

**City of Salem Massachusetts
Public Meeting Minutes**

Board or Committee: Design Review Board, Regular Meeting
Date and Time: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 at 6:00 pm
Meeting Location: 120 Washington Street, Third Floor Conference Room
Members Present: Ernest DeMaio, David Jaquith, Glenn Kennedy, Helen Sides, J. Michael Sullivan
Members Absent: Paul Durand, Christopher Dynia
Others Present: Andrew Shapiro, Economic Development Planner
Recorder: Colleen Anderson

Vice Chair David Jaquith acting as the Chair calls the meeting to order.

Urban Renewal Area Projects Under Review

1. 10 Front Street (Curtsy): Discussion and vote on proposed installation of blade sign

The submission under review includes: a signed permit application, sign design with dimensions, existing condition photos, neighboring existing condition photos, and a proposed conditions photo. Keith Barsanti, father and representative of Courtney Gibbs (Owner of Curtsy) was present to discuss the proposed signage.

Barsanti explained that the new store “Curtsy” (the former location of the Boston Bead Company) will be an upper-mid to high end accessory and gift store.

Shapiro stated that the proposed blade sign, and pendant sign that will attach to the bottom of the blade sign, is compliant with the sign code. Barsanti added that the proposed blade sign will be attached to the existing blade sign bracket.

Jaquith questioned whether there was any lighting on the existing sign. Barsanti responded that the current sign does not have lighting and the current street lighting is sufficient. Shapiro noted that the neighboring blade signs do not have lighting. Kennedy agreed and added that adding lighting would be disruptive. Barsanti questioned whether “Curtsy” would have to reapply if they wanted to add lighting and Jaquith responded yes.

Sides: Motion to approve the proposed blade sign.
Seconded by: Kennedy, Passes 4-0.

2. 265 Essex Street (Fingerprint Innovations): Discussion and vote on proposed installation of signage

The submission under review includes; a sign permit application, table of contents for attachments with color scheme & text details, sign design with dimensions, existing & proposed condition photos, and a sketched floor plan showing. Jennifer LePore of Fingerprint Innovations, was present to discuss the proposed signage.

LePore stated that since the proposed signage has changed since the 1-27-16 DRB meeting, that LePore previously attended. LePore added that the previous submission proposed four (4) signs and the current signage proposal is for two (2) signs and a possible A-frame sign.

Shapiro stated that the comments made at the 1-27-16 DRB meeting were; Fingerprint Innovations is a first floor tenant in an office building – not a traditional commercial space with a storefront, they have a need for signage & visibility given that they frequently have clients searching for their business, and that signage for their business will keep their clients from entering into the Chamber of Commerce office and asking for directions to their location. Shapiro added that they also need to advertise for their partners, ItendoGo.

Shapiro stated that there is a detailed sketch of the proposed A-frame sign, and that the sign would be placed next to a landscaped area on their property, and not on the sidewalk. Shapiro added that typically A-frames are placed within 10 feet of an entrance, but the ordinance for A-frame signs does allow the board to provide leniency due to site constraints, and that this may be one of those cases.

Kennedy questioned whether the building photos showing the proposed window signage were already in place. LePore replied yes.

Kennedy questioned whether their clients need to be in the parking lot before they can see the signs. LePore responded that the signs can be seen from both the parking lot and the sidewalk on Essex Street.

Patrick Delulis, the building Owner, stated that he is aware that his tenants clients have consistently had difficulty finding their business since they moved into the building. Delulis added that the building orientation, and the building directory being setback at the main building entrance, make the building as a whole, is not easily identifiable as 265 Essex Street.

Delulis noted that her business is more retail oriented business in terms of foot traffic instead of what could be considered normal office space. Delulis added that they chose to rent at this location due to the proximity of parking for their clients.

Delulis stated that despite the fact that the leases for all tenants of the building do not allow window signage, he approved window signage for this tenant only because of the nature of her business. Delulis added that he is present to support their petition for window signage.

Kennedy noted that being a business that leans more towards retail, the building orientation, and their location within the building, all provide them with tough signage options. Kennedy added that the usage of signage is unconventional, and there is no real place for their proposed signage, and that the issues with the building have to be considered.

Sides questioned whether the façade with the narrow window faces Essex Street (sidewalk view) and if the façade with long horizontal band of windows faces the parking lot. Shapiro replied yes and LePore agreed.

Sides questioned the need for two signs and asked LePore if she had two different businesses. LePore responded that the second sign is for their sub-contractor ItendoGo. LePore added that Fingerprint Innovations customers find their business through ItendoGo, so signage for ItendoGo is needed as well.

Sides questioned whether the two signs could be combined and/or repeated. LePore stated that she is open to all signage placement options and suggestions. Sides added that she does not like temporary look of signage propped up within a window. LePore added that it was a temporary sign, and a permanent proposed sign is in the submission packet which satisfies their partnership agreement with IdendoGo.

Sides suggested that the two signs be duplicated, placed one over top of the other (larger sign over top of the smaller sign). Sides added that the two signs be placed at the exterior corner of the windows (one set facing the street and the other set facing the parking lot), so the two signs look intentional and as if the two companies belong together. Kennedy suggested that the signs be made smaller and lowered to increase their visibility.

Kennedy questioned LePore on whether the IdendoGo sign requires a white background. LePore replied that IdendoGo gave them six (6) different signs to use and the sign with the white background was selected because they felt that the previously selected sign was difficult to see.

LePore added that she prefers that the two signs look similar. Kennedy suggests not using a white background but using similar text to simplify and unify the signs. LePore stated that seeing if the two companies can create one shared sign

Jaquith stated his distaste for the A-frame sign. LePore replied that if alternative signage is approved, the A-frame sign can be eliminated.

Sides: Motion to approve with the adjustment of: placing both signs in duplicate, 1/3 of the way down the exterior corner windows, with both signs having a clear background, and the smaller IdendoGo sign placed below the larger Fingerprint Innovations sign.
Seconded by: Kennedy, Passes 4-0.

3. 161 Essex Street / East India Square (Peabody Essex Museum): Continued discussion of proposed museum expansion (schematic design review)

The submission under review includes; a slideshow presentation consisting of a Site Plan, Floor Plans, Sections, Elevations, Elevation renderings, aerial images, contextual photographs, proposed schedule, and a staging plan. Robert Monk of Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) and Stephen Chu of Ennead Architects, were present to discuss the proposed museum expansion.

Monk stated that they have continued with the design process and that the design team is nearing the end of the Schematic Design phase. Monk added that they wanted to update the Board on the latest development since they last presented at the December 15, 2015 meeting. Monk introduced Stephen Chu, project designer with Ennead Architects.

Chu noted that he will be reviewing the presentation previously reviewed at the December 15, 2015 meeting, but will indicate which aspects of the plans have been revised, in relation to the comments made by the Board at that previous meeting.

Chu stated that the Site Plan shows both vehicular and pedestrian traffic surrounding the PEM complex as well as the proposed expansion. Chu added at the concept of the expansion is a house-like structure, which is in scale and keeping with the museum complex, and whose experience is like that of the other areas of the museum - a house that one must move through and between in the various open spaces.

Chu stated that the addition would act not just as a new gallery space but would create a gathering/open/light space between the addition and the neighboring structure.

Chu noted that the one change to the floor plan is that the addition has been moved North (towards the bottom of the page) to respect the street wall of Essex Street, as opposed to the previous floor plan where the building was further away from Essex Street.

Chu stated that the handicapped ramp, which was previously outside the addition with a cantilevered Second and Third Floor above it, has now been placed within the addition. Chu noted that the Board had previously commented that a cantilever would create a dark area in what would typically be storefront.

Chu added that the handicapped ramp is behind glazing with a low wall to hide it, and the gallery space would be behind the ramp.

Chu stated that bringing the building closer to Essex Street created an “interior” area against the gallery space which would also provide a source of natural light. Chu noted that the intent was to liven up the street level to bring life & light to the space, unlike the blankless and non-engagement of Dodge on the other side of Marine Hall. Chu added that updated graphic of this area would occur later in the design process.

Chu added that the intent is to celebrate East India Marine Hall. Chu stated that the adjacent buildings curve around Marine Hall, making it the centerpiece, and the façade of the addition will do the same.

Chu noted that another change to the floor plan was to make the proposed grade and floor elevations of the addition consistent with the existing grade and floor elevations of Marine Hall. Chu added that maintaining these elevations has been done through the complex.

Chu stated that to keep the floor heights and keep the massing of the building low, the grade level was lowered to match up with adjacent garden grades, so the volume of the building can be pushed down so the height of the addition can closely match the height of the neighboring Boys Club Building. Chu added that this can be seen in the elevations.

Chu stated that two bridge-like structures connect the new Second Floor of the addition with the existing second floor gallery space, as well as with Marine Hall. Chu added that these two connections have created an atrium space that exposes the West side of Marine Hall, which will be restored once the buildings attached to it have been removed. Chu added at the condition of that façade will require some exploration, and that the intent is to bring it back to its historic state – a free standing building.

Chu noted the circulation of the spaces: A grand stair within the atrium connects the lower level to the Second Floor gallery space. Chu added that the Second Floor connects to the Third Floor gallery through a feature stair, on the North (front) side of the building. Chu noted that a large window at the Third Floor will offer a view of the plaza to the North, as well as the bridge on the Second Floor.

Chu stated that a skylight over the interstitial space, is best compared to Liberty Atrium. Chu added that a skylight will be added over the North stair also, to provide additional light to that end of the museum.

Sullivan arrives at 6:30 PM.

Chu noted that the North-South Building Section shown the heights of the proposed spaces as well as the heights of neighboring buildings. Chu added that the pop-up at the Third Floor roof, which has been set back from both the North and South facades of the addition, can be seen.

Chu noted that on the Section Elevation, taken from Marine Hall and looking towards the addition, they are beginning to work out the structure and finishes of the addition, although no finishes have been finalized i.e. stone type, jointing, scale of the panels, and the finish stone façade is still being explored. Chu added that a view to the new garden can also be seen from the atrium.

Chu noted that the next Section Elevation, taken from the face of the addition and looking towards Marine Hall, shows the newly exposed side of Marine Hall, which will be the “main event” of the atrium space.

Chu added that both Second Floor bridge connections can be seen, as well as how the natural light that will travel through the space. Chu added that this newly exposed façade will also be seen from Essex Street, especially at night when the interior spaces are lit.

Chu noted that the North Elevation shows the various heights of the museum structures as well as the heights of the neighboring buildings, with Marine Hall being the focal point.

Chu added that another change to the plan is in regards to the existing entry gate along Essex Street. Chu stated that Ennead has been working with Historic Salem, Inc. (HSI) to restore and relocate it to the East side of the new addition, which will break up the glazing and add more visual interest to the North façade.

Monk added that in 1924 there was a similar façade along the East façade of the Marine Hall (formerly Academy Hall) that also provided access through a gallery. Monk noted that this space was removed in 1974, prior to the addition of the Dodge wing.

Chu stated the existing trees would be replanted along Essex Street.

Chu stated that the horizontal datums seen in elevations, respect floor levels and facades of neighboring structures.

Chu noted that the aerial view from Charter Street shows the new work at the loading dock, and does not show the boiler plant, which has already been demolished. Chu added that a landscape architect, Nelson Byrd Woltz, has been added to the design team, to provide either landscaping or architectural screens to help conceal the dock.

Jaquith stated that the revisions are a major improvement from the previously proposed design. Jacquith questioned if the front (North) façade of the addition reads as a floating plan over and surrounded by sections of glass. Chu responded that the intent was to incorporate various section of glass to offer a view back to the historic East India.

Sides stated that the revisions looked great, however; the glass above the base at street level looks spindly when compared to the rest of the façade, and perhaps something different could be done with the glass at the street level. Chu noted that adding more at the glass will take away from the ability to look through the glass and see the depth of the space beyond. Chu added that the glazing style also hasn't been determined but the intent is to make it appear as if the plane/façade above is floating.

Kennedy questioned how the light from the Third Floor skylight is being carried through to the Second Floor below. Chu noted that the Second Floor is a two story space. Chu added that the large window at the front (North) façade will provide additional light.

Jaquith questioned whether the new entry between Marine Hall and the new addition would be used for school group. Chu replied that this entrance would be for school and other larger groups only, and not as an alternative main entry to the museum.

Jaquith questioned whether the new entry to the right of the addition was an emergency entrance. Chu replied that it was, but it is also the entrance to the handicapped ramp.

Sullivan questioned whether the coursing/joinery of the proposed façade was in reference to the façade pattern. Chu replied that it was, but added that the joints and scale have yet to be determined. Chu added that there will not be a montage of colors, but subtle differences in the façade, to make it less monochromatic like the Dodge façade.

DeMaio stated that the treatment of the gallery wall, behind the first floor glass and the large window, will become almost like the front façade. Kennedy added that it needs to be developed with as much emphasis as the façade.

DeMaio added that the more transparent the glazing the better, to reinforce the floating nature of the stone façade, but to allow the eye to travel and see the depth of the building.

DeMaio stated that the scale and strong horizontal lines of the addition are too literal when compared to the neighboring buildings, and that it makes the first floor seem squat, even with the incorporation of the glass. DeMaio added that the lines of the base and the cornice at the roof could be higher. Sides added that they should not to be stuck by the neighboring building heights. Chu noted that the Third Floor roof line will be set back, which will create some variation in the height and will add to the floating feel of the front façade.

DeMaio noted that some differentiation will make the existing building stand out. Chu stated that the intent is to compliment what is there not recreate anything historic.

Jaquith noted that this addition will create experiences as people move through the addition which is important, and that occurs in existing parts of the museum.

Public Comment:

Jennifer Firth of (HSI) commented that they are supportive of the expansion, have been have entered into an IOU with Mass Historic concerning this project. Firth added that she appreciated the green space on the Charter Street side of the addition.

Emily Udy of (HSI) commented that she agrees with DeMaio regarding the squat/heavy look of the base along the front (North) façade. Udy added that the base stands out as a band and that the plain could be raised.

Public comment was concluded.

Sullivan questioned if the plinth could be used as seating. Chu responded that the image suggests that, but the design still needs to be studied and developed.

Monk stated that regarding the schedule – they are finalizing the Schematic Design and will be moving into the Design Development and will incorporate the new comments from the Board.

Sides: Motion to continue.
Seconded by: DeMaio, Passes 5-0.

Old/New Business

Approval of the minutes from the December 15, 2015 regular meeting.

Sides: Motion to approve.
Seconded by: Kennedy, Passes 5-0.

Approval of the minutes from the January 27, 2016 regular meeting.

Jaquith: Motion to approve.
Seconded by: Sullivan, Passes 5-0.

Adjournment

Jaquith: Motion to adjourn the meeting.
Seconded by: Sides. Passes 5-0.

Meeting is adjourned at 6:55pm