

**TOWN OF ACTON
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES OF MAY 16, 2007 MEETING**

7:30 p.m.
Room 126, Town Hall

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING: Wednesday, June 6, 2007
Acton Town Hall, Rm 126, 7:30 p.m.

Present: Ann Sussman (Chair), Tom Peterman (Vice-Chair), Ruth Martin, Lynn Alpert (arrived at 7:35), Terra Fredrichs (left early) and Holly Ben-Joseph.

Meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

We reviewed the May 8th meeting notes and approved them.

We talked about the ‘Culture of the Board’. Ann started the conversation by saying she sees our role more as an educational one, providing information to developers. Other’s mentioned that since our board has no authority to grant approvals, we can encourage developers in the right direction by strongly supporting and praising good design in our reviews. Our approach will be more of using the ‘carrot’ rather than the ‘stick’.

Terra and Ann suggested we make the atmosphere ‘friendly/open’ by bringing in blocks to set on center of table.

Action Item: Ann will bring in blocks.

Tom P. discussed what the actual process will be for those coming before us. Will we have an application to fill out? How do we review projects that don’t need a special site plan review, which there are many. Another question raised is who should have our guidelines? Ann thought Planning Board, building department and Town Clerk. We all agreed.

We all decided that we need to spend more time discussing these items, and that some of the processes and questions we have may be answered as we start to review projects.

Action Item: All of us are to review the HDC (Historic District Com.) application process before next meeting.

Action Item: Terra will get the Town of Acton’s Site Plan Review info and bring to next meeting.

Action Item: Ann will request more copies be made of the Guidelines from the Building Dept. and will distribute them to the above mentioned agencies.

REVIEW OF PROJECT – ROUTE 27, OLD LUMBERYARD SITE (?)

David Duane – Macot Realty Trust

Russ Grenier – Facilities Manager – Methods Machine Tools

Robert Taylor – Cutler Assoc. Architects

David did most of the speaking; he manages the land for Methods Machine Tools. They bought the land several years ago. Currently they have one tenant and use a portion of the space for storage. They are based in Sudbury now in 3 buildings and want to consolidate operations into this new location since zoning for the area has changed and allows for this.

They brought to the meeting:

- Existing conditions plan by Stamski & McNary
- Proposed site layout
- Front Elevation – (no relationship to site or surroundings)

Elements of the Design:

- Removal of old building - new building in its place , larger 181,000sf
- The building requires large bays off of a central crane.
- Front of the building will be for a showroom, and on mezzanine level will be offices.
- 215 parking spaces, mostly in front (where current parking is)
- 2 access roads into site, one just for egress.
- The trucks will unload at the rear of the building
- Currently as shown, the building SF is too small, they need more space for operations and are working to enlarge the building. Since the lot is already 'maxed out' they are not sure if they will succeed.
- Materials: masonry band at bottom all around, steel frame & skin above.
- Large windows on showroom side of building, small windows on other side, and canopy over front entrance, otherwise no articulation of front façade.
- The owner likes stone walls and will probably put one in the landscape

Board's Comments:

- Break it up, to change or reduce the scale, especially at front of building
- Most important to work on front façade
- Proportions of windows lack grace – see Lowell Mill buildings for example of good proportions
- Concern that this 'large scale design' will not be workable for future tenants if Machine Tools moves out
- Will this building fit in with the future development that is occurring at a rapid pace now. Many over 55 housing units going up near by. Should this site cater to their needs?
- The site plan does not follow our recommendations of putting parking to the rear of the site, is there any way to reconfigure the building and move more of the parking to the rear?
- Possible good examples – Cisco in Boxborough, the large building next to the SAAB dealer on 2
- We mentioned to them that the parking layouts had been recently changed by zoning.

Applicant's Comments:

- Building must keep current shape and location for efficient use of space
- They will not move out of the area
- There will be a wide landscaped buffer along the road. The sidewalk will remain
- Look on their website to see their buildings in other locations. This is what HBJ could find:
http://www.mmsonline.com/dp/showroom/show_company_profile.cfm?code=METHODS&lcode=ML&pub=MMS

We thanked them for coming and asked them to come back once they have more developed plans.

We had a quick discussion of what the applicant needs to bring to the meetings. Some ideas were:

- Site / locus plan
- Existing Conditions plan
- Photographs of the site
- Proposed plans & Sections
- ??

We also discussed the 'tone' the board should be taking with the applicants. Tom and others felt that we cannot just bend to what the applicant's propose, as they always will say it can't be done any other way, and that we need to stand firm on issues covered in the guidelines. This project may be one of the biggest that this board will review, and that we need to carefully review it, and make sure we are happy with the design before giving it the green light.

Finally, we reviewed the plans for the sidewalk along Route 27 by Stamski & McNary as requested by Bruce Stamski. Some supported the sidewalk at this location, others did not.

Concerns/Questions –

- Many mature trees are being removed, can't walk be aligned to go around some of the trees?
- Is the stone wall being removed, will it be rebuilt with the same methods?
- Does the current level of pedestrian activity warrant a walk here when in so many other locations there is much more activity, heavy traffic and no walks?
- Some felt the walk was a critical link on a major N-S route that would like town center to Nara Park even though current level of pedestrian/bike activity was not high.
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Action Item: Holly will write up board's comments and email to board for review, and then send out to BOS and Bruce Stamski.

The meeting was adjourned at: 9:48

Respectfully submitted,
Holly Ben-Joseph