

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
December 3, 2009**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Liza Kilcoyne (Chairwoman); Dan Kerin, John Alden, Aaron Martin, Andrew Boutin, Diane Clemens.
ADMINISTRATION: Robin Pierce, Development Director.

1. CALL TO ORDER and AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS

Chairwoman Liza Kilcoyne called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. There were no comments from the public.

2. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

3. MINUTES

November 5, 2009

MOTION by John Alden, SECOND by Andrew Boutin, to approve the 11/5/09 minutes with the following corrections/clarifications:

Page 4, Essex Junction School District Application, Motion, Condition #1 – delete “near the center of the view corridor”;

Page 4, Handy Application, Applicant Comments, 2nd paragraph, sentence reading: “The number of parking spaces...” – change ‘lightly’ to “slightly”;

Page 6, Handy Application, Staff Report, paragraph beginning with “There was discussion of moving the condominium buildings...” – delete the sentence and begin the paragraph with the sentence reading: “The Residential-Office District allows...”.

VOTING: unanimous (6-0); motion carried.

4. PUBLIC HEARING

The procedure to be followed with applications before the Planning Commission was explained and individuals to give testimony were sworn in.

[Note: the conceptual and final plan proposed by Champlain Valley Exposition and Village of Essex Junction was reviewed simultaneously. Liza Kilcoyne recused herself from review of the application(s) and Diane Clemens assumed the duties of the chair.]

Conceptual Plan review for waivers of streetscape improvements at 105 Pearl Street in the PE District by Lamoureux & Dickinson, agent for Champlain Valley Exposition and Village of Essex Junction, owners

Final Plan review for streetscape improvements: gate structures/archways, signs, fence, flagpoles, landscaping and sidewalks at 105 Pearl Street in the PE District by Lamoureux & Dickinson, agent for Champlain Valley Exposition and Village of Essex Junction, owners

Rick Hamlin (Project Manager/owner), Dave Crawford (Village Manager), Jody Carriere (Lamoureux & Dickinson), Rod Halsted (CVE), and Liza Kilcoyne (architect) appeared on behalf of the application.

APPLICANT COMMENT

Dave Crawford gave a brief history and update on the project which began with the concept plan done by Saratoga Associates and CVE five years ago. Subsequently, Sen. Leahy secured funding for the project (\$2.2 million earmark). CVE and the Village Administration began working together two years ago on easements and agreements. VTrans agreed to 'fast track' the turn over of ownership of Pearl Street to the Village of Essex Junction. The design team for the project includes Lamoureux & Dickinson (consulting engineers), Gardner & Kilcoyne (architects), and Rick Hamlin (project manager). Dave Crawford noted per the advice of the Village Attorney in accordance with the Village Ethics Policy staff does not have a conflict of interest in working on the project, but is simply "doing their job". Also, the Planning Commission chairwoman recused herself and will not be in the room during deliberation by the Planning Commission. The Village Development Director will answer questions during the public period or factual questions pertaining to the Land Development Code during deliberation, but will not render an opinion on how the Code applies to the project.

Rick Hamlin reviewed the various roles of the people involved in the project. Jeff Kershner is the Village Engineer on the project, Rod Halsted represents the CVE Board of Directors, John Booth is a CVE Board member emeritus and project manager for CVE, Bob Jenkins is the CVE Facilities Manager, Ande DeForge is the VTrans contact, Jody Carriere is the engineer with Lamoureux & Dickinson, and Liza Kilcoyne is the architect for the project. Other participants are Northeast Archeological Research, Susan Jamele with Historic Preservation, and Kirick Engineering for electrical work.

Dave Crawford commented positively on the concerted collaborative effort on the project which has involvement by a significant number of village residents on the design team. The project is on schedule and on budget.

Jody Carriere reviewed the project site extending from the Bouchard Pierce building to Post Office Square. The proposal includes a ticket booth, archway and kiosk at the new pedestrian entrance. The ticket booth structure meets the setback requirements and building height requirements. The building is 20' in height. The top of the archway is 24'. Maximum building height allowed per the Code is 35'. There will be benches and a hoop style bike rack with 24 parking slots (each slot with two locking points) by the pedestrian entrance. There are bike lanes on the roadway (Pearl Street). There will be two 20' high pole lights with tulip style fixtures and 175 watt metal halide bulbs. The same lighting scenario will be located at Gate B. Gas lamp style lights will be located along Pearl Street. There is a light at the 80' wide Gate B entrance with new curbing and better defined lanes (two 14' wide entry lanes and two 12' wide exit lanes with a seven foot wide median in between). There are two floodlights to be operated by the police to illuminate the intersection when directing traffic in/out of the fairgrounds. The sidewalk at Gate B will be at-grade with the road. Gate A to the west of the new pedestrian

entrance has one-way traffic flow for the bus and taxi stop. Emergency vehicles can enter the fairgrounds through the gate at Gate A whenever necessary. A six foot high black wrought iron fence with seven foot high accent brick posts will be installed along the front of the grounds. There are nine 14' posts with banners to add color to the area (three by Gate A, three by the bump-out, and three by the angle). The sidewalks are 15' wide from Gate A to Gate B. Drainage is incorporated into the design. Lamoureux & Dickinson is working with the Village Engineer to ensure recommendations are met and drainage is not overloaded on Pearl Street.

Liz Kilcoyne commented CVE is trying to encourage more off-site parking and therefore use of public transportation/shuttle buses so Gate A is important.

Jody Carriere said four variances will be sought, including a variance for an additional flag pole to allow four flags (US, Canada, Vermont, CVE), to allow a 38 s.f. (2'x 19') wall sign on the ticket booth archway reading "Champlain Valley Exposition" (maximum sign size is 18 s.f.), to allow temporary sign boards on the kiosk located to the left of the ticket booth (to be used as a public bulletin board and changed without requiring review each time), and to allow the banners on the poles to be at a height of six feet rather than three feet. The archway sign will have lighting from below the sign, but this is not yet designed. The sign by Gate B will be replaced by a smaller sign which will be handled administratively. Other items to be done include replacement of the fire hydrant, planting new street trees (salt tolerant variety) behind the fence in groups of three (the number of trees will exceed the requirement of one tree per 40 linear feet), planting shrubs and plantings in the median by Gate A and near the main sign by Gate B. The large elm tree and maple tree on the property will be saved. There will be interpretive signs and shrubs along Pearl Street to Gate B. The crosswalk by McDonald's Restaurant will be relocated to the new pedestrian entrance. There will be plantings in the island where the old crosswalk was located. The area in front of the pedestrian entrance will be open and free of plantings. Umbrellas may be used to provide shade when necessary. If pervious concrete is used for the project it is understood there must be a maintenance schedule. There will be municipal water and sewer service to the ticket booth building. The project will undergo Act 250 review and there will be compliance with all requirements.

Andrew Boutin asked about the cow barn. Rod Halsted said the agricultural area on the fairgrounds will be relocated and the cow barn will be torn down, but not as part of the proposal currently under review. Mr. Boutin expressed concern about the sidewalk being at-grade with the road by Gate B and cars not slowing down for pedestrians. Rick Hamlin pointed out the Gate B entrance mimics a regular street entrance. Sidewalk by the shopping center is at-grade. The sidewalk is inlaid across the entrance so it is clear there is a pedestrian route across the roadway. A sign can be placed on the back side of the post at the Gate B entrance alerting drivers to the pedestrian crossing. Police will be at the intersection during high traffic events. Dave Crawford stated the goal is to move traffic in/out of the site in a controlled fashion during events. Removing the bump by the Gate B entrance helps. The police asked that the bump be removed because it causes traffic to back up on Pearl Street. Liza Kilcoyne pointed out the entrance is improved by the curbs and better lighting.

Dan Kerin commented that hanging vinyl banners/signs on the fence is not attractive or professional looking. The current proposal for signs and banners should eliminate this practice from the fence and barn. Mr. Kerin asked if the crosswalk by the pedestrian entrance will have a lighted sign or activation button. Jody Carriere said there will be crosswalk signs and during large events at the fairgrounds the police will be helping people cross the street. Rick Hamlin added the crosswalk is located away from the busy area by McDonald's and the bus stop. Mr. Kerin asked about the material on the building façade. Liza Kilcoyne stated cement board siding will be used. Dan Kerin asked if any improvements are planned for the Route 2A entrances. Dave Crawford said only the Pearl Street area is being improved. Work in the 66' right-of-way will use federal and village money and work beyond the right-of-way will use CVE's share of the federal grant and CVE money.

John Alden observed people will want shelter while waiting in line at the pedestrian entrance; this would be good to consider in the building design. Rod Halsted said most of the traffic to the fairgrounds is vehicular rather than pedestrian. Portable tents will be used to provide shade during large events and there can be up to three ticket windows open to sell tickets and move people through expediently. Rick Hamlin noted due to the southern exposure, trees would have to be planted along the curb to provide shade, but there are already utility poles along the road. It is too expensive to bury the utility lines and the project would be delayed significantly (two years). Mr. Alden referred to the expanse of sidewalk and suggested there be more patterning. Jody Carriere pointed out the sidewalk is a colored brick pattern. Dave Crawford added the idea is to tie in to the same look found at Five Corners. Mr. Alden referred to the archway at Gate B, observing the brick support pillars appear too slender compared to the double trussed archway. Mr. Alden also suggested the main sign be larger, not smaller, than the original sign.

STAFF REPORT

The Planning Commission received a written staff report on the application, dated 12/3/09. Robin Pierce pointed out the review is for both conceptual and final approval. Staff recommends any approval be contingent upon securing the noted variances.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public.

MOTION by Diane Clemens, SECOND by Dan Kerin, to close the public portion of the application by CVE and Village of Essex Junction for 105 Pearl Street.

VOTING: unanimous (5-0); motion carried.

DELIBERATION/DECISION

Conceptual and Final Plan, Streetscape Improvements, 105 Pearl Street, CVE and Village of Essex Junction

MOTION by John Alden, SECOND by Dan Kerin, to approve the conceptual and final plan for streetscape improvements (gate structures/archways, new pedestrian entrance building and canopy, signs, fence, flagpoles, landscaping, sidewalk) at 105

Pearl Street by Champlain Valley Exposition and Village of Essex Junction with the following conditions:

- 1. The applicant shall receive all necessary variances from the Zoning Board of Adjustment including, but not limited to, the height of the brick posts, flagpoles, additional permanent and temporary signs, and the location of the new fence in relation to the sidewalk.**
- 2. There shall be an appropriate maintenance schedule for pervious concrete used in the project.**
- 3. Landscaping along Pearl Street shall be redesigned to create shaded areas for visitors to the property and to increase pedestrian safety along the section of Pearl Street so a waiver of landscaping costs is not necessary.**
- 4. There shall be no increase in storm water runoff after the project is complete.**
- 5. The applicant shall comply with all Act 250 requirements.**
- 6. The applicant shall replace the fire hydrant.**
- 7. Additional texturing to the sidewalk shall be considered to break up the large expanse of concrete.**
- 8. There shall be heightened attention to safety at the crosswalk which may include additional lights or review of the proposed lighting.**
- 9. No other signs shall be erected on the site, specifically no signs on the fences or the cow barn.**

DISCUSSION: There was discussion of raising the crosswalk by the pedestrian entrance to alert drivers. Aaron Martin pointed out the lane reconfiguration creates a different driving environment than in the past. Rumble strips on each end of the crosswalk were mentioned (may interfere with snowplowing). Diane Clemens suggested traffic warning barrels be placed by the crosswalk so people can get accustomed to the traffic pattern. There was mention of the sidewalk by Gate B and having a contrast in pavement material and the sidewalk. It was noted the crosswalk will be painted bright yellow. There was discussion of people still crossing the road by McDonald's rather than using the relocated crosswalk and having enough lighting in the area to enhance safety. There was discussion of the banners on the poles by the fence being in a regular pattern rather than in clusters.

VOTING: unanimous (5-0); motion carried.

5. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

None.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Diane Clemens, SECOND by Andrew Boutin, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous (5-0); motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.