

**City of Salem Massachusetts
Public Meeting Minutes**

Board or Committee: Design Review Board, Regular Meeting
Date and Time: Wednesday, May 24, 2017 at 6:00 pm
Meeting Location: 120 Washington Street, Third Floor Conference Room
Members Present: Paul Durand, Christopher Dynia, David Jaquith, Helen Sides, Glenn Kennedy, J. Michael Sullivan, Ernest DeMaio
Members Absent:
Others Present: Andrew Shapiro, Economic Development Planner
Recorder: Colleen Anderson

Paul Durand calls the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Urban Renewal Area Projects Under Review

1. **221 Essex Street (Freaky & Elegant):** Discussion and vote on proposed painting of storefront, and installation of lighting and signage (*item was taken out of order*).

The submission under review included; a signed application, sign dimensions, proposed signage drawings, and contextual photo of existing conditions and of an example storefront serving as inspiration for the design. Yuliya Abene (Owner) was present to discuss the proposed signage and paint color.

Abene explained that she wanted to paint her storefront matte black, and have raised gold letters as signage, matching the “Bank Plaza” sign above. The letters would be 12” high and 6” wide, per letter. Gooseneck lighting fixtures were also proposed to be installed over the signage.

Sides inquired as to whether the Bank Plaza sign was part of the building. Shapiro remarked that it is. Sides, Shapiro, and Abene discussed where the proposed black paint for the storefront might begin and end (how high it would go on the façade).

Sullivan asked what the other colors of the building are.

Shapiro explained that the building had brick and a façade painted white above the storefront that is currently multi-colored.

Sides asked where the lights would be mounted. Abene said they would need to be mounted just below the Bank Plaza sign.

Shapiro asked whether conduit for the lighting would be exposed. Abene said that the landlord would be responsible for installation and that she expects that they take care to do a “good job.” Board members expressed a desire to better understand how the conduit would be run and whether it would be exposed.

Sullivan explained that the photo showing a storefront that serves as inspiration for the proposal, shows a small storefront with a great deal of articulation in the façade elements.

Therefore, the black works well there. He expressed a concern that the Bank Plaza sign could get lost in the black color.

Sides said that she would like to see a photo with a larger portion of the building shown, to better understand how the proposed design would fit in with the building in full. She encouraged the applicant to see whether all three panels where signage was currently being shown, were needed for displaying signage, or if another arrangement might work better.

Sullivan noted that perhaps a blade sign would be appropriate in this location.

Abene noted that an existing sign bracket had been broken and they do not plan on replacing it.

Kennedy noted that it might be better to use a warmer toned color, like a deep slate gray, for the façade, instead of black.

DeMaio pointed out that the signage drawings are not to scale and that a future drawing should be to scale.

Shapiro confirmed some additional information that the board was seeking in order to be able to make an informed recommendation for the project: a stepped back image showing the façade in context, a scaled drawing, paint samples, details on mounting the lighting (conduit)

Kennedy: Motion to continue the proposal to a future date.
Seconded by: Jaquith. Passes 7-0.

2. **184 Essex Street (Omen):** Continued Discussion and vote on proposed new paint color for top of awning.

The submission under review includes a cover letter, photoshopped image of the storefront with the proposed paint color shown on the awning, and specifications about the paint to be used and the method of application. Tim Reagan, Assistant Manager, was present on behalf of the applicant.

Shapiro explained the status of the proposal. That signage had previously been approved by the DRB, but that the issue of painting the top of the awning had been continued for two or three meetings.

Dynia asked whether the applicant had inquired with any other tenants of the mall, as to whether they would also like to paint their awnings. Reagan noted that they had reached out to other tenants, but there was no interest.

Sides announced that she is still not in favor of the proposal, as a one-off project to paint one portion of one awning structure. She feels that the awning reads as part of the building; it would be strange to isolate a single piece of it.

Durand said he is in favor of it. It shows what can be done with storefronts in this location.

Sullivan said he is intrigued by the proposed new color. He noted being in favor of the proposal and that it provides an opportunity to see what other colors look like along this building.

Durand acknowledged that there is a risk in granting this proposal, but that he does not like the status quo either.

Kennedy: Motion to recommend approval of the proposed new paint color for top of awning at 184 Essex Street (Omen) as presented.

Seconded by: Jaquith. Passes 6-1 (Sides voted No).

3. **76 Lafayette Street (T-Mobile):** Discussion and vote on proposed installation of signage

The submission under review includes a sign permit application, design of the proposed signage, and a photoshopped image showing where on the building signage would be mounted. Scott Suleski of Divine Signs was present on behalf of the applicant.

Durand said he is fine with the proposal.

Shapiro asked for confirmation on there being no window signage, other than a small decal shown on the proposal that indicates the owner of the T-Mobile shop. Suleski said that he is not charged with putting any window signage in, other than what is shown.

Shapiro inquired about the color of the letters. Suleski said that they would be white. They will be lit from behind with a "halo effect."

Shapiro asked Suleski to convey to his client that any additional window signage should come before the DRB for approval.

Jaquith: Motion to recommend approval of the proposed installation of signage at 76 Lafayette Street (T-Mobile) as proposed.

Seconded by: Kennedy. Passes 7-0.

4. **1 Sewall Street (YMCA):** Discussion and vote on proposed improvements to playground area – small project review.

The submission under review includes; a cover letter, drawings, photos, and renderings. Pete Avila, Project Manager for the YMCA of the North Shore was present on behalf of the applicant.

Avila noted that the YMCA had recently undergone interior renovations, and as a result, they dismantled the play area for use as a staging area. They would like to provide a green space for kids to play.

Sullivan asked for more information about the landscape plan. Avila noted that most of the space would be artificial turf. The ramp would be made to be ADA compliant. A small storage shed with trusses for shade would be added. A black aluminum fence would replace a current chain link fence. A new tree would be planted. Plantings would be planted between the fence and the play area.

Sides asked if the trellis would be white. Avila did not know. Sides recommended that the whole shed structure be uniform.

DeMaio commented that there was some information that was missing about the shed structure. Is it wood? What kind of wood? PVC? He pointed out that it appears that the

structure will be painted. Avila confirmed that it would in fact be painted and made of wood. Brackets would be galvanized and painted.

Jaquith said that Azek could be a good material to use for the shed structure.

Kennedy said that he feels that there should be bollards installed in front of the area.

Shapiro explained that the Building Department would need to weigh in on the issue of how to protect the play area.

Glenn noted that perhaps the curb in front of the parking area could be raised even more than it currently sits.

Shapiro said that the landscape scheme could be approved, the trellis could be continued, and the recommendation could be contingent upon conferring with the Building Department on an acceptable solution to protect the property.

Sides: Motion to recommend approval of the landscape plan contingent upon working with the Building Department to address any ways to improve safety in front of the play area, and to continue the review of the trellis structure to a future date (more info needed: materials, connections, paint, etc.).
Seconded by: Jacquith. Passes 7-0.

5. **302 Essex Street, Suite B (Moon Baby):** Discussion and vote on proposed installation of signage and removal of existing sign band.

The submission under review includes a cover letter, sign permit application, photos showing existing conditions, design of the signage, and photoshopped images showing the location of where signage will be mounted. Liz Frazier of Witch City Wicks was present on behalf of the applicant.

Shapiro pointed out that the proposal calls for both a blade sign and a window graphic. The window graphic will be placed on a window closest to the applicant's entrance.

Frazier noted that the existing sign bands will be removed. Kennedy and Sides said that they agree with that decision.

Sullivan asked whether the entrance to the shop would be underneath the blade sign. Frazier said that it would not. Kennedy and Sides said that the sign would need to be placed over the entrance, otherwise it would be confusing. Frazier said that the planned entrance could change to be underneath where the blade sign is currently shown.

DeMaio inquired about the height of the bottoms of the blade signs from the sidewalk. Shapiro noted that he requested that they be 10 feet from the sidewalk. Frazier noted that once the existing sign bands are removed, that the brackets holding the signs can be mounted in order to meet that standard. DeMaio emphasized that the brackets be mounted at the same height.

Sides: Motion to recommend approval of the proposed installation of signage and removal of existing sign band at 302 Essex Street, Suite B (Moon Baby).
Seconded by: Jacquith. Passes 7-0.

6. **302 Essex Street, Suite A (Witch City Wicks):** Discussion and vote on proposed installation of signage and removal of existing sign band.

The submission under review included a cover letter, sign permit application, photos showing existing conditions, design of the signage, and photoshopped images showing the location of where signage will be mounted. Liz Frazier of Witch City Wicks was present on behalf of the applicant.

Kennedy noted that this proposal called for only a blade sign.

Kennedy: Motion to recommend approval of the proposed installation of signage and removal of existing sign band at 302 Essex Street, Suite A (Witch City Wicks).
Seconded by: Jaquith. Passes 7-0.

7. **Artists' Row:** Discussion and vote on new paint color scheme, windows/doors, and signage scheme.

The submission under review included designs/drawings of proposed fonts and signage, colors, and photos. City of Salem Public Art Planner Deborah Greel was accompanied by Leslie University student Zachary Johnson to present the proposal.

Johnson explained that this proposal was developed as a result of a class project for a community design class. The goal was to redesign and reimagine how Artists' Row is viewed.

Greel explained that she was introduced to the idea of this project by the class' professor, Rick Rawlins, who also is a business owner in Salem. There is two phase to this project. Phase one is the institution of a new color palette on Artists' Row.

Johnson said that they are proposing to make the primary color of each building a slate gray, but perhaps a bit lighter. The masonry would also be painted and the roof would remain the same. Pops of color would maintain a cohesive system, but allow for individuality and expression of each individual artist. There will be two trim colors, for window and door frames. Large super graphics would be either painted on or applied in vinyl to one side of each shed, indicating the number of the respective sheds. The other side of three of the sheds would have a large super graphic spelling out R-O-W (as in "artists' row"). The numbers will allow for easy wayfinding.

Johnson noted that the new proposed windows and doors will provide improved visibility into the stalls, given that they will have fewer mullions blocking views inside.

Sides remarked that better lighting inside the stalls would also be an improvement. Sides noted that the presentation lacks a marked out plan.

Greel noted that the current tenants of Artists' Row are resistant to the idea of the proposed blade signs because they look too similar.

DeMaio asked what the inspiration was for the chose fonts. Johnson said that the use of DIN works well in large format. The sheds have an industrial feel and the DIN combined with Sentinel works well with that idea. DeMaio pointed out the inconsistency of the fonts for "Artists' Row" as shown on the barn door versus the sign painted on the outside wall. He emphasized the need to be consistent for branding purposes. DeMaio asked if there was intent to be "retro" with the use of super graphics, noting that this type of font was used often in the seventies; he emphasized that this was not a "good" or "bad" thing, but just an observation. Johnson said there was no attempt to be retro, but rather just be readable.

Kennedy suggested eliminating the second trim color from the proposed palette. He expressed liking the various pops of color. There is too much going on with the bathroom barn door and needs to be simplified. Sentinel is not the best choice with DIN. There are better choices for italic serif fonts. Be more modern, but still a bit retro. Look at the Blue Note Records fonts and their use of contrasting fonts; that will be good reference.

Sides asked Kennedy if he liked the idea of uniform signage for the artists' stalls. Kennedy said that it could be successful, but it might be difficult to implement when artists have varying preferences. Johnson noted that there was a thought to having uniform blade signs, but allowing tenants to have individually branded building signs.

Greel inquired as to whether the Board would accept painting both the wood walls and masonry on each stall. The color would be uniform. Board members expressed willingness to allow that.

Kennedy: Motion to recommend approval of the proposed new paint color scheme, windows/doors, and signage scheme, conditional upon the following:

1. That the barn door graphics / typeface be revised and reviewed again in the future (the barn door itself is approved).
2. That the second trim color be removed (each building is to have two colors).

Seconded by Jaquith. Passes 7-0.

Old/New Business

Shapiro noted that the DRB's presence was being requested at the next regular meeting of the SRA on June 14th, in order to have a joint meeting of the two boards. The purpose would be to review and discuss the design progress of the parcel at 289 Derby Street, which will in the future be a City park. Landscape architect CBA would be present and this would be the only opportunity for the two boards to formally review and discuss the project. A community focused engagement process is ongoing.

Sides raised the issue of potentially expanding the purview of the DRB to also include select projects in the City's entrance corridors. She noted that the Planning Board has been discussing this possibility. She went on to say that the Department of Planning and Community Development recommends that projects 10,000 square feet or more be subject to DRB review. She disagrees with this recommendation and feels that almost anything non-residential should be reviewed.

Kennedy asked for clarification on the Planning Department's recommendation. Sides said that there is a thought that the process will be too onerous for developers and that the Planning Board has design review capabilities that it can employ for smaller projects.

Jaquith remarked that generally, design review is not onerous for developers.

Sides said that she has requested examples of projects 10,000 sf or above that would have triggered DRB review in Entrance Corridors. She noted that the "F.W. Webb project" went through an extensive process that would require the project to go before the DRB if it triggered site plan review at the Planning Board. Because the project has been reduced in size to less than that, it will not be coming before the DRB.

Shapiro noted that perhaps the F.W. Webb situation presented a need to consider a lower threshold for design review, but that it might not be the norm. He said that getting an idea of what kind of projects would be triggered at a 2,000 square foot threshold versus a 10,000 square foot threshold would be helpful in evaluating how to handle this proposal. He noted that there is not resistance to a lower threshold, but perhaps a desire to start with a higher threshold and see how it works. It can always be adjusted later.

Sides reiterated her desire to see a lower threshold. She said that now is the right time to implement this change.

DeMaio asked what are the boundaries of the DRB's current purview.

Shapiro explained that it includes any exterior facing projects that would need to be reviewed and approved by the SRA, as well as projects requiring site plan review in the NRCC. The Urban Renewal Area (SRA jurisdiction) is most of the downtown, from Washington/Bridge Street to Washington/Canal Street.

Sides pointed out that at the time the Urban Renewal Area was being renewed, it was a rushed process that did not allow for much discussion on the idea of expanding the boundaries a lot further.

Shapiro explained that in many cases, projects that are less than 10,000 square feet are owned by general property owners, rather than developers with designs on a large and expensive project.

Sides expressed not liking the process of being the sole representative on the Planning Board conducting some level of design review outside the formal structure of a full meeting, and then having to report back to the full board.

Jaquith noted that if a project requires relief from the Zoning Board of Appeals, it may help its case if it receives a positive recommendation from the DRB. The majority of the people who have come before this board would say the DRB has helped them.

DeMaio pointed out the investment that has been made in entrance corridors with respect to new streets, sidewalks, and lighting. He asked why the City would make that investment if it weren't willing to also allow a process to facilitate better design of projects in those locations as well.

Durand asked if Shapiro would take this information to the Planning Department and if it might have an effect on the ultimate decision. Shapiro indicated that he would have further discussion with the department.

DeMaio said that the location of a project is more of an issue than how large the project is. A 2,000 sf project in a prominent location could be critical.

Durand suggested that perhaps zoning designation could be the primary criteria to determine whether design review is required (i.e. that industrial would not require design review, but commercial would).

Shapiro thanked the board for its comments and said that he would relay information back to the Planning Department, and that he looked forward to further discussion on the subject.

Minutes

Approval of the minutes from the April 24, 2017 regular meeting.

Kennedy: Motion to approve the minutes.
Seconded by: Sides, Passes 7-0.

Adjournment

Kennedy: Motion to adjourn the meeting.
Seconded by: Jaquith, Passes 7-0.

Meeting is adjourned at 8:59 PM

Know your rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. c. 30A §18-25 and City
Ordinance Sections 2-028 through 2-2033.