historical Commission – Joint Meeting
December 14, 2010

The Tuesday, December 14, 2010, joint meeting of the Design Review Board and the Historical Commission began at 6:00 p.m. in the Glass Room at the Bangs Center.

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

Historical Commission members Jim Wald (Chair), Michael Hanke, Lynda Faye and Betty Sharpe were present.

Also present were Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner, and Nathaniel Malloy, Associate Planner.

Ms. Winston chaired the meeting.

Ms. Winston suggested that the group review and comment on the flag designs one at a time.

Flag #1 contained an image from the Police uniform of the town seal on a blue field. Ms. Faye commented that it was straightforward and fitting, nice and clear, and contained the town symbol. Ms. Winston agreed but noted that the image of the plow was hard to read and the images within the seal need to be of a contrasting color in order to read better. Mr. Hanke noted that most seals are graphically flat. This seal is graphically weak and a mediocre design.

Flag #3 contained an image of the town seal in black and white on a blue and green background. Mr. Salvon commented that this one had more “graphic punch”, but Ms. Faye noted that the shape of the plow is unreadable. She suggested changing the image of the plow so that it can be read. Ms. Winston noted that the symbol is unreadable if the people reading it are not farmers. Mr. Malloy said that a group of international students were able to recognize the abstract drawing of the plow in the town seal.

Mr. Wald offered some historical perspective. The current town seal was designed in 1959 for the town bicentennial. It became the town’s official seal two years later.

Ms. Winston suggested making the plow into a solid image, as depicted in Flag #7, making it more readable.

Members commented that Flag #7 was appealing but they did not like the background red color. There was discussion about using maroon instead of red, like the colors of UMass and the Amherst Regional High School. Purple was considered problematic because of its association with Amherst College and Williams College. Some members noted that they did not wish to use colors associated with the university or the

colleges. Members expressed a preference for blue and green, although maroon might be possible if it were the “right” maroon.

Mr. Noble stated that once the final design is developed the DRB and Historical Commission should look at it again to make further comments.

Jim Wald presented an image on his laptop of the Hall of Flags at the State House. Members noted that the flags were all displayed vertically, with their short ends parallel with the ground.

Members reached consensus that they did not prefer Flags #2, #5, #8 or # 6.

Members focused on Flag # 3 and discussed altering the shades of blue and green (making them bolder) and making the image of the plow more solid. Mr. Noble noted that the blue and green of this design could be construed to represent the land and the sky. If the seal were less abstract and the white band between the two colors were replaced or removed this might be a good choice.

Members noted that the image of the book and plow in Flag # 7 worked well as a more literal translation of the book and plow. It was stronger and clearer than other images. Ms. Faye summarized the members’ comments as follows: take the book and plow from #7, the colors from # 3 and the mountain range from #4, and use the mountain range as a substitute for the white band which separates the blue and green.

Ms. Grandonico expressed support for Flag # 4, stating that it depicts an idealistic place that people would want to visit. She asked if the flag were being designed for “locals” or “visitors”.

There was discussion of the plow on Flag #7 and the fact that it is oriented horizontally and vertically and not tilted. This orientation was preferred.

There was discussion about whether the central image with the book and plow should be contained within a circle, as shown in Flag # 3 or without a circle, as shown in Flag # 7.

All agreed that there were parts of Flags # 3, # 4 and # 7 that they liked. Ms. Grandonico stated that the image of the town seal as the sun looks inviting and indicates that the people like their community.

Others thought that Flag # 4 was too illustrative, that it was a nice image but not the quintessential “town flag”. Ms. Grandonico suggested that the yellow or golden color from Flag # 4 be incorporated into the flag design.

There was discussion about whether to include the sun’s rays and the members decided not to do so.

Members strongly recommended that a graphic designer be hired to put these elements together and that the final design not be done by a flag company.

There was discussion about the actual proportions of a flag and the members felt that Flag #7 depicted the actual proportions more accurately.

The members present voted 8-0 to approve the following recommendations. (Note that Michael Hanke is a member of both the DRB and HC, but only voted once.)

Recommendations:

- 1) The town should hire a graphic designer to prepare a final flag design;
- 2) The Design Review Board and the Historical Commission should have an opportunity to review the final flag design;
- 3) The final flag design should incorporate the following:
 - a) The book and plow as depicted on Flag # 7, because it is easier to recognize than the book and flag on the town seal;
 - b) The blue and green colors of Flag # 3, with the colors more saturated, to represent green fields and blue sky;

- c) The green mountain central strip from Flag # 4, either reading as a mountain range or as a dark green strip (a “conceptual” mountain range);
- d) The central area with the book and plow should either be just a book and plow with no circle, or a circle containing a book and plow similar to the town seal; the book and plow and/or seal area should be a golden color with a black image and lettering (if lettering is included), similar to the golden color in Flag # 4;
- e) The graphic designer should be free to work out the lettering “Amherst, Massachusetts” and “Founded 1759”.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:15 p.m.

Cc: Janet Winston, DRB
Kathryn Grandonico, DRB
Jonathan Salvon, DRB
Derek Noble, DRB
Michael Hanke, DRB
Jim Wald, Select Board Liaison
Nate Malloy, Associate Planner
Historical Commission members