

Revised DRAFT – October 26, 2006
Approved – November 2, 2006

Joint Meeting
Medway Planning Board and Design Review Committee
Monday, October 2, 2006
Medway Senior Center

DRC MEMBERS PRESENT: Katie Tortorello, Karyl Spiller-Walsh, Rachel Walsh, Gwen Hendry, Dan Hooper

PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Tucker, Chan Rogers, Andy Rodenhiser, Karyl Spiller-Walsh and John Schroeder (9 pm).

Also Present: Susy Affleck-Childs, Planning Board Assistant

The meeting began around 7:10 p.m. at the Medway Senior Center with informal discussion before Andy Rodenhiser arrived.

CHAN ROGERS – The DRC Committee is illegal. You cannot do anything in subdivision control that isn't in your rules and regs.

KATIE TORTORELLO – Our job is to make recommendations on how things look.

CHAN ROGERS – I have been in the design build business for 40 years. We couldn't spend one nickel for aesthetics. Things have changed somewhat. I applaud what you are doing for site plan review activities but you can't do it for subdivisions.

GWEN HENDRY – These projects that we are reviewing are not on public land.

DAN HOOPER - We can use whatever guidelines we want. We give a recommendation to the PB. You cannot make a ruling based on our aesthetic. If you vote solely on the premise of an aesthetic decision, then that is illegal and it is outside the rules and regs. But that is not what we are doing. In the technical realm of site plans and decisions, our hope is that our recommendations will have some weight.

CHAN ROGERS – And we would be well to follow your advice. This came up with a subdivision recently (Rolling Hills).

DAN HOOPER – The applicants were quite agreeable with our suggestions.

GWEN HENDRY – Projects are referred to the DRC from the PB, building inspector and Selectmen. I think we need to clarify the process for the applicant if the PB recommends they see us for advice.

KATIE TORTORELLO – Our job is to help the PB and to help businesses be more effective.

CHAN ROGERS – I reserved this discussion for this meeting and not to have it public and not give developers any ideas.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – Chan is talking about subdivisions and asking what right do we have to insist, urge, implore, etc. to improve the visual aesthetic for a subdivision.

CHAN ROGERS – I have fought my whole career to get things done under the Federal Highway Administration.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – The WPA produced aesthetically beautiful bridges.

CHAN ROGERS – I do feel like it is important.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – Let's go back to subdivisions.

GWEN HENDRY – The only things we have ever had a discussion on for a subdivision are cul de sac islands, buffers and landscape design issues. We never have anything to say about the structures. So where is it written that landscape design should be left to the applicant?

CHAN ROGERS – Regarding cul de sacs, as far as I am concerned with the circles you shouldn't have islands if the DPW doesn't want them.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – We have reached a good compromise. Dave D'Amico was willing to accept it and do it. These cul de sacs are better now with the landscaped islands. Everything we do, if we push it, if we can get it, the project is going to look better because of it. We have had tremendous success.

CHAN ROGERS – But DPS has to maintain these islands.

KATIE TORTORELLO – Which is why when we work with developers we are looking for low to no maintenance plants & landscaping materials. We are all aware of the issues. We are trying to make it nicer looking for all of us and for the people who live there. That is our job. Sometimes we wish we had more teeth behind what we suggest.

CHAN ROGERS – I applaud the group for the time and the interest you show to this.

DAN HOOPER - Do we have an agenda for tonight?

KATIE TORTORELLO – Susy made up some notes for us. OK. What is working? Is it helpful?

GWEN HENDRY - The letters of recommendation, do you use them?

ANDY RODENHISER – I respect them and find them helpful in boiling out what needs to happen at a level we can't get into. Absolutely they are helpful.

BOB TUCKER – I haven't seen any of these.

CHAN ROGERS – I refrained from discussing this in front of developers. I am a bear because of the time I spent on a PB in the past.

BOB TUCKER – How do you feel about the DRC?

CHAN ROGERS – It is a fantastic set up particularly to deal with site plan work for commercial and industrial and business sites and for site plans for cluster projects and special permits. But they are not appropriate for a straight subdivision. You cannot force a developer to put in something better than what the state or town would put in. I am speaking about the retaining wall Rolling Hills. You won't even be able to see it.

GWEN HENDRY – I walk on that street every day and I disagree.

CHAN ROGERS – You cannot force a subdivider to do something beyond the state specs.

KATIE TORTORELLO – What if the developer likes the idea?

CHAN ROGERS – Because he bought into it, I wasn't going to say anything.

ANDY RODENHISER – It is important to note that we have a bylaw that authorizes us to do this work.

GWEN HENDRY – It would be helpful if you could bring in what you are referring to.

DAN HOOPER – He is saying the PB cannot use aesthetics for making decisions about a subdivision. That is where I am getting lost.

GWEN HENDRY – You are afraid it might happen.

CHAN ROGERS – I can tell you that I tried to get subdivision control laws more favorable to planning boards many years ago.

ANDY RODENHISER – We want to flush this out.

Susy Affleck-Childs – Let me recap. On May 12, 2003 at the Annual Town Meeting, the DRC was established.

NOTE – Susy distributed copies of the town bylaw that was approved.

CHAN ROGERS – The PB cannot abdicate its decision making to any other board. I agree that you should try to push them. You cannot go beyond the Mass Highway standards

RACHEL WALSH – We can suggest.

DAN HOOPER – You as a PB member can agree or disagree with the DRC’s recommendation. You are authorized to not use that recommendation solely to base your decision on.

CHAN ROGERS – I would like to add that I don’t want this attitude I have on this one issue to predominate our discussion. The standard of the law is what the courts have ruled over the years.

ANDY RODENHISER – What Chan is referring to is when an applicant comes before us without needing any waivers. But when they need a waiver, we can bring aesthetics into the picture. With the town bylaw, we are building a defensible decision when we want to push.

BOB TUCKER – It is not a far reach to take aesthetics and turn it into engineering practices.

CHAN ROGERS – I am not going to raise this at public hearings but only in open discussion. I applaud you for getting away with it today.

ANDY RODENHISER – I feel that the service of the DRC provides is establishing what the look, feel and scale of Medway will be. These are all the design elements that are going to be the future of Medway. We are trying to retain the rural character.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – We need to be careful about overplaying rural character. We may need to village character.

ANDY RODENHISER – The DRC plays an important role in this.

CHAN ROGERS – Medway is changing from a rural town to a semi-suburban community amongst a lot of horse farms and cow farms, living together harmoniously.

KATIE TORTORELLO – I think it would be helpful to have a little bit more history when a project comes before us. Where does the project stand and what do you want us to do?

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – We need to do a site visit early on to analyze existing conditions.

ANDY RODENHISER – Think of what went wrong with the Pine Ridge project as we worked on that decision recently.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – That was a very specific situation. We agreed to take it to a certain level. They presented a very rote village façade. Some things were indigenous to the site. It was hidden way in the back with tons and tons of landscape buffers that we were part of designing. Because it was so hidden and they talked about the market issues that would change and whether a unit had a porch or deck, or whatever. It seemed logical we didn’t need more information. It wasn’t relevant. Also, we had other mitigating elements. John Claffey was going to own Candlewood Drive. If it is an OSRD project, it needs to have a village feel. They had agreed to provide end views. They had pushed to get the special permit and then work out the architectural details at the definitive plan stage.

Susy Affleck-Childs - I challenge all of us involved in writing decisions to be as clear and descriptive as possible. We need to be very specific about what we want. In the case of Pine Ridge, there were differences of opinion on what façade meant. Front only or all 4 sides?

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – What level does the PB want to see? What level is good enough before the PB hands out a special permit?

DAN HOOPER – For example – entryway signage, landscaping for River Bend. Give us some direction of what you want us to look at.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – The DRC has to be involved early on in these larger projects. There is a litany of stuff to look at. We need a list of stuff to address that we haven't even thought of yet. What can be seen from the street? Curb appeal? There are signature elements that the DRC should be looking at especially on the entry pieces that impact the whole community.

Susy Affleck-Childs – Would a checklist be helpful?

DAN HOOPER – Sometimes they (an applicant) come in and ask us to look t this or that.

ANDY RODENHISER – We are going to give you more direction from here on forward. What are the challenges you have with working with applicants?

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – The DRC needs to understand what it wants for that specific site. The DRC has a goal and then don't get milk toasted about. Where do we want to go and stick to our guns!

ANDY RODENHISER – I think we look to the DRC to give us a recommendation. That should be happening at the DRC level, not at the PB. We wait for your letter.

GWEN HENDRY – We want to trust the PB has done the homework that all of the other safety issues, road works, etc. are going to be taken care of.

ANDY RODENHISER – The aesthetics of what things look like we want to turn over to you.

BOB TUCKER – But then your recommendation should include what has been agreed to or what the DRC believes should be done but which hasn't been agreed to by the applicant.

ANDY RODENHISER – My point is to have a priority one, priority two approach. Have some level of escalation. What is imperative? What is recommended?

ANDY RODENHISER – We have to give these guys a lot more specificity on what to look at.

CHAN ROGERS – At the last meeting, Paul Yorkis accused us of leading him down the garden path and then changing things at the last minute.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH - We need to play our levers.

BOB TUCKER – The important thing there is that we had it in previous minutes, where he committed in previous documents that he would do.

Susy Affleck-Childs - We need the DRC's written recommendations to be more agreed to by the various board members.

ANDY RODENHISER – We need to know how you feel about relevant priorities.

BOB TUCKER – Has the DRC letter of recommendation been in our packets?

KATIE TORTORELLO – I think with River Bend, there have been as many as five.

BOB TUCKER – Why are there that many?

KATIE TORTORELLO – This is where some more direction from the PB would be helpful.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – What is before us is what gets reviewed. The large building at River Bend. . We may have had at least 8 meetings on that . . . maybe 5 on other things.

GWEN HENDRY – Each time we refer to the drawing and the date.

CHAN ROGERS – I find your work extremely valuable. I entered this profession as a big road builder. I got the only example of traffic calming in Boston to be constructed. I just came on very hard. I have been in the hospital. I am leaving town for a several days. I need to go.

ANDY RODENHISER – Do you have any goals for the DRC that you want to ask them to work on going forward?

CHAN ROGERS – No. I haven't thought that much about it. There aren't enough good people like you. Thank you for what you do.

ANDY RODENHISER – What about DRC membership composition and leadership?

GWEN HENDRY – We are down. Deirdre (Murphy-Sullivan) has resigned.

Susy Affleck-Childs – We really need to have an architect on the DRC.

Leo McDermott, 71 Lovering Street – I recently moved here from Dorchester and am just trying to learn about the town.

DAN HOOPER – Any experience relative to design issues?

Leo McDermott – I work in the marine industry work on tug boats. What I have seen is different is that city neighborhoods become their own town broken up by parishes and we discussed everything that was going on.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – People are notified of projects if they are an abutter.

Leo McDermott – I am trying to get a feel for what is going on in the community as a whole.

ANDY RODENHISER – Do we have architects in town that we could get involved?

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – Paul Crisafauli won't do it.

GWEN HENDRY – I know there are other architects in town.

ANDY RODENHISER – I will talk to Paul Crisafauli.

KATIE TORTORELLO – I am going to be done in June. I think it would be great if somebody else took on some leadership. We have missed Gary's presence and leadership. We need some consistency.

ANDY RODENHISER – Things have prospered under your tutelage.

DAN HOOPER – The recent meetings have been very efficient. We seem to be getting to the point.

GWEN HENDRY – We do have a lot of sidebars with Gary.

DAN HOOPER – We have to coddle the applicants a little bit. The more they are in front of us, the better.

KATIE TORTORELLO – I would like to see more communication. I feel like we need to talk between meetings. I wish Gary would send group emails. Heads up guys, we are going to do this at the next meeting. I would love it if he would do that.

GWEN HENDRY - It would be handy if when we get the agenda we are told what more info should we get.

KATIE TORTORELLO – We need more specifics on when the PB needs a Letter of recommendations.

DAN HOOPER – The leadership question is one the DRC will have to discuss. We need to discuss how we want to approach this. I just know what I have experienced on both sides; it seems to be pretty well done.

ANDY RODENHISER – So we know that you guys need 2 members, and one of which should be an architect. I would like to get off the DRC as the Medway Business Council representative.

KATIE TORTORELLO – I can't wait until Stacey comes back. She has the experience from Bellingham.

ANDY RODENHISER – So what goals does PB have the DRC? I feel they need to be common and shared.

BOB TUCKER – In their letter of recommendation, does the applicant agree and how strongly do you feel about a recommendation. I like numbers.

GWEN HENDRY – We tend to work by consensus. Taking hard votes is different for us.

ANDY RODENHISER – One of my goals is to have the PB be more planning focused and proactive. When we talk about zoning changes, I would like to be able to say that we have worked with the DRC and they have come up with the buffer zone options so we can then apply the standard to the zoning change that might be before us. So can you provide us with some ideas on buffers?

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – I think what you are looking for is a rote solution. That is very dangerous to do. It doesn't take into consideration the particulars of the site.

BOB TUCKER – How about instead if you were to define or recommend mitigation methods – lighting, noise, dust protection, etc.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – Andy is looking for a standard to make things simple.

ANDY RODENHISER – I am looking for guidance to help us build a zoning district for areas where industrial meets residential or commercial meets residential such as Walgreens and Restaurant 45

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – You are not going to have a guideline that is specific.

GWEN HENDRY – The Adaptive Use Overlay District has a good buffer requirement between the commercial district and the historic district.

BOB TUCKER – We need to deal with such issues as manufacturing noises.

ANDY RODENHISER – And dust.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – I find it hard to put it in categories.

ANDY RODENHISER – Let me explain myself. Let's look at a particular zoning district. Let's make one up. What is acceptable to go on in that zone and what is not if it abuts up against a residential zone. These are the appropriate buffers that are needed.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – I say that because of a lot of elements, topography, trees, vistas, a lot of details might vary the need for different buffers within that one zone on each side of that development.

ANDY RODENHISER – Then why not write the recommendation that allows for the 4 step design process to choose the type of buffer? But we need to have language that comes from you to consider scale, etc.

GWEN HENDRY – We have been writing the design guidelines for residential. We haven't got to commercial areas which is what we have to do next.

ANDY RODENHISER – This is important to me personally. I want to try to increase the commercial tax base of the town but I don't want to hurt the town. Let's do it appropriately and safely and smartly. That is my personal objective. To do it properly means it needs to take into consideration the design elements.

KATIE TORTORELLO – If there is an industrial district you want to create, we could look at it and come up with ideas.

BOB TUCKER – What types of things would be acceptable? We need to provide guidance to those who might develop.

BOB TUCKER – We have the Rosenfeld site? How do you mitigate that?

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – We added some trees and a stockade fence. Would we have done that if we were starting from scratch? With the site we were looking at to convert to industrial, on the Green Valley side, there are a lot of wetlands so you don't need any more buffer area. You couldn't build for probably 50 feet behind there.

ANDY RODENHISER – If it is not necessary, then it is not necessary. What about if there are parking areas within 30 feet of the zone line, what do you want?

BOB TUCKER – We have to give them something to work with.

ANDY RODENHISER – Land gets used to the highest and best value regardless. We all want better things for the town. That is an appropriate area for industrial development but we need to protect the surrounding areas in the community.

KATIE TORTORELLO – At one point, didn't we have a piece of paper to think about when they first came? What if we did that for an industrial zone?

BOB TUCKER – They still need to be given some guidance.

GWEN HENDRY – There is an example from Rhode Island design guidebook.

DAN HOOPER – If what drives your question about getting a recommendation from the DRC is rezoning the industrial park down there, you don't have to appease all. Often what happens in Medway is that the first go around on something fails - the sign bylaw, ARCPUDS s, etc. - because the neighbors have to get up and spew up and bitch and moan. We do listen to that feedback and then we go to the next meeting with a better proposal.

DAN HOOPER – I literally know 3 abutters to that area very well. It is a NIMBY situation. The proposal is exactly what the town needs. It really doesn't affect residential owners at all, other than the perception that 150 feet beyond my property line is industrially used land.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – It is a comfort zone. All they have to look at is what they see in Ellen Rosenfeld's industrial park.

ANDY RODENHISER - Have I given you a clear direction as to what I am looking for. We could give you a specific are to evaluate. For example changing the residential zoning on Summer Street from Route 109 south to Main Street to some sort of commercia

BOB TUCKER – We have to show due diligence to address the issues you are going to force out.

Susy Affleck-Childs – Use the zoning bylaw to establish the minimum standards and use site plan rules and regs for the more flexibility.

GWEN HENDRY – Can't we as an exercise, take this little plot of land and discuss it as a DRC and see what we come up with?

DAN HOOPER – What kinds of aesthetic elements can be included in a zone?

NOTE - John Schroeder arrives 9:20 pm after attending a meeting of the Community Preservation Committee.

NOTE – Gwen Hendry leaves at 9:35 p.m.

ANDY RODENHISER – Another area of interest would have to involve Bellingham. You know where the Bellingham Cumberland Farms is? Across the street from there behind Mobil Excavating there is 3 acres in Bellingham. I heard that Bellingham had tried to make it commercial. There is probably about

15-20 acres in Medway that abut Mobil Excavating. We need to work with Bellingham to get access through there to get to the Medway land. There is Hopping Brook back there. There are power lines that go through there. It is a good area for development to increase our commercial tax base.

KATIE TORTORELLO – Maybe we could look at that place too!

ANDY RODENHISER – In terms of the Design Guidelines, where do things stand?

DAN HOOPER – Early this summer, I said I would take it from where it was to where it needs to go. The first draft was written with the subdivision frame of mind but that isn't what we really focus on. It needs to have more of a commercial focus.

ANDY RODENHISER – What kind of time frame?

DAN HOOPER – How about the second week of January to get something to the PB on the design guidelines? That would give me the time to complete it and the DRC to review it.

ANDY RODENHISER – Rachel, can you explain the project you are working on?

RACHEL WALSH – WE want to have an image archive. This started with getting images of historical buildings in Medway. But what we really need are images of successful commercial developments that have the right kind of aesthetic and feel, like pictures of good gas stations.

ANDY RODENHISER – Things that are aesthetically pleasing.

RACHEL WALSH – It could be linked up to the DRC web page. Sort of successful examples.

ANDY RODENHISER – Is there a time line established?

RACHEL WALSH – It began with the residential but for the DRC specifically, we really need to show people what we are looking for in Medway.

ANDY RODENHISER – It would be a communication tool.

RACHEL WALSH – I think of it as an image bank.

ANDY RODENHISER – Is it possible you can put together a project document that explains what you need and a timeline so we would know what needs to get done?

RACHEL WALSH – Yes. We started out just saying if anybody sees anything they like to take a picture.

ANDY RODENHISER – What about the awards program? Do you want to do this annually?

KATIE TORTORELLO – I think it should be deserved, not automatic.

JOHN SCHROEDER – I would vote for The Maids project at 149 Main Street. They are doing a wonderful job.

ANDY RODENHISER – Any other issues to discuss?

KATIE TORTORELLO – I think we need better direction and guidance.

ANDY RODENHISER – Will you let us know if you are not getting that in the future

RACHEL WALSH – We should do this every 6 months or so.

KARYL SPILLER-WALSH – Let's bring the DRC into site walks early on.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susy Affleck-Childs
Planning Board Assistant