

3 PRIMROSE STREET
NEWTOWN, CONNECTICUT 06470
TEL. (203) 270-4276
FAX (203) 270-4278



TOWN OF NEWTOWN

DESIGN ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES

Tuesday, April 16, 2019
7:00 p.m., Meeting Room 1
3 Primrose Street, Newtown CT

Present: Kathy Geckle, Agni Kyprianou, Peter Cloudas

Also present: Christine O'Neill, Clerk; Eric Nelson, Rauhaus, Freeddenfeld & Associates; Pei Cheng, Rauhaus, Freeddenfeld & Associates; Russ Cyr, Solli Engineering; Eric Maria, Claris Construction; Dr. Vali, applicant

Recused: Phil Clark

Miss Geckle called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

New Business

Planning and Zoning Commission Application 19.05 by Prithvi Real Estate Management, Inc., for an Amendment to a Special Exception, originally approved under Application 18.11 on 6/21/18, for a property located at 94 South Main Street, as shown in a set of plans titled, "Pleasant Paws Pet Center, 94 South Main Street, Newtown, Connecticut" revised 3/26/19 and most recently revised 4/11/19, and supporting documents submitted to the Land Use Agency 3/29/19.

Russell Cyr, a civil engineer from Solli Engineering showed two site plans: the approved site plan and the proposed site plan. He reported that very little has changed. A generator was added, a modular block retaining wall was put in place (for traffic visibility "sight distance" per CT DOT), and the HVAC condensers' position was shifted. Mr. Cyr called the site plans "virtually identical."

Mr. Cloudas asked about the coloration of the retaining wall and asked if there were plans for a stone finish. Mr. Cyr replied in the negative, but noted that the blocks would have a natural concrete texture. Mr. Cloudas verified with Mr. Cyr that no plantings could be put in front of the retaining wall, in order not to obstruct the sight distance.

Dr. Vali, the applicant, stated that if there are any changes that can be made to improve the aesthetics, he was willing to listen and make those alterations.

Ms. Kyprianou suggested that a stone veneer be put in front of the wall, but noted that she'd like to see the 3D renderings of the building (which Mr. Nelson was to present later).

Eric Maria of Claris Construction mentioned that a stain would be a better solution, because a veneer would stick out and obstruct the sight distance. The Board and other attendees were amenable to this idea.

These minutes are subject to the approval of the Board.

Mr. Cloudas asked if the retaining wall showed up in any of Mr. Nelson's graphics, and Mr. Nelson replied that it did not.

Ms. Geckle asked if there was a space for the animals to get out of the facility. Dr. Vali and Mr. Cyr clarified that there was a fenced-in exercise area.

Mr. Cloudas asked about the relocation of the mechanical equipment. He approved of the decision to move it into a more concealed area where it will be less of an eyesore.

The Board was satisfied with the site plan, and Eric Nelson of Rauhaus, Freeddenfeld & Associates introduced the 3D renderings of the building.

Mr. Nelson displayed both the approved rendering and the proposed rendering. Similar to Mr. Cyr, he stressed that there were very few changes, most of which were "refinements" as a result of consultations with engineers. The amount of fenestration has changed for energy preservation purposes and a few aesthetics were altered such as the use of Nichiha material.

Mr. Cloudas noted that the architecture and plane style of the approved rendering called more attention to the entrance, and he was wondering why that seemed to have been lost in the second rendering. The second rendering seemed more "blocky."

Ms. Geckle and Ms. Kyprianou agreed that the originally approved rendering was nicer, and they would like to work to move back towards that aesthetic.

The Board acknowledged that there had already been, and would continue to be, many different discussions about the coloration of the building (it had changed from blue to brown in the proposed rendering).

To respond to Mr. Cloudas's concerns about the industrial look of the building, Mr. Nelson suggested banding and mentioned there are a handful of changes that could be made to decrease the subordination of the entrance.

Ms. Kyprianou suggested bumping out the entrance by using a different material, such as a wood that has graining. Using a wood band would create visual dimensions and define the entrance. Mr. Nelson replied that he would prefer not to do too much of the wood because it works better as an accent, so from his point of view doing the entire front gable in wood would lose the effect.

Ms. Kyprianou liked the big glass windows behind the entrance in the first rendering, and asked why it was not carried over to the second. Mr. Nelson and Dr. Vali replied that it was for energy efficiency reasons. Ms. Kyprianou wondered if any of it could be preserved. Mr. Nelson suggested making only the center bay slightly bigger, or introducing a trim element to increase definition. His assistant Pei Cheng pointed out that the center bay corresponded to the width of the vestibule and therefore could not be increased, but that the trim element was possible.

Mr. Cloudas wanted more definition where the center gable comes down so that it does not look so much like a flat plane. Ms. Cheng suggested a vertical reveal and Mr. Nelson suggested adding a trim band to increase definition.

Mr. Cloudas asked if Dr. Vali was still open to suggestions, and Dr. Vali stated that anything that looked good and was agreeable to the Board would certainly be considered.

Mr. Nelson introduced the elevation plans. He demonstrated that the height of the rooflines and dormers had changed. Ms. Geckle asked how many stories, and Mr. Nelson replied two.

Mr. Nelson asserted that the building had a solid design with a complementary palette of both materials and colors.

Dr. Vali asked if several different color schemes could be mocked up and presented to the Board, and Mr. Nelson said that was doable. Ms. Kyprianou also requested that samples of materials be presented to them. Mr. Cloudas pointed out that the Planning and Zoning Commission hearing for this application was on Thursday, so there is no real time to consider color schemes before a recommendation needed to be given to the Commission. Dr. Vali stated that he would be happy to come before the DAB again, even after the P&Z approval was obtained, just to make sure the design would be agreeable to the Board and the Town.

The Board was wondering if there was a depiction of the sign that had been originally approved. Mr. Cyr was unable to find it on the site plans that had been submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Once the presentations had concluded, the Board entered into a discussion about how to communicate their comments to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Recommendation to Planning and Zoning Commission

Mr. Cloudas made a motion to recommend that the Planning and Zoning make it a condition of approval that the applicant return to the Design Advisory Board addressing the comments from tonight's meeting. Ms. Geckle seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Adjournment

Mr. Cloudas made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Geckle seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m.