Brattleboro Design Review Committee
Tuesday, March 29, 2016
Minutes

Present: Barbara George, Teo Senni, Robin Sweetapple, Mary McLoughlin (alternate)
Staff: Rod Francis, Sue Fillion, Brian Bannon
Public: Robin Johnson

1. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 12:00 noon.

2. Review and Approve Minutes of previous meeting.
R. Sweetapple moved approval of the minutes as written; B. George seconded. Pass 4-0.

3. Review of Development Proposals

2015-220 Delta Epsilon, Inc; Urban Center District; request for Site Plan and Design Approval to construct a new ADA entrance to the basement level with associated landscaping at 210 Main Street; Tax Map Parcel #275217.000

R. Johnson gave an overview of the new design which includes a handicapped ramp on the Grove Street side of the building leading up to an existing door, a new sign, removal of some ivy on the building, and placement of the cross on the Grove Street side of the building in a location that does not interfere with snow load from the roof.

The sign design was reviewed. Applicant mentioned that it will likely be a wood finish with wood burn. The image which mirrors a window in the church may include the name "Stone Church." Ms. George noted that the Downtown Design Guidelines states that unfinished wood is not encouraged.

R. Johnson discussed the ramp. It may not be required (this is dependent on how the cost of the ADA bathroom will be figured into the 20% construction cost threshold). The first run will be 26 – 27 ft. with a 5 ft. x 5 ft. landing before switching back to a 20 ft. run. It will be faced with stone from the steeple. There was discussion of railings, which were not included on the drawing. B. George said that Preservation Brief 32 speaks to accessibility. Railing should be minimalist and you should be able to see through them. R. Johnson said he is leaning towards black metal.

Alternatives to a handicapped ramp were discussed. A lift on the front would be too intrusive. A lift on the side was also considered but ruled out.

M. McLoughlin noted that the table could block the cross. R. Johnson said that the cross will be set in the foundation, not on a plinth. He is open to relocating the table.

The landscaping was discussed. A tree will be removed and the yard cleaned up. A retaining wall will be rebuilt. There is so much rain and snowfall under the roofline that there is not much to be done for landscaping.

The sign was discussed. R. Johnson he could do either the ground sign or hang above the front entrance. M. McLoughlin liked the proposed located, design and materials. T. Senni suggested something on the sign that makes it more modern (e.g., metal trim with painted wood). Mr. Bannon asked if it will have changeable copy. Mr. Johnson said no but that he does intend to have an enclosed bulletin board on the unused front entry door.

B. George asked where the nearest handicapped parking space needs to be. R. Francis advised that if the applicant wants a space on Grove Street, he can petition the Traffic Safety Committee.

The Design Review Committee suggested that the applicant provide drawings to the DRB that show the building.

R. Sweetapple spoke in favor of approving the design. M. McLoughlin agreed. B. George was in favor of the sign materials being more turn-of-the-century that fit with the stone. She was ok with the bushes and ivy being removed. T. Senni prefers a simple painted sign versus a weathered wooden sign. There was discussion of having an appropriate trim color that is compatible with the building façade. T. Senni would prefer that not all of the ivy is removed noting that it doesn't damage buildings as much as people used to think.

B. George moved to provide a letter to the Development Review Board regarding location of cross, the provision that picnic table and seats be of stone, the ramp faced in material from the structure and that it be adjacent to the building at the rear southwestern corner of the building, and that the railing be minimalist so as not to interfere with the character of building. T. Senni seconded the motion. Pass 3-0.

B. George suggested adding language that it is never a wonderful thing to change historic buildings but that the DRC recognizes the need for them to be economically feasible, especially churches, but that we feel that sometimes change needs to happen so that a historic building can be reused. Achieving universal access to the building and the fact that the owner has not done a lot to distort the historic character of the front façade are important.

4. Administrative Matters and New Business

No further business. The meeting adjourned at 12:55 PM