

TOWN OF WESTPORT ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD

MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: Ward French, Chairman; Vesna Herman, George Masumian. Staff: Donna Douglass and Mary Young. Clerk: Sally Palmer

Minutes from the July 27, 2021 meeting were approved.

1. **1480 Post Road East:** Proposed signage at 1480 Post Road East (Parcel ID# H09//016/000 SIR Development for property owned by SIR-1480 PRE LLC located in a GBD. (Project layout/site plan by Landtech dated 4/21)

Appeared: Rob Haroun, Owner/Builder

Mr. Haroun said that sign is for a new 32 unit rental complex of townhouses called SIR Signature Living. The sign is already installed. It is:

- 31" tall x 72" wide, two sided, 15.5 sq. ft. signboard
- Supports are two 57" high decorative white posts
- The signboard is gray with white script
- The location is in the northwest corner of the property on the Post Road within setbacks

Vesna Herman and Ward French had no questions.

George Masumian asked if the sign would be lit. Mr. Haroun said no. Mr. Masumian said he realized the street address was the name of the development but asked if there would be a street address as well. Mr. Haroun said yes, he was waiting for one of the numerals to arrive.

All board members agreed the sign was appropriate.

**THE SIGN DESIGN IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL AS PRESENTED WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE STREET ADDRESS WILL BE ADDED (Unanimous)**

2. **1790 Post Road East:** Proposed signage modifications at 1790 Post Road East (Parcel ID# 109//006/000 by Thomas Sign & Awning Company Inc for property owned by BYELAS LLC and Leslie Byelas in a GBD. (Sign design sheet by Thomas Sign & Awning Co Inc dated 6/15/21; Site plan by Leo Leonard, Surveyor dated 12/31/91)

**Appeared:** Greg Davis and Bernie Brooks of Thomas Sign Co.

Mr. Davis said Stop & Shop has new branding which requires a change of signs. He described existing signage, 9 signs with a total 294.4 square feet. Stop & Shop has a new logo and the new store sign exceeds 50 square feet. But there will be only 6 signs with a slight increase in total square footage to 295.74.

Ward French said he had no questions; from experience we know these are all corporate designs so we can't really change anything or criticize the designs. But we can require that all the square footage requirements are met.

Ms. Brooks said they are allowed 379 sq. ft. so are under the square footage allowed. This is more a like for likeish exchange.

Ward French said the signs are an improvement.

George Masumian asked if any of the signs are internally lit. Mr. Davis said only the Stop & Shop and the pharmacy signs are lit with channel letters.

Vesna Herman verified that they have no variances. She said the new signs are better.

George Masumian thanked the applicants and agreed the signs are better.

Ward French agreed.

**THE SIGN DESIGNS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL AS PRESENTED (Unanimous)**

3. **800 Post Road East:** Proposed design modifications at 800 Post Road East (Parcel ID# F09//069/000) submitted by James Margeotes, JBMP Architects for property owned by IL Westport 4 LLC located in a GBD. (Building design by JBMP Architects dated 9/14/21; Plot plan dated 3/16/20 by Charles Leonard, Surveyor) Applicant returning.

**Appeared:** James Margeotes, Architect

Mr. Margeotes said that the presentation is a reduction in the original scope of the project. The existing openings will remain unchanged, there will be no new gables or cupola. The 3 plate glass window on the front right elevation are raised 30 inches. The window in the west elevation is existing. The front canopy is the same as originally proposed, as is the color scheme.

Vesna Herman confirmed that the image presented is as proposed. She asked if the sign on the entrance canopy is the same. Mr. Margeotes said yes, and it is not lit.

George Masumian had no questions.

Ward French had no questions and said it works fine, is a massive improvement, a handsome building.

Vesna Herman agreed.

George Masumian agreed with both board members.

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

4. **Discuss Possible Text Amendment:** Discuss possible text amendment change #800/PZ-21-00600 to exempt from Setbacks and Coverage small balconies on commercial buildings adjacent to the Saugatuck River.

**Appeared:** Rick Rostantini, Architect and Christi Corrie

Mr. Rostantini said he text amendment allows small 10 ft balconies of up to 500 s. f. above the first floor on commercial buildings on the Saugatuck River. It furthers the town's goal to enhance coastal access and provides an additional amenity to commercial buildings for owners. He provided renderings of a balcony on the building at 33 Riverside Avenue.

George Masumian said you are saying the platform should be enclosed by a wall or balustrade 3' 6" high. A solid railing could block the view from the interior. You are talking about protruding no more than 10' but in **Building area and/or Footprint** you say "projections shall not extend more than 3 feet from the building wall". Don't windows already provide visual access? Balconies would be an enhancement for renters.

Mr. Rostantini said the outdoor space would provide unobstructed views for employees who may not have a view as well as an added aspect for employers. Balconies cannot protrude more than 10 feet or be larger than 500 s. f.

Mr. Masumian said if the parapet or railing is solid it could block the view. Mr. Rostantini said that would be up to the building's designer, it is not included as a requirement as we wanted to keep the text amendment as simple as possible. Ms. Corrie said the intent is to have glass on the railing. Mr. Masumian was concerned that the way it is worded, saying wall for railing and the reference to extensions of only 3 ft, could have unintended consequences.

Mr. Rostantini referred to his drawings for 33 Riverside Avenue as a sample balcony and how it could work. He drew attention to the fact that there are no pilings.

Mary Young agreed with George Masumian that the wording he pointed out could have unintended consequences and recommended that Mr. Rostantini submit a corrected version the next day.

Vesna Herman clarified that the discussion is not just about this particular building but all commercial buildings on Riverside Avenue. She said she agreed with allowing nice open balconies in terms of the zoning rules and regulations and conceptually agreed with the proposal.

Mary Young said that architects are currently told that a certain amount of footprint is available and amenities like balconies currently count in the footprint. This text amendment creates an option for amenities on the river. The design for this building will provide options for other buildings on the river. Vesna Herman suggested it could be given to all existing buildings. Ms. Young said this definition is being drafted for buildings on the river only. She hopes the P & Z will consider expanding it further.

Ms. Herman suggested that developers could be asked to give something back to the town for allowing an amenity like this. Ms. Young said that was an idea to consider. The town wants to promote resident access to the Saugatuck River, there are many possibilities to consider.

Ward French said he felt that it was P & Z's purview, we can review projects as they come to the ARB and discuss them then. Vesna Herman disagreed, she thinks everyone should profit from an agreement of this sort.

George Masumian agreed with Vesna Herman. If the town provides an opportunity to enhance commercial buildings on the shore area of the river, it's also an opportunity to request that they provide something of benefit to the community.

Ward French said he was not opposed to the concept but hates to do a tit for tat. We want to encourage the best design, I don't want to go that route, it's not appropriate.

There was discussion about what kind of amenities a building could provide the town. Mr. French agreed it's a possibility for new buildings, but we're talking about existing buildings, they could be over encumbered with this kind of request.

Mr. Rostantini said he would have to talk to his client. As drafted, it is an enhancement for Westport and allows access to the river for employees. I would like this matter to move forward. Given how broad the possibilities for a give back could be, some properties may not be able to provide a quid pro quo.

Vesna Herman still thought a gesture to the town would be nice. But it is an undeveloped idea. She said she could support the text amendment as it is now, but maybe it can be developed further in the future.

George Masumian said he supported the proposal in the text amendment.

Ward French said he would like it clarified that this would allow a balcony for one floor only, not multi floors. It needs to be specific in the text amendment, one location and not multiple balconies, above the first floor. Board members agreed. Mr. Rostantini said he would have to consult with his client.

Mary Young agreed it should be included that the applicant may have one balcony above the first floor. It should be clarified that it can extend 10 feet, not 3 feet. She asked Mr. Rostantini to make corrections to the original proposal as soon as possible.

Ward French said the board could provide a conditional approval.

**THE APPLICATION AS PROPOSED, WITH RECOMMENDATIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS TO ALLOW ONE 10 FOOT, 500 S.F. BALCONY ON ONE FAÇADE ABOVE THE FIRST FLOOR ON COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS ON THE SAUGATUCK RIVER IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL (Unanimous)**

Sally Palmer, Recording Secretary