

Montpelier Design Review Committee
March 23, 2010
City Council Chambers, City Hall

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Stephen Everett, Chair; James Duggan, Vice Chair; Nancy Mears, Jay White, Steven Burkholder and Muffie Conlon.
Staff: Clancy DeSmet, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Call to Order:

The March 23, 2010 Montpelier Design Review Committee was called to order by James Duggan, Vice Chair, at 5:30 P.M.

- I. 101 Northfield Street – CB-II/DCD**
Applicant/Owner: COPS, Inc.
Signage and exterior alterations
Interested Party: Tom Leytham, Architect

First of all, there were two applications. One was for the lights, and they have withdrawn that application for the parking lot lights. They are adequate and too expensive to do it and they aren't sure it would be worth all of the trouble. Since they started this project they have been squeezed pretty hard. They have been squeezed by the franchise. The franchise for these people is very important. They have their standards so they are going to have to maintain their standards, and they are very fussy. The problem with the franchise is they have been very slow on their decisions. They have requested signage changes, etc. They are having an inspection sometime next week. They found a lot of surprises when they were doing this building. Every renovation is a surprise. This has caused them to do some changes which aren't appearance changes. They found some large stones in their way. The third thing is the economic climate. Lending is impossible. Their client wants to get this thing going so it can start to pay for itself.

Ms. Conlon asked if it was being used now or if there was any occupancy.

Mr. Leytham replied no. They have the sprinklers in and the carpet is down. There is still some finished carpentry to be done. There is a breakfast room almost complete and a handicapped bathroom almost complete. He showed a progress photo to the DRC. The one thing that is missing is the signage and an awning that will really change the impact on the façade. The franchise wanted the peak on the roof, and they have been squeezed each way.

Mr. White asked if he was proposing a different awning than what was proposed.

Mr. Leytham replied yes.

Mr. White said he is proposing a sign above. He noticed they had some very bright lights that shine up on the two columns, which is a very purple light and very bright. It's almost like a search light. These are very white lights on the wall whereas the ones inside the corridor are more of an incandescent color. What he is bothered with mostly on the current situation are the very bright purple lights that shine upon the columns. When you have the red awning and light it with half of the purple light underneath it is going to make a kind of strange shadow. He thinks it would be better to take them out.

Mr. Everett asked if the fixture was such that it could be turned to a down light with just a couple of floods.

Mr. White said they are in the ground.

Mr. Leytham replied they aren't in the ground. The basic idea is to show where the office is compared to the entire building. It shines on the building and not on the road.

Mr. White remarked he thinks it looks better when they are turned off.

Ms. Mears said she is a little confused what he is asking for because she isn't seeing a lighting plan or fixtures.

Mr. Leytham said the lights on the building were in the original plan. He asked if they could change the bulbs.

Mr. White said if they change the bulbs to match the other lights it would look a lot better. It's the purple color that bothers him.

Ms. Mears asked if the applicant was asking the DRC to approve signage and the windows with the changed roofline and awning.

Mr. Duggan said the window there now has grills. What kind are those?

Mr. Leytham replied they were simulated divided.

Mr. White said the original design had more glass on the bottom or more doors. When you have the awning coming from wall to wall it separated it more. This one doesn't quite do that. He thinks the awning helps a lot.

Ms. Mears asked if the awning was going to say Econolodge on it. Mr. Leytham replied it may or may not depending on what the franchise wants. Right now he is voting for it not to be there because they have signage enough. It may say office or front desk

Mr. DeSmet said the hard part for this group is that there is a constantly moving target so it is hard to evaluate the project as it changes on the fly.

Mr. Leytham said there won't be any signage on the awning.

Ms. Mears said the DRC has already approved the Econolodge sign at the street.

Mr. Leytham said this sign is going up on the building.

Mr. White asked if they had lights inside the awning if they would shine through.

Mr. Leytham said there weren't going to be any lights. There will be a light going down on the doorway.

Mr. White inquired if he was proposing any landscaping.

Mr. Leytham said they have rebuilt a lot of the walls and when the time comes they will seed it with grass.

Mr. White said he thinks it would help if there were some type of planter or landscaping.

Mr. Leytham said there are existing planters. The franchise does require that they put planters or flowers at the entrance. They will be planted in the ground.

Ms. Conlon asked how many units were there.

Mr. Leytham replied 42 rooms. The Fire Department is going to be using the existing building that is coming down for training.

Mr. DeSmet said they would need a permit for demolition to take the buildings down.

Steve Everett, Chair, took over chairing the meeting.

Mr. Duggan said he is curious as to how far the new canopy projects out.

Mr. Everett said there are two parts of this, the sign recommendation form for the building sign. The ground sign out front has been approved already.

The DRC reviewed the criteria and found the application acceptable. Mr. White said there needs to be a clarification that the lighting needs to be changed to be the same color as the other exterior lights. He said he personally thinks both signs would look better if they were internally lit. That location is totally different than all of the other downtown areas in the Design Review District. That kind of sign normally looks better if it is internally lit.

Mr. Everett said the wall sign on the building may be lighted by a single black gooseneck with a 60 watt flood light.

Mr. White said he thinks they need to consider the sign with the whole lighting around as well because it has the two lights on the side.

Mr. Everett replied that is lighting the building so it would fall under the building changes. It wouldn't have anything to do with the sign application.

Mr. DeSmet said it would apply to the exterior changes.

Mr. Everett said they would do that as an adjustment to the scope of the proposal for the exterior of the building and not the sign.

Mr. White said he feels the color of the light that lights the sign should match the other exterior lights which are not an incandescent color. It is much whiter.

Mr. Everett asked if he wanted a whitish bulb or an incandescent for the sign.

Mr. White said on this particular sign it is better if it is consistent with the other exterior lighting they have.

Mr. Everett said it is a 60 watt maximum wattage flood bulb whose light color matches the exterior lighting. It will be the same lighting as on the façade length of the building.

The DRC found the application for the sign with the adjustment with the wall sign mounted on the building may be lighted by a single black gooseneck fixture above the sign with a 60 watt maximum flood bulb whose light color matches the lighting on the façade length of the building acceptable on a vote of 5 to 0.

Mr. Everett said the DRC will now review the remainder of the items on the building. There is a change in the awning. They are approving the peaked roof over the office area and the window substitution. The side lights were approved before, so it is just the color of the bulbs. Mr. White said he doesn't remember the side lights being there before. There is also the addition of the lights on the vertical trim on the sides of the office façade. There is no landscape plan presented at this point. The adjustment is for a clarification of the lighting would be that the lighting be of the same color of the lights as the rest of the vertical trim of the office façade. Mr. Everett said he wrote that the light fixtures proposed for the vertical trim of the office façade will have bulbs of the wattage and color to match the remaining façade lighting on the building.

They are looking at those two lights, the window substitution as shown in the picture, the peaked roof and the awning. Again, the awning color is the same color as the corporate logo which is the same color in the sign. The Committee reviewed the criteria for the four items.

Mr. Duggan said he would reiterate that the central element does not at all resemble what they originally approved. He thinks the design they are left with isn't as good as what was originally proposed.

Mr. White said it would be acceptable if there were side lights on the sides of the door so that the top windows would line up with the bottom windows and it would give a sense of organization to the façade.

Ms. Mears asked if it was a cost issue.

Mr. Leytham replied everything is a cost issue because banks aren't lending money. This project has already gone way over budget.

Ms. Conlon said she thinks the awning will compensate some for not having the side lights.

Mr. White agreed that the awning will help a lot.

Mr. Everett said it will give it some balance that wasn't there before.

Mr. Duggan said also considering the location of the building it isn't as critical as if it were in the middle of town.

Mr. White said there could be a compromise solution whereby instead of putting in the lights they could be able to do some solid glass with black painted behind it. He would vote no on the door. The door needs to be a much stronger element. If they agree with the change they suggest they wouldn't have to come back.

Mr. DeSmet said the hard part is they have changed it already.

Mr. Everett said the Committee should review the criteria. They are questioning the design and the lights on the sides of the vertical trim.

Mr. White said the applicant has agreed to change the color of the floodlights on the wall. He finds that acceptable. He would still approve it with the condition that the side lights be added to the doors, but he won't approve it without that condition.

Mr. Duggan said he would prefer to see a little stronger entrance.

Ms. Mears said she feels the same way. The original design with the side lights was better. It is unfortunate that it is already built like this. She doesn't feel strong enough about it that she would say she wouldn't approve it without it, but it isn't as good this way.

Mr. Leytham asked if they were to put some signage there would they have to come back again.

Mr. DeSmet replied yes.

Mr. Leytham said they would put some panels there on either side of the door. That will be another adjustment.

Mr. White said he could accept that. He would prefer it as glass. He thinks the lobby would look better with more glass. He agrees it is already built and they should be economically sensitive to the requirements of keeping a business in Montpelier going.

Mr. Everett said there would be two side panels with trim matching the entry doors and windows above. They will be placed on either side of the entry doors to provide a stronger entrance. The harmony of the exterior sign would be acceptable and the prevention of the use of incompatible designs with a stronger entrance that would balance with the upper window. The awning color will match the color of the wall sign which is a corporate logo color for Econolodge. Light fixtures proposed for the vertical trim of the opposite side will have bulbs of a wattage and color to match the remaining façade lighting on the building. Based on the adjustments the application passed on a vote of 5 to 0.

II. 10 State Street – CB-1/DCD

Applicant: Kelly Sullivan/Athena's

Owner: Candice Moot

Sign

Kelly Sullivan said she recently moved Athena's and moved the Athena's sign off the wall where her Splash sign is so she could have it redone to match their new logo. The color is not as burgundy any more; it is more of a fuschia with

golden brown lettering. It is sort of like a surfboard sign. Always on Time Signs in Barre has the sign now and said they could paint over it. It is exactly the same sign but different paint.

Members of the committee told her they thought it looked very nice.

Mr. Everett asked if that would be mounted in the center of the sign band.

Ms. Sullivan replied that was correct.

Mr. Duggan asked if she planned on doing any other painting at the entrance.

Ms. Sullivan replied on the door they have put up a little decal which has the same logo as the new sign and then Always on Time Sign Designs made little corner decals of the same color. They will be on the inside.

Mr. Duggan said he was wondering about the woodwork down at the bottom of the panel. He was wondering if she would stay with the existing color.

Ms. Sullivan said she would stay with the same color.

Ms. Conlon asked what material the ramp going up was.

Ms. Sullivan replied it is cement. It needs a fresh coat of paint.

Mr. Burkholder asked if she was going to keep the sign in the same location.

Ms. Sullivan replied no. The Grand Opening sign will be gone and the Athena's will be centered in the middle.

Mr. White said when she paints the woodwork it might be better if it were picking up more of the tan tone and not mess with the brick color. It would probably give the store a better visibility. He said he is talking about the wooden panels below. The sign band is consistent with a lot of stores.

Mr. Burkholder asked if there was any possibility of future lighting on her sign.

Ms. Sullivan replied she didn't know. There is nothing in the works right now.

Mr. Everett said the applicant may extend a color compatible with the sign lettering to the recessed panels at the sidewalk level on either side of the entry and façade.

Mr. White said it could be a neutral color. It doesn't necessarily have to match the sign lettering.

Ms. Sullivan said the sign lettering is more of a brown/gold than it looks.

Mr. Everett said it could be any neutral color compatible with the sign lettering.

The DRC reviewed the sign criteria and found the application as proposed acceptable on a vote of 5 to 0.

III. 39 Main Street – CB-I/DCD

Applicant: Montpelier Alive

Owner: City of Montpelier

Planters.

Interested Party: Paul Carnahan

Paul Carnahan said Montpelier Alive said they would like to start to replace the old whiskey barrel planters in the downtown. Some are getting old and he isn't sure the style is appropriate for a downtown to begin with so they are looking at something a little more urban. They will need to raise money to acquire the planters so it will take awhile to

fill up the downtown. They would like to start with State Street from Main Street to the first bump out and along the center of Main Street and sort of gradually spread throughout the downtown. They want to purchase planters from a company called Landscape Forms that are made of this polyethylene material. They describe it as lightweight polyethylene and ideal for high traffic areas and won't chip or crack, resistant to UV rays, moisture, corrosive substances and extreme temperature changes. Mr. Carnahan showed the DRC pictures of what they would look like. They want to cluster them around the streetlights or on the bump outs themselves. Some of the bump outs, particularly down State Street, are large enough to accommodate two or three of them of different sizes. The largest is 42 inches.

Mr. White asked if there was a way to keep them level if the sidewalks aren't quite level.

Mr. Carnahan said he assumed they could. They are made urban environments.

Mr. White said he thinks this is a good idea, and the sooner the better.

Ms. Mears asked if they were going to be grouped.

Mr. Carnahan replied yes and different sizes in a grouping.

Ms. Mears asked who was going to maintain the planters.

Mr. Carnahan said that is always the challenge. Suzanne is very aware of who maintains them and who doesn't so they try to put them in front of places where they know people will maintain them. They first looked at self watering inserts, but the company who makes the planters recommended against that. There is a soil compound that will maintain the moisture better. Using the polyethylene material will hold the moisture better than the wood or ceramic that dries out.

The DRC reviewed the criteria and found the application as proposed acceptable on a vote of 5 to 0. The optional change the applicant may pursue at their discretion is the applicant is encouraged to propose to the City of Montpelier Public Works Department perform a routine watering procedure using existing mobile equipment. They could put a pressurized tank on the city's sidewalk plows.

Approval of February 23, 2010 Minutes:

Only three of the four people present at the last meeting. Ms. Mears moved to approve the minutes with Mr. Everett seconding the motion, and the minutes were approved on a vote of 3 to 0.

Adjournment:

The Design Review Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clancy DeSmet
Planning & Zoning Administrator