



**TOWN OF NEWTOWN
DESIGN ADVISORY BOARD**

MINUTES

Wednesday, June 10, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Zoom Virtual Meeting Participation Information

Call-In Number: +1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 818 3571 3502 #

Website: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81835713502>

Board members: Phil Clark, Peter Cloudas, Agni Kyprianou, Frank Caico

Also present: Christine O'Neill, Clerk; Valerie White, White Architects; Robin and Gani Metaj of Patty's Pantry

Mr. Clark called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Application

Application by Solli Engineering, LLC, for a property located at 282 South Main Street, as shown in a drawing titled, "Patty's Pantry, 282 S. Main St. Newtown, CT" dated 3/25/20 last revised 4/24/20.

Ms. White began by stating that she and her clients were pleased with the first iteration of the building (approved by the Board in November 2019), but when it went out to bid the project went over budget. Therefore, Ms. White has returned in order to modify the project in hopes of maintaining the aesthetic, but lowering the overall cost.

The following changes are being requested:

REQUEST 1: Omit board and batten siding on rear elevation of gambrel. Replace with cement siding to match kitchen.

REQUEST 2: Omit vertical boards on gable volume at front and south (drive thru window) elevations. Replace with cement siding to match kitchen siding at rear and south elevations.

REQUEST 3: Omit stone veneer at base of building both locations.

REQUEST 4: Omit wall mounted light above main entry door. A recess light has been provided.

REQUEST 5: Omit barn doors.

Mr. Caico asked to see the previously approved drawing, and later the Board shifted to the rendering with the proposed changes. Ms. White demonstrated the changes on the drawings.

Mr. Clark and Mr. Caico wondered how much money would be saved by making these changes on such a small building. Ms. White said they are trying to save every thousand dollars they can. She would have liked to propose vinyl siding to save \$30,000 but knew it wouldn't go over well with the Board, so the cement siding is a compromise. Ms. White hopes that if all the changes are approved, the project cost will be reduced by \$20,000.

Ms. White shared her screen to demonstrate exactly where she would like to eliminate the stone veneer along the base of the building.

Mr. Caico noted that the cost of Ms. White redrawing the renderings and coming to these meetings would likely cancel out the savings. Ms. White expressed that the stone veneer and the siding are the two most expensive items, and therefore her largest priority in terms of savings.

Mr. Clark said that he is okay with the siding change, but he would prefer that the stone veneer remained.

Mr. Cloudas shared that he had similar stonework done to his house but it cost \$15,000. Mr. Caico pointed out that the Board had only requested a stone veneer as opposed to an actual stone wall and footing. Mr. Clark noted that in his experience, the stone veneer can be as expensive as real stone.

Mr. Clark asked the Board if they could come up with a compromise, or if the sentiment was that the building should remain the way it is. Valerie White shared that Director of Planning George Benson wished for the Board to give their blessing to the project.

Mr. Cloudas stated that he liked Ms. White's first rendering better than the current proposal. He felt that the minimum standard would be to express New England character. He asked his fellow Board members if they thought the new design with the proposed changes would have been approved, had it been presented the first time around.

Mr. Caico was of the opinion that the front elevation is the most important in terms of visual impact, so he preferred if changes were not made to that. Mr. Caico asked if they could trade the stone veneer on the light posts for keeping the stone veneer on the front elevation. Ms. White explained that the contractor would have done the light posts as a complimentary service, so it would not actually save them money.

Mr. Cloudas wondered if the stone veneer could be replaced with another material, so it would maintain the horizontal split to break up the wall height, and later put in the stone veneer when they were able to afford it. Ms. White was not certain if that would work with the business plan, and noted some other changes where the owners were trying to cut costs.

Mr. Clark returned to Mr. Cloudas's question of whether or not the Board would have approved this new rendering if it was presented the first time around.

Mr. Caico was concerned that this would represent DAB lowering their bar, since there is a pattern of stepping back from their suggestions when applicants return with modifications to lower the cost of the project.

Mr. Caico also noted that the asphalt runs right up to the front of the building, which means there is no room for landscaping as a softening feature. Ms. White recalled that conversation from the initial meeting, and said that the site was so tight that landscaping wasn't possible. Mr. Cloudas noted that there was a single elevation from driveway right into the building, which did not give her an opportunity for a curb. Ms. White commented that the excavator was able to raise the

finished floor elevation (FFE) a bit. There is 6 inches between the concrete and FFE. Mr. Caico confirmed that it's not flush, then, and Ms. White explained there is a ramp leading to the concrete pad.

Ms. White proposed an eight-inch high stone veneer, only in the front of the building, instead of having the contractor do the light poles.

Mr. Caico made a motion to recommend to the Land Use Agency that the changes proposed are acceptable with the exception of the stone veneer on the front elevation (Request #5).

Mr. Cloudas said he did not want to second yet.

Ms. Kyprianou wondered if they could replace the stone veneer with brick veneer, which is less expensive. Mr. Cloudas was looking at a different type of stone as a possible alternative, but Ms. White and Ms. Kyprianou said that would not result in much savings and would be less aesthetic. Ms. Kyprianou reiterated the suggestion of bricks. Ms. White felt the building would not look like an old farmhouse if they used brick. Mr. Cloudas wondered if the siding on the gable portion could be switched to rounded tile or shingle.

Ms. White displayed a color board of browns and grays, commenting that they were trying to make the building as charming as possible.

Mr. Clark expressed that, like Mr. Caico, he agreed with all the requested changes except eliminating the stone veneer.

Gani Metaj, owner of Patty's Pantry, shared that things have changed dramatically for their business in the wake of COVID-19. They had signed the contract for this new facility right before quarantine and business closures, which put them in a difficult position. Unless you want an empty building, Mr. Metaj stated, we are looking for help. Robin Metaj shared that the restaurant business has been hit especially hard, and their future income was uncertain.

Mr. Cloudas said the point is well-taken, and said he was ready to second Mr. Caico's motion - though he felt the Board was continuing to degrade their standards on account of cost. The Board as a whole, however, has been raising their standard, and Mr. Cloudas felt they should be able to accept this "B" as opposed to the originally-presented "A+."

Ms. Kyprianou pointed out that the one of the listed changes is to eliminate the barn doors. She asked if the Board was okay with that, and Mr. Clark expressed concern. Ms. White shared that eliminating the stone veneer would save a lot more money than the barn doors.

Mr. Cloudas stated that he would not want the barn doors to be eliminated. Ms. Kyprianou said she could live without the stone, but not without the barn doors, as they add so much character to the building. She also wanted to keep the gooseneck light.

The Board expressed their sympathy for the position that Patty's Pantry is in.

Mr. Caico asked if the Metajs would be okay to keep the barn doors and the light. Ms. White pointed out that the light was more decorative than functional. Mrs. Metaj commented that her

priorities would be to keep the barn doors and light, and that it is important to fit with the character of the neighborhood. Mr. Metaj expressed once again that he is trying to save money wherever possible.

Mr. Caico withdrew his previous motion. He made a new motion: That the applicants' requests to modify the plans are acceptable with the exception of Request #4 and #5, which the Board would like to see maintained. Mr. Cloudas seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Mr. and Mrs. Metaj thanked the Board for their consideration and making compromises.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Clark and the Board decided to table the minutes from the meeting of December 16, 2019.

Mr. Cloudas made a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting of February 12, 2020. Ms. Kyprianou seconded. Mr. Clark and Mr. Caico abstained. Mr. Cloudas and Ms. Kyprianou were in favor and the minutes were approved.

Draft Pre-Application Review & Peter Cloudas's Process Document Discussion

Ms. O'Neill briefly presented the pre-application form she created.

Mr. Caico liked the form. Mr. Cloudas said he wasn't opposed to it, but felt that the discussion of process should come first. Mr. Caico wondered how an applicant would know to fill it out. Ms. O'Neill reminded the Board that not every Planning and Zoning application is referred to DAB, because they are not in Design Districts.

Mr. Caico was under the impression that the Board had already reached an agreement with the Land Use Agency where all applications would come before them, regardless of whether they are in a Design District. Mr. Clark said that he had a past discussion with Mr. Benson and Planning and Zoning Chairman Don Mitchell to that effect, but nothing had come of it. The Board wanted to continue discussing this and try to ensure all Planning and Zoning applications were reviewed by them in the future. Mr. Caico felt the DAB also adds value to the town.

Mr. Cloudas said he would review the previous write-ups he had shared with the Board for proposed amendments to the Zoning Regulations, which would give the Board more authority than it currently has.

Mr. Cloudas and Mr. Caico wondered if there was a pre-application process already in place at the Land Use Agency. Ms. O'Neill explained that pre-application meetings are relatively rare, and often happen in the form of informal conversations with leadership in the Land Use Agency.

Mr. Cloudas suggested tabling the pre-application because there was no solidified DAB process for it to fit into. Mr. Caico was also concerned about the Board process tying into the Town's process. Mr. Clark said that there are two separate issues: how the Board fits into the Town's process, and what the Board's internal process is.

Mr. Caico and Ms. Kyprianou strongly felt that the Land Use staff should encourage the applicant to come to DAB at a very early stage, so they can give them guidance. Mr. Clark agreed, saying that the applicant's proposal should incorporate the feedback that the Board discussed with them at the start. The Board all agreed that they did not want to see modifications coming to the Board after they'd already been approved by Land Use or Planning and Zoning, and were already in the process of being constructed (as happened with the Pleasant Paws project). Mr. Cloudas said that it was imperative to see the applicants before they are already married to their design.

Mr. Clark asked how the Land Use Agency would know to recommend, at an early stage, that developers come to DAB. Ms. O'Neill explained Mr. Benson usually recommends that Planning and Zoning applicants go before DAB during an informal conversation, but that this discussion would best be had with Mr. Benson himself present.

Mr. Clark and the Board wished to have a meeting with Mr. Benson, Mr. Mitchell, and Deputy Director of Land Use Rob Sibley to discuss how the Board process fits in with the Land Use Agency process. Mr. Caico said the Board should treat this as a "sales pitch" to convince the Land Use Agency of the Board's value.

Mr. Clark said he would like to bring Mr. Cloudas's document as a starting point during the discussion. Mr. Cloudas proposed creating a subcommittee for the purpose of redrafting his process document so that it's more representative of what the whole Board thinks.

Mr. Clark shared that he will be resigning from the Board soon. He explained that the reason he postponed the candidate interviews is because it was awkward to have them over Zoom. The Board agreed it was important to have them at the next meeting, ideally in person.

Mr. Cloudas moved to table the process discussion, until such time that a meeting could be arranged with George Benson, Rob Sibley, and Don Mitchell. Mr. Caico seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Mr. Cloudas moved to table the pre-application to the next meeting. Mr. Caico seconded. All were in favor and the pre-application was tabled.

Adjournment

Mr. Caico made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Clark seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Christine O'Neill, Clerk*

A recording of the meeting may be found here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1M3Utt_i5rmxcsTAJ8nWypEPA0cj4I2Iv?usp=sharing