

Draft Minutes

TOWN OF GUILFORD Design Review Committee Minutes – 12th April, 2017

A regular meeting of the Design Review Committee was held on Wednesday 12th April, 2017 at 4:00p.m. in the Guilford Community Center with Vice-Chairman William Thompson presiding.

Present: Philippe Campus, Robert Charney, John Cunningham, Shirley Girioni, William Thompson and Shavaun Towers. Also present Town Planner George Kral. Excused: Karin Patriquin, Mary Repetti and Walter Weissenborn.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00p.m.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to change the order of the agenda to make “2730 Boston Post Road” the third item and “301 Boston Post Road” the last item on the agenda. Mrs. Girioni seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

REVIEW APPLICATIONS

VFW Post #7666, 57 Mill Road, Map 46, Lot 62, Zone R-5: Coastal Area Management Application for replacing part of an existing building and installing a new parking lot. (\$273-91): Mary Jo Kestner and Joshua Grochowski (CK Architects, 131 Boston Street, Guilford, CT 06437) introduced themselves and circulated a packet of information for this project. Ms. Kestner stated that earlier a grant had been received for a new facility but due to time constraints, cost and bond issues this had become no longer feasible. Instead the plan now was to do a heavy renovation of the existing building. Mr. Grochowski said the existing hall would be replaced with a new addition in the same footprint and he circulated photographs of the existing buildings. The stone building will be saved and the rest of the structure will be replaced by the new addition. There will be new paint, new asphalt and shingles but no structural changes. Siding and trim around the windows will be vertical barn board and Mr. Grochowski showed a sample of this. He said there would be a very simple barn gable with transom windows and barn doors to provide some interest. There will be glass windows on the side to take advantage of the view of the pond but these will be very simple. The new addition will have red siding and black windows. Mr. Grochowski briefly reviewed the lighting plan on the site plan. He pointed out that 4 post lights in the rear were dated so he was proposing barn lights. Mr. Thompson asked if the lights would be shaded cut offs and Mr. Grochowski replied yes. He noted that landscaping would be as simple as possible, mostly retaining the existing landscaping. Mr. Grochowski said the street would be widened at the request of the Town. It would be paved up to a certain point and then gravel beyond that. He added that he would like to pave the whole driveway but cost was a factor. Mr. Cunningham queried the new roof color. Mr. Grochowski replied a subdued charcoal architectural shingle was proposed. Mr. Campus said that with such a large roof element a lighter shingle color than charcoal might be preferable. Mr. Thompson agreed saying this would probably be better and that it could be considered by sampling before the roofing stage was reached. He also felt there was not much screening of the paved areas.

Mr. Campus made a motion that the Design Review Committee recommended PZC approve this application. Mrs. Girioni seconded the motion. During discussion Ms. Towers recommended that plantings be installed between the two patios. Mrs. Girioni had concerns about all the black top. Mr. Cunningham pointed out that it was existing. It was noted that there was no break in the hard surfaces. Mr. Charney asked if the parking capacity was being increased in case it might be

challenged by a large event. He wondered if the amount of parking was actually needed. Mr. Thompson said a reserve parking area could be created which could be left unpaved. He said if operationally less parking was needed than required by zoning then an area could be held on reserve to see if over time it might be required. Mr. Charney added that the reserve did not necessarily have to be located at the end of the driveway. Todd Anderson (Anderson Engineering & Surveying Associates, 1054 Boston Post Road, Guilford, CT 06437) stated that the gravel area had been in place for years. He said rain water did not percolate down through the gravel but instead formed puddles which lasted for days. At present water was not captured and treated but a catch basin was now being proposed. Mr. Anderson also said that he personally felt the amount of parking was deficient. Ms. Towers said that planting one tree at the corner of the building would soften the corner. Mr. Campus modified his motion to add the stipulation that a tree be planted at the corner of the building. Mrs. Girioni seconded the modified motion and it was carried unanimously.

2772 Boston Post Road (Tony Thompson of Plans Ahead), Map 83, Lot 25, Zone TS3: Site Plan Revision to change the use from a restaurant with apartments above to a 10-unit apartment building:

Anthony Thompson (Plans Ahead, Branford, CT), said that the Committee had looked at an earlier proposal for this property for a mixed use with a restaurant and apartments above. Now the proposal was for a 10-unit apartment building on two floors which would reduce site requirements. Mr. Thompson said parking would be reduced from 54 to 19 spaces, and the building could be pulled further away from the wetlands. Egress is from the Boston Post Road and original curb cuts will be honored. He showed elevation drawings of a Federal-style building with a portico around it. Units will be one-bedroom. Mr. Thompson said the building would be parallel to the Boston Post Road and pulled away from Moose Hill Road slightly. He noted that the site was dark and brooding and that he wished to change that. Clutter around the building will be minimized so parking will be removed from the front of the building and this area will be planted. There will be a stone wall on the west side, shrubs will be kept down low and there will be grassy areas around the building. Mr. Thompson said it would be a sort of picture frame building and that he did not want it to read as a commercial building. He showed a floor plan of the apartments which were entered from the rear. Design is simple and the apartments are almost identical. Mechanicals will be located below the apartments. Windows will be over-sized double hung (6' x 34"). Mr. Charney suggested more dense planting between the building and the Boston Post Road. Mr. Thompson talked about the issue of falling tree limbs. Mr. Charney replied that the Committee was always looking for more trees. Mr. Thompson stated that he would be planting evergreens. Mr. Charney recommended moving the building back so larger plantings could be installed. Mr. Thompson thought he could move the building back by approximately 5 feet. William Thompson noted that the *Planning and Design Guidelines: Route 1 East Boston Post Road* (Design Guidelines) were clear about wanting more trees and he felt this would be beneficial. Mr. Cunningham warned that it would be impossible to plant trees on State land. He suggested having more parking behind the building which would provide more room by the Boston Post Road for planting. He added that the Committee was not looking for ornamental trees and that they should be shade trees. Mr. Campus said putting the building in the middle of the parking and then not spending money on landscaping bothered him. He asked what was more American than grilling on one's patio at the weekend and where could this be done on this property. William Thompson said the building was a very efficient modular design but that development of a landscape design would be quite nice. Tony Thompson pointed out that the units would have a portico. Mr. Campus asked how big. Tony Thompson replied 6ft. wide. Mr. Campus pointed out that residents could have children or visiting children who would need somewhere to play. Mr. Charney felt it came down to the site plan and landscaping and that the Committee needed to see revisions to these.

The Committee recommended that the applicant return with fully developed site and landscaping plans that addressed the Committee's concerns as outlined above. William Thompson said he liked the overscaled windows and if the site was developed this would be good. Mr. Cunningham recommended checking the trees on this and the adjacent property which he felt might help with the decision making. It was noted that a communal area could be closer to the wetlands boundary than a paved area.

2730 Boston Post Road (former Old Broadway Mason & Garden Supply), Map 49, Lot 51, Zone CD. (New Haven Middlesex Association of Realtors, Inc.): Redevelopment to office space:

David Basilone (John A. Matthews Architecture & Planning, 817 Boston Post Road, Madison, CT 06443) showed a site plan. The proposal was to renovate the existing building which was in poor condition. Portions of the rear would be demolished and a new addition would be added extending towards the back of the property. An existing open area with a roof will be enclosed. The existing entrance is on the front of the building but this will be closed off and a new entry tower will be added on the east side. Mr. Basilone said this would allow a portion of the building to be closed off when training sessions and workshops were held on weekends. Materials, finishes and shingle color will be matched. Azek will be used for the new trim. Mr. Thompson asked if all the finishes would be new and Mr. Basilone replied no. He circulated some photographs of the building. The change from the Boston Post Road would be the new entry tower. The rest of the front of the building would remain the same apart from filling in the existing front entrance. There will be signage on the entry tower and on the building.

Todd Anderson (Anderson Engineering & Surveying Associates, 1054 Boston Post Road, Guilford, CT 06437), briefly reviewed the existing site noting that the paver block area which had been used for storage by the previous owner would be scaled back. The blocks will be repurposed into a one block high wall along the parking lot and extended as a barrier on the west side. The greenhouse area will be removed. There was no stormwater retention on the property and this is not proposed. Instead there will be a swale to catch water and this will have to be cleaned out periodically. There will be a roof drainage area. The pervious area will be reduced by approximately 5%. Mrs. Girioni said it would be nice to follow the shade trees that hopefully would be planted on the adjacent property. She queried a landscaping plan. Mr. Basilone said it had not been developed yet. Mr. Campus was concerned about the entrance tower on stilts and felt it would be better to have the entrance facing the street rather than the side. He thought this would make the building more logical. He also said cars dropping people off at the proposed entrance could back up. Michael Barbour from the Realtors Association said he was not wedded to the tower but thought the architect was trying to conceal the roof line. Ms. Towers talked about the signage on both the tower and the building and recommended this be reassessed when the signage allowance was determined. Mr. Charney said it was a pity to take the vernacular and just run with it without improving it. He thought the entrance tower was supposed to do this but perhaps it seemed too much. It was way overblown especially if there was signage on the street. Mr. Charney said signage was not needed on both the tower and on the street side. He recommended looking at more modest gestures and enhancing the building overall. A sign should be created that subtly said here is the entrance, after reviewing the signage allowance. Mr. Charney said if the applicant was making a big room then make it a nice room. Bring the quality up a notch which he thought could be done by simple means. Ms. Towers asked the applicant to come back with a landscape plan and that the paving should be broken up with trees. Mrs. Girioni mentioned Article 273-57 and asked that this section be studied. Mr. Charney suggested extending the front porch down the side so one could walk under cover, then the tower would not be

needed. The applicant was asked to return with landscape and lighting plans, and to develop some of the building elements as the Committee had discussed today.

**U-Haul, 301 Boston Post Road, Map 49, Lot 30, Zone TS (former Charles Mannix property):
Site Plan Revision - Change of use from retail to self-storage, and truck and trailer rentals:**

Present were Peter Sciortino (property owner), Michael Hunton, landscape architect and David Gagnon, civil engineer, (both with Langan Co.). Mr. Gagnon reminded the Committee that this was a 4-acre parcel in the TS Zone. He said a site plan application had been submitted to PZC and meetings had been held with town staff. The Inland Wetlands Commission (IWC) has approved the proposal but PZC asked the applicant to return to DRC. Mrs. Girioni noted that a newspaper article said DRC had approved this project but that this was incorrect. Mr. Thompson added that while the Committee had met informally with the applicant this was its first formal review of the project. Mr. Gagnon noted that the property was a former car dealership and that it consisted of two parcels which would be consolidated, and that a lot of landscaping would be installed. Currently there was no stormwater management but there will be a new infiltration basin in the back/ biofiltration in the northeast corner of the site. The proposed septic system will be in the middle with a landscaped island also in the middle.

Mr. Hunton said there would be large street trees along the sides with a mixture of shrubs and groundcover below to shade headlights and the site. There will be lawn along the street and on either side of the hedgerows. There will be a mowed edge along the curb line with foundation plantings on the existing and new building. A tree will be planted on the eastern corner to help screen the new building. Ms. Towers asked if the rear of the new building could be enhanced with plantings and was told yes. Mr. Thompson said he had reviewed this proposal with town staff and believed that several attorneys were looking into legal issues that had been raised but there was no determination on this yet. Mrs. Girioni said the resolution of this would be an important factor in her decision-making. She asked if the applicant had sought a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals so the new building could be pushed back, and had he asked IWC about this issue? Mr. Gagnon replied that this would require proving hardship. Mr. Thompson felt the building was pushing the limits in the appropriate scale for the property. Mrs. Girioni said it would make a huge difference if it could be moved back. Mr. Gagnon said pushing the building back would push the infiltration basin closer to the wetlands. Mr. Cunningham asked if the shape of the basin could be changed so the building could be moved back. Mr. Gagnon said he believed the shape could be changed slightly. Mr. Thompson asked if IWC had been questioned about compressing it. Mr. Gagnon replied that he had not asked about moving more to the west or changing the shape of the basin.

Mr. Kral talked about the Design Guidelines which recommended having buildings closer to the street with parking behind. He said it would be unusual to ask for a variance to do the opposite of this recommendation. If a variance was received from ZBA then the applicant would have to file a revised plan with IWC. Mr. Charney said it was a unique site which the Committee felt needed special attention. He added that he thought if it was a very special building the Committee probably would not be so concerned but it was not. Mr. Kral mentioned that three attorneys were weighing in on the legal matters, one issue of which was parking versus displaying vehicles. If “displaying” was not allowed then could the vehicles be “parked” on site. Mr. Thompson thought the Committee could articulate its preferences and look at non-legal issues such as massing. Mr. Gagnon stated that the new building was the same as before. Ms. Towers felt there was a lot of open space in the middle of the site.

Mr. Gagnon showed the lighting plan. Mr. Sciortino said the building lights would be on all night but the wattage would be turned down. Mr. Thompson asked how much of the building light would extend out into the exterior. Mr. Sciortino replied that he did not know. Mrs. Girioni wondered if all the special permit criteria had been adhered to. Mr. Hunton said he did not believe that a document could be produced that would show how much interior light was extending outside. Mr. Charney said a building lighted up at night was effectively a billboard. Mr. Hunton said light poles had been brought down to 25ft. with full cut offs. There will be sconces on the building and lights under the soffit in the new building – again full cut offs. The light level will be at a minimum of 0.2 but in certain areas it would be hard to maintain this. All the lights will face towards the site. Mr. Thompson asked that a warmer light color be used. Mr. Hunton replied that using a more yellow bulb would make the colors read differently. Mr. Cunningham said there was a lot of overlap in the lighting and wondered if this could be reduced in some areas. Mr. Hunton replied that he would want light across the front. He added that the proposed light levels across the front would vary from 7 to 11 foot candles. Mr. Charney suggested tapering the lights down to the edge. He then asked if two lower level lights would be sufficient for fire department access. Mr. Sciortino mentioned that some of the lights would go off at 10:00p.m. so all the lights would not be on all night. He did not specify which would be on and which would be off.

Regarding the new building Mr. Hunton said there were no changes. Mr. Thompson queried height and Mr. Gagnon replied approximately 40ft. Mr. Thompson felt it was a very substantial volume compared to surrounding buildings and that he had real issues with the scale. Mrs. Girioni felt it was over-scaled and that the area was a gateway to Guilford. Referring to the optional criteria in the special permit regulations she asked which ones had been chosen. Mr. Hunton replied curb cut reduction and pedestrian access – a bike rack was being proposed and a sidewalk will be built in the State right-of-way. Mr. Thompson checked that nothing was articulated on the building and that it had solid lines. Mr. Hunton replied that he did not believe it would be flush and that there would be some play in it. The various material elements were described to have several inches of offset. The main massing was shown as flush. Mr. Cunningham said he would like to see the new building further back and that a good job had been done of softening the existing building. He preferred to have the trees be of a larger caliper and felt that the amount of lighting could be reduced. Mr. Cunningham said he would also like to know which lights would be on or off and that 25' poles were not needed in front of the new building. He mentioned that there was an existing large white pine on the adjacent property and he was concerned about grading around the roots. He would not want this tree to be compromised by grading. Mr. Campus said U-Haul was designed at capacity which had nothing to do with the neighborhood and the Committee had had a similar experience with other large developments in Guilford, which was an issue. He felt the building was pushing the limit of what was allowed in order to meet a corporate image. However, the Committee did not want Guilford to become a “miracle mile” and so it had to control this. Instead the building should address basic town design issues. Mr. Sciortino replied that the building was nowhere near a corporate image. Mr. Campus disagreed saying that fundamentally it was. He added that it was better than what was there before but in the scale of what the Committee would like to see it was only at 25% whereas the Committee would like 50%. Mr. Campus felt the Committee might accept display trucks if there was a better building. The building will be there for 50 years but the Committee only has one chance to make it good for Guilford. Mrs. Girioni agreed with Mr. Campus and said that part of the problem was a change in the zoning regulations which allowed this use on this site, which showed a lack of foresight. She was concerned about the corporate look and felt it was a pity not to have asked IWC about moving the building back. Mrs. Girioni also said she was concerned about the display of trucks. Mr. Charney thought it should be possible to make the building look more attractive. He said

it was a very special site which did not fit the generic requirements of zoning. Perhaps this was the wrong site for this enterprise although he appreciated the effort to make a more appealing building. Mr. Thompson agreed with everyone's comments but said he found it troubling that last year the Committee discussed moving the building but the applicant never came back to discuss this but instead went to PZC. He said he was not comfortable with the building and that no attempt had been made to adjust it. Mr. Thompson said the applicant had worked very hard on the material palette but not with the siting or massing.

Mark Wasserman, Chairman, Economic Development Commission said regarding the "gateway" comments that coming from the east one would hardly see the new building but he agreed that it would be visible approaching from the west. Regarding the truck display, Mrs. Girioni said the applicant had known from the beginning that this was a problem. She said there could be signage without displaying 7 vehicles and that 7 "billboards" were not needed. Mr. Charney said the Committee was frustrated because the applicant was entitled to do things but it did not feel these were aesthetically good for the site. The building was very large and the Committee wished it could be better. Mr. Thompson noted that the Committee had asked several times for the mass to be adjusted and that the building be articulated by feet not inches. He said it was not a good looking building on a very prominent site and that he wished to reach a point where it pleased everyone. Mr. Wasserman said he did not feel it was a special site. Mr. Thompson replied that it was on the crest of a hill, was a gateway to Guilford and was located between I-95 and the Boston Post Road. Mrs. Girioni said scenic roads and old, historic houses were part of what made Guilford special and if the fabric of the town was allowed to slowly erode there would be nothing left. One needed careful planning and maintenance of the fabric of the town.

Jennifer Milano, Milano Properties, 40 Mungertown Road, Madison, CT 06443), briefly reviewed a letter which she had sent to the Committee and PZC earlier expressing concerns, most of which she felt had been covered today. The letter in part expressed concern about scale and building design, building height, screening of parking, lighting and poor maintenance of U-Haul properties.

Mr. Campus asked what could be done together to reach a compromise and he briefly described how the building could be changed so one would no longer have a huge shoebox. Mr. Thompson said again that it should be moved to the north. Mrs. Girioni stated that changing the building design would mean the applicant would have to withdraw his application and start again but he had already been to PZC. Mr. Thompson replied that the Committee could still comment on it. To summarize Mr. Thompson made a motion that the Committee felt the scale was incorrect, that the Committee did not support the current style of the new building, its massing and its location, that the landscaping had been improved but that the possibility of changing the basin had not been explored. Mr. Campus seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Approval of Bills: Mrs. Girioni made a motion to approve the following bill: Katharine Stewart, secretarial services. Mr. Campus seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Mrs. Girioni made motion to accept the Minutes of 8th March, 2017. Ms. Towers seconded the motion and it was carried with 5 votes in favor. Mr. Campus abstained since he was not present at the March meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00p.m.

The next meeting of the Design Review Committee will be held on Wednesday 10th May, 2017 at 4:00p.m. in the Guilford Community Center.

Respectfully submitted,

Katharine Stewart
Recording Secretary