

TOWN OF WESTPORT ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD

DRAFT MINUTES - TUESDAY, MAY 24, 2022

Board Members Present: Ward French, Chairman, Vesna Herman & Jon Halper. Staff: Donna Douglass.

1. Minutes from the April 26, 2022 meeting were approved.
2. **371 Post Road East:** Review and comment on the proposed signage at 371 Post Road East (Parcel ID# D09//150/000) in GBD/A by Stacy Becker, Sign Pro, for property owned by Peoples United Bank Association located in a GBD/A. (Site overview by M&T Bank; signs by Sign Pro, Inc)

Appeared: Stacy Becker

Ms. Becker said M&T Bank had purchased Peoples Bank and was in the process of taking over its sites. The main site sign is located where the current Peoples Bank is sited at the front of the building on the Post Road. The sign is:

- 9 ft 5 ½ inches high x 2 ft 8 inches wide
- Internally lit 2 sided 3M Panagraphics III face in translucent Holly Green vinyl with a translucent Golden Yellow vinyl decorative trim stripe on the inside edge
- Vertical sign lettering is dropped out in white
- 4 inch white street numbers are on the base

Additional signs include:

- Matching illuminated sign, 6 ft 8 inches by 1 ft 8 inch horizontal wall cabinet over the main, rear entrance
- Matching illuminated 13 ft by 2 ft 6 inch wall sign on the west façade
- Matching illuminated 15 ft x 2.5 inch wall sign on the east façade
- A number of various directional and information signs around the drive-in site

Ms. Becker said the signs tend to be smaller or similar to the current signage.

Jon Halper said he had no problem with the signs, it is the intensity of the lighting that concerns him. Ms. Becker said the signs have dimmers. Mr. Halper said if they can be prudent about the light density, the design is fine.

Vesna Herman asked if they needed any variances and was told no.

Ward French had no problem with the sign designs, they are fine, if you agree to dimming them.

THE SIGN DESIGN IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE ILLUMINATION WILL BE CONTROLLED (Unanimous)

3. **351 Post Road West:** Review and comment on proposed signage at 351 Post Road West (Parcel ID# B07//036/000) submitted by Tracy Becker, Sign Pro, for property owned by Peoples United Bank National Association located in a GBD/A. (Site overview by M&T Bank; signs by Sign Pro, Inc)

Appeared: Tracy Becker, Sign Pro

Ms. Becker said the sign design and materials is essentially the same as in the previous application. The location will be patched and painted white. The signs include:

- The site sign is a 1 ft 4 ¾ inch by 4 ft 10 inch illuminated horizontal tenant panel on a shared sign post
- Colors and materials are translucent 3M Holy Green Vinyl plexi with white lettering and a 3M Golden Yellow trim band at the bottom
- 4 inch white address numbers on the matching green base

Additional signs:

- A 12 ft x 2 ft 4 inch Paniflex face sign over the entrance in matching materials and colors
- Various directional and identification signs on the site in the same materials and colors

Board members had no questions and agreed they liked the design long as the light can be controlled.

THE SIGN DESIGN IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL AS LONG AS THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE LIGHT CAN BE CONTROLLED (Unanimous)

4. **1 Burr Road:** Review and comment on proposed Text Amendment and plan to redevelop the site into a modern Memory Care Facility. The facility will adaptively reuse the existing building at 1 Burr Road (Parcel ID# H09//120/000) submitted by Dave Pinto, Redniss & Mead for property owned by 1 Burr Road LLC located in an RORD1. (Aerial Exhibit, CAI Technologies 3/16/22; Proposed design, Meyer Architects & Interiors 3/22; Potential site plan exhibit 3/15/22, Redniss & Mead)

Appeared: Rick Redniss, Redniss & Mead; Joseph Straus, representing the landlord

Mr. Redniss said this is the site of an existing nursing home, considered by many in the neighborhood to be an eyesore. It is very tired, non conforming in an RORD zone and

parking is a mish-mash. He provided views around the outside of the building showing its in poor shape.

They plan proposes to infill a small portion of the northwest elevation and add 2nd and 3rd floors to two other small areas, create a mansard roof, replace sidewalks and change landscaping for parking, softening and screening. There will also be a new dumpster enclosure and mechanics will be moved to the roof.

Ward French asked what is in the regulations precluding these plans. If you increase the density it will exacerbate a site that is already maxed out. I'm trying to understand how the improvements will help.

Mr. Redniss said there will be a significant decrease in the number of beds, there are now 120 beds and 21 parking spaces. Going forward there would be 68 beds. Memory Care requires less employees as they are non skilled caretakers. Parking would be increased to 23 spaces. These are qualitative and quantitative improvements. Without concurrence from the town to be able to redo the building, the owner will have to let the current lease run out. In our pre-ap with Planning & Zoning they encouraged us to move ahead.

Mr. French said you are reducing beds, creating a significant 3,074 s.f. addition with additions to the height front and back, adding costs and reducing revenue. The place has a history of the ownership not maintaining it.

Joseph Straus said that at the moment, the landlord could negotiate with the tenant for a release from the lease. We would programmatically change the use of the building, improve the plant and reduce clientele. Alzheimer's patients are higher end clientele and pay more.

Mr. French said we've had several applications before that never moved forward.

Vesna Herman said you are asking for visual improvements, is that the real reason for the text change? Mr. Redniss said the only way to proceed is to provide enough incentive to transition to a memory care facility. Ms. Herman said, why you need the complex text changes is not crystal clear so I'll stick to the architectural aspect. So far you have a brick façade, if it goes forward will you return with a full architectural plan? Mr. Redniss said yes, your input has enhanced all my plans, it is important. Ms. Herman said visually you are improving the property and it will cost more than you think.

Jon Halper said there are different advantages to a variance or a text change. What would a variance say? Mr. Redniss said he doesn't believe in variances. He has gone for variances before and has been denied. The town has all kinds of anomalies. Variances should be limited to hardships. This isn't relief, if there's no economic incentive the proposal won't go ahead

Vesna Herman said, in terms of architecture, it is fine but nothing to write home about.

Jon Halper said he thought if the applicant could pull off the text amendment, fine, any forward movement would help the property.

Ward French said he was not sure the site could handle the additions to the building. The text amendment doesn't preclude additional patients down the line. He had a level of skepticism and was concerned.

Mr. Redniss said the changes proposed will be enforceable conditions. The neighbors are very unhappy with things now. It is an existing nonconforming situation. The town has nothing to lose. If it stays as is, those conditions will last forever.

Ward French said he was fine moving forward with the conditions as proposed. It has a density issue, but is fine for the moment.

Jon Halper said he was in favor but is not sure that a brick Georgian with a mansard roof is the way to go. The project itself can go forward but not the design. There are dozens of ways to skin a building. Although you've chosen to pick up on the school across the street, this project is also on the border of a small scale neighborhood. Mr. Redniss asked if he was suggesting using more residential materials. Mr. Halper said yes, but he's not the architect and it may not be the right choice. Mr. Redniss said it would be taken into consideration.

Ward French said we'll watch for the project to move forward and we wish you luck.

Sally Palmer

Recording Secretary