

Minutes
Design Review Committee
August 12, 2020

Members in Attendance:

Planning Board	Citizens	Staff Support	Other
Lenny Horr, Chair	Steve Cabana	Beth Della Valle, Planning Dir.	Lucas Lanigan
Dianne Connolly	Thom Gagne	Molly Kirchofff, Planner	Catalina Lanigan
	Oliver Jones III	Mike Casserly, Asst. City Eng.	Steve Buck, C.Manager
	Evelyn Libby		
	Kelly Tarbox		

Meeting called to order by Lenny Horr, Chair, at 5:05 pm.

Agenda Item 1 – Minutes:

Motion by Dianne Connolly to accept the minutes, second by Kelly Tarbox. Motion Passed 7-0.

Agenda Item 2 – Lucas Lanigan c/o Carte Blanche Boutique & Meggs Properties – 886 Main Street:

After Lenny Horr opened this item, Dianne Connolly noted that in the past the DRC has asked the Director to not bring applications forward that are not complete and that this item is missing information, is unclear, and is not complete. She asked to send the item back to staff to work with the applicant. Upon request she clarified that information about signage and lighting specs, confusion/clarity about what is being measured in the photographs, no specs for furniture, what is proposed to be used, and where elements will be located. Kelly Tarbox said that she did not see a lot of supporting documents. She added that the DRC has seen this situation before and has previously said it wants more documentation before reviewing a project. Dianne added that when this has happened before it had not worked out well and asked if the DRC can vote on this application tonight. Lenny Horr asked why this project isn't being included in the overall effort to improve the MidTown Mall.

The applicant said he did not have access to CAD to prepare a plan for the application and that when he asked for the item to be included in the Downtown improvements, he was told to take this path, that he had put a lot of time putting together the application, that he is running out of time for the season, with COVID he did the best he could, and that he could explain the really simple proposal.

Lenny asked if the applicant would consider including his proposal in the Downtown project. The applicant indicated no that he is just looking to improve the façade and break up views of the storefronts.

Lenny asked the applicant to respond to Dianne and Kelly's concerns. The applicant said there is not much more information needed than what is in front of the DRC. He described what he plans to do, noted the photos with boxes explaining that the height is either 31" or 24" tall, that the smaller ones will go under windowsills, and that the planters will be maintained by a landscape company.

Steve Cabana said he understands what is being proposed in front of the Carte Blanch storefront and asked what is being proposed for the rest of the complex. The applicant read a description of the project, noted that there will be year-round seasonal plantings, and will follow Code requirements for door clearances. Molly Kirchoff noted that the applicant was reading from the Pre-application Meeting Notes, which the Planning Department had included in the packet to supplement the applicant's submission.

The applicant explained that the planters/benches will be in two colors, maybe alternating across the complex. Kelly noted that that detail was not provided in the packet. The applicant said that the decision regarding color would be up to individual shop owners and asked for a waiver of the requirement for more specificity.

Lenny indicated that he was inclined to continue the discussion to get as much information from the applicant about the proposal as possible.

Thom Gagne said he was not clear about what was being proposed. He noted the picture of a planter box and asked if it will be under the window? Raised off the ground? The applicant indicated he had no access to CAD so he showed examples. He indicated that the shorter box would be placed under windows and the taller would be on the other side of the door. Thom asked how the benches connect to the box and the applicant said it would be a straight piece. Thom said it was not clear how many planters/benches are being proposed. The applicant said the planters would be off the wall about 16", the larger box had a 119" clearance between the box and the sidewalk, and that the material would be composite wood which lasts about 20 years. When Thom asked about colors, the applicant said if the DRC is not ok with two colors, he proposes the blue, which was identified in the application. Thom asked if the blue was also proposed for the benches, the applicant said they would be built of the same material and that why he was not clearer is that each business may not want the same thing. He noted that if the DRC wants to break the improvements in the rest of the complex off from the portion proposed

for Carte Blanche, that would be ok with him, but he thought he could get approval for that component and apply it going forward.

Lenny indicated that what the DRC is looking for is a good example of what will happen and that is the point of the review process. The applicant asked if he could return at a later date to determine colors.

Lenny asked if what the applicant was proposing was for the rest of the Mall. The applicant said he understood the submission is a bit vague which was why he wanted to describe it to the DRC. Dianne noted that in the description of the project in the Preapplication Meeting notes indicates that the improvements were proposed for the front of the shop but also in the rest of the Mall, that the application was not clear about color, and suggested the application be sent back for clarification.

Catalina Lanigan said they would be spending hundreds of dollars to build the improvements but did not want to spend the money unless they know their proposal will be approved. She said she has no trust in the process, that not one told her the application was incomplete. Lucas said he just wanted a vote.

Kelly said the applicant should make it clear that the blue is what is being proposed. She said she believes that a consistent color is desirable. She also said she would like a bit more information on who and how the plantings will be maintained to understand what to expect. The applicant said if the DRC wanted one color he'd propose blue with black trim. He also said that a maintenance program will be paid for by tenants and will be managed professionally.

Steve noted that there are two different heights of planters, that the lower ones will be placed under windows with the taller ones between doors and asked how many tall planters are proposed. The applicant said about 6 with some type of shrub to provide privacy between shops to break up the spaces between businesses. Steve noted that Mr. Meggs had previously told the DRC that there would be awnings above each door and asked if he is still proposing to do so and whether that would be compatible with the taller planters with shrubs. The applicant put an overall image of the complex on the screen and used it to illustrate potential locations. He said he believes that Mr. Meggs' concept about the awnings has changed which is why he is proposing the taller boxes with 3' high shrubs to break up view of the doorways.

Kelly expressed concern about the survivability of shrubs in planters, but said that would be the landscape firm's problem.

Dianne asked what would happen if businesses don't want to participate in the program with a rent increase to pay for it. She also asked if there is any lighting proposed. The applicant said they have talked about providing landscape lighting to bring the eye down to the planters, but would forego that because he needs more time to refine plans and will return to the DRC for that component.

Evelyn Libby asked for clarification about what is being proposed – a planter or a bench or planters with a bench in between. The applicant responded that there would be a planter under the window then a bench for 2' then a planter attached.

Thom asked how many benches and boxes are proposed. The applicant said about 3 with one in front of Carte Blanche. Thom asked if it would be balanced and the applicant indicated it would.

Oliver Jones asked how the boxes will be spaced, whether there would be a space between them. The applicant noted a photo and said that they will be continuously built, some 10" and some 4", all 16". Oliver clarified that they will all be the same width but different heights.

Steve asked if the applicant was proposing to have the taller units one color and the lower with units another. The applicant said that the thought is to alternate colors from one business to the next. Steve asked if he was proposing to use height to distinguish the colors. He suggested that the applicant be mindful with benches, that they may be welcoming homeless people to sleep there as he has observed happening in Legacy Lane. The applicant said that is why they are not proposing specific locations and that he needs to talk with each business but agrees.

Dianne asked about the proposed sign for Carte Blanche. The applicant said the photo shows a temporary sign, but the permanent sign will be the same. He said they are adding a kids' clothing store in the former Candy Tubbs shop, which will be called "Women and Little's Clothing". He said they'd like to have a hand carved sign. Steve noted that the DRC needs to hear from Mr. Meggs, that two years ago he told the DRC that he would require signs of consistent size and materials. The applicant said he would do what the DRC told him to do. Steve said he is not questioning the design, but the fact that the owner had previously told the DRC that he wanted consistency with the understanding that square footage would be tied to the square footage of the store. The applicant said he will do what is needed and made reference to the sign at Willows Massage. Steve repeated that the first conversation had to be with Mr. Meggs.

Lenny said there had been a lot of items discussed about the Mall tonight as well as at previous meetings and it goes back to the need for a master plan for improvements to the Mall and

asked what the plans were for that. The applicant said that the master plan was waiting for the Aceto design for the parking lot and that was why he was proposing planters to balance the design Aceto is proposing. Lenny said he did not have a problem with the applicant's proposal but that a master plan is needed. The applicant said that Meggs does not control the whole Mall and is trying to incorporate his plans for improvement into the overall Aceto plan. Kelly noted that the conversation has drifted from the discussion of signage and was not part of this application. Lenny said the DRC is talking about design elements in the Mall.

Dianne asked what material are proposed for the sign and noted that this information was not contained in the submission. The applicant noted what he wants but said he did not include that detail in the submission. Lenny asked if the sign is proposed to be of one or two colors. Thom asked what 2 colors means – one for the sign, one for the trim. Kelly noted that the DRC is back to not knowing what they are being asked to vote on. Lenny suggested that the applicant should come back with a clear proposal. Steve said he is ok with one color. Kelly indicated that the DRC always has concerns when there is a drift toward designing for the applicant instead of responding to an applicant's proposal. Lucas asked if the DRC could get approval for Carte Blanche's proposal and come back to the DRC at another meeting. He said he is proposing one color for Carte Blanche.

Lenny said he is ok with the design of the planters/bench. Steve said he is ok with one color for the sign and the design shown and additional information provided based on photos (16" deep and described placement, using composite material, blue as defined in the submission.

Dianne noted that 280-15-11.8.2.1.3.3.1 tells applicant to shy away from sharp corners so people won't be injured. Steve noted that the sidewalk belongs to Meggs so that is a private insurance issue. Molly said that the concern may be with the trim and, if so, the mitered corners could be rounded. Lenny asked how the sidewalks will be cleared of snow. The applicant said he did to have that answer and he would follow the standard regarding sharp corners.

Molly asked whether the trim will be natural or white like in the two illustrations. She noted that white protrudes more and asked what the applicant is proposing. The applicant responded that the natural box illustrated what he is proposing.

Kelly said that the review was nitpicking. Lenny said he was trying to get an idea of what the proposal will look like. Thom added that this is what happens when the DRC does not have the pictures/drawings necessary to understand the proposal. Lenny agreed.

Thom made a motion to recommend approval of the design concept for benches and planter across the Meggs' property as proposed in the packet and further described tonight. Kelly seconded the motion. Lenny indicated that he wants to see a master plan for the Mall and that would make the process far easier. The applicant agreed and said he hoped to do so in cooperation with the plan for the parking lot. Lenny said he could understand the applicant's frustration and that you know what you want but are not clear. Beth Della Valle asked for someone to clarify what is proposed for bench/planter.

Thom made a motion to amend his original motion to just cover the benches/planters for Carte Blanche; seconded by Kelly. Voted 6:1 (Dianne).

Lenny indicated that the applicant will have to return to the DRC with a more complete proposal for the rest of the Mall.

Beth asked the applicant to come to the Planning Department and she will work with him to draw up the proposal so it is clear how to write the DRC's recommendation.

Steve asked that Mr. Meggs clarify his signage strategy, including how to handle exceptions. Beth noted that the applicant had been designated as Mr. Meggs' agent.

Steve asked the applicant to explain the intent of the signage. The applicant said it is based on the ordinance, that code will dictate the dimensions, and will use the design provided in the photo with addition of the words "Women" and "Littles", just the sign with no lights, over Door 200 as illustrated. Steve said the application was not clear about materials. The applicant said the materials will depend on cost. The applicant said it would be a white sign with black letters, will use the previously agreed upon material and if the DRC wants him to do something different to tell him. He said he was asking the DRC's recommendation and continued with other commentary about the review.

Lenny said the DRC needed to move on to the rest of the agenda and indicated he would be speaking with the City Manager, that the applicant had been unprofessional and unreasonable. The applicant agreed, saying that this is petty.

Kelly noted that some of what happened at the review is that the DRC was conducting its meeting in an unconventional manner (remote Zoom meeting), that the planters were recommended for approval, that the applicant need to sit down with Beth to work out details, and leave it at that.

Agenda Item 3 – Small Project to Beautify Downtown with Downtown Legacy Funds

Beth introduced this item and helped the DRC brainstorm potential projects. Following the brainstorming, the DRC discussed each of the ideas and did virtual dot voting. The results of the dot voting were as follows:

- 4 votes – tables in the new section of Central Park
- 4 votes – decorative lighting in the two alleyways
- 3 votes – decorative streetlights like those in Downtown extended down Roberts Street to Goodall Park
- 1 votes – decorative street signs like those used in the East Side neighborhood, to encompass the entire Downtown area
- 1 vote – local or regional artist to do an art installation in the two alleyways
- 0 votes – improvements to the walkway in the MidTown Mall parking lot
- 0 votes – funds for business support

The DRC discussed those proposals that received votes and asked for another vote on the top projects. The vote follows:

- 4 votes – tables in the new section of Central Park
- 3 votes – decorative streetlights like those in Downtown extended down Roberts Street to Goodall Park
- 2 votes – decorative street signs like those used in the East Side neighborhood, to encompass the entire Downtown area
- 0 votes – decorative lighting in the two alleyways

Agenda Item 4 – Next Meeting – Wednesday, September 9, 2020

Agenda Item 5 – Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:03 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Beth Della Valle, Planning Director