

DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting September 3, 2015

Town Hall Annex

80 Doyle Road, Bantam, CT

Members Present: Jeff Savage, Joel Peck and Carol Bramley

Members Absent: Patricia McTague, William Ellis, and John Honigmann

The meeting was called to order at 9:25 A.M.

1. Discussion of proposed amendments to Litchfield Zoning regulations possibly beginning Planning and Zoning Commission public hearing November 2.

Committee members reviewed new signage regulations (p. 47-49) from the proposed regulations with the following comments:

- (1) Awning Sign – Based on the illustrations the word “awning” should be defined.

The right hand drawing represented a structure that does not exist in Litchfield and shouldn't be permitted. If that type of structure was permitted, it could be made of uncharacteristic materials, such as metal or wood. In addition, it appears the lettering is freestanding on the top of the structure, something that is, in the committee's view, better suited to a large scale shopping mall.

The left hand drawing misrepresents the percentages of coverage allowed. The oval on the face area of the sloping portion appears to be more than 25% of the total surface. How would the percentage of coverage be measured, by individual letters and elements or the entire oval?

The face area of the valence lettering pictured is less than 75% of the linear surface. Although this potentially illustrates a “recommended” coverage, it is at best only 50% of the linear space available. The illustration scale is acceptable, the percentage allowed seems too high.

- (2) Freestanding sign – The Freestanding sign and the Monument sign seem to be one in the same but with different standards and both with a support or structural element along the entire width of the sign based on their definitions in the glossary. It was felt they should be combined.

The multitenant signs in town are billboard type, some as tall as 12 feet in height (Village Green, Commons, the Cove). The total height of eight feet makes signs in town that are taller non-conforming and doesn't provide the visibility for the large complexes.

It should be clear that the maximum height of the sign is measured from grade.

A sign hanging off a post should not have the same maximum area as a single or multitenant, two post sign.

(3) Monument Sign – the dimensions are out of character with what exists in Litchfield.

72 sq. ft. is too large and could be applied to any building in town.

The maximum height of 10 feet is too large for a solid sign affixed to the ground (the reason for the suggestion this sign type and the freestanding be combined in one category with a consistent set of standards).

The setback proportion will leave signs mismatched along the street line of the 202 corridor in due to the variances in the state take line as well as areas of slope along the road.

(4) Projecting Sign – the dimensions proposed are OK.

(5) Sandwich Board – Committee felt the sandwich board sign should also include other “temporary” signs such as for sale or lease signs.

Should have short time term for special announcements and not be an additional permanent sign.

Should be tied to the hours the business is open and removed when the business is closed.

Should be associated with special events, like a new store opening and permitted for a 30 day time frame only.

It was discussed that if manageable, no more than one 30 day temporary sign within a 3 month period. Currently, there are sandwich board signs up in multitenant complexes almost every day, which means more than one per complex if multiple tenants want signs.

(6) Wall Sign – Our current standards allow one sq .ft. per linear foot of building width fronting on the street. Why are we changing that requirement since it seems to work well? That allows for signs to be appropriately scaled to the building and our New England village design. The proposed maximum area and width are too big and the maximum height and depth seem to be in error as they don’t work.

2. Review and discuss “Performance Standards for Large Scale Developments” document prepared by Maine State Planning Office, submitted by Carol Bramley.

C. Bramley stated she was made aware of the Maine design guidelines for large scale developments by former Town Planner, Tom McGowan as a result of the Planning and Zoning Commissions “Character sub-committee” appointed in 2013 when concern arose regarding large scale development inconsistent with the town’s character.

The guidelines are not intended to suggest historic architectural design be recreated but rather to encourage new development to complement existing commercial neighborhoods. Initial discussion and

comments of recommendations for standards that could be adopted in Litchfield's design guidelines included:

Buildings utilize varying setbacks, heights, roof treatments, doorways, windows and other decorative elements to visually reduce the appearance of the scale of the building.

Roof angles and pitches include varying elements to break up the massing of the building.

Exterior building facades that face the street or residential neighborhoods be of an aesthetic quality on all sides and utilize materials consistent with the types of materials (brick, stone, wood, architectural metal, etc.) found in town.

Buildings of more than 150 feet facing a public street should be designed to appear as a series of attached storefronts even though there may be a single retail occupancy.

The building's architecture should reflect traditional New England building forms and those design elements characteristic of Litchfield.

Continued discussion of the Maine standards, including outdoor sales, lighting, landscaping and parking will be scheduled for committee's next meeting.

5. Approval of Minutes – August 6, 2015

Approval of the minutes was deferred to the next meeting when all those at the August 6th meeting are present.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:34 A.M. Motion: C. Bramley. Second: J. Peck. Motion unanimously carried.

Design Review Advisory Committee

Date