

**Montpelier Development Review Board
Special Meeting
August 30, 2004
City Council Chambers, City Hall**

Subject to Review and Approval

Present: Alan Blakeman; Acting Chair; Dave Keller; Ken Matzner; Douglas Bresette,
Staff: Valerie Capels, Planning and Community Development Director

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Blakeman, who said that he would be serving as the Acting Chair for the meeting.

Comments from the Chair

There were no comments.

Sketch Plan Review and AI-PUD Master Plan Amendment

Applicant: Union Institute & University and The New England Culinary Institute

Property Owner: Union Institute & University

Property Address: 56 College Street

Zone: HDR/DCD

- Addition and building alteration to accommodate new NECI office use.
- Interested Parties: Richard Hansen, Vermont College of the Union Institute; Eric Seidel, New England Culinary Institute; Jay Ancel; Ron Lyon; Karen Kramer, Alice Soule-Collins, David Grayck

Ms. Capels said that the purpose of the sketch plan and pre-application meeting was for the applicant to receive comments prior to the conditional and final review of the project by the Board. She acknowledged that Board members made a special effort to pull together a quorum for this special meeting because this has been a highly unusual situation where a quorum was lost at three previously scheduled meetings due to a combination recusals and absences. She noted that, because the applicant has continued to develop their application materials in the meantime, this project has been warned for consideration at the regular DRB meeting next Tuesday (September 7). Ordinarily a project would receive the sketch plan review before being scheduled for a hearing. The hearing on Tuesday can be continued or rescheduled if significant issues come up tonight that need to be addressed.

Ms Capels said that this pre-application conference was for an addition to an existing building. Staff had determined that the addition is not consistent with the current Vermont College Master Plan. While the Board is typically tasked with determining if the proposal requires an amendment, the applicant decided to proceed with a request approval of an amendment to the Master Plan rather than wait for the DRB's formal determination that such an amendment is required.

The interested parties were sworn in by Mr. Blakeman. Mr. Ancel gave an overview of the project. He said that the proposed addition will connect a main house and a carriage barn. The carriage barn will be moved about 10' diagonally from its present location and raised three feet. The addition will house offices, elevators and halls. The application has been reviewed by the DRC and modifications have been made based upon DRC comments. The on-site parking will be reduced from five spaces to two spaces. Additional parking will be provided across the street. There will be a trellis element in front of the

addition to soften the look. The residents across the street and to the sides will see little change from their properties. The applicant is working with a geotechnical engineer to protect the hillside to the back of the buildings. The siding will be wooden shiplap rather than clapboard based upon the National Trust suggestions that the addition be differentiated from the existing historic structure. The use will continue to be institutional/educational.

Mr. Bressette asked if there is enough handicapped parking to meet ADA requirements. Mr. Ancel said that there will be one handicapped space adjacent to the carriage barn. This meets the requirements. Mr. Matzner asked whether students will come to this building frequently. Mr. Ancel said that the offices will be administrative and there will be no functions that would result in students coming to the building with any frequency. Mr. Matzner asked whether parking permits are required. Dr. Hansen said that permits are not required. He said that 278 parking spaces have been approved on the campus. Based upon a revision of the Master Plan approved in 2001, there can be up to 316 spaces throughout the complex. The College will be able to provide the parking that is needed. There are 53 spaces across the street from the building and additional spaces near the gym. Ms. Capels said that a map in the Master Plan shows the distribution of parking. Mr. Lyon, the project engineer, said that the project designers looked closely at access using the existing street crossing system. He said that the existing system provides ADA access to the building using existing cross walks at intersections. He said that there are hazards to creating new mid-street crossings. Mr. Bressette said that he would have major concerns about the lack of a direct crossing for handicapped access. Mr. Matzner asked about the possibility of eliminating the cross walk to the west in favor of a new one to the east. Mr. Lyon said that the existing location provides better visibility. Mr. Grayck, a neighbor, said that he would be concerned that moving the cross walk would decrease safety because the vehicle sight distances are better at the existing location. He also noted that vehicles tend to speed on College Street, but vehicles on East State Street are slowing for the turn. Dr. Hansen said that the existing walks also serve Alumni Hall.

Mr. Lyon said that there is a very steep bank at the rear of the project. Roof runoff currently runs down the bank. In order to reduce the amount of runoff directed to the bank, the applicant is proposing to direct the roof runoff to the City storm drainage system. To provide some water to the vegetation on the bank, however, a ten-foot wide shelf at a slope of no more than 2% will be created at the top of the bank to allow a small amount of runoff to sheet flow over the bank. The ten-foot wide shelf will be created in the cutting and removal of soil at the top of the bank to reduce the loading on the bank at the suggestion of the geotechnical engineer. Mr. Keller asked if the creation of the shelf required the removal of trees. Mr. Lyon said that some brush, small trees, and one larger tree will be cut, but that the roots may be left in place. He said that the area will be replanted immediately. Mr. Keller asked whether it would be best to leave the trees in place for bank stability. Mr. Lyon said that the geotechnical engineer thinks that it would be best to remove soil to reduce the loading on the bank because the addition will be added to the site. He said that the shelf will be cut at a maximum grade of 2% for ten feet and then will match into the existing grade. He provided photographs of the area to the Board.

Mr. Keller asked whether the carriage barn will be raised. Mr. Ancel said that it would be raised by three feet to match the main building floor. Mr. Keller asked whether the carriage barn doors will be replaced. Mr. Ancel said that they are presently modern overhead doors and will be replaced with doors with a more historic look.

Mr. Keller asked why the project requires conditional use approval. Ms. Capels said that nonresidential structures more than 10,000 square feet require conditional use review.

Mr. Ancel provided information related to the conditional use criteria. He said that the use will remain in office use. He read from a letter dated November 12, 2003 from Stephanie Smith regarding the AI-PUD designation. He said that the applicant is amending the Master Plan to reflect the proposed changes since the building will be enlarged, which the Master Plan did not anticipate. He said that the applicants have met with Tom McArdle on stormwater drainage and sewer and have requested an allocation. Mr. Ancel said that the applicants have met with the Fire Chief and will be installing a sprinkler system. No adverse impacts on City services are expected. The project has been designed to ensure compatibility with the neighborhood. The 30 employees in the building will create no adverse impacts in relation to existing traffic.

Ms. Capels asked whether signage is proposed to direct visitors where to park. Mr. Seidel said that the employees will know where to park and visitors will be told where to park when they call for an appointment. The building will be used for administrative and admissions offices. There is also parking on the street.

Mr. Keller asked what the Master Plan amendment process will be. Ms. Capels said that the Master Plan guides future changes on the campus. The campus is part of an Academic Institution-Planned Unit Development. Mr. Keller asked whether the fourth paragraph of the Master Plan amendment was really needed. Dr. Hansen said that he was advised by the staff to have the language be broad, but include something specific to the project that describes the purpose of the amendment. Mr. Bressette asked whether the amendment set the stage for the future sale of property on the campus. Dr. Hansen said that the College currently has the authority to sell property without approvals. The property in question involves a significant addition, requiring a Master Plan amendment. Ms. Capels said that the proposed Master Plan language would also allow leased properties to change building footprints provided that the changes met all other requirements. The language also puts the neighborhood on notice that changes to other buildings might occur as the College's needs change.

Mr. Keller said that he views this as a rather large amendment. He said that he was concerned that only one neighbor was present and said that he was uncomfortable in considering the amendment without a mailing to the neighbors. Ms. Capels said that a notice was mailed to all of the neighbors around the perimeter of the campus and to the residents within the campus boundaries. The notice was for the Master Plan amendment and the proposed building project. She said that a notice for the meeting next Tuesday also appeared in the newspaper last Thursday and will be posted on the City's Web site.

Mr. Blakeman said that the reference to Design Review in the third paragraph should be followed by the word "Committee."

Dr. Hansen said that without the proposed Master Plan amendment, the College could still bring proposed projects through the development review process. Mr. Keller asked what would happen if a building was purchased for a non-institutional office use. He said that the point of the Master Plan is to set the tone for what the College is. He said that the Master Plan notes that there is excess building space on the campus and states that the best use of the space is, first, adult programs, second, administrative and, third, leasing for a five-year period. Mr. Hansen said that the Master Plan also says that sale to compatible uses might be necessary. Mr. Keller said that he is really interested to hear what the neighbors have to say. Mr. Grayck said that, as a neighbor, since many of the students are in the 18-22 year old age group, he would like to see the campus more closely managed. Mr. Seidel noted that this project will not add students.

Mr. Keller said that he does not agree with the National Trust regarding using a siding on the addition that will not replicate the existing clapboard. He said that he would like to see the addition sided in a manner consistent with the main building so that it will look less like an addition. Mr. Seidel said that it is in the Institute's interest to satisfy the federal program in order to receive funding.

Mr. Blakeman said that he thinks some kind of signage to direct visitors to the parking will be necessary. Mr. Ancel said that the applicant has not yet applied for any signs. Ms. Capels said that a directional sign does not require permits.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Capels
Planning and Community Development Director

Transcribed by Kathleen Swigon

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