

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 18, 2020
Held Remotely Via Zoom And Telephone Access

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Design Review Board ("DRB") held Wednesday, November 18, 2020. Chairman John Henke called the meeting to order at 9:18 p.m.

1) ROLLCALL

Present: Chairman John Henke; Vice-Chairman Keith Deyer; Board Members Gigi Debbrecht, Natalia Dukas, Patricia Lang, Michael Willoughby (all Board members located in Birmingham, MI)

Absent: None

Administration: Nicholas Dupuis, City Planner
Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist

Chairman Henke asked all meeting participants to be mindful of not speaking over each other.

11-94-20

2) Approval Of Minutes

Motion by Ms. Dukas

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to approve the DRB Minutes of November 4, 2020 as submitted.

Motion carried, 6-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Dukas, Debbrecht, Deyer, Henke, Willoughby, Lang

Nays: None

11-95-20

3) Public Hearing

None.

11-96-20

4) Design Review

A. 855 Forest – Abood Law Firm

CP Dupuis reviewed the item.

Evans Caruso, architect, and Jeffrey Abood, owner, were present on behalf of the application.

After some DRB discussion, Mr. Caruso indicated he was willing to remove the sign on the rear elevation and the fence from current DRB consideration. He said he would bring those items to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Mr. Deyer said he did not believe that Sign #2 was technically in the sign band. There was some discussion among the DRB members about whether Sign #2 could be described as being in the sign band.

In reply to Mr. Deyer, Mr. Caruso explained that the item described as a 'canopy' in the submitted plans has a function for blocking sunlight at certain times of day. He stated that the architects do 3D modelling to make sure that such architectural elements are effective at providing the appropriate shade.

Mr. Willoughby confirmed that he often adds similar architectural elements in his work to block or enhance sunlight in different ways.

Mr. Deyer noted that calling it a 'canopy' has a specific meaning in City ordinance, and said it should be changed so as to reduce potential confusion.

Mr. Willoughby suggested it be called a 'solar solution'.

The applicants said they were happy to change all wording in the submitted plans from 'canopy' to 'solar solution'.

Mr. Willoughby noted the sign to the west of the solar solution is aligned with the sign band on the front facade. He recommended that consequently the sign's placement should be considered a viable solution for the sign visibility problem the applicant would otherwise have.

Motion by Mr. Willoughby

Seconded by Ms. Lang to approve the Design Review application for 855 Forest – Abood Law Firm – with the following conditions: 1. The applicant must submit glazing calculations showing the percentage of glazing on the front and rear facades; 2. The applicant must submit revised plans resolving the issues with Sign #3; 3. The applicant must submit revised plans without the fence; and, 4. They are commended for their brilliant solar solution on the front facade.

Motion carried, 6-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Willoughby, Lang, Deyer, Debbrecht, Dukas, Henke

Nays: None

Mr. Abood thanked the Board.

In reply to an inquiry from Mr. Caruso, Mr. Willoughby and Chairman Henke said they liked the rear wall proposal.

Mr. Deyer recalled that an apartment complex near N. Adams and the railroad tracks used a screening wall that was neither masonry nor evergreens. He asked if a similar divergence from ordinance requirements for 855 Forest's rear wall might be possible in this case.

CP Dupuis said he did not immediately remember what material was used for the screening wall of the apartment complex in question. He confirmed he would look into it and let the DRB and the applicant know if the material used did diverge from ordinance in that case, and if so, how it might affect Mr. Abood's proposal.

Mr. Deyer noted that if architecture will be developed more often in the future to deal with issues posed by sunlight, the DRB would probably need to devise standards for evaluating said architectural elements.

Mr. Willoughby suggested that one option would be requiring solar calculations from applicants in the same way the City requires light calculations.

B. 825 Bowers – Todd's Room

CP Dupuis reviewed the item.

Todd Skog spoke on behalf of the application. He explained that he was not aware that he needed approval to paint the building's exterior because while this is his fourth store in Birmingham, it is the first one where he had the ability to paint.

There was general consensus among the DRB members that steps should be taken to minimize the amount of pink visible on the building's exterior.

Ms. Lang said she was all right with leaving the building's exterior as-is. She said that while the color would not likely have been approved by the DRB if asked beforehand, she said she found it inoffensive and that it brightened up an area of the City that was otherwise 'drab'.

There was general DRB consensus that they would be interested in Mr. Skog presenting two ideas at a future review. The first was a picture of the building's three visible sides combined with the proposed landscaping photoshopped in; the second was a proposal for painting some of the exterior a more neutral color and leaving only some of the pink color so that the pink functions as an accent.

Chairman Henke mentioned that the Board prefers requests for permission rather than requests for forgiveness. He also advised Mr. Skog that if he wanted to use ivy as part of the landscaping, it would have to be affixed to a trellis rather than to the building and that faux ivy would not be permissible.

CP Dupuis clarified for Mr. Skog that any landscaping plans would require either DRB or administrative approval before implementation.

Motion by Mr. Deyer

Seconded by Mr. Willoughby to postpone the design review application for 825 Bowers to a date uncertain, which will give the applicant a chance to return with renderings that integrate the landscape plan and the building.

Mr. Willoughby reiterated the recommendation that the applicant also consider proposing ways of using a more neutral paint on the exterior to minimize the amount of visible pink coloring.

Motion carried, 6-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Deyer, Willoughby, Lang, Debbrecht, Dukas, Henke

Nays: None

11-97-20

5) Sign Review

None.

11-98-20

6) Study Session

None.

11-99-20

7) Miscellaneous Business And Communications

A. Pre-Application Discussions

B. Draft Agenda - December 2, 2020

1. None

C. Staff Reports

1. Administrative Sign Approvals

2. Administrative Approvals

3. Action List - 2020

11-100-20

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Deyer

Seconded by Ms. Debbrecht to adjourn the DRB meeting of November 18, 2020 at 10:13 p.m.

Motion carried, 6-0.

Design Review Board
Minutes of November 18, 2020

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Deyer, Debbrecht, Lang, Dukas, Willoughby, Henke

Nays: None

Nicholas Dupuis
City Planner

APPROVED