



City of Woonsocket, RI

Design Review Commission Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 | 6:00 PM
Location: Online Meeting via Zoom, Meeting ID: 825 4273 6944

I. Call to Order

Chairman Finlay called the meeting to order at 7:52 PM following the 6:00 PM Planning Board meeting.

II. Attendance Review

Members in Attendance:

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

Others in Attendance:

1. Kevin Proft, Design Review Officer
2. Theresa Dunigan, Recording Secretary
3. Leszek Przybylko
4. Britte Jessen-Balint

III. Remote Meeting Announcement:

General Proceedings

1. Each agenda item will be read in-full to ensure it is clear what matter is before the board.
2. Members should request permission to speak from the Chair prior to speaking. The Chair should recognize the Member by name.
3. Members will identify themselves each time before they speak.
4. All votes should be conducted by roll call.

Public Comment

1. The public will be muted by the meeting administrator until the Chair opens the floor to public comment, at which point all members of the public will be unmuted.
2. Members of the public wishing to comment should use the “raise hand” tool on their zoom screen so they may be called on by the chair to speak. If this method proves to be too challenging, the meeting administrator will mute all members of the public, and then unmute each member of the public one-by-one and ask if they have a comment.
3. Members of the public wishing to comment should state their first/last name and address for the record, then state their comment.

Documentation

1. Documents associated with the items being discussed at the meeting are available to the public on the Planning Board’s webpage on the Woonsocket website.

- i. <https://www.woonsocketri.org/planning-board/pages/meeting-files>

Technical Difficulties

1. If remote access is interrupted for all participants and cannot be restored within 10 minutes, the remainder of the meeting items will be continued to the following meeting. The board will preemptively vote to continue items not addressed due to potential technical difficulties to the next meeting to avoid the need to re-advertise said items. The date of said meeting must be included in the motion to continue.

IV. Vote to continue agenda items not completed due to technical difficulties to the next regularly scheduled Design Review Commission Meeting on October 6, 2020:

Mr. Kevin Proft said a vote was not needed since the DRC items do not require advertising or abutter notification, so can be easily rescheduled.

V. Correction/Approval of Minutes: Meeting of July 9, 2020 and January 1, 2020

Motion to APPROVE: Vice-Chairman Eappen

Second: Secretary Miller

Discussion: Chairman Finlay asked why January minutes were included. Mr. Proft said the minutes had not been approved during the March or April meetings. He believed it was due to confusion related to COVID-19 issues.

Vote:

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

Motion Passed 5-0-0

VI. Old Business

None.

VII. New Business

a. Design Review:

1. Redevelopment of Mill at 43 Railroad Street | Applicant: Leszek Przybylko | Owner: 43 Railroad LLC | Project Location: 43 Railroad Street (Lot 14-205) | The applicant proposes to renovate the vacant mill at 43 Railroad Street into a mixed-use development including 20 residential dwellings and two commercial units. The Design Review Commission may vote on a motion to approve the application at this meeting.

Mr. Proft introduced Mr. Leszek Przybylko to the Commission and informed the Commission that the application was turned in late for this meeting. The application was also not completed so a full design review is not possible, but the project has support from the Planning Department and approval by the Zoning Board. Mr. Proft recommended focusing on the architectural aspect of the building for this meeting and provide a limited approval of architectural elements so Mr. Przybylko will be able to move forward with the building permit process for the structure. Mr. Przybylko will be required to return to the Commission at a future meeting to review the rest of his

design (site plan, Circulation and parking, landscape plan, etc.). This would be contingent on the Commission being generally comfortable with the rough outline of the project.

Mr. Przybylko spoke to the Commission. He reviewed photos of the existing three-story building. The first (ground) floor will be commercial, likely with two or three tenants. The existing 2nd and 3rd floor will be converted to three floors within the same space and house 18 residential units. Two penthouse units will be added on the rooftop.

There was a brief discussion about the arches above the windows. Mr. Proft stated that he believed the arches added character to the building that will be lost if the new windows are squared off. Mr. Przybylko said the arches look more pronounced in the architectural elevations than they do in real life. Chairman Finlay agreed. Mr. Przybylko stated that the arches will be maintained on the first floor and forth floor windows. An arch will be added to the front doors to match the first floor windows and the doorframe will include a window component above the door itself.

For the commercial spaces on the first floor, one large space is proposed on the western side of the building and one smaller space is proposed on the eastern side. Anew building entrance off James Street will offer access to the commercial spaces. At the basement level, there are several spaces that receive a large amount of natural light from the ground level glass-block windows.

Mr. Proft said he was comfortable with the window arches on the first and top floors because this will maintain the original design of the building. As for the proposed patio area (accessible from the café space), the guidelines recommend maintaining window openings, and the proposed plan would remove windows from the entry wall. Mr. Przybylko explained the drawing was not up to date. One of the windows will remain overlooking the patio space, and the other window will be closed due to electrical meters being placed there. Mr. Przybylko said the loading doors on the first, second and third floor of the structure on the east side of the building will be maintained for aesthetic purposes but will not be functional.

The exterior for the rooftop walls will be a dark brown metal paneling. This paneling will also be used as an accent treatment on one side of the building (corresponding to an added interior staircase). An abutter had previously requested the Commission to review the material to decide if it is of good quality and match with the brick on the rest of the exterior. Mr. Proft asked Mr. Przybylko for details on the siding material. Mr. Przybylko said it is a powder-coated architectural steel that will create a more modern aesthetic to the industrial exterior of the building. He said several other places in Rhode Island have featured this same design aesthetic. He also said he could provide a sample that, while in the wrong color, would show the quality of material for those walls.

Secretary Miller asked about parking, specifically saying he was concerned there would not be enough room for the tenants and the businesses' parking spaces. Mr. Przybylko said the building is required to have 20 parking spaces for the tenants but not required to have any parking for the businesses. He said the plan is to have 30-32 parking spaces within the lot. He anticipates the businesses will use the parking in front of the building. Mr. Proft clarified there is no parking requirement for commercial units in the Downtown Overlay District because a study determined there was more than

adequate municipal parking available. The only parking requirement for that overlay is one parking space per residential unit. Mr. Przybylko said he is currently working to take over ownership of James Street to create additional parking for this and the neighboring buildings.

Vice-Chairman Eappen asked if any neighboring businesses had expressed concerns regarding the parking, particularly losing their parking due to customers visiting the commercial spaces in this building. Mr. Przybylko said he met with the neighboring business owners, and they were encouraged to approach the City collectively to obtain the ownership of James Street. The City determined it would improve the parking for the neighboring businesses. Secretary Miller wanted to know if there would be a barrier between the parking spaces and the next building. Mr. Przybylko answered there is a fence, and Secretary Miller asked if the fence would be maintained. The intent is to leave the fence as-is according to Mr. Przybylko.

Chairman Finlay asked for more information regarding the proposed planting marked on the plans. Mr. Przybylko said the plan is to create raised beds along the left-hand side of the building and an existing fence. He also said there is a possibility the fence near the patio may become an appealing gate entrance for the patio and café.

Member Gardner said he would like to hear what the neighbor, Ms. Britte Jessen-Balint, had to say about the exterior material. Chairman Finlay then opened the floor for Public Comment. Ms. Jessen-Balint took the floor. She said she has spoken with Mr. Przybylko since she voiced her concern to Mr. Proft, and she is now ok with the exterior design. Her only remaining concern is about the parking area that is proposed to be on the side of her building (61 Railroad Street), but she will bring that specific issue to the appropriate meeting. She and her husband are supportive of the design. They have seen similar designs on other buildings and liked them. Chief Finlay said the Commission welcomed any opinions or suggestions regarding visibility or design from her because she and her husband have been in that neighborhood for 21 years. Ms. Jessen-Balint responded she thinks this project is exactly what Woonsocket needs to help bring Main Street back together. She is in full support of this project.

There were no further public comments.

Mr. Proft reviewed a few remaining questions for Mr. Przybylko. He asked what kind of mechanical equipment will be used and how it will be screened from public view. Mr. Przybylko said the only part that will be visible will be the meters on the east side of the building and should be mostly blocked from view by a fence. Chairman Finlay specifically asked about HVAC units. Mr. Przybylko said the majority of HVAC split units will be on top of the roof. He said there may be a few units near the meters that would be near the ground, and he might put a unit on the Railroad Street side but said it could easily be placed on the roof if needed. The units are fairly small and quiet.

The commercial unit windows should be transparent and not tinted or reflective according to the design guide. Mr. Przybylko said the two side-by-side windows with a transom at the top and will be transparent glass. He said the next set of drawings will have clearer window and awning designs to reflect the changes discussed at this meeting. There will be an awning above the main door to provide rain cover.

Mr. Proft said the foundation looked deteriorated in a few spots. Mr. Przybylko said the cement and concrete on the exterior (including the foundation, windowsills, and the lower section) will be pressure washed and covered with a cement coating to improve the integrity of the structure and the visual aspect. Mr. Proft voiced a concern about the stairs leading to the front doorway possibly creating an ADA compliance issue by blocking the sidewalk. Mr. Przybylko replied the sidewalk is 8 feet across while the stairway will take up half of the width. He believes the stairway and sidewalk will meet ADA restrictions.

Chairman Finlay did not see a trash collection designated on the plans. Mr. Przybylko pointed out a permanent trash enclosure on the left-hand side of the entrance for the parking lot on Cato Street. Mr. Proft and Member Gardner said that location could create a zoning issue since the Dumpster is being proposed in the front yard setback of the property. Mr. Proft said he will speak with Carl Johnson, the Zoning Official, for clarification.

Chairman Finlay suggested a construction time limit of 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM. Mr. Przybylko agreed to this time window. Mr. Przybylko said the construction dumpster will likely not be on the street to keep it closer to the building.

Mr. Proft said all of his concerns were addressed positively and that he supports this project as being in line with the type of project the City wants.

Chairman Finlay read the Limited Design Review Approval Letter and Conditions of Approval into the record.

Motion to APPROVE the Limited Design Review Approval Letter and Conditions of Approval: Member Gardner

Second: Secretary Miller

Discussion: Mr. Proft requested the construction time limit be included in the

Conditions of Approval: Monday-Friday, 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM and Saturday, 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM.

Vote:

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

Motion Passed 5-0-0

The Commission wished Mr. Przybylko good luck on his project, and he thanked the Commission members for their time.

VIII. Administrative Officer's Report:

- a. Mr. Proft approved the following sign plans administratively”
BL Beauty Sign at 66 Main Street
Beauchemin Lumber Sign at 334 Social Street
Oak Street Health Sign at 2000 Diamond Hill Road

CVS Window Signage at 1054 Cass Ave
600 Cass Ave Signage
Abacus Health Signage at 25 John Cummings Way
CSL Plasma Signs at 1500 Diamond Hill Road.

- b. Three Metro by T-Mobile Signs are currently being reviewed by Mr. Proft for Administrative Approval

IX. Next Meeting Date:
TBD | Online via Zoom

X. Adjournment
Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 PM: Vice-Chairman Eappen
Second: Member Gardner
Discussion: None
Vote:

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice-Chairman Eappen	Yes
Secretary Miller	Yes
Member Gardner	Yes
Member Pratt	Yes
Motion Passed	5-0-0