

Montpelier Design Review Committee
August 2, 2005
Memorial Room, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Margot George, Chair; Stephen Everett, Vice Chair; Eric Gilbertson; Guy Tapper (left at 6:45), Vicki Lane, Soren Pfeffer
Staff: Stephanie Smith

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Ms. George who explained that the Committee had met at 89 State Street at 5:30 p.m. to conduct a site visit and was now reconvening.

I. Continuation of Design Review and Site Plan Review

Property Address: 89 State Street
Applicant: Applicant: Vermont Mutual Insurance Company
Zone: CB-I/DCD

- Code compliance alterations to main entrance
- Raising and increasing size of landing, adding two steps and modifying black pipe railing.
- Existing door to be modified to swing out

Interested Parties: Greg Lord and Kim Morrow of E.F. Wall and Diane Harwood of Vermont Mutual

Ms. George explained that the Committee had conducted a site visit where they asked clarifying questions and received a new proposal from the applicant. She said that the applicant would be removing the door sweep and would be extending the door to meet the threshold. She said that it was determined that the proposed railing placement would be narrower to avoid obstructing the view of the exterior posts. She said that a total of 5'9" is proposed from the edge of the door to the end of the existing platform and there will be three steps to bring the landing to grade.

Eric Gilbertson said that he had communications with the applicant as part of his job with the Division for Historic Preservation. He said that if anyone felt that he should not participate in the review of the application, he would not do so. Mr. Lord said that he had no objection to Mr. Gilbertson's participation. The other members of the DRC said that they had no problems with Mr. Gilbertson's participation. Ms. George noted that the applicant had also expressed concern that the Committee members' opinions might be clouded by the DRC's review of the applicant's previous application for the demolition of 22 Court Street.. She said that there was not much to be done about that since the majority of the Committee participated in that review.

Ms. George discussed the proposed length of the landing and expressed concern that it should be minimized. Mr. Lord said that the plan that had been provided was the result of discussions between the owner, E.F. Wall, Mr. Gilbertson and Chris Cochran from the State Historic Preservation Office and Mary Jo Llewellyn, a historic preservation consultant. Mr. Lord said that the door swing has been changed to eliminate the swing out. He said that the bottom of the door will be extended down close to the granite. He said that the proposed dimensions of the landing might be modified at the meeting based upon the discussion. Mr. Lord said that maintaining the integrity of the granite framing was an important consideration in the design and the proposed dimensions will keep the landing within that framing. He said that if the integrity of that framing will not be compromised, the landing could be modified. He said that a 5'9" landing from the face of the existing granite threshold is preferred, but the applicant could live with 5' from the threshold face.

Mr. Gilbertson asked whether the steps would be widened to match the landing. Mr. Lord said that was

proposed. He said that the proposed handrails will not be fixed to the building, but will be freestanding. Ms. Lane asked what would happen to the existing railings. Mr. Lord said that they would be removed. Ms. George asked for a better description of the proposed railing. She said that the Committee would typically be provided with the catalogue details for that type of element. Mr. Morrow said that the proposal is for a simple railing to meet the Secretary of Interior's Historic Preservation standards. He said that the railing will have square tube framing and a code compliant 1 ½" outside diameter round handrail. He said that the railing would be flat black.

Ms. George said that there was some concern about the width of the system and the location of the railings in relation to the posts. Mr. Gilbertson said that he had suggested a more narrow landing to reveal the base of the columns, but he later realized that a portion of the base of the columns was still visible. He said that the proposed landing width was acceptable, but not perfect. Ms. George said that the base of the column presently rests on the landing which rests on the steps. She expressed concern that the proposal is for the landing to butt into the column which will make it obvious that this is a new step. Mr. Gilbertson said that no one has any idea of what the step was like before the current one was put in.

Ms. Lane asked whether the holes where the current railing attaches to the building will be repaired after the railing is removed. Mr. Lord said that the holes will be repaired. Mr. Morrow said that Barre grey granite will be used for the new landing. He said that the applicant will try to match the color of the existing granite landing. He added that the existing landing will be re-cut and used for the steps.

Mr. Everett said that the wide width of the landing will meet the review criteria for avoiding hiding the architectural details. Mr. Pfeffer said that the question was a wider landing versus the obscuring of the details by the railings. He said that he thought that the wider landing would be better.

Ms. George said that the usual procedure would be to go through the review criteria and then ask the applicant if any changes would be proposed based upon the discussions. She asked whether the applicant wished to proceed with the modified size of the landing. Mr. Lord said that he would like to proceed on that basis if that was the preference of the DRC. Ms. George summarized her understanding of the proposal before the Committee. She said that the landing would remain at the present width and the new piece will be notched around the base of the columns to reveal the base. She said that the proposed landing length will also be reduced from 5'9" to 5'0". She said that the railings will remain in the present placement, but will not be attached to the building. She said that the holes from the current rail attachment to the building will be repaired. She added that the proposed change in the door swing had been dropped so that the door would continue to swing in.

Ms. George said that she was still interested in whether the 5'0" length of the landing could be measured to include the original threshold rather than being measured from the face of the threshold. She said that would minimize the change to the doorway and be more consistent with the criteria. Mr. Everett said that the landing length was acceptable to him as proposed. Ms. Lane said that it was better to keep it minimal, but the proposal will not make much of a difference. Mr. Tapper said that a minimal change would be best. Mr. Pfeffer said that it was best to keep the changes minimal, but the look of the stairs and landing in elevation was more critical than the depth of the landing.

Ms. George said that, while the building is currently used as an office, it is a house from a historic preservation standpoint. She said that the entryway begins to look less like a house as the landing gets bigger. She noted that State code includes variances for historic buildings. Mr. Lord said that the original proposal for a 6' deep landing was reduced to a 5'9" deep landing and the current proposal has been reduced to a 5'0" landing measured from the threshold. Ms. George asked whether the applicant could live with a further reduced depth of the landing if the State agreed with it. Mr. Morrow said that the change to the

landing was not discussed with the fire prevention people. He said that they accepted the door continuing to swing in, but said that they did not want to grant any variances related to fire code. He said that the applicant has done a good job of meeting all of the various concerns. Ms. George said that the State of Vermont is not asking the applicant to make any of the changes to the exterior of the building. Mr. Morrow said that the proposal was presented to the State as part of an application for a permit to do the overall project. He said that it was assumed that the door would be swinging out and the applicant went back to them with the change on the door swing, but did not discuss the change that Ms. George was discussing. Ms. Smith said that it appeared that the applicant was requesting that the DRC review the application as currently proposed.

Ms. Lane said that the existing railing has been there for a long time and it seemed that a residence would have a railing attached to the house like the existing railing. Several other Committee members said that was not necessarily the case. Ms. Lane said that the existing railing is minimal because it is only located at the top of the steps. She said that the proposed railing would not be minimal because it would extend down the stairs without serving much function. Ms. George suggested that the proposed railing might be simplified by reducing the number of vertical posts. Mr. Gilbertson said that it would be better to minimize the number of vertical members. Mr. Morrow said that the smaller vertical members could be eliminated so that the number of uprights would be the minimum number needed for structural support of the railing. Ms. Lane said that would be better.

The Committee considered the review criteria and recommended approval of the application by a vote of 4-1 (Ms. George voted against the application) with the following adjustments:

The railing will have no smaller vertical members except the minimum amount of support posts to make it structurally sound. The first landing shall remain the same width with the granite columns revealed by notching. The base of the column will be revealed. The platform landing will be 5' and the stairs will be the same width.

II. Continuation Design Review

Property Address: 154 Main Street
Applicant: Robert Hitzig
Zone: CB-II/DCD

- illuminated sign

Mr. Hitzig showed the Committee a representation of the proposed sign with the actual proposed lettering. He said that the sign will be hung on the porch. Ms. Smith said that the size of the sign complies since it is not a ground sign. She noted that the sign will be single sided. Mr. Hitzig said that the sign will be made of red cedar with carved lettering and gold paint in the lettering. He said that the pears will be made of white cedar, but he would like the ability to paint the pear gold if the contrast between the two types of wood is not obvious. The Committee and the applicant discussed the chain that will be used to hang the sign.

Mr. Hitzig said that a light will be placed under the eaves below the roof. Mr. Pfeffer suggested that the applicant might prefer to use a gooseneck lamp so that the lighting angle will be correct. Mr. Everett said that the proposed light is only 25 watts so that two such lights could be installed and not exceed 50 watts. Ms. George said that those suggestions could be included as options.

The Committee reviewed the criteria and voted unanimously to recommend approval of the application with the following adjustments and optional changes:

Adjustment: Black metal chain will be used to hang the sign.

Optional Change: One small gooseneck or two of the proposed lights may be used.

III. Design Review

Property Address: 5 Green Mountain Drive
Applicant: W. Paul Allard
Zone: GB/DCD

- Wall sign

Ms. Smith clarified that the ground sign was not part of the application because a new placard will be applied over the existing sign. Mr. Allard said that the proposed wall sign would be painted plywood with vinyl letters. He said that the sign will be centered over the entrance.

Ms. George expressed concern with the two 250 watt flood lights that were proposed. Mr. Allard said that he thought that was the smallest type of flood light available. Several members of the Committee said that flood lights were available down to 60 watts. Mr. Pfeffer asked why the lights were located at the ends of the building. Mr. Allard said that those locations provided some protection from snow. The Committee agreed that, based on the location of the lights, 75-120 watt lights would be appropriate. Mr. Allard indicated that change was acceptable.

The DRC considered the review criteria and unanimously recommended approval of the application with the following optional changes:

- 75 to 120 watt maximum flood lights may be used
- The sign lettering may be forest green

IV. Design Review

Property Address: 3 Corse Street
Applicant: Johanna Petersen and Paul Donovan
Zone: HDR/DCD

- Placement of two 100 gallon propane tanks with two-sided lattice enclosure

Ms. Petersen explained that, in addition to the proposed tanks, a change in the design of the piers for the house was proposed. She said that the entire heating system of the house had been changed and the tanks were needed for heat. She said that the tanks would be screened by lattice that would be allowed to weather to a gray color. She said that annual vines would be planted at the lattice. Ms. Petersen said that the concrete estimates for the piers came in high because of the need for custom-made forms. She said that, to minimize the cost, straight piers were now proposed instead of the previously proposed tapered piers.

The DRC considered the review criteria and voted unanimously to recommend approval of the application with the following adjustment:

The rear concrete piers will be straight instead of tapered as previously proposed.

V. Design and Site Plan Review

Property Address: 155 State Street
Applicant: Vermont State Employees' Association
Zone: CB-II/DCD

- Approval requested for changes made to previously approved site plan: Rear door, handicapped ramp, window and landscaping

Katie Boyd said that she was representing the applicant. Ms. Smith explained that this was an application to correct the permit record for an addition on the building. She said that the changes to the back of the building that required approval were a rear emergency exit that was added, a fixed pane window that was installed instead of the approved one over one window, the handicapped ramp design was modified so that it doubles back on itself and a light fixture was added. She said that the changes to the front of the building

related to the minimization of the number of shrubs and foundation plantings. Ms. Boyd noted that the applicant had planted twice as many cedars as were required along one property line. Ms. Smith added that a kitchen counter runs along the location of the rear window and that may have been the reason for using a fixed window.

The DRC considered the review criteria and unanimously recommended approval of the application with the following adjustment:

A light fixture may be added next to the rear door.

VI. Design Review

Property Address: State and Main Street

Applicant: Beverlee Pembroke for the City of Montpelier

Zone: CB-I/DCD

- Temporary banners for Montpelier's 200th Anniversary Celebration

Ms. Pembroke Hill said that the City wishes to place temporary banners where the artistic banners are currently hanging along Main and State Streets. She said that Paul Cochran was requesting that the banners be permitted to remain up through April 30 so that they will be in place for the legislative season and also to avoid the need to change them in cold weather. Ms. Pembroke said that a fireworks design would be added to the anniversary banners. She said that historic banners printed with old photographs of Montpelier would be hung at City Hall. Ms. Smith noted that those banners were before the DRC because they would have writing on them. Ms. Pembroke Hill said that the banners will be placed on poles along Main Street from the Drawing Board to School Street and down State Street from Main Street to Taylor Street.

The DRC considered the review criteria and unanimously recommended approval of the application.

VII. Design Review for Site Plan, Variance Request and Conditional Use Approval

Property Address: 20 Corse Street

Applicant: Kris Hammer and Nancy Chickering

Zone: LDR/DCD

- 8' x 20' sunroom addition on south side
- 12' x 12' addition on west side

Mr. Hammer described the proposed extension of a sunroom across the back of the house. He said that the existing perennial plants will be relocated. He said that the sunroom would improve the energy efficiency of the house and provide additional living space. He also described a 12' x 12' addition proposed at the front of the house.

The DRC considered the review criteria and unanimously recommended approval of the application.

Other Business

- **8 Bailey Avenue:** Kris Hammer said that the Land Trust had previously proposed to remove the arched window from this building and that application had been approved. He said that the proposed replacement window was too small for the window opening and he was now proposing using square windows that would fit the rough opening. He said that Mary Jo Llewellyn had written a memo in support of this. Ms. Smith said she had not seen that memo. Mr. Gilbertson said that, when he reviewed the original proposal, he thought that the windows would be the size of the opening. Mr. Hammer said that Ms. Llewellyn thought that the currently proposed windows would look better. Several Committee members agreed. Ms. Smith said that this discussion was not an application to the DRC. She said that there is some discretion for a non substantial change to be reviewed

administratively. She said that, if the Committee assumed that the width of the window opening would be the same as the arch opening, there could be some leeway for that type of review. Eric said that was his assumption and said that this is a minor change. The Committee generally agreed that the change should be approved administratively, if possible. Ms. Smith said that she would send the applicant a letter confirming that the change was non substantial.

- **Future Discussion:** Mr. Gilbertson said that he would like to have a discussion about views and vistas at some point in the future.

Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the July 5, 2005 meeting. The Committee voted unanimously to accept minutes as drafted. The Committee deferred the review of the July 19 minutes.

Adjournment

The Committee agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Smith
Administrative Officer

These minutes are subject to approval by the Design Review Committee. Changes, if any, will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which they are acted upon.