

DERRY TOWNSHIP DOWNTOWN CORE DESIGN BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
May 18, 2020

The May 18, 2020 meeting of the Derry Township Downtown Core Design Board, which was conducted via video conference (Zoom Webinar) due to COVID-19, was called to order at 5:05 p.m. by Chairman Jim George.

ROLL CALL

Members Present (*via video conference*): Jim George, Chairman; Susan Cort, Secretary; Pam Moore; George Achorn; Rick Zmuda

Members Absent: Andy Bowman, Vice Chairman; Matt Luttrell

Also Present (*via video conference*): Dave Habig, Assistant Director of Community Development; Chuck Emerick, Director of Community Development; Lauren Zumbrun, Economic Development Manager; Jenelle Stumpf, Planning/Zoning Coordinator

Public Attendance (*via video conference*): Dominic Carlevale; Milt Purcell; Keith Heigel, Light-Heigel & Associates

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion made by Member Moore, seconded by Member Zmuda, and a unanimous vote, the minutes from the April 27, 2020 meeting were approved as presented.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Consideration of free-standing sign at 144 West Chocolate Avenue (Dominic Carlevale; DCDB 450)

Dominic Carlevale explained that the original proposal was for a non-dimensional sign; however, after discussing the matter with Township staff, the sign is now proposed to have all lettering raised ¼ inch from the sign panel, per the Downtown Core Design Standards. Chairman George thanked Mr. Carlevale for making that accommodation.

Member Zmuda asked if the sign will be parallel or perpendicular to West Chocolate Avenue. Mr. Carlevale replied that it will be parallel to West Chocolate Avenue, with the intention of targeting foot traffic across the street.

Chairman George inquired if the sign will be illuminated. Mr. Carlevale stated that the landscaping will be white stone and there will be a low-voltage spotlight directed at the sign. Dave Habig noted that the lighting will need to conform with the Zoning Ordinance.

Chuck Emerick pointed out that the change in landscaping, which was not included in the proposal, requires approval as well. Mr. Carlevale stated that he intends to retain

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the bushes but remove the rest of the existing vegetation and replace it with white stone so that less maintenance is required. Mr. Emerick asked how the stone will be kept on the property and off the sidewalk. Mr. Carlevale responded that he installed a stone edging that is raised off the sidewalk about eight inches. The stone will be “bare white” in color.

Member Zmuda questioned if this is part of the sidewalk that the Township is having redone. Lauren Zumbun explained that this is one of the blocks that is currently being designed. The construction should take place next year and is being funded through a PennDOT grant.

Motion

Secretary Cort made a motion that the Downtown Core Design Board issue a Recommendation of Appropriateness for the proposed lighted free-standing sign with raised lettering and stone to replace the present landscaping. Member Zmuda seconded the motion, which was passed by a unanimous vote.

B. Consideration of demolition of connecting walkway and addition of exterior stairs and light fixtures at 545 and 547 West Chocolate Avenue (Milton Purcell; DCDB 451)

Milt Purcell and Keith Heigel represented the proposal. Mr. Heigel stated that the properties are currently connected by a walkway. The applicant is proposing to remove the walkway and add exterior stairs to each building. The building at 547 West Chocolate Avenue is approximately 10.5 feet from the property line and the building at 545 West Chocolate Avenue is a little over 11.5 feet from the property line. By removing the connecting walkway, the building at 547 West Chocolate Avenue would have 5.5 feet for a landing and stairs that would exit toward the rear of the property, and the building at 545 West Chocolate Avenue would have a landing and stairs that would be coming toward West Chocolate Avenue. The exterior stairs will be constructed of treated lumber. There will be 5 feet of distance from the property line to the stairs on each of the lots. A safety light fixture is proposed for each landing. The light fixtures will be mounted on the structures and directed downward.

Chairman George inquired if these are commercial properties. Mr. Heigel answered yes. Mr. Purcell added that 547 West Chocolate Avenue contains a massage salon and 545 West Chocolate Avenue is going to be office space on both floors. When Mr. Purcell purchased the properties, Chuck Emerick alerted him that in 1987, the prior owner was granted relief by the Zoning Hearing Board to construct the connecting walkway, which crossed the property line; however, a condition of the approval was that if the properties were sold to another owner, the connecting walkway would have to be removed. There are existing doors on both buildings on the second floor; that is why Mr. Purcell is proposing exterior stairs.

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Secretary Cort asked if the applicant is proposing to remove the connecting walkway because it is a requirement or because the businesses can operate better without it. Mr. Emerick reiterated that a condition of approval of the relief granted by the Zoning Hearing Board in 1987 was that the connecting walkway had to be removed if the properties were sold and the walkway would no longer be used in the manner originally proposed. Mr. Purcell stated that he does not have an issue with removing the connecting walkway because he does not like the appearance of it and also because he wants to separate the buildings since they are on separate lots. Secretary Cort agreed that the connecting walkway is not attractive.

Chairman George inquired if there is ADA accessibility to the buildings. Mr. Heigel answered no. Mr. Emerick noted that ADA accessibility will have to be addressed in some portion of the building permit. That does not necessarily mean ramps into the buildings will be required. It is also possible that it is infeasible to add ramps. There are many different solutions that the applicant can use to meet the requirements.

Member Zmuda asked why the previous owner chose to connect the two buildings. Mr. Purcell explained that the previous owner had a real estate business that was too big for one building, so the connecting walkway made it easier for employees to go back and forth between the buildings.

Mr. Emerick commented that the proposed lighting will need to be full cutoff fixtures instead of what appears to be a traditional wall pack. Mr. Heigel agreed to make this change.

Motion

Secretary Cort made a motion that the Downtown Core Design Board issue a Recommendation of Appropriateness for the proposal as presented, with the stipulation that full cutoff light fixtures are used. Member Moore seconded the motion, which was passed by a unanimous vote.

OTHER BUSINESS

Member Zmuda stated that the Downtown Hershey Association's Organizing Committee met earlier today to look for ways to open restaurants in the Chocolate Avenue area as Dauphin County transitions to the Yellow Phase during COVID-19.

Lauren Zumbrun stated that the Downtown Hershey Association's Organizing Committee met today, and the full Board will meet tomorrow and review how we are operating as an organization in light of COVID-19 and if there are new or different ways that we should be doing things. Specifically regarding downtown restaurants being limited in seating, what does that mean in terms of outdoor seating? Can the Township help by maybe designating an open street day when the restaurants would be able to place tables in Township streets? The Organizing Committee is looking for the Downtown Core Design Board's reaction to this concept.

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Member Zmuda commented that given the fact Dauphin County may be transitioning to the Yellow Phase soon, the restaurants in a lot of locales are opening streets because their permitted capacity is in the vicinity of 25% to 50%. If Derry Township does that to some of the businesses in the downtown, it is going to be difficult for them to keep going for the next year or so until things calm down. We are looking for a way to let the restaurants expand while still conforming with social distancing requirements.

Ms. Zumbrun added that many cities are looking at creative solutions. West Chester is considering utilizing parking spaces or alleys for the placement of tables. We have also talked about the potential of doing more in Chocolatetown Square Park in terms of potentially placing tables.

Secretary Cort remarked that she would love to see something in Chocolatetown Square Park, or maybe the parking lot near the park that is centrally located and helps to build the sense of community but does not impact a residential neighborhood.

Member Achorn asked if Linden Road could be closed on certain evenings to allow adjacent restaurants to use it as extended space for dining. It should not impact many people and it would be helpful to the adjacent restaurants. Ms. Zumbrun responded that Linden Road is a Township road, so closing it would not require PennDOT approval. We would have to make sure we are getting businesses and property owners on board, coordinate days and times, and discussing how it would impact residents in that area as well as traffic flow.

Secretary Cort suggested using the upper deck of the parking garage for rooftop dining. It would be interesting, and it would not feel as though one were dining in the parking garage if the tables were on the upper deck. Member Zmuda noted that the restaurants would need to have the dining facilities close by so their employees can be on hand to wipe down tables.

Ms. Zumbrun noted that it would need to be determined who would be providing the dining tables.

Secretary Cort commented that the biggest issue is going to be sanitation. People would need to be responsible for cleaning their own tables after use, or the tables would have to be assigned to certain restaurants to ensure they are being cleaned. Member Zmuda thought that if the dining area were located further away from the restaurants, like on the upper deck of the parking garage, it would be more of a community effort to keep the area and tables clean. Secretary Cort added that if this idea is pursued, Ms. Zumbrun should get in touch with Waste Management to see if they could place and empty temporary trash receptacles.

Ms. Zumbrun stated that it sounds like a great idea on the surface but it will require a lot of planning and if it is only being held a couple of times a month, at what point is this

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going to be considered an event? We have to make sure we are doing this in a responsible manner.

Mr. Emerick noted that it may just be a matter of providing the space for people to bring their own tables and chairs, and then we would not have to worry about cleaning tables.

Secretary Cort pointed out that whatever the Township does that would work for one restaurant, it should do for all restaurants.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Member Moore, seconded by Chairman George, and a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

Secretary