



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Design Review Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting conducted via Zoom video conference
May 7, 2020 – Approved at May 21, 2020 meeting

1 ***Call to Order***

2 Patrick McKelvey called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Cathy Rooney, member, Bill Savage,
3 member and Aaron Ladd, member, were present. Emma Snellings, Assistant Planner was also
4 present.

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6 The meeting was held remotely via a Zoom meeting. Ms. Snellings recorded the meeting.

7
8 **5 Homer Ave Design Review**

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10 Tej Shah, applicant, presented the proposed changes to the outside of the building. The changes
11 include removing the four awnings, installing signs lit by gooseneck lights on the top part of the
12 building, one facing Homer Ave and one facing Main Street, and tinting the windows. The
13 window tint would make the window appear darker, and make the window one way. Mr.
14 McKelvey asked if the windows would be completely dark. Mr. Shah explained that from the
15 outside, the window will be blacked out, either all the way up the window, or black towards the
16 bottom with a lighter gradient towards the top.

17
18 Mr. Ladd asked if the applicant has plans to put signage on the door of the business. Mr. Shah
19 explained that he does plan to put something on the door, but needs to clarify what is allowed in
20 the sign code first. Mr. McKelvey suggested putting the logo on the door. Ms. Rooney shared
21 that the building without the awning looks stark, and that because the property is in the
22 downtown district, it should have planters or window boxes to add visual appeal to the
23 streetscape. Mr. McKelvey raised the question of whether the sidewalk is wide enough to allow
24 planters. Ms. Rooney suggested placing a planter by the door, because there is nothing to soften
25 the appearance. Ms. Rooney stated she will measure the sidewalk.

26
27 Mr. Savage asked where patrons will park. Mr. Shah explained that there is some street parking,
28 and patients will be directed to park in the public parking lot by Needham Bank. Mr. McKelvey
29 asked how many employees there will be. Mr. Shah stated that there will be 3 employees to start,
30 and potentially up to 5 or 6 employees. Mr. Ladd commented that there is a front, rounded corner
31 that will be bare that would be impacted by the new design. Mr. Shah replied that he is
32 considering putting something there, such as just the logo, but was not sure if the sign code will
33 allow another sign.

34
35 A representative of Metrowest Dental Care asked where the applicant was planning to put the
36 dumpster, and whether it will be near the backdoor as the last tenant placed it. Mr. Shah replied
37 that the back entrance will be an employee entrance and emergency exit, and there may be a
38 dumpster there if he has to have a dumpster. The Metrowest Dental Care representative shared
39 concerns that patients may get confused about where to park, and may park in the wrong parking
40 lot. Mr. Shah stated that he will have clear signage and will notify patients before their

41 appointments about where they can park. The Metrowest Dental Care representative shared that
42 she thought the sidewalk may be too narrow for a planter. Mr. McKelvey stated that on Google
43 maps, the sidewalk looks to be about 4 feet wide. Ms. Rooney stated that the sidewalk gets wider
44 by the door. Ms. Snellings shared that the Downtown Zoning District only includes requirements
45 for plantings on much larger lots, and she will look into those requirements. Mr. McKelvey
46 stated that having a dumpster by the back door might be an issue if it is an emergency exit, and
47 that they might need a very small dumpster, or pavement markings, to make sure it complies
48 with emergency egress requirements.

49
50 Mr. McKelvey asked why the applicant is planning to remove the awnings, since it does provide
51 rain protection. Mr. Shah shared that he did consider the awnings, but the sign companies he is
52 working with recommended taking the awnings down as it is a dated look. The Metrowest Dental
53 Care representative shared that she thought different color awnings could look modern. Mr. Ladd
54 commented that this is the only building downtown with awnings, so it would be ok to remove
55 them to match other buildings. Mr. Savage agreed with Mr. Ladd. Ms. Rooney prefers the
56 awnings. Mr. McKelvey motioned that the sign and gooseneck lighting is approved by the
57 committee, which passed with the following vote:

58 Mr. Savage: Aye

59 Mr. Ladd: Aye

60 Ms. Rooney: Nay

61 Mr. McKelvey: Aye

62
63 Mr. McKelvey recommended that if a dumpster is located by the back door, there are areas
64 painted on the ground to indicate where it goes to keep the path clear. Mr. Ladd stated that the
65 downtown streetscape project could change the area so much, that he does not think a planter is
66 appropriate. Mr. Savage suggested window boxes, and Ms. Rooney agreed that window boxes
67 could work. Mr. McKelvey expressed concern about the width of the sidewalk. A discussion of
68 the sidewalk width followed. Mr. Savage stated that if the tint is not completely black it would
69 be good. Ms. Rooney suggested using light colored blinds or shades inside. Mr. Shah stated he
70 preferred the tint because the patients could look out. A discussion ensued of whether the
71 applicant should come back to the committee to discuss window tint further. Ms. Rooney
72 suggested he return in order to gain clarity on the planter issue as well. Mr. Savage asked if any
73 mechanicals will be added to the roof. Mr. Shah explained that the internal mechanicals will be
74 replaced, and use the existing vent on the roof. Ms. Rooney motioned that the applicant return at
75 the next meeting to discuss the window tint and planters

76 Mr. Savage: Aye

77 Mr. Ladd: Aye

78 Ms. Rooney: Aye

79 Mr. McKelvey: Aye

80

81 Ms. Snellings stated that the next meeting will be May 21.

82

83 **Minutes Review and Approval**

84 The Committee reviewed the minutes from April 2, 2020. Mr. Ladd motioned, and Mr. Savage
85 seconded to approve the minutes, which passed with the following vote:

86 Mr. Savage: Aye

87 Mr. Ladd: Aye
88 Ms. Rooney: Aye
89 Mr. McKelvey: Aye

90

91 **Discussion of Committee Membership**

92 Mr. McKelvey shared that he plans on stepping down from the committee at the end of his
93 appointment which ends in June.

94 Ms. Snellings shared that Mr. Ladd and Ms. Hines' appointments also expire in June, and asked
95 them to send her an email if they are interested in continuing on the committee.

96

97 **Discussion of Possible Bylaw Amendments**

98 Ms. Snellings reviewed the past discussions of bylaw amendments. Mr. Savage stated that he has
99 shared the requirements of the Winchester DRC, and Ms. Snellings replied that she will share
100 how that committee is triggered at the next meeting.

101

102 Ms. Rooney reviewed the past discussions on parking lots triggering design review. Mr.
103 McKelvey shared ideas on how a parking lot could trigger design review, such as the age of the
104 parking lot and whether design elements that reduce heat island effect were used. Mr. McKelvey
105 and Ms. Rooney discussed possible green infrastructure approaches to support for parking lot
106 renovations. Mark Dasoni, resident, shared that he thought it should depend on the size of the
107 parking lot. Mr. McKelvey suggested that the trigger could be based on parking lot size. Ms.
108 Rooney noted that the Nyanza plume could be an issue for parking lots on Pleasant Street. Ms.
109 Rooney stated that she will approach the Sustainability Committee to see if they have thoughts
110 on how to add requirements for green infrastructure in parking lots. A discussion of the storm
111 water fee and how green parking could be incentivized followed. Mr. McKelvey suggested that
112 the committee might recommend that the storm water fee be increased. Ms. Snellings stated that
113 anything with the storm water fee would have to go through the storm water advisory committee.
114 Ms. Rooney suggested having a joint meeting with the storm water advisory committee and the
115 sustainability committee. Mr. Ladd shared that the storm water fee was controversial, and that
116 this approach is outside of the design review committee scope, the committee should review
117 parking lots when they come in a submission to the committee.

118

119 **Planting Appendix**

120 The discussion of the planting list was continued to the next meeting. Ms. Rooney will be
121 discussing the tree list with a group that is developing a tree protection bylaw.

122

123 The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.