

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



TOWN OF NEWTOWN

DESIGN ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES

Tuesday, June 11, 2019
7:00 p.m., Meeting Room 1
3 Primrose Street, Newtown CT

Present: Phil Clark, Peter Cloudas, Kathy Geckle, Agni Kyprianou, Frank Caico

Also present: Christine O'Neill, Clerk; George Benson, Director of Land Use and Planning; Greg Wilson, Landscape Architect with Kaestle Boos; Alex McKeton, Architect with Kaestle Boos; Scott Mangiagli, Architect with Kaestle Boos; Allen Adriani, Sustain Energy Commission member; Bob Mitchell, Chair of Public Building & Siting Commission; Chief of Police James Viadero

Mr. Clark called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and had the representatives for the applicant introduce themselves.

New Business

Application by Kaestle Boos Associates, Inc., for a property located at 191 South Main Street, as shown in a set of plans titled "New Police Headquarters for the Town of Newtown, 191 South Main Street, Newtown, CT" dated 5/28/19.

Mr. Mangiagli introduced himself distributed several sets of plans. He stated that the property for the new Police Headquarters formerly belonged to Taunton Press. It is an existing building built in 1980 of about 21,000 square feet. There will be an addition for a detention and sally port of about 5,000 square feet, as well as an addition of a new main entrance. Mr. Wilson explained that the parking in front of the building would be resurfaced, with no alterations to the grading, and would have 28 spaces; on the right side of the building, an additional 63 spaces of secure parking would be paved to accommodate the police fleet.

Mr. Wilson shared that the fencing for the secure portion of the parking is black vinyl coated chain link with a gate to separate the public parking, and answered a few clarifying questions for the Board members. The space between the parking and Ethan Allen Road has been graded such that no retaining wall is needed. The planting plan shows a "slope mix" of low maintenance, fast-growing landscaping.

Mr. Wilson explained that a new front staircase would be installed where the existing one currently is. The landscape between the front parking lot and the road is already existing and will not be added to. Mr. Clark asked if the minimalist landscaping was to leave the police building

These minutes are subject to the approval of the Board.

as visible as possible, to which Mr. Mangiagli replied yes, as it was a secure facility with surveillance cameras.

The architects did not have many options for placing the entrance sign, in order to both maintain the sight line and make sure it was visible from the street front. Mr. Clark asked for a drawing of the sign, which was part of the plan that had been distributed at the beginning of the evening. The sign is granite and meant to emulate what has been used by Parks & Recreation, and is intended to be lit.

The Board asked about the alternate plans. Mr. Wilson explained the alternate entrance plan would include a segmental retaining wall with brick pavers as a functional breakout from the lobby. Mr. Mitchell commented that the stone had been requested by an ad hoc committee, but that the additional cost could not be justified.

Mr. Caico wondered why the streetlights appeared so urban-contemporary and if alternatives had been considered. Mr. Wilson and Mr. Mangiagli responded that the design was meant to reflect the look of the building based on what the existing facility had started with.

Mr. Mangiagli pointed out a prefabricated two-bay carport in the center of the secure parking, which is an alternate because of the cost. Mr. Clark wondered if there could be some trees planted in an island to disguise the structure, but Mr. Mangiagli reminded them that there are security concerns and that the parking lot should remain as clear and visible as possible.

Mr. Caico and Mr. Clark had additional questions about grading, which Mr. Wilson addressed by directing them to the grading plan in the set of plans.

Mr. Caico requested details on the parking lot gate, and commented that it looked too “imposing.” Mr. Mangiagli said that the black vinyl is an alternative to galvanized steel chain link, and that they did consider wrought-iron which was the most expensive. Mr. Caico encouraged the applicant to look into something more decorative and attractive for the fence/gate. Mr. Clark and Mr. Cloudas agreed. Mr. Cloudas pointed out that the fence interrupts the New England character that the South Main Village Design District is looking to preserve.

Mr. Caico also asked about hardscape materials in the public portions of the site. Mr. Wilson stated there would be asphalt paving for the parking lot, the accessible walk and front steps would be concrete, and the prisoner release walk is asphalt. Mr. Clark asked if there would be concrete on one side and asphalt on the other, which Mr. Wilson confirmed. Ms. Kyprianou asked why these materials had been chosen, and Mr. Wilson explained it was a cost-driven decision.

Mr. Mitchell commented that the trees which were up against the building, with roots beginning to grow under the building, had been removed by Public Works. Any replacement trees were required to be native.

Mr. Caico asked about the crushed stone that was depicted underneath the fence. Mr. Wilson explained that there was no irrigation for landscaping there and the stone would be earth tone colors. Mr. Caico feared that it would eventually become weeds and look like trap rock. Mr.

Caico suggested instead putting a planting bed with arborvitae. Mr. Clark felt concerned about the chain link fence with the crushed stone giving off a “cold” appearance.

Mr. Cloudas wondered about visibility from the road. Mr. Mangiagli mentioned that the building could not be seen from the road, but Mr. Clark disagreed saying he could certainly see the building when he drove past.

Mr. Caico stated that while he understood the desire to be judicious with tax dollars, the chain link fence and crushed stone would not be visually appealing or in harmony with the Town.

Mr. Clark suggested they move on to the facade.

Mr. Mangiagli stated that the existing material is fading and would be replaced with aluminum composite on a backer board. The material is durable and will sit well on the brick. In the back of the building at the point of the patrol entry, it will transition to a steel panel, as it is more cost-effective. The back of the building has not been rendered.

Mr. Caico asked if the sally port was a one-story structure and if it had a flat roof. Mr. Mangiagli confirmed this. Mr. Clark further asked about the rendering, if it could generate a perspective from the road or from the back. The grades were already built into the model so Mr. Mangiagli stated it would be possible.

Mr. Clark asked about windows, and Mr. Mangiagli explained there would be no operable windows on the building.

Mr. McKeton passed out material samples of the aluminum, brick, and fiber cement siding. Mr. Clark asked if Mr. Mangiagli felt these were in keeping with the character of the neighborhood. He replied that it was perhaps more residential than what would be expected for a civic building. Mr. Clark asked if it could be broken up with gabled ends, but Mr. Mangiagli said that it was another cost-driven decision. Ultimately part of the reason this site was chosen was to save money by using an existing building.

Mr. Caico suggested introducing a more residential clapboard siding instead of the fiber cement siding, which would be along the sally port on the side of the building.

Mr. Cloudas asked why they didn't bring a rendering of the sally port, seeing as that was the main part of the building that was being added. He felt that a single rendering was inadequate for the DAB to make a recommendation. Mr. Mangiagli explained that the sally port is essentially a garage, and as such they did not feel it was important to render. The Board requested that a rendering of the sally port be submitted to them before the next meeting.

Mr. Mangiagli spent some time discussing the details of the lighting. The light is a half-inch flexible LED channel light.

Mr. Caico confirmed that the dumpster enclosure was within the secure area. Mr. Wilson stated it is six feet tall with the vinyl slats.

Mr. Clark asked if the architects were willing to consider a softer, more New England-esque material for the front of the building than the metal shown in the plans. Mr. Mangiagli explained that they had looked at Nichi Ha, but it was only available in two colors.

Mr. Kyprianou asked if the stone detail along the entry stairs depicted in the rendering would be present, but Mr. Mangiagli said it is currently concrete. The Board and the architects discussed what had changed since the rendering was produced, due to cost.

Mr. Caico asked about the plant materials for the front landscaping. Mr. Wilson said they were low shrubs and perennials such as spirea, fountain grass, and Bar Harbor juniper. Further up there was the ability to put larger shrubs with the backdrop of the building, such as Miss Kim lilac and inkberry. He also stated there would be coneflowers by the flagpole. Mr. Caico shared that he disliked the parking coming right up to the sidewalk, and suggested they place a planting strip to soften the space between the sidewalk and parking lot.

Mr. Caico asked if the existing surface parking in decent shape. Mr. Wilson said no, but the top layer of asphalt is going to be stripped and repaved entirely.

Mr. Clark and Mr. Caico stated that they were sympathetic to the challenge of trying to remodel an existing building and stay within a tight budget, but that the job of the Board is to protect the New England character of Newtown.

Mr. Benson reminded them that they could make a recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission, and P&Z could pursue it further.

Mr. Clark and the Board agreed that they would really like to see the additional renderings they requested. Mr. Benson suggested the architects send an email with those renderings, so that the Board could take a look at it before meeting for a second time.

Mr. Cloudas asked about the stone wall at the front of the property, stating that is a typical New England feature which should be continued to the front of the building. Mr. Mangiagli explained that the New England character was certainly ideal, and that's what they expressed with the alternatives.

Mr. Cloudas stressed that the aesthetic focus should be the most visible part of the building.

Mr. Caico expressed that the wayfinding signage should be integrated into the architecture. Mr. Clark disagreed, saying that for this particular building he felt the signage should be as prominent and large as the police want it, considering that civilians in trouble will need to identify the building quickly.

The Chief of Police commented that it is very important that both the signage and the facade itself stand out from shopping plazas and other businesses. He also commented that the sally port has very particular specifications, which leave very little room from design upgrades.

Miss Kyprianou agreed with the comments of Chief Viadero but explained that the main entry really should be more aesthetically pleasing. Mr. Caico stated that corrugated metal doesn't necessarily identify the building as a police station, rather seems to be more common in retail.

Mr. Caico asked if they had gotten DOT approval. Mr. Benson and Mr. Mangiagli stated that nothing had triggered a need for DOT review.

Mr. Caico asked when construction would start and Mr. Mitchell explained that it would begin in October and was slated to be a 12-month project. As far as the Planning and Zoning Commission submission, the applicant would need to submit by July 2nd to get on the July 18th agenda.

Monday, June 24th at 7pm was decided upon the next meeting time for the DAB. It was later decided that interested DAB members could meet at 5pm at the site for a site walk.

Mr. Mangiagli stated that communication antennae would be need to be placed on the roof roughly in the center-front of the building. After some discussion, the Board determined that the rooftop units would not be visible from the parking lot.

The Board asked about the entry doors. They would be gray sliding doors.

The Board summarized the main concerns as:

1. The chain link fence with crushed stone
2. A better understanding of what could be seen from the road and parking lot, including rooftop units
3. The site lighting fixtures
4. A softer alternative to the metal siding
5. A physical sample of corrugated metal siding for the entryway
6. A rendering of the sally port and the other side of the building

Development of a DAB of Application, Application Documents Requirements, and Application Process

Mr. Benson went over a memo he had written regarding the purpose and practices of the Design Advisory Board. He explained that there had not been a consistent DAB since he became the Director of the Land Use Agency, so he wanted to review the responsibilities. He also explained how the South Main Village Design District worked as an overlay zone, as well as the Special Development Districts which are for new buildings within the SMVDD. Mr. Benson shared that he would like to start inviting one member of the DAB to come to the Planning and Zoning Commission pre-application review meetings for projects with Design Districts, as an effort to get the DAB involved earlier in the process.

Mr. Caico wondered if the DAB should also be commenting on projects outside the Design Districts. Mr. Benson reminded them that the Ordinance creating the DAB was specific that they only had jurisdiction over Design Districts.

Mr. Clark asked if Mr. Benson thought it was a good idea to go before the Planning and Zoning Commission and ask to expand their jurisdiction to projects outside the Design Districts. Mr. Benson explained that they would need to change the Ordinance, which meant they would need to go before the Legislative Council. Mr. Benson said that he could recommend large projects to the DAB, regardless of whether or not it was in a Design District, and did not feel they would need to alter the Ordinance, since the applicants' use of the DAB is voluntary.

Mr. Clark handed out a mock-up of a potential DAB application. He explained that he had used applications from local towns to create the mock-up and asked the Board to review it at their leisure and return to the next meeting with comments. Mr. Cloudas suggested adding a sheet showing a sample of the process for a Design District. He also thought it would be helpful if the applicant pointed out where within the Design District the site lay by providing a map.

Adjournment

Mr. Clark made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Cloudas seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 9:08pm.