

**Architectural Design Review Board
Regular Meeting Minutes
October 19, 2011**

The Architectural Design Review Board opened its October 19, 2011 regular meeting at 5:30 PM in the 1st floor Town Hall Meeting Room. Present were Board members, Christopher Thorp, Michael McKinley, Robert Birmingham, Charles Canavan, Susan Cullen and Chairman, Mark Comeau. Member Mollie Burton was absent. Also attending was Town Planner, Keith A. Brynes.

Minutes:

Ms. Cullen motioned to approve the minutes of the September 21, 2011 meeting. Mr. Thorp seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 5-0.

Review of proposed modifications to Brustolon Motors building. Property located at 47 Stonington Road, Mystic. Assessor's Map 160, Block 1, Lot 5. Zone GC-60. Applicant/Owner - Brustolon Buick Pontiac, Inc.

Project architect, David Atkinson presented the building designs. Sketches were reviewed by the Board during their last meeting. Despite the Board's desire for a more compatible design, General Motors has refused to vary from their standard building design. Plans propose white aluminum composite panels along the front entrance area of the building. The remainder of the brick façade will be painted white. An eyebrow shaped canopy will be built over the entrance. Cindy Casey, owner of Brustolon Motors, stated that the building has not been updated since 1974 and that GM does not approve changes to its preferred exterior materials or colors.

Mr. Comeau felt that the building should be designed to look like something other than an auto dealership. Ms. Cullen stated that she was hoping GM would be sympathetic to the Town's desires and that the Board is sympathetic to Brustolon's need to update its site and maintain its business.

John Carlin, of Carlin Construction, stated that this site is in a transitional area outside of downtown Mystic, and surrounded by commercial buildings which lack a consistent design. Mr. Thorp recommended focusing on upgrading the landscaping by adding street trees which would improve the look of the entire area. Trees could be selected and located to not block views of the building or cars.

Mr. Canavan stated that these building plans are an improvement over last month's sketches and that the surrounding area includes similar commercial buildings. Additional landscaping should be added near the street and building. Mr. Birmingham agreed. Ms. Casey stated that some landscaping could be added but that she did not want to add trees along the street.

Robert Valenti, of Valenti Motors, stated that trees are often problematic at a car dealership due to blocked views and falling leaves; sea grass could be a good landscaping choice.

Mr. Comeau stated that car dealership and gas stations traditionally have modern designs and this site should still be recognizable as a car dealership. Mr. Birmingham stated that since this is only a building modification and not new construction, these upgrades are not as problematic. More landscaping could be added at the southeast and northeast corners of the site.

Mr. Birmingham motioned to approve the application with the recommendation of planted gardens in the southeast and northeast corners of the property. Mr. Canavan seconded the motion. Mr. Birmingham withdrew the motion.

Ms. Cullen motioned to approve the application with the recommendation that a stronger landscaping component be incorporated. Mr. Canavan seconded the motion. The motion was approved with a vote of 6-0.

Preliminary review of proposed new building at Valenti Motors. Property located at 72 Jerry Browne Rd., Mystic. Assessor's Map 164, Block 2, Lot 3. Zone GC-60. Applicant/Owner – JBRV, LLC.

The project was presented by owner, Robert Valenti. Mr. Valenti presented a site plan showing a new 14,400SF Volkswagen dealership building at the southwest corner of the site along I-95. Building elevations were renderings from Gensler Architects who consult for most of the auto companies. Façade will feature a modern design with white panels and a large glass area. Other sides will be solid white walls, possibly concrete block. The main façade will be on the east side of the building which is most visible to motorists on I-95. The south side flush with I-95 is less visible due to existing trees and grade changes.

Mr. Canavan thought there may be opportunities for other building materials and additional landscaping. Mr. Thorp recommended showing pictures of the other buildings on-site to compare with this one. Mr. Birmingham stated that as a new building there is more of an opportunity to fit in to the local character. Mr. Valenti stated that the auto companies are very strict in not varying from their designs. This building will not be visible from Jerry Browne Road and is more attractive than the site's other buildings. Ms. Cullen stated that this site has already done a good job in preserving trees and adding landscaping.

Mr. Valenti stated that he will apply to the Inland Wetlands Commission as a next step. Consensus of the Board was that there were no issues with the site plan or building location. Mr. Valenti will discuss modifying the building materials with Volkswagen and will return to the Board with more detailed plans. No motion was taken.

Review of proposed Congregate Care Facility. Property located at 162 Greenmanville Avenue (access through Clara Drive). Assessor's Map 172-2-5. Zone RM-15. Applicant – Brom Builders, Inc. Property Owner – Clara Morgan Coogan Trust.

The application was presented by Architect Kevin Bessollo of Bessollo Design Group and Joe Mastronunzio of Brom Builders. The 245 unit project is proposed for the northeast corner of the larger Coogan Farm property. Site access will be only from Clara Drive and not Greenmanville Ave. The project will be built in phases based upon demand. Total buildout is expected to be 5 – 10 years. Mr. Bessollo presented 3-dimensional computer graphics of the building design. The site has a 60 - 70 foot change in topography from one end to another. The building uses more of a neighborhood design with 14 – 16 units in each wing and open space areas near every section. Efforts were made to maintain a residential scale despite the building's large size. The building is only 1 story at the Clara Drive site entrance.

Mr. Canavan asked if the Fire Marshal had been consulted about having only one access point. Mr. Mastronunzio stated that the Fire Marshal and many other local officials had been consulted in designing the plan and that the Fire Marshal would approve one site entrance/exit as long as emergency vehicles can get around the entire building.

Mr. Thorp stated that the porte cochere does not blend with the rest of the building and looked overly dark on the renderings. The planting list includes two invasive species which would crowd out the other native plantings. Ms. Cullen commended the design which would provide views of open space for all areas of the building.

Mr. Canavan stated that he thought the roofline of Phase 2, including the octagonal "hats" did not add to the design. Mr. Bessollo stated that they would prefer a sloped roof but that zoning height restrictions did not allow it. A mansard roof was initially designed but did not look good. Lack of flexibility in the bulk regulations was discussed by the Board. The overall design of Phase 2 is reminiscent of brownstone row houses found in Boston or New York City. Mr. Canavan recommended providing more detailing for Phase 2.

Mr. Mastronunzio stated that this building will not be visible from Route 27 or Pleasant Street and that Phase 2 is even less visible. As a market rate development with \$4,000 – \$7,000 per month rents, good design is a priority for the operators and future residents.

Mr. McKinley and Mr. Thorp left the meeting at 7:00PM. Mr. Birmingham stated he is concerned with circulation and emergency access and that the Planning and Zoning Commission should look at the entire Coogan site. Mr. Mastronunzio stated that if required by the Fire Marshal, emergency-only access could be provided off Pleasant Street. Mr. Comeau commended the massing of the design as compared with the Stoneridge Assisted Living Facility on Jerry Browne Road.

The Board recommended that the applicants return in November with revised plans that show

1. A redesign of the porte cochere which adds more natural light;
2. A redesign of the roofline of Phase 2.

Mr. Bessollo stated that they will try different design scenarios for the roofline and renderings will be emailed to staff for distribution to the Board.

Mr. Comeau motioned to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Mr. Canavan. The meeting adjourned at 7:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Keith A. Brynes, Town Planner



Mollie Burton, Secretary