

## Draft Minutes

### TOWN OF GUILFORD Design Review Committee Minutes – 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2017

A regular meeting of the Design Review Committee was held on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2017 at 4:00p.m. in the Guilford Community Center with Acting Chairman Philippe Campus presiding.

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

The meeting was called to order at 4:05p.m.

Mr. Campus welcomed newly appointed regular member David Rosenthal and said he was happy to have Mr. Rosenthal back serving on the committee.

**Approval of Minutes:** Mrs. Girioni made a motion to accept the Minutes of 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2017. Mr. Charney seconded the motion and it was carried with 7 votes in favor. Mr. Weissenborn abstained since he was not present at the May meeting and Mr. Rosenthal abstained since he was not serving on the Committee in May.

### **REVIEW APPLICATIONS**

**Metro Pooch, 201 Soundview Road, Map 42, Lots 118-4, 118-5, 118-6, Zone I-2 (Tom Stevens, Thomas A. Stevens & Associates, Inc.): Review of rear canopy over outside dog runs:** John Cunningham recused himself and circulated copies of the final plans for this project. He said that the rear of the building had been changed. Originally there had been jogs in the building but these were now straightened out. Mr. Cunningham noted that this would make no physical change to the lot coverage. Mr. Campus asked if there were any changes to the building design itself. Mr. Cunningham replied just dimensional changes. Kristen Delaney stated that everything on this project had already been approved so the only thing that she was here for today was to show the rear canopy over the outside dog runs – to protect them from the sun. She reiterated that the jogs in the building had been removed and made straight due to cost issues. Mr. Thompson questioned the front entrance to the building. Ms. Delaney replied that everything was being done as it had been approved and that there was nothing different from the street side. Mr. Thompson asked if the opening was remaining open. Ms. Delaney replied that she believed so. It was the consensus of the Committee that PZC should approve the rear canopy over the outside dog runs.

**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:** In order to inform the Committee Mr. Campus said that he and Ms. Patriquin had met with the applicant on 6/6/14 on an informal basis in order to answer questions and make recommendations. He said that he assumed what would be presented today would be as a result of that meeting. Mr. Campus noted that the applicant had made significant changes to the design and that he appreciated this. Mr. Kral reminded the Committee that the original application had been withdrawn. Instead the applicant was now seeking a variance from the maximum building set back. In addition a revised application would be heard by the Inland Wetlands Commission tonight. Should the variance be granted then the applicant would make a formal site plan application to PZC. Mr. Kral said the applicant would like to hear the Committee's views on the variance application. This has to be based on a hardship or

something that is unique to the property. Since the Committee wanted the building moved back the applicant would like to hear from the Committee. Mrs. Girioni said she felt the whole problem had been caused by the zoning in this area which was very inappropriate so she thanked the applicant for trying to fit in.

David Gagnon, civil engineer, Langan, circulated revised documents. At the last meeting in April Mr. Gagnon said there were a number of concerns which he felt he wanted to get right, and that he would like to keep the Committee and the Town happy. He said he had gone back to the drawing board in order to address all the concerns. Mr. Gagnon showed earlier and new drawings of the project. One concern was the proximity of the new storage building to the street. A problem with this was the maximum (50ft.) and minimum (30ft.) setbacks. Initially the building was set back 50ft. Now a variance will be sought to set the building back an additional 20ft. for a total set back of 70ft. Mr. Gagnon said one constant was the wetlands in the northeast corner. There was a 100ft. wetlands review area so one could only go back so far and Mr. Gagnon said nothing would be built in the wetlands. The infiltration system has been increased and moved as far from the wetlands as possible. Also the building has been articulated so there was more interest from the street and there will also be screening from the street. Mr. Gagnon noted that he had tried to have the building in line with the adjacent building to the east. He reminded the Committee that the existing building would be renovated and that the rest of the site plan would remain the same as presented earlier.

Mr. Gagnon showed elevation drawings of earlier and new versions of the proposed storage building. On the south elevation (Boston Post Road), there will be two stories in front then the building will be tiered back so the third story is set back. Another concern had been the height of the U-Haul sign so this was lowered. The cedar shakes were not looked upon favorably so these will be replaced with Hardiboard. On the west elevation (I-95) Mr. Gagnon said that again the cedar shakes had been replaced with Hardiboard, the color scheme will remain the same but the color of the doors was modified and the “eyebrows” were removed. No changes have been made to the plans for the existing building.

Michael Hunton, landscape architect, said one comment had been that there was too much light along the road along the new building so some of this has been eliminated. There will be all new poles with foundations for the lighting. Mr. Cunningham queried pole height. Mr. Hunton replied 25ft. Mr. Gagnon noted that permission to park vehicles 20ft. back from the road was a legal issue that had not yet been resolved by the attorneys. Mrs. Girioni asked if permission was denied what the backup plan was. Mr. Gagnon replied that it would have to be reassessed but that it would have significant impact on the layout of the project. He said he had tried to screen the vehicles but that it would hurt the business if one could not see what it was selling. He also felt the applicant would want to display more than one vehicle. Mr. Weissenborn queried screening material. Mr. Hunton replied that there would be shade trees with typical screening underneath. Mr. Campus noted that a sidewalk had been added. Mr. Gagnon agreed saying it was along the Boston Post Road, and there was a new bicycle rack.

Mr. Campus asked if there was a formal application before PZC. Mr. Kral replied that the priority was a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Mr. Campus suggested the Committee separate the zoning issue from other items since it was more urgent and the Committee had requested this. Mr. Thompson disagreed asking how the Committee felt about the general mass of the new building and did it have a sense of this. He felt this should be framed before the Committee started other pieces of the project. Mr. Thompson thought if the Committee was not comfortable with this then it should be addressed first. Mr. Campus replied that there were only two choices – either the building

was set at 50ft. or moved back at the Committee's request to 70ft. He said there was no third choice. Mr. Thompson felt it would be helpful to see where the Committee members stood on the new building.

With regard to the design of the building Mr. Weissenborn thanked the applicant for all the work and felt that it was greatly improved. However, he said the thing that drew his attention was the entrance piece on the west elevation. Mr. Weissenborn explained that everything else was going for a bigger read but this area was a lot of little pieces. He suggested it could be clad in glass like the existing building so it was almost invisible and within that could be set the doors and entrance. Mr. Weissenborn felt the mass could be a lot less by stepping things down. Mr. Gagnon noted that the site sloped down towards the rear so one would not see the whole 40ft. of the building. Mr. Charney queried the windows above the entrance. Mr. Campus replied that they essentially opened into a box that was not accessed.

Committee members made the following comments:-

- Mr. Charney said it was great that the building had been pushed back so it was aligned with the adjacent building so it was referencing something else. However, he said he wished that he could say that it was a good looking building but it was not. It was not the right scale for a building of this size. Mr. Charney said he was not opposed to mass if it was done well. He thought the scale of the windows was too big on the narrow façade, the character of the entrance was not good and that he would like it to be straightforward and authentic. Instead it looked just like items put on a wall. Regarding the variance Mr. Charney said he would advocate for changing the rules and pushing the building back.
- Mr. Thompson felt the project was going in the right direction on the big parts but that the architecture needed to be better. He said if he approved the variance request that this did not mean that he approved the whole project.
- Mr. Charney said the character of the building was subjective but this was what most people would appreciate.
- Mr. Thompson stated that even if approvals were granted by ZBA and IWC which would be reasonable he still would not support the building.
- Based on the informal meeting Mr. Campus felt from the massing standpoint that a lot had been accomplished but he thought the applicant was lost because they were outside of their usual vocabulary for the building. Perhaps the Committee should step in more to help move things in the right direction. Mr. Thompson disagreed saying the Committee should not design the building.
- Ms. Towers thought some of the shifts in the building could be emphasized with strategically placed plantings and that the front should be left as one piece rather than three.
- Mr. Thompson said any approval of the variance should include a statement about the new building.
- Mr. Rosenthal thought the person (architect) who should be hearing these comments was not present today.
- Mrs. Girioni recommended making two motions, one for the variance and one for things the Committee wished to see addressed on the new building. Mr. Thompson disagreed saying it was up to the applicant to design the building and then the Committee would comment on that.
- Mr. Thompson felt it would be nice to have several perspectives.

- Mrs. Repetti pointed out that the Committee had asked for 3-D models in the past so it could really understand a project.
- Ms. Towers said the 2-story section made the building much better.
- Mr. Weissenborn was intrigued by an earlier comment from Mr. Charney to put a barn-style building. He added that a 2-3 story structure wasn't really a barn. Mr. Campus said that it wasn't really a barn scale.
- Ms. Towers said if it could be made a background building that would be good.
- Mr. Charney said he appreciated the attempt to modulate the mass in order to reduce the size of the building near the road, but overall there seemed to be no rationale or logic organizing all the elements of the building. For example, the storage area windows were at a different scale from the entry windows, and seemed to be randomly placed, though they could have been located in a way that reinforced the entry. He recommended that the designer study the project in 3 dimensions in order to look at the building as a whole, and not just a series of elements to be placed on a wall. He also mentioned that the designer could reference a variety of regional, vernacular building types in order to design a building that felt that it belonged in the area. A large beautiful New England barn for example, even without the change in mass, might prove to be more appropriate than the current design. In general, he asked for a handsome looking building, traditional, modern, whatever, as long as it was thoughtfully designed as a whole, and for this very prominent site.
- Ms. Towers said that aligning with the adjacent building created a more consistent landscape buffer which would unify and soften the gateway character.

Mr. Thompson made a motion that the applicant reconsider the proposed self-storage building based on the above-mentioned comments. Mr. Charney seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Mrs. Girioni made a motion that the Design Review Committee endorsed the applicant's request for a variance from the maximum building set back because this was a unique site, it was a gateway to Guilford and the proposed use was fairly intensive for this unique site. The zoning for this site was set up for street fronting which had a different kind of intent. To make this use possible the building should be set back so that it could align with the adjacent Guilford Gravure building to the east. The Guilford Gravure building already presented a non-conforming condition since it was situated well beyond the 50 foot maximum setback line. Lining up the two buildings would give both facilities a stronger built context and rationale for their positions relative to the street. The increased setback would also enhance the landscape buffer provided at this gateway to Guilford. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

In conclusion Mr. Campus felt the applicant was lost about what to present to the Committee so it should give as much feedback as it could. He said he personally thought the shallow roof did not do anything and that there was no reason to echo the roof on the existing building because they were two different structures. He suggested stepping it down to simplify the building. Mr. Rosenthal pointed out that barns were the original self-storage buildings of New England. He said the proposed building had no reference to anything and it could be located anywhere. He asked if there were any unique pieces that the Committee could suggest. Mr. Charney said they should be authentic and consistent within themselves. The applicant was making changes but not in a way to make the whole thing consistent. Mr. Thompson felt the best suggestion was manipulation in a 3-D model and to make the pieces come together. Mr. Charney recommended designing a building that worked as a whole and to do this the applicant should look at a 3-D model and think about the scale, etc.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25p.m.

The next meeting of the Design Review Committee will be held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2017 at 4:00p.m. in the Guilford Community Center.

Respectfully submitted,

Katharine Stewart  
Recording Secretary