

Montpelier Design Review Committee
February 6, 2007
Memorial Room, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Margot George, Chair; Vicki Lane; Eric Gilbertson; Guy Tapper; and Daniel Richardson.
Staff: Kathleen Swigon.

Call to Order:

Ms. George called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. She described the advisory role of the Design Review Committee and explained the design review process.

I. Design Review – CB-I/CB-II/DCD

Main and School Streets

Applicant: Montpelier Downtown Community Association

- Installation of tree boxes, benches, landscaping and seating within sidewalk areas

Interested Party: Suzanne Hechmer

Ms. Hechmer described the application. She said the MDCA plans on planting a tree next to the light pole and installing two benches and two planters in the sidewalk area near the Banknorth building. The planter boxes and benches will be removable for the winter. They also propose changes to the sidewalk on Main Street in front of Brooks Pharmacy where there is currently a crosswalk. Delivery vehicles that illegally park there block the visibility of pedestrians. The sidewalk would be expanded into a bump-out at that location. This would be done with a brick-like substance similar to the way it was done in front of Capitol Grounds on State Street. The change should also help direct water to the drain to eliminate a puddling problem.

The application is also for the replacement of trees that are dead or dying. The trees are located within the City rights of way along Main Street and in front of City Hall. The crab apple trees in front of City Hall will be replaced when they die. Ms. Lane said the trees in front of City Hall should be replaced at the same time so they are symmetrical. Ms. Hechmer said the experts' advice is that the trees are not likely to live through the rest of the year. Ms. Lane recommended that a sitting wall be installed around the soil areas at the bases of the trees. Ms. Hechmer said that she did not believe that there would be funds in this grant for other improvements at City Hall.

Ms. George asked if the proposal included metal grates on the base and protection around the trees to provide some protection and increase the chances of the trees' survival. Ms. Hechmer said the plan calls for the installation of grates and the use of structural fill. The DRC members stressed the need for a maintenance plan in order for the trees to survive.

Mr. Richardson asked what kind of trees would be used. Ms. Hechmer said that the tree species would be based upon the Tree Board's recommendations. Mr. Richardson asked what the benches in the application were going to look like. Ms. Hechmer said they were going to look like all of the other City benches downtown. They would have metal sides and wooden slats.

Members asked if the planters were going to be the same as what is presently outside of City Hall. Ms. Hechmer said that an exact specification for the planters had not yet been decided upon. She said that they would be of a material and style that would match the benches. Ms. Lane said the planters should be of a sturdy construction if they are to be moved.

The Committee reviewed the evaluation criteria. The following adjustments to the scope of the project were noted.

1. The trees will be hardy deciduous trees recommended by the Tree Board, which will be protected and maintained both at the base and trunk;
2. The benches will be the same style benches as the existing city benches;

3. The planters shall be complementary to the benches and made of durable natural materials;
4. The bump out will be a textured concrete similar to what is placed in front of Capitol Grounds' on State Street, not stamped concrete.
5. Applicant can pursue a sculpture subject to an amendment of the application as an option.

The Design Review Committee voted to recommend approval of the application with the adjustments 5-0.

II. Continuation of Design Review – CB-II/DCD

169 Barre Street

Applicant: Michael McCarty

- Construction (partly completed) of a new roof and installation of vinyl siding on rear and sides of building.

Ms. Swigon gave copy of photos to Mr. McCarty. Ms. George said the DRC is going to discuss the construction of a new roof and the installation of vinyl siding on the rear and sides of the building at 169 Barre Street. The reason the DRC postponed action on the application for a month was so members of the Committee could look at the project.

Ms. George said that the DRC is now only reviewing the part of the roof over the porch. She said that the DRC had continued the application from the last meeting to allow the committee members to take a look at the building. She said that there had been some concerns about the look of the proposed pitched roof over the porch. Mr. Richardson asked how the sides of the porch roof would be finished. Mr. McCarty said that he would use trim material. Ms. George said that after visiting the site, she was concerned that changing the porch roof would not address the underlying structural problem. She described her concern that the existing negative pitch on the porch roof has been created by the heaving of the front supports of the porch. Ms. George said she talked with Soren Pfeffer and he had the same concern regarding the structure heaving. Mr. Gilbertson said that the photographs show sagging of the roof that might indicate that there has been a structural failure in the porch roof. Ms. Lane expressed concern about the potential safety risk if there has been structural damage. The consensus of the Committee was to strongly recommend that the applicant address the situation, inspect the structural members and conduct maintenance to ensure the structure is safe. Ms. George said she would list under optional changes that the applicant can replace the supports on the porch and do structural maintenance

Ms. George described Mr. Pfeiffer's recommendation for a low hip roof over the porch instead of the proposed pitched roof. She said that the rafters would have to be shaved down at the edge on all sides. That way the high point would be at the back where it would be less visible. Mr. Gilbertson said that hip roof is a common design that would create the desired high point on the roof without being highly visible. It was the consensus of the Committee that the hip roof would be acceptable. Mr. McCarty said he would be okay with the hip roof concept.

Ms. George inquired what the material for the roof would be. Mr. McCarty said he would prefer to use the corrugated steel material he currently has on the roof. The Committee indicated that corrugated metal roofing was not appropriate for a hip roof because of the need for a seam. They discussed alternate roofing material like half-lap bitumen.

The DRC reviewed the siding proposal. Mr. McCarty said he was going to use a light colored vinyl siding with yellow hues to match the existing paint color on the front of the building. Ms. George it would be very difficult to match the existing color. Mr. Gilbertson said vinyl tends to get dirtier quicker than paint does. Mr. Gilbertson asked Mr. McCarty if he had done any investigation into why the paint is peeling. Mr. McCarty said a lot of it is because of the condition of the roof. Mr. Gilbertson questioned whether the water was actually getting through from behind the clapboard and said that installing vinyl in an area where there is a water issue would create a situation that would promote rotting of the underlying wood. He said that the vinyl will trap all of the moisture within the building and it is very risky using vinyl siding on an older building like this. Other DRC members expressed concerns with the vinyl siding including the potential for causing rotting, the difficulty in matching the color and the tendency to attract dirt. A concern was also raised about the look of the siding where joints are

needed to match it into the wooden elements and details of the building. It was noted that vinyl siding is not common to the district. It was also noted that the photographs appeared to show that most of the peeling paint was on the trim rather than the clapboards. The consensus of the Committee was that the vinyl siding as proposed would not resolve water issues, could lead to the rotting of a historic structure, would be difficult to match to the color of the painted clapboards and difficult to keep clean and was inappropriate for this historic building.

The DRC reviewed the evaluation criteria. The DRC voted 5-0 to recommend approval of the proposed porch roof modifications with adjustments, but to recommend that the approval not include the installation of the vinyl siding.

Ms. Swigon told Mr. McCarty that if he disagreed with the recommendations he could go to the Development Review Board and ask them to review the application. She said that the Design Review Committee is advisory to the Development Review Board.

III. Design Review – CB-II/DCD

149 Main Street

Applicant: O.M. Fisher, Inc.

The Gary Home

- Replacement of all windows and relocation of fire exits.

Interested Parties: Michael Lajeunesse and Brad Lawson, Lajeunesse Construction, Inc.

The application for 149 Main Street is proposing to replace all of the windows and relocating the fire exits. The DRC members reviewed plans of the proposed changes.

Mr. Lawson said in conjunction with interior renovations on the 2nd and 3rd floors, the fire escape needs to be moved from the back to the side of the building. The applicant is proposing to use pressure treated lumber to construct the fire escape at the new location. It is pressure treated lumber. The Committee suggested that the wood be painted white. Mr. Lajeunesse agreed to the white paint for the wood on the sides and trim of the fire escape, but not the treads.

Mr. Gilbertson said he is concerned with the proposed gable over the fire escape. It is imitative of the original architecture and it would be more appropriate for it to be differentiated from the original style. It could also create an area where ice and rain could hang up. Mr. Lajeunesse said they could do a relatively flat shed roof. He said they could put a diverter on the roof to divert the water. Mr. Gilbertson said they could put a standing seam metal roof so they wouldn't have to worry about leaking. Mr. Lajeunesse and the Committee agreed that a low pitched shed roof with a standing sealed galvalume roof would be installed over the fire escape.

Mr. Lajeunesse said the applicant is going to remove 100 windows which would be all of the windows except for the ones at the gable end of the attic and the ones on the sunroom. The applicant is proposing Farley vinyl windows with interior dividers. The replacement windows would be installed into the existing window openings.

Ms. George said that the DRC has consistently recommended that windows in historic buildings in Montpelier be replaced in-kind. The only deviation the DRC has accepted in some situations has been for windows with a simulated divided light. Ms. George said that the in-kind replacement is the standard, and is something the DRC finds important in this case. The existing windows have a true divided light window. Committee members noted that this is an important building that was originally designed by the architect to have windows with divided lights and exterior muntins with visible profiles. The Gary Home is a prominent building on Main Street. The whole Blanchard Block was refurbished with simulated divided light windows.

Mr. Lajeunesse said the Board at the Gary Home would like to have the true authentic light. The only problem is the replacement cost would be about \$60,000 more.

Mr. Gilbertson said the existing windows have been in the building for 70 years, and they are not in bad shape. He said the life of a vinyl clad window is only approximately 20 years, and the aluminum clad wood is a better window but still not as long lasting as the existing windows. Ms. Lane said she couldn't vote for the proposed window replacement on this building since the windows are aesthetically important to maintaining the look of the building. Mr. Lajeunesse said the owners' complaint with the existing windows is that they allow cold air in and are difficult to open and clean. Mr. Gilbertson said he believed that there were kits available to modify older wood windows so that they will tilt out for cleaning. Mr. Lajeunesse said he would research the information and present the DRC recommendations to The Gary Home and their Board. He said he understood the DRC's concerns.

Ms. George said they could vote on the portion of the application that deals with the relocation and reconstruction of the fire exists. Then, the DRC would vote to recommend that the proposed vinyl windows be denied. The applicant can then come back with a new window proposal. Mr. Lajeunesse said the Gary Home may decide to keep what they have for windows and not want to come back, so the DRC should go ahead and vote on the fire escapes.

The Committee asked about lighting. There will be wall pack down lighting fixtures will be installed over each door at the new fire exit locations. Mr. Gilbertson noted that there will be fiberglass doors with true divided lights. Mr. Lajeunesse clarified that the doors would have simulated divided lights. The Committee discussed the treatment of the old door openings. It was suggested that inseting brick by ¼ inch or a wood panel to look like the door would be appropriate. Mr. Lajeunesse agreed.

The DRC reviewed the design review evaluation criteria. It found that the proposed vinyl windows were inconsistent with the evaluation criteria. Interior grid vinyl windows are not compatible with the design of the original windows and are inappropriate materials. The configuration of the windows is an important and significant design element in this building. It was a conscious design element to put these windows in. It is inconsistent with current applications of design review standards and the appearance.

The application for the relocation and reconstruction of the fire exits was unanimously recommended for approval by the DRC, while the replacement of the windows in the building was recommended for denial.

Minutes:

January 2nd and 16th minutes of the Design Review Committee were approved.

Adjournment:

The DRC adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Swigon
Administrative Officer

Transcribed and prepared by:

Joan Clack,
Clerk & Treasurer's Office