

Town of Franklin



Design Review Commission

**Tuesday, August 8, 2023
Meeting Minutes**

Chair Sam Williams called the above-captioned meeting to order this date at 7:00 PM, as a remote access virtual Zoom meeting. Members in attendance: Chair Sam Williams, Vice Chair Paul Lopez, Amy Adams. Members absent: Cassandra Bethoney, Associate James Bartro. Also present: Maxine Kinhart, Administrative Staff.

As stated on the agenda, due to the continued concerns regarding the COVID-19 virus, this meeting will be conducted as a remote/virtual Design Review Commission meeting. In an effort to ensure citizen engagement and comply with open meeting law regulations, citizens will be able to dial into the meeting using the provided phone number, or citizens can participate by using the Zoom link provided on the agenda. This meeting was recorded.

1. **Gardner – 125 Constitution Boulevard** – Replace existing monument and wall sign faces to reflect rebranding.

Chair Williams said this was discussed at the last meeting, and there were some issues regarding lighting.

Mr. Lopez stated that everything the lawyer told us last time was right. He stated that there is a Mass. statute that essentially says prior non-conforming uses are permitted. He discussed a three-step test to see if the prior non-conforming use can continue. Chair Williams said that the cases the Commission had before them at the last meeting will be able to move forward as presented. Mr. Lopez stated that was his take-away. Chair Williams confirmed with Ms. Kinhart that the Commission could vote on this item without the applicant being here as they have already presented, and the Commission knows the issues. Ms. Kinhart stated they can.

Motion: To **Approve** the monument sign as submitted. Motioned by P. Lopez. Seconded by A. Adams. Roll Call Vote: Williams-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

2. **Big Y – 348 East Central Street** – Rebrand Big Y with new logo signage – reface existing pylon sign, replace existing building signs.

Chair Williams stated that this item had a similar issue; he believes it is going to move forward in a similar manner.

Motion: To **Approve** the free-standing sign package as submitted. Motioned by P. Lopez. Seconded by A. Adams. Roll Call Vote: Williams-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

3. **Alpine Place – 40 Alpine Row** – Renovate existing office building with new offices and warehouse space. Construction of new mixed-use 28-unit apartment building with ground level parking and commercial space.

Chair Williams stated that for stuff like this we are a recommending board. So, we can give you recommendations based on the façade, the site plan, site lighting; if there is site signage, we would give you approvals for that.

Mr. Bob Boynton of Dennis Colwell Architects stated that this is basically the prior submittal which the Commission has already seen. He stated that all we are basically trying to do with the resubmittal is repurpose the façade on the 28-unit approved apartment building so it does not look so modern and make it look in line with the architecture of the neighborhood and the surrounding area.

Chair Williams noted that some of the Commission members are new. He asked the representative to provide a summary of the property and proposal.

Mr. Marcelo Alves, property owner, reviewed the provided renderings. He stated that essentially what is there is an office space; they are trying to modify the façade as it will remain an office. He stated that for the building, the original approval was a very modern building which is more appropriate to Boston. What we are trying to do is bring it more to a town look and design. He stated that we did not change any sizes or footprint; we just changed the exterior. He stated that what is there now is storage garages. He stated that we will demolish the garages and put up the structure as shown on the rendering.

Chair Williams stated that improving on the site is fantastic. He stated that his one concern is the building scale-wise as it is really big compared to the neighborhood houses. He noted that this is a very small narrow street and the building is right up on the streetscape. He stated that he likes the aesthetics of the building, and the roof is sloped to bring down the scale a little bit. Mr. Alves stated that the height or width was not changed from what was approved.

Chair Williams stated that this was approved by Planning in a previous iteration. Mr. Lopez asked about the façade changes. Mr. Alves explained the exterior changes such as the floating balconies. He stated that they are trying to make it similar to what else is in town such as the one next to Big Y. Mr. Bob Boynton of Dennis Colwell Architects confirmed his firm designed a similar building on Central Street.

Chair Williams stated that the last time the applicant was before the Commission was July 6, 2021. Mr. Boynton explained that it was a more modern building that was proposed. He stated that he thinks it was a 40 ft. building. He noted the previous submittal from Joe the Architect. Chair Williams shared the screen and showed the previous submittal renderings. He stated that regarding the current submittal, it would be good to have it stepped back a little. Mr. Boynton stated the footprint was copied from the original. Chair Williams discussed the scale of the building from various angles. Mr. Boynton reviewed details of the renderings.

Chair Williams noted the site slopes down to the back. He asked how close they are to the property line. Mr. Boynton stated that the driveway access is 24 ft. Chair Williams noted the adjacent buildings which he thinks are rentals will be in the shadows for most of the day. He stated that he thinks overall it is a nice-looking building, but scale-wise it seems a little big; that is a decision for the Planning

Board. Mr. Lopez stated that he agreed. Chair Williams stated that in a town where housing is an issue, getting the density makes sense. So, he understands it from a developer's point of view.

Mr. Lopez asked about parking. Mr. Boynton stated that he could not speak to parking. Mr. Alves stated that he thinks they have an extra 12 parking spaces more than required. He does not know what is dedicated to commercial and residential. He stated that it is a mix of one- and two-bedroom units. Mr. Lopez noted that parking on the street may become an issue. Mr. Alves stated that it would be five office spaces, and they will not be retail. Mr. Lopez stated that as long as it is compliant with the law, there is no need not to recommend it. Chair Williams stated that he has mixed feelings about parking.

Chair Williams stated that he did not see photometrics. Mr. Lopez stated the Commission did previously recommend the site plan. One of the only concerns discussed was light spillage. Mr. Boynton stated that they did not do anything with the parking. Chair Williams reviewed the angled parking. He confirmed that the site plan and lighting has been approved. He stated it is up to the Commission to recommend on the aesthetics of the building which he thinks are pretty nice.

Ms. Adams stated that she is with Chair Williams on how big it looks and how close to the street it is. She stated that she is thinking it is beautiful but feels in the neighborhood it is in, it is really large for the space.

Chair Williams asked if there are any variances. Mr. Boynton stated that they are not doing anything against any zoning bylaws. He stated it is zoned downtown commercial. He discussed the façade materials. Mr. Alves discussed it may be some hearty material. Chair Williams stated that the siding on the building on East Central Street does not look good. He stated the siding on the project at 72 East Central looks much better. He stated that he would like to see all the materials submitted for this project; he stated they should bring the materials to the building department. He asked if the existing building was going to be refinished. Mr. Alves stated that it would be looking similar to the adjacent building.

Ms. Adams noted that the second building has a walking path to enter the building. She asked if the new building will have some kind of walking space like that in the front. Mr. Alves explained there is landscaping and the sidewalk is across the street. Chair Williams stated that he thinks it would make sense to have a sidewalk along the side of the building. Discussion commenced as to the exact location of the sidewalks/walkways as shown on the renderings. Mr. Alves stated that he did not think he could accomplish additional walkways without going back to the Planning Board, so they are just focusing on the aesthetics of the building on the same footprint.

Motion: To **Recommend** the building finishes/façade aesthetics, provided that we get some samples to look at, as submitted. Motioned by P. Lopez. Seconded by A. Adams. Roll Call Vote: Williams-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

Mr. Alves asked when the Commission wanted the samples. Chair Williams said that to get them in next week would be terrific and stated they should bring the samples to the building department.

GENERAL MATTERS

Approval of Minutes:

None.

Chair and Commission Comments

Chair Williams stated that normally the Commission gets a whole package before it goes to Planning. He noted that the previous package had already been to Planning and been approved. He noted that the height of the building changed, so he thinks that they may need to go back to Planning. Ms. Adams asked for information on the process. Chair Williams explained that the Commission is only a recommending board. Ms. Kinhart stated that she thinks the previous applicant is going before Planning. Discussion commenced on the Commission being a recommending board, and discussion commenced on the previous application not having a sidewalk in front of the building. Chair Williams stated that with downtown retail, you try to make it so it is walkable; people can park in other places. He stated that if you are going to walk to a place, it is helpful if there is a sidewalk to get to it.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

Motion: To **Adjourn** by P. Lopez. Seconded by A. Adams. Roll Call Vote: Williams-YES; Lopez-YES; Adams-YES. Voted 3-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary