



TOWN HALL
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002-2351

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
(413) 259-3040
(413) 259-2402 [Fax]
planning@amherstma.gov

May 24, 2012

DRB Memorandum #2012-05

Memo to: Rob Morra, Building Commissioner
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
From: Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Subject: DRB Meeting – May 15, 2012

The Tuesday, May 15, 2012, meeting of the Design Review Board began at approximately 6:35 p.m. in the Second Floor Meeting Room/Library, Town Hall.

Design Review Board members Kathleen Ford, Derek Noble and Michael Hanke were present for the first application – Trustees of Amherst College, 79 South Pleasant Street. (Mr. Salvon had recused himself.)

DRB members Jonathan Salvon, Derek Noble and Michael Hanke were present for the second and third applications. Ms. Ford had left the meeting.

Present for Amherst College were Chuck Roberts and Andy Grogan of Kuhn Riddle, Tom Davies and Kristine Royal of Amherst College, Jeff Squire of The Berkshire Design Group. Present for Arise Farm to Table Pub and Pizzeria was Emily Wadham. Present for The Mini Donut Factory were Keren and Nick Rhodes.

DRB 2012-00021 – Trustees of Amherst College – 79 South Pleasant St. (former First Baptist Church) – Review of renovation and addition to historic 1834 structure, including site improvements

Recommended approval without conditions

Mr. Roberts presented the proposal for the building. The building at 79 South Pleasant Street is one of the oldest buildings on the Common. The proposal includes renovation of the historic portion of the building and demolition of the recent additions on the north, west and south sides. The newly renovated and enlarged building will be used to house three non-academic departments plus the Five-College Language Study Program.

Mr. Squire presented the site plan with the existing and proposed conditions, including the sidewalk in front of the building and the bus stop. The area in front of the building will become a public gathering space with a new bus shelter and trash receptacle. A planter wall will be built to the north of the east entry to match the stone on the bottom of the building and another matching wall will be built to create a ramp on the south side of the east entry. The benches in the area in front of the building will be semi-circular. The sidewalk in front of the building will be rebuilt to match the sidewalks being built in the rest of the downtown area, with brick to match.

The entrance to the parking lot will be one-way along the south side of the building with handicapped parking easily accessible from the main building entry on the south side. Trash and recycling will be stored at the southwest corner of the property, surrounded by a stone retaining wall. There will be parallel parking spaces along the north side of the building, as there are now. On the south side of the building, the overgrown yews

on an adjacent Amherst College property will be removed, as will the porch on the south side. This will open up the views of the historic church building from the south.

Mr. Roberts noted that the planting bed along the south wall of the building will be set out from the base of the building to protect people from snow falling off the roof. There will be a walkway south of the planting area. Amherst College intends to restore the existing church building and construct an addition that is similar in character to the main building. There will be a neutral transition (transparent) area between the new addition and the existing building which will act as the main entry on the south side. Mr. Roberts termed this a “slot connection”.

The windows will be opened up to double-height. Currently there are small double-hung windows on the second and third floors. The head height of the windows in front of the building will be raised so that the natural light on the third floor can be increased.

The addition will have a similar rhythm and pattern of solid and void, glass and stone, as the original building. The material of the addition will be a thin-sheet stone veneer that will look similar to the stone on the bottom of the existing building, which is a type of schist. The stone will have the same tones as the stone on the existing building. The addition will have a lighter color stone veneer on the upper floors, to blend with the upper floors of the existing building, which are painted brick. The new addition is designed to blend with and complement the existing building. There will be a smooth finish on the veneer of the new building. The stone on the existing building has a rough hammered finish. The base of the new addition will have tighter coursing than the base of the existing building. The siding material on the new addition will change as it wraps around the west and north sides. The southwest corner will have a stone veneer. The siding will transition to corrugated metal on the west and north facades, where they will be less visible to the public. The renovation will restore the existing woodwork and patch and replace anything that is broken.

The windows in the attic will be replaced by louvers, similar to those in the steeple. These louvers will act as vents for the attic. The mechanical system will be on the roof, but will be set back enough so that it won't be seen from the south side.

The lights will be downcast. There is an existing light pole in the back of the building.

Ms. Ford observed that the design was well done and that she appreciated the proportions of the addition. Mr. Noble noted that he appreciated the modern intervention in the downtown. He is not concerned about the corrugated metal panels.

Mr. Hanke noted that this was the third time that he had seen the proposal, since he is the Chair of the Historical Commission, which has reviewed this proposal twice. He observed that the building will serve as a “bookend” to this part of town. The streetscape will be continued around the corner and the steeple will be framed against the addition.

Mr. Noble stated that the bus stop area is well designed and provides a formal gathering space. He also noted that the opening up of the windows in addition to the new front entry space will give a good impression from the pedestrian level.

Ms. Ford left the meeting and Mr. Salvon joined the meeting.

New business

Board members noted that Ms. Winston, Chair of the Design Review Board, had resigned recently and that the Board needed a new Chair. Mr. Hanke nominated Mr. Salvon as Chair. Mr. Noble seconded and the vote was 3-0 to approve Mr. Salvon as the new Chair of the Design Review Board.

DRB 2012-00022 – Emily Wadham for Arise & Drink Your Bliss LLC – 28 Amity Street (currently Tabellas Restaurant)– Review of new signs

Recommended approval without conditions

Ms. Wadham presented the application. Her restaurant, Tabellas, is changing its name, menu and price point. It is proposed to become Arise Farm to Table Pub and Pizzeria. The existing Tabellas signs will be repainted to reflect the change in the restaurant. As there are now, there will be a decal on the front door, a blade sign hanging from the ceiling of the covered walkway (over the door to the restaurant) and a sign on the building directory. The size, material and placement of the new signs will be the same as the existing signs.

The images that Ms. Wadham presented included a white or off-white background. She discussed the possibility of using a black background with gold lettering for the signs. The Board members were satisfied with either choice. However, they suggested that she think carefully about the way the light will fall on the signs, if she chooses to use black with gold lettering, particularly for the blade sign hanging from the ceiling of the walkway, to make sure that the signs will read.

Ms. Wadham is preparing for a May 24th meeting with the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Board members commented that the sign designs “looked great”.

DRB 2012-00023 – Keren Rhodes for The Mini Donut – 233 North Pleasant Street – Review of new exhaust hood on exterior of building and new signs

Recommended approval with conditions

Keren and Nick Rhodes presented the application. They are proposing to open a gourmet donut shop in the Carriage Shops, where the Verizon store used to be located. The new donut shop will require the installation of ventilation on the outside of the building. The vent will come out of a window on the south side. There will be a metal plate installed over the window. The hood is a small one and therefore the vent will also be small. In addition, the applicants would like to have a window sign in the large window facing North Pleasant Street as well as a small plaque sign by the door. The color of the signs will be blue and the font is intended to match from one sign to the other. The applicants presented an early design for the signs, which they intend to revise. The window facing North Pleasant Street is tinted, so the vinyl lettering will need to be placed on the outside of the window in order to be read.

Mr. Hanke observed that the window sign looked weak. The letters are too thin and will not be legible.

Board members considered the location and color of the exhaust vent. They asked about hours of operation and noted that the exhaust vent was proposed to be located near a walkway to the West Cemetery. They asked about noise.

Ms. Rhodes stated that the hours of making donuts were from about 5:30 a.m. to noon. After noon the exhaust vent would not be in use.

Board members discussed whether the exhaust vent should be painted in colors to match the building. They determined by consensus that this was not necessary. The metal color of the vent will most likely be compatible with the surroundings. However, if the applicants do choose to paint the vent the colors of the building wall, the Board members would agree to that. They suggested to the applicants that the vent be installed and the applicants could then decide whether they wished to paint it or not.

Conditions

- 1) The signs shall be brought back to the Board for review and recommendations when the applicants have decided on a final design. Colors and fonts of the signs should be compatible.

