

TOWN OF WESTPORT ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD

MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 10, 2017

Members Present: Ward French, Chairman; Vesna Herman and Jon HalperThe meeting was brought to order at 7:30 PM by Chairman Ward French. Minutes from the Dec, 13, 2016 meeting were approved.

1. **Test Amendment #725**, To add a new section to the zoning regulations, General Business District/Residential zone (GBD/R)

**Appeared:** Attorney Bill Fitzpatrick for the Riverwalk District, Roger Ferris and Myron Mirgorodsky, Architects; David Waldman, Applicant

Mr. Fitzpatrick said the property is 2.58 acres in a GBD. He said this is just the start of a lengthy review process for the project. Roger Ferris will show a demonstration plan for the GBD/R application.

Mr. Ferris showed renderings of the Save the Children site and said it will be a mixed use site with some building renovation and some tear down/rebuild. The text amendment allows a building height of 47 ft. He showed drawings of the height in relation to adjacent buildings. He said the amendment does several things – it breaks up the monotony of the existing structure, allows a less intensive use of the site, the addition of the residential component will enliven the neighborhood, and the office parking area will provide overflow parking at night for the neighborhood.

Ward French asked if the text amendment would apply to any other sites and was told no other parcel is applicable.

Vesna Herman asked if it allows the building to be higher, can it also effect the footprint? She was told no, FAR is 0.75. Ms. Herman asked if the set back is the same as the existing. Mr. Mirgorodsky said no it is smaller and complies with regulations.

Jon Halper asked if the 47 ft height allowed is to the roof deck. Mr. Mirgorodsky said yes, from the parking lot, but the new residential building would be dug down 2-3 feet so it will only reach an approximately 44 ft. height to the deck.

Ward French asked if the neighbors still support the project. Mr. Waldman said yes.

After further discussion, Jon Halper said he had no comments; based on the demonstration, he was fine with the proposal. Vesna Herman and Ward French agreed.

**THE PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL AS PRESENTED (Unanimous)**

2. **54 Wilton Road**, Renovation to existing office building.

**Appeared:** Roger Ferris and Myron Mirgorodsky, Architects; David Waldman, Applicant

Mr. Ferris said the plan is to renovate a part of the Save The Children building, a U shaped piece at the south end of the building. Long term plans call for the elimination of the rest of the building to allow space for the residential construction. They are working with the existing structure to create a new building. The proposal includes:

- Gutting the interior
- Creating a recessed glass entrance at the center of the façade with site lines through to the courtyard behind
- Adding a parapet
- Changing the proportions above the second floor to create a band above new larger horizontal windows
- Add more glass to first floor and make all windows the same proportions
- Window systems are aluminum

Ward French said they are adding to the perceived building height and asked how much. Mr. Mirgorodsky said 6 inches.

Jon Halper asked how contingent the new skin design is on the removal of the part of the building that is designated for teardown. Mr. Ferris said they want to keep the proposed portion of the building, clean it up and change the proportions with nicer windows and a change of materials. He said they could complete the north elevation later if necessary. Mr. Halper asked if they are intentionally not making it red brick. Mr. Ferris said he wanted to create a break between the proposed residential building and all the red brick beyond. The exterior material is called Swiss Pearl.

Vesna Herman said it is a very modernistic building with the horizontal banding. Mr. Ferris said there is the center recess at the entrance to break it up. He said he did not like the existing rear indentation; with the entrance recess, they are creating an open air courtyard out of the space, including some vegetation, that will be visible from the front. He wanted to create a subtle, background building, unselfconscious. Ms. Herman asked how deep the indentation is and was told 10 ft. Mr. Mirgorodsky said the building will also be FEMA compliant.

Ward French asked if this design is in expectation of the new residential building. Mr. Ferris said yes.

Jon Halper said it is a handsome, simple tailored design but it is feeling a little sterile. He said he was struggling with the context, he wasn't quite sure if it is too background or doesn't feel like part of the procession. It looks like something in an office park, and as an interim between a new building and National Hall he doesn't see it tying them together. Mr. Ferris described all the variety of buildings in the neighborhood and said there is no contextural theme. He said one problem is that the building is too close to the road, he'd love to have planting islands in front but there is no room, they need the parking.

Mr. Halper said, then the more industrial loft like it is the better. Mr. Ferris said that is the intent. David Waldman said the execution of the details will make it work.

Vesna Herman liked the simplicity of the big windows and the light and tying together volumes. She said they could create more of a sense of depth by making the middle void stronger and more playful.

Ward French said that, given the constraints they have to work with, they have created an interesting, transparent building. He thought it would be a good transition to the new residential building.

**THE BUILDING DESIGN IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL AS PRESENTED**

(Unanimous)

**3. 59 Post Road East, Signage**

**Appeared:** Karen Johnson, AICP

Ms. Johnson said that since her last appearance, there has been a complete change in town planning leadership and philosophy. They were asked to withdraw their previous proposal and resubmit it for variances. The town is making new regulations for wayfinding signs so that proposal will have to wait. She was here to present 2 monument signs and 2 banner signs.

There are 2 monument signs, one at the corner of the Post Road and Main St. in an RORD, the other at Church Lane and Elm St., in a BCDH. There is an application before the ZBA to reduce setbacks for the signs.

The Post Road monument sign is precast patterned concrete with pin lettering. Ward French confirmed that the sign is 90 s.f. (12 ft wide x 5ft high x 11 inches deep). He said it is a massive sign. Ms. Johnson said they are allowed 100 s.f. She said the sign is set well back from the extended curb at the corner but is noncompliant with the property line. The Church & Elm monument sign, also precast concrete, is 5 ft high x 7 ft wide x 6 inches deep and is located in a planting area.

Jon Halper asked if the signs are colored as indicated in the submission. Ms. Johnson said no, they are gray. The colors were used to show the pattern in the concrete.

Ward French said it looks like the lead tenant is dictating the design and does not have the same design intentions as Centerbrook. Ms. Johnson said that it is almost the same size and shape as Centerbrook's design. Anthropologie did consult with Centerbrook who supported and approved the design. Mr. French said the sign does not relate to the building and, with the number of tenants indicated, and the pinned letters, it will be radically busy. Ms. Johnson said there really won't be the number of tenants indicated in the submission. Mr. French said the whole sign is graphically challenged, over busy and doesn't achieve its goal. This really is a gateway to the down town and the design is incongruent with the development. He could not support it.

The other board members agreed. Ms. Johnson asked if the board could support the location of the site signs and indicate it so that they could go to the ZBA. They will come back with a new design. Mr. French said he was not happy doing that.

David Waldman said this is where Centerbrook placed the sign and the size won't change. Just let us get to the ZBA for approval. Ms. Johnson said they have to come back for a zoning permit anyway.

Jon Halper said he had no issue with the location. He would like to see a Bedford Square design, not an Anthropologie design. This is just too busy.

Vesna Herman agreed, this design is not aesthetically appropriate for this location, the shape and style are not appropriate. There is not much option for the location. But it's hard to approve the location without knowing what is going there.

Ms. Johnson described the banner signs: 12 ft high by 2 ft wide for a total 24 s.f. They are attached flush by brackets to the building, are a gray Sunbrella fabric and are fixed. Colors are gray with white print saying Anthropologie & Co and a red ampersand.

Board members liked the banners. Vesna Herman said they are appropriate for this building.

**THE BOARD DOES NOT APPROVE THE DESIGN FOR EITHER MONUMENT SIGN BUT AGREES ABOUT THE RELEVENCE OF THEIR LOCATIONS** (Unanimous)

**THE DESIGN FOR THE BANNER SIGNS IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL** (Unanimous)

#### 4. **1 Morningside Drive North**, Exterior modifications

**Appeared:** Jim Sackett, Architect; Bob Hartt, Property Manager, Newman's Own

Mr. Sackett reminded the board that he had appeared a couple of years ago for the renovation of these buildings. The property consists of 3 buildings, Building B is rental space and Neman's Own, which occupies Building A, wants to expend into Building C. At the time it was built the complex was conforming; now it is nonconforming.

In Building C, the only windows on the second floor are at the gable ends. They propose:

- Skylights on the south facing roof
- A dormer addition on the north side (back) of the building
- Connecting the buildings by infilling an existing portico
- Adding French doors to create a vestibule in the east elevation of the portico
- New insulated glass in existing windows

Jon Halper said they did such a great job on Building A, if they do the same work for the renovations he is fine with it. Ward French and Vesna Herman agreed.

**THE RENOVATION DESIGN IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL** (Unanimous)

5. **154 Post Road East**, Applicant returning

**Appeared:** Jeff Kaufman, Architect

Mr. Kaufman said that at his last appearance, the board had been concerned about the proposed retaining wall in the enlarged parking area to the west of the building. The existing retaining wall directly behind the building is concrete block with a stucco finish. The new wall will be a continuation of what is there.

Mr. Kaufman said Ms Herman had been concerned about the canopy construction on the east elevation. He said it is 4 x 4 inch and 3 x 3 ½ inch galvanized steel tubing, closed on the ends, and painted.

Board members agreed that their concerns had been addressed.

**THE RENOVATION DESIGN IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL AS PRESENTED**  
(Unanimous)