

Montpelier Design Review Committee
August 10, 2010
City Council Chambers, City Hall

Approved

Present: Stephen Everett, Chair; James Duggan, Vice Chair; Eric Gilbertson, Kate Coffey, Jay White and Steven Burkholder.
Staff: Clancy DeSmet, Planning & Zoning Administrator

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Stephen Everett, Chair, at 5:30 P.M. Mr. Everett explained that the Montpelier Design Review Committee is advisory to the Development Review Board.

I. 64 Main Street – CB-I/DCD

Applicant: One More Time – Leslie Rabins

Owner: Stephen Lewinstein

Sign.

Interested Party: Steve Miller

Mr. Miller said the lettering in the center they made out of the same $\frac{3}{4}$ inch MDO plywood which is standard material for cutout letters. The sculpted pieces will be made out of polyester resin fiberglass which is the same materials used to make canoes. Mr. Miller showed color samples to the DRC.

Mr. White asked what color the shoe would be.

Ms. Rabins replied the shoe would be red. The chair would be a straw color.

Mr. Duggan said the Committee has already discussed at one point in the past that the sign band is actually larger than Cityscape allows for. He likes the cutout letters and having some icons present, but this is one huge sign. He wonders how that works with the stipulations in Cityscape or in the sign ordinance.

Mr. DeSmet said in Cityscape it shows a 2' x 6' sign band, but there are buildings with larger and smaller signs. From an area standpoint it is larger than the permitted sign. The application says it is 4' x 59".

Mr. Miller said some of the letters are joined together because they run into each other, but each item is a separate piece and they are using the sign band for the background.

Mr. White said there are two storefronts here and they are treating it as one storefront and as a result the sign is huge. It is one sign band, but architecturally it is two storefronts. It used to be two stores.

Mr. Everett asked what the sign limitation was.

Mr. DeSmet replied it is greater of 50 square feet or 2 square feet per linear foot of lot frontage.

Mr. Miller said although you can say it is a 4 foot band there isn't much they can do about the fact that there is 4 inches of trim around the entire sign. That is existing. They aren't doing anything with that. They are working entirely within a 40 inch segment and there are big gaps all the way across.

Mr. Duggan said he is suggesting they could bring some of the things in a little closer and it might enhance the design a little bit. We have a noncompliant sign band. He isn't suggesting they change or alter the sign band.

Mr. Gilbertson said the dress extends into the border. That may be just a graphic issue. The chair is touching the border. If they were scaled down it would help him and the letters could be brought in a little to create a little more space. He thinks they would be more legible that way.

Mr. Everett said from the sidewalk or the traveled lane the letters are too large for that scale.

Mr. DeSmet said it is an “or” statement on the sign band. It either has to conform to the existing architecture, which is a larger sign band than normal, or it should be no more than 2’ x 6”. It can be larger to a certain extent, but there are area limitations that this body can’t permit. It is either 50 square feet or 2 square feet per storefront.

Mr. White said he thinks there could be a sign compromise here because the sign band is overly big. Likewise, if the signs were applied to it was too small they would be too small. From a graphics point of view his feeling is that if the “One More Time” was about 75 percent of its current size shown and had smaller but more of the applied graphics without so much space in between so there would be more information on the sign, then the scale of it would be more comfortable with what is displayed in the store and what the other storefront sign bands are.

Mr. Miller said they have a 60 foot band and a 27 foot sign, and then there are little symbols. It isn’t exactly a sign. These are decorative elements.

Mr. DeSmet replied it’s a sign.

Mr. Miller said they have worked on this for months and now this goes against everything they have read in the book.

Mr. DeSmet said when he looked at what their application said it said 48 inches by 59 feet for the total area of the sign. That’s 236 square feet. That’s significantly larger than the ordinance permits. When he interpreted the application it was interpreted as the whole band being part of the application so that would be included in the total sign area. He needs to calculate it based on covering the whole thing, or calculate it based on the area of each letter.

Mr. Gilbertson said he would just square off the dress because it is too big graphically because it hangs over the top of the band and hangs over the bottom of the band. If they just squared those off and figured out the square feet he would be happy.

Mr. Everett said it would also help if they brought some of the graphics in closer to the sign to group it more. Spread out over the whole thing you don’t see it as well. From the sidewalk and from the street driving by the lettering is too large for that distance.

Mr. Miller said the capital letters are about 36 inches high but the other ones are considerably smaller. This is what it is going to look like.

Mr. White said he doesn’t think it has good proportions like it is. It would have better proportions if the letters were a little smaller and the graphics were a little smaller, and there were more graphics so they wouldn’t have so much void space between the decorative parts so the whole thing would dance across the whole storefront.

Ms. Rabins said it is good to have white space like in an ad. Less is more.

Mr. White said it isn't a good set of proportions as it is. Maybe if the three on each side were grouped together a little more so there was a wider space.

Mr. Gilbertson said there is a huge sign band and they are crowding it with this.

Mr. Everett said the set of criteria they have to judge the application by is the harmony of the design which includes size, lettering, etc. with all of the other signs on the street, and this sign is larger than anything else on the whole street. Not in terms of just its width but in terms of its lettering. There is no sign in town that is three feet high anywhere.

Mr. Miller said he looks at the sign bands which were intended to be used as sign bands and sees little miniature signs stuck in them and they look little.

Mr. Everett said all of the signs approved were the ones submitted by the applicant.

Mr. White said they almost never deny a sign that has been proposed. This would be one of the first ones he wouldn't be able to vote for because of the graphics on it. He thinks he will be within the ordinance on the quantity of the letters. His concern is the aesthetics of the sign and the proportions and balance of it.

Mr. Duggan said maybe we should table this until they get the information.

Mr. Gilbertson said if they draw a square around each one of their words or symbols and call that the sign it would make him happy. He does think it has to be smaller.

Mr. Everett said there should be more exposure around that. The graphics are too large in relation to the height of the sign.

Mr. DeSmet said the graphics can't go outside of the sign band.

Mr. Everett added he doubted they would receive approval for 36 inch letters.

Mr. Miller said if he takes the length of the elements together and add up the elements times the 40 inches it comes to 125.4 square feet, which is dealing with this as a single block.

Mr. White said if that same proportion was 75 percent smaller it would look better and pop out more if there was more space above and below the words "One More Time." If it was shrunk down just a little bit more it would look better.

Mr. Everett said Cool Jewels was 24 inches and it was decided it was too large.

Mr. DeSmet read how the area is calculated. It's the complete face, but when you have cut out letters or symbols for signs made of cutout letters the sign area shall be computed by taking the area enclosed within the smallest rectangle needed to completely encompass all letters, including vertical and horizontal space in between letters. The sign is too big.

Mr. Duggan said a better approach might be to take it proportionately rather than trying to fit the criteria so they might be a little fewer than 118 but have the letters in proportion to the relative area they are within and bringing some of the stuff closer to it and leaving more space at the ends.

Mr. White asked why they wanted such a huge sign. He doesn't have a problem with the size of the sign band. His whole problem is to get it to look as good as possible and it would look better if there was more

space above and below the words than what they currently have. Shrinking it so there is more space above and below the words probably would get it to be within the proportions and much easier to get approved.

Ms. Rabins said they could shrink it a little bit.

Mr. White suggested they come back with another graphic that shows the letters and details a little smaller and also with the exact colors. Complete the application with all of the pieces of it together. It could work if it is a little bit smaller.

Mr. Miller said the sketches are all drawn by hand. To shrink it down by a percentage would be very easy to accomplish because he could calculate what it would be and make them that size.

Mr. Duggan said he assumes they are trying to have their sign centered over the door. The text fitting a little more compactly would read a little better. They are suggesting taking the letters and bringing them in a little bit.

Mr. Gilbertson said the easiest thing would be to redraw it because he would like to understand completely what he is voting on. He would move the DRC table the application and he can work on the revisions.

Mr. White said he could take this sketch to a copy machine and reduce it to about 80 percent and that would give the DRC and the Development Review Board a better sense of what the final proportions are going to be, and then just note what colors go where.

Mr. Everett said they should know the specific color of each graphic as well and come back with a different scale.

Mr. Duggan asked how they plan on attaching the sculptures.

Mr. Miller said he is going to be molding. They will be screwed directly into the board.

Mr. White seconded the motion to table the application. The motion was passed unanimously.

II. 144 Elm Street – HDR/DCD

Applicant/Owner – Resurrection Baptist Church

Replace 9 windows.

Interested Parties: Roger McManus, Trustee, and Rick Kesterson, Pastor of Resurrection Baptist Church.

Mr. McManus said they would like to replace 9 windows and the associated storm windows with double pane vinyl clad windows.

Mr. Gilbertson asked them to tell the DRC why they wanted to do that.

Mr. Kesterson said most of the windows are either cracked or broken. The window sashes are bad. Some of the windows aren't even operable. For the front they have solid glass

panels to put over them. The cold air just blows through and they even have plastic on the inside. Their heating bill is over \$15,000 a year so they are trying to get their heating costs down, and the only place left is the windows. They made an application to get their front doors replaced. They don't have the money to do the other two floors so the second year they will do the second floor and the third year the third floor.

Mr. DeSmet added it isn't in the file but it is on the National Register.

Mr. Duggan asked if they had an energy audit done.

Mr. Kesterson said almost all of the building is insulated now. They worked on the attic this year and on the third floor.

Ms. Coffey asked what the insulation in the walls was.

Mr. Kesterson replied it is sprayed in foam and was done years ago.

Mr. Coffey asked if the windows that won't open are because they are painted shut.

Mr. Kesterson said there are a number of reasons. Even the ropes of the metal weights are broken on all of the windows. To fix them they would have to totally dismantle everything and start from scratch and just the cost for replacing the materials is staggering.

Mr. Duggan said there are actually some studies that suggest that it is more cost effective to repair the windows than to replace them. All of the stuff he has mentioned can be repaired.

Mr. Kesterson said he has a hard time believing that single pane windows with a storm window over the top is as energy efficient as insulated argon gas filled windows. Every building code in the country when you build new homes they make you put in insulated glass.

Mr. Duggan replied those are new buildings which are designed differently than some of the older buildings. Just to be an advocate for the repair rather than the replacement even putting in a replacement window you are still putting glass in, and even though it is insulated you are not gaining a whole lot of insulating value beyond what a single pane wooden sash with a properly fitted and air sealed storm window will get you. The second issue is his choice of replacement in that vinyl windows are not a suitable replacement for the wooden windows. The vinyl has a lot more expansion and contraction. They typically have problems that deal with the insulating glass. When that seal goes they have to replace the entire unit rather than fix parts that might need maintenance periodically in a wooden window. He would encourage them to repair rather than replace, but if they are stuck on replacing he would suggest a different product or different window.

Mr. Kesterson said he made a mistake. The church looked at the cost and decided on this one. He is new to the review process here in Montpelier and ordered the windows. Before anyone caught it the windows were already made so they couldn't cancel the order. They are paid for and are sitting on the porch. For the second and third floor they will look at other options and do other things, but they are stuck with \$1,800 worth of windows sitting there which are custom made.

Mr. Gilbertson asked if it was just the sash they were replacing or the whole window.

Mr. Kesterson replied it is the whole unit.

Mr. Gilbertson asked how he was dealing with the trim on the outside.

Mr. Kesterson said they aren't touching it. It's just the sash.

Mr. Gilbertson said that might not cure their draft problems just because of the pockets on either side.

Mr. Kesterston said he planned on taking the inside trim off and shanking all of the windows around the sides and get them finished where the insulation didn't get to.

Mr. Gilbertson said for the windows on the side that are 2 over 2's, are they being replaced? How are the dividers?

Mr. Kesterston said the dividers are just sit on the glass.

Ms. Coffey said it says they are between the glass which doesn't give the profile of the shadow line.

Mr. White said they have not approved those before. In the past the Committee some have agreed to replacement windows if they maintain the proportions and shadow lines of the original windows, meaning the mullion would be exposed on the outside of the glass. They have not approved any windows where the grill is either a fake grill inside the glass or between the panes of glass. The ordinance doesn't really allow them to approve a duplicate or replacement window that doesn't have the shadow lines of the original windows in the Design District.

Mr. Kesterston said they haven't ordered the grills yet. Some windows needed grills and some didn't. The three in the front don't have grills in them at all and the rest of them do. The piece they are getting will fit on the outside of the glass so it maintains the shadow.

Mr. White said they ordered all of the windows 1 over 1 with the idea they would be attaching the grill piece.

Mr. Duggan said separate stand alone grills usually go on the inside. He understands his predicament but he doesn't feel he could vote for the windows himself. Would they be willing to unload these windows and order more appropriate replacement windows? Is that an option they would be willing to entertain?

Mr. Kesterston replied they are such custom windows he doubts it.

Mr. White said it is unfortunate they ordered the windows before the review process even began. The problem they have approving windows because they are already ordered sets a precedent that shouldn't happen. He would encourage him to either repair the windows as James suggested, which would be less expensive and give you a better result if the sash is relatively good. If the sash is bad he doesn't have a problem replacing the windows with something like the Marvin Integrity line that actually has a simulated divided light meaning the insulated glass is clear through but the divider actually protrudes beyond the face of the interior and exterior. Being fiberglass windows instead of a vinyl window it will also last substantially longer. The vinyl window is a short term fix. They are probably looking at a maximum of 10 to 15 years at the most in this climate with a vinyl window because the expansion and contraction is so great in Vermont it just won't hold up. They are likely to find that the insulated glass will lose its seal and it won't be too long before the glass becomes cloudy and dim. In the long term you may find you wished you had spent a little bit more money and got a proper window for the climate. This is not the right choice for their church.

Mr. Everett said the ultraviolet light does play havoc with the vinyl over time.

Mr. Gilbertson said the vinyl splits on the miters on the corners and water gets in and rots the wood because it can't get out.

Mr. Everett said the Farley's are a solid vinyl. There is no wood at all. Did they get these through Allen Lumber Company?

Mr. Kesterston replied yes.

Mr. Everett asked if they came and measured them for them.

Mr. Kesterston said he measured them. They are special fit. He has been doing this for a long time.

Mr. Gilbertson said nowhere in their literature is the word “vinyl” mentioned.

Mr. Kesterston said what surprised him was how heavy the windows are.

Mr. Duggan said there is insulation in the glass, but what is there in the hollow vinyl? What do they have to keep the cold air out?

Mr. Kesterston said that is where the separate tubes are.

Mr. White said dead air space is a fairly good insulator. If you can restore the window and keep the sash cords a lot of people say you need to foam that cavity. If you can seal the inside and outside trim so you create a dead air space then it becomes insulating as well. Does this window have the efficiency where it would be allowed for a tax credit if it was a taxable institution putting it in like a house? It doesn't say that here.

Mr. Everett said the DRC can review the criteria or just do a straw vote based on what has been presented so far. He knows there are some concerns about the materials used, particularly on a building that is on the Historical Register. Are there storm windows on these, or were there?

Mr. Kesterston said they go up every winter. They are the wood frame with the solid sheet of glass, and it takes two or three people to set them up on ladders. It's an all-day affair just putting the storm windows up on the first floor.

Mr. White said it seems according to the profiles this is designed to be a replacement window so there is a frame within a frame so the total amount of glass size would be narrower.

Mr. Kesterston said they are talking about an inch and a half around the parameters which they are losing for the frame.

Mr. White said they are talking about 3 inches of vinyl around it.

Mr. Gilbertson said that is a significant reduction in the size of the window.

Mr. White said it is supposed to look like the old windows but it really doesn't. It's going to look much heavier than the existing windows do. The bay windows are really quite nice, and he is concerned if they put a 3 inch frame around all of those will significantly change proportions.

Mr. Kesterston said the bay windows are 19 ½ x 77.

Mr. Gilbertson said if they are changing it from 19 ½ to 16 that will make the window look really scrunched up and the frame will look big.

Mr. Everett suggested they go through the criteria or just do a quick straw poll around the table to find out members' reactions.

Mr. Duggan said he would vote no.

Ms. Coffey said she didn't believe the application meets the criteria for approval.

Mr. Everett added he would vote no.

Mr. Gilbertson said he would vote no and feels bad they have ordered the windows. It is unfortunate.

Mr. White said he would vote no.

Mr. Kesterston said he would like to say he saw a lot of vinyl windows on his walk down to the meeting.

Mr. Gilbertson said these windows were put in before design review and sometimes are done inappropriately.

Mr. Kesterston said he figured this would be the answer a long time ago when Mr. McManis said something about it.

Mr. Gilbertson said this isn't the first application they have turned down that didn't meet the criteria.

Mr. DeSmet asked if the applicants planned on coming back with an alternate proposal.

Mr. Kesterston said at this point he would say no. They don't need a permit to repair.

Mr. Duggan replied no because that would be considered maintenance.

Mr. Everett said the committee just took a straw poll, but they can review the criteria so he will know what their decision is based on. He can also withdraw the application.

Mr. Kesterston said they would just withdraw the application.

Review of June 29th and July 13th Minutes:

Upon motion by Mr. Gilbertson and Mr. White the Minutes of June 29, 2010 were approved unanimously.

Regarding the July 13th minutes, the bank sign the only issue people had was with the signs attached to the building. Mr. Gilbertson said he has an issue with all of the signs. Ms. Coffey said she has issues with the signs. It should read that people were concerned to the signs attached to the building. Mr. Gilbertson replied he had an issue with the whole application. Mr. DeSmet said the Development Review Board had similar issues with the application.

Mr. Everett said the DRB has tabled the application twice. Mr. DeSmet said the applicant has changed the luster of the metal finish. John Kerin came back with a satin finish and not a glossy finish. It still isn't approved.

Mr. Gilbertson inquired if the Development Review Board needed the recommendation of the Design Review Committee. If somebody changes the application between when they come to the DRC and go before the DRB the DRC should have another review of it.

Mr. DeSmet said the DRB legally has the ultimate authority so they can approve something completely the opposite of what the DRC recommends.

Mr. Gilbertson said when somebody changes something the DRC hasn't looked at it should come back to the committee as a process because they don't have their recommendation.

Mr. DeSmet said he doesn't disagree with him but he doesn't think that necessarily has to happen. Upon motion by Mr. Duggan and Mr. White the minutes of July 13th were approved with changes.

Other Business:

Mr. White said one of the two taxi companies has said there is an issue when people get off the bus or train. If they are trying to encourage people to take public transportation there is no way for them to know if there is even a taxi in town or who to call. He would like to be able to put some type of subtle sign at all of the bus stops advertising for taxis.

Adjournment:

Upon motion by Mr. Gilbertson and Mr. White the Design Review Committee adjourned on a vote of 5 to 0.

Respectfully submitted,

Clancy DeSmet
Planning & Zoning Administrator

Transcribed by: Joan Clack