



# City of Woonsocket, RI

## Design Review Commission Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: Tuesday, August 17, 2021 | 7 p.m.

Location: City Hall, 169 Main Street, Woonsocket | Harris Hall (3<sup>rd</sup> floor)

I. Call to order

Chairman Finlay called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

II. Attendance Review

Members in Attendance:

1. Ken Finlay, Chairman
2. Roji Eappen, Vice-Chairman
3. Wendall Gardner
4. Jon Pratt

Members Absent:

1. Ron Miller, Secretary

Staff in Attendance:

1. Kevin Proft, Design Review Officer
2. Genesis Johnson, Recording Secretary

III. Correction/Approval of Minutes

Motion to APPROVE Planning Board Meeting Minutes of July 13, 2021: Member Gardner

Second: Vice-Chairman Eappen

Discussion: None

Vote:

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice-Chairman Eappen	Yes
Secretary Miller	Absent
Member Gardner	Yes
Member Pratt	Yes

**Motion Passed**

**4-0-0**

IV. Old Business  
None

V. New Business

- a. **Design Review | Building and site improvements at 336 Cumberland St. | Owner: Woonsocket Realty LLC | Applicant: Rashid Gaffney | Project Location: 336 Cumberland St. | The applicant has proposed façade, signage, and site design improvements to the structure and lot at 336 Cumberland Street (Lot 37-192). The Design Review Commission may vote on a motion to approve the application at this meeting.**

Applicant Rashid Gaffney presented the application, stating that all interior and façade work is complete. Most site improvements have not been completed. Mr. Gaffney explained that he was only made aware of the Design Review requirement by City staff after completing the work on the structure and installing the awning signage.

Chairman Finlay voiced concern about the size of the drive-through. Mr. Gaffney explained that he has tested multiple cars of varying sizes and all of them could make the turn shown on the site plan when exiting the drive-through. Mr. Proft expressed concern that queued cars would interfere with north-south circulation through the parking lot. It was determined that since there are two curb cuts (one at the north and one at the south end of the property, even in circulation was disrupted, it would not cause significant issues.

Mr. Proft stated that a portion of the proposed parking area is located on state-owned property. He said he did not know if there was an agreement between the property owner and RIDOT for use of this land for parking. The former business at 336 Cumberland Street used the land as parking as well. The Board required the applicant to inform the property owner of the situation prior to moving forward with reconstructing/stripping the parking area.

Mr. Gaffney informed the Board that he will be removing the old fence to the north of the building. A Dumpster enclosure will be erected in that location. The fence will be made from material that is solid in appearance.

Mr. Proft stated that the Zoning Official has determined that the awning signage does not meet the requirements of the Zoning Code. The text is too big. The Board required the applicant to work with the Zoning Official to address this concern as a condition of approval.

Concerning landscaping, Mr. Gaffney stated that he would be improving landscaping in the existing landscape beds at the north and south property line and that hardy, low maintenance plantings would be used.

Mr. Gaffney stated that the existing free-standing sign at the south corner of the property would be refurbished. He was required to get Design Review approval for the sign from Mr. Proft prior to installation.

Mr. Gaffney agreed to extend a crosswalk from the sidewalk to the striped area next to parking space #6 on the site plan.

The applicant agreed to reconfigure the ADA ramp so that it would not conflict with the drive-through lane.

The applicant stated that he understood that heavy snow – an related snow storage – may require him to close his drive-through window.

When Mr. Proft questioned if the lights on property could be dimmed after business hours, Chairman Finlay and Member Gardner stated that they did not think this was necessary given the businesses location on a brightly lit street and given that there are no residential abutters.

Chairman Finlay read the Design Review Commission Design Review Approval into the record, including the following findings of fact and conditions of approval:

- (1) The architectural design of the project is appropriate for the type of project proposed. The building includes ample windows and glass doors that will allow visibility into the commercial establishments. The project includes a pedestrian-scale awning over the front and side facades. The façade uses a neutral color scheme except for the awnings which are blue and maroon. The façade treatment is used on all four sides of the building.
- (2) The landscape design of the project is appropriate for the type of project proposed. The applicant has agreed to improve existing landscape areas with new, low-maintenance landscaping and manage said areas continuously.
- (3) The impacts on available utilities are limited. All utilities will be underground. The applicant will prevent erosion and manage all new stormwater on-site per State and local requirements. No new impervious surface is proposed. Impacts on water and sewer usage compared to the former use (auto repair) are expected to be negligible.
- (4) Traffic impacts resulting from the new development will be negligible. More traffic will likely be generated by the new uses compared to the former use, but the increase is reasonable given the site's location on a commercial corridor in a commercially zoning district. The site has two existing curb cuts to Cumberland Street, both of which will be maintained.

- (5) On-site traffic circulation will be adequate. The applicant has proposed 10 parking spaces as required by the Zoning Ordinance. The applicant has agreed to include a painted crosswalk from the sidewalk to the businesses through the Parking Lot. There is adequate space for box trucks to unload.
- (6) The overall visual quality of the site is appropriate given the type of project proposed. The improvements to the façade are attractive compared to former conditions. The applicant has agreed to improve the site's landscaped areas. The applicant has agreed to screen dumpsters from abutter and public view. The applicant has agreed to remove the existing fencing. The applicant has agreed to refurbish a derelict freestanding sign and, if applicable, remove a pole light at the south corner of the property.
- (7) The relationship of the proposed development to surrounding buildings is appropriate. The proposal redevelops an existing building, limiting the ability of the applicant to incorporate changes that significantly impact the relationship of the proposed development to surrounding buildings.
- (8) The signage is acceptable given the proposed uses. The signage is well integrated into the building's façade on an appropriately placed awning. The signage uses only two font sizes and two colors per establishment (blue/white and red/white). The signage is not illuminated. The signage of neighboring tenants is coordinated by size, type, and style. The signage does not meet the dimensional requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, but the applicant has agreed to work with the Zoning Official to address this concern. Freestanding signage will be reviewed by the Design Review Officer administratively.
- (9) The site layout is appropriate given the type of project proposed. Circulation is adequate (see (4) and (5) above) and the landscape plan is acceptable (see (2) above). Dumpsters will be screened from abutter and public view.

Conditions of approval:

- 1. Construction shall be limited to 6 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- 2. Dust shall be controlled during all stages of development per section 9.0 of the City's subdivision regulations.
- 3. Erosion shall be managed during and after construction and stormwater from new impervious surface resulting from development shall be managed after construction per section 8.7 of the City's subdivision regulations and Chapters 7.5 and 7.75 of the City's Code of Ordinances.
- 4. Dumpsters shall be located to the north of the building and screened from the view of abutters and the public right-of-way by a fence of solid appearance prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

5. The existing fence to the north of the building shall be removed prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
6. The pole light and freestanding sign at the south of the property shall be removed or refurbished prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
7. A painted crosswalk from the public sidewalk to the structure's ADA ramp shall be located to the south of parking space 6 and striped in conjunction with the rest of the parking lot striping.
8. The landscape areas along the side property lines shall be improved with new, low-maintenance plantings by July 2022 and continuously managed.
9. The ADA ramp to the south of parking space 6 shall be reconfigured to avoid requiring pedestrians to access the ramp from the drive through lane prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
10. The applicant's freestanding sign shall be reviewed administratively by the Design Review officer and Zoning Official upon receipt of additional documentation.
11. The applicant shall work with the Zoning Official regarding noncompliant awning signage and other zoning issues identified by the Zoning Official prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
12. The applicant shall inform the property owner that a portion of the proposed parking area is owned by the State of Rhode Island.

Motion to APPROVE the Design Review Application with Conditions of Approval: Member Gardner

Second: Member Pratt

Discussion: None.

Vote:

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice-Chairman Eappen	Yes
Secretary Miller	Absent
Member Gardner	Yes
Member Pratt	Yes

**Motion Passed 4-0-0**

- b. **Design Review | New Self-Storage Building at 777 Providence Street (Ayotte Field) | Owner: City of Woonsocket | Applicant: True Storage c/o Bussiere, P.A. | Project Location: 777 Providence Street (Lot 5-79) | The applicant has proposed the construction of a new, three-story, 90,000-square foot self-storage building at 777 Providence Street with associated site improvements. This application was tabled at the July 13, 2021 meeting. The Design Review Commission may vote on a motion to approve the application at this meeting.**

Project Manager Michael Malynowski, Allan & Major Associates, presented the project and its revisions since the previous Design Review Commission meeting to the Design Review Commission.

Mr. Malynowski addressed the request to re-locate landscaping from the rear of the structure to the corner of Providence Street and Smithfield Road. He agreed that plantings should be hardy and low maintenance to ensure the long-term success of the landscaping plan. Mr. Malynowski agreed with Mr. Proft that the ideal location for the landscaping would be to the southwest of the line of evergreens so it is visible from the intersection and creates an attractive gateway to the City. He noted that moving the landscaping to the parking lot area – as proposed on the revised site plan – could conflict with the snow storage plan.

Mr. Malynowski acknowledged that a signage plan had not been submitted with the application. The Design Review Commission agreed that signage approval could be handled administratively by Mr. Proft. Mr. Malynowski said the freestanding sign would likely be placed at the intersection of Providence St. and Smithfield Road.

Mr. Malynowski stated that the Zoning Board has granted the project a variance to allow nine parking space, but that the site plan has been revised to include 19 spaces to address concerns about too little parking expressed by the Design Review Commission at the previous meeting. The Board expressed satisfaction with this improvement.

Mr. Malynowski addressed the Board's prior concerns with the lack of a Dumpster on-site, explaining that it is an industry standard for self-storage units to not have a dumpster on property to discourage tenants from dumping their belongings at the storage facilities expense. Traditional trash receptacles serve the facility operator's needs. Chairman Finlay stated that he had researched the issue since the previous Design Review Commission and was now in agreement that a Dumpster is not needed.

Mr. Proft questioned how True Storage would handle instances of illegal dumping, and Mr. Malynowski explained that through key fobs and security systems in place, it would be easy to determine what unit the objects would come from and that a client's credit card would be on file to hold them accountable for clean up if necessary.

Mr. Proft noted a small adjustment that needed to be made on sheet L-101 where the "loam and seed" label needed to be shifted to the correct area on the plan. The applicant agreed.

Mr. Malynowski confirmed that the brown stone displayed on the rendering is real stone, although he was unsure if it would be installed as individual stones or as sheets. Mr. Proft asked if it was at all possible to reconfigure the window placement displayed on the front of the building in the rendering to remove the empty blue space next to it, but he, the

Board, and Mr. Malynowski all agreed that it would be too costly to add an extra window as well as reconfigure the stairway/units inside to make an amended design work.

The Board expressed their appreciation and satisfaction with the improvements made since the applicant's last presentation in July.

While discussing the hours of construction, the Board debated concerns of allowing construction on Sundays with the site being in vicinity of a nearby church, but ultimately decided to allow it as the applicant explained that, for the most part, they try to avoid working on the weekends unless necessary, so having the option to do so would be appreciated but not necessarily utilized.

Chairman Finlay read the Design Review Commission Design Review Approval into the record, including the following findings of fact and conditions of approval:

Findings of Fact:

- (1) The architectural design of the project is appropriate for the type of project proposed. The building includes windows at the front corners of the structure and the blue column elements on the front and side façade. The façade is articulated and includes variations in color and material, thereby limiting the impact of long, blank walls. An ashlar stone pattern is included at the base of the blue column elements. The roofline is varied to limit the visual impact of the flat roof. The project includes a pedestrian-scale awning over the office entry. The façade uses a neutral color scheme except for one accent color (blue). The façade treatment is used on all four sides of the building. All utilities are underground, including electrical utilities. The loading area canopies include design details that match the design of the main structure.
- (2) The landscape design of the project is appropriate for the type of project proposed. The frontage of the building, facing Providence Street and wrapping around the front corners of the building, includes a landscaped area with a variety of plantings to soften the impact of the structure. Significant special interest landscaping is provided along Providence Street and along the north property line near the entrance to the facility. Parking and an electrical transformer are adequately screened from view via a combination of evergreens and special interest landscaping. Existing vegetation is retained along Providence Street (e.g. spruce trees), Smithfield Road (e.g. deciduous trees) and along the west property line (e.g. wooded area). Street trees are planted within the public viewshed on private property. A pollinator friendly seed mix is incorporated in portions of the property that do not require a manicured aesthetic.
- (3) The impacts on available utilities are limited. All utilities will be underground. The applicant will prevent erosion and manage all new stormwater on-site per State and local requirements including section 8.7 of the City's Subdivision Regulations and Chapters 7.5 and 7.75 of the City's Code of Ordinances. Impervious surface has been limited via reduced travel-lane width and parking spaces. Water and sewer usage are

expected to be negligible due to the limited activity associated with the use. The applicant has adequately addressed comments from the Department of Public Works and understands DPW will conduct a more thorough review at a later stage in the permitting process.

- (4) Traffic Impacts resulting from the new development will be negligible due to the limited activity associated with the use.
- (5) On-site traffic circulation will be adequate given the expected level of use. The Fire Marshal's office stated that the proposed layout was adequate to receive design review approval, but noted that a more thorough review will be conducted at a later stage in the permitting process. The applicant has agreed to comply with all requirements of the Fire Marshal's office as permitting progresses. Site access is limited to one curb cut. An adequate snow storage plan is included on the site plan. The applicant received a variance at the July 12, 2021 Zoning Board meeting to significantly reduce parking based on expected demand. The Design Review Commission supports the proposed parking plan – 19 spaces – included in the August 9, 2021 version of the plan. Pedestrian visitation of the use is expected to be minimal and the low level of on-site traffic reduces the need for significant pedestrian accommodations.
- (6) The overall visual quality of the site is appropriate given the type of project proposed. The building is of relatively interesting design given the use and the proposed landscape plan is acceptable (see (1) and (2) above).
- (7) The relationship of the proposed development to surrounding buildings is appropriate. The structure is setback 39 feet from Providence Street. The setback of the neighboring building is approximately 25 feet. While a more similar setback would be preferable, the visual effect of the greater setback will be reduced due to the height of the proposed structure compared to the neighboring structure. Access between abutting parcels is not necessary given the mix of uses.
- (8) Signage will be reviewed under a separate Design Review application.
- (9) The site layout is appropriate given the type of project proposed. Circulation is adequate (see (4) and (5) above), the landscape plan is acceptable (see (2) above), the proposed structure's orientation to abutting roads given the site's topography and context is appropriate, and the location of the proposed structure compared to neighboring sites is acceptable (see (7) above).



Conditions of Approval:

1. Construction shall be limited to 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. on Monday-Friday and Sunday and 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. on Saturday.
2. Site lighting shall be LED, building-mounted, downward-facing, full-cutoff, and will be motion-censored between 9 p.m. and 9 a.m.
3. Dust shall be controlled during all stages of development per section 9.0 of the City subdivision regulations.
4. Erosion shall be managed during and after construction and stormwater from new impervious surface resulting from development shall be managed after construction per section 8.7 of the City’s subdivision regulations and Chapters 7.5 and 7.75 of the City’s Code of Ordinances.
5. Signage shall be reviewed administratively under a separate design review application prior to sign-related building permits being issued.
6. The “loam and seed” label to the north of the building on sheet L-101 shall be moved to point to the correct area on the plan.

Motion to APPROVE the Design Review Application with Conditions of Approval: Member Gardner

Second: Vice-Chairman Eappen

Discussion: None.

Vote:

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice-Chairman Eappen	Yes
Secretary Miller	Absent
Member Gardner	Yes
Member Pratt	Yes

**Motion Passed 4-0-0**

- VI. Administrative Officer’s Report:  
The next report will be provided at the September meeting.

- VII. Next Meeting Date:  
September 14, 2021

VIII. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 PM: Member Gardner

Second: Vice-Chairman Eappen

Discussion: None.

Vote:

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice-Chairman Eappen	Yes
Secretary Miller	Absent
Member Gardner	Yes
Member Pratt	Yes
<b>Motion Passed</b>	<b>4-0-0</b>