

**MINOR ARCHITECTURAL SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE PLANNING BOARD
OCTOBER 6, 2020
Town Council Chambers 2:00 p.m.
MINUTES**

I. Call to Order

Planning Board Chair Paul Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

The roll call was taken:

Paul Rasmussen (in Council Chambers)
Barbara Dill (remotely)
Pat Sherman (in Council Chambers)
Beth Olshansky (in Council Chambers)
Andrea Bodo (in Council Chambers)
Molly Malloy (in Council Chambers)
Todd Selig (in Council Chambers, and remotely)
Rick Taintor (remotely)
Sean McCauley (in Council Chambers)
Sharon Ames (in Council Chambers)
Emily Innes (remotely)

Chair Rasmussen said he and Administrator Selig were the facilitators for the meeting.

Ms. Ames shared the presentation provided at the community event on September 12th, which she said focused on describing the approach relative to colors. She said there were four participants at that event, and said some minor adjustments to the colors were made based on comments received. She said these adjustments were presented to the Planning Board at its September 23rd meeting.

She said they looked at the context of the project within the community as well as based on general principles put forth in the Town's architectural standards. She noted the color palette for Historic New England, which included colors for the colonial Georgian revival that could be seen more frequently in Durham. She said there was also the context of the community, seen in the commercial development in the downtown area. She noted the neutral, muted tones toward the mid blocks, as well as more contrasting tones toward the edges of the downtown. She showed this in a number of slides. Among other things, she noted the red-orange brick as one came to the downtown on Main St, in UNH buildings as well as several commercial buildings on Main St. She noted the off-white trim on these buildings, and also noted the variety of canopies on these buildings to accent the different businesses and draw attention to their storefront areas.

Ms. Ames said at the September 12th meeting held with members of the community, feedback was received on the color palette for the project, and it was then fine-tuned to have more muted tones, and a blue palette for the clapboard areas. She said she had samples of these colors. She said the idea was to draw attention to the commercial areas of the buildings using contrasting tones, and brick to create importance at corner locations and to draw one's eye into the project site.

She noted that the new buildings wouldn't be located on the roadway, as was the case with the Madbury Commons and Orion projects, and said these colors would help attract commerce to the area. She provided a bird's eye view of the project that showed opportunities to create focal points, looking at the buildings from Mill Road. She noted that they also used brick in the paving scheme, which formed the main retail connection between the buildings.

Administrator Selig asked why the brick was put in the center of Building C. Ms. Ames said there was a relationship of that brick to the brick at the corner of Building B. She also said the end of the brick in Building C represented the termination of the commercial retail area and pedestrian walkways, and said beyond it was the covered parking. She noted that the brick portion of Building C was planned at this point as a bank.

Ms. Molloy asked if there was consistency in terms of the commercial buildings all having similar finishes, as brick or the darker color. There was discussion.

Ms. Sherman said the brick was sort of bookending the project. She noted that the brick lintels were sandstone and not granite and white and said granite was more traditional for a lintel in a brick building. She noted UNH buildings as a reflection of this. There was discussion, and it was noted that what was proposed was a decorative lintel.

Ms. Dill said the Boothbay blue color looked different on the two different buildings. Ms. Ames said that was because of the lighting of the rendering. Ms. Dill asked if the paving was the same brick as the brick on the building. Ms. Ames said they were different materials, but could have a similar coloration.

Ms. Sherman noted that the clapboard was Hardiplank. She said the trim around the windows was difficult to see, and asked if it was 3 ½ in trim. Ms. Ames said yes, and said it would be on all sides and would be augmented with a crown. It was noted that the window trim was a dark bronze. Ms. Sherman said that was a surprise. Ms. Ames said this was used in response to community and Planning Board feedback about having a dark toned window sash. She said the toning of the dark bronze was a soft black and appeared to be more sympathetic with the brick work.

Ms. Molloy said it wasn't inconsistent with the new architecture going in. She said it looked more sophisticated but didn't negate the historical look, and didn't stick out from the building.

Ms. Ames noted that in earlier iterations there was a white trim for the windows.

Ms. Olshansky said she looked back at the community forum, which she had attended, and said the vote overwhelmingly was for ebony/black windows, not bronze. There was discussion. Ms. Sherman said the sample of the bronze window was almost black, and said she understood the interest in this.

There was discussion that the Hardiboard clapboards would be horizontal, as per the architectural guidelines. Ms. Molloy said it looked really dark, and asked if with shadows it would look lighter and darker.

Ms. Ames said yes, and explained that there would be different toning based on the time of day. She provided updates of some of the views, and said the idea was to draw people into the commercial areas, since Mill Road was 450 ft away from the first retail space. She said the brick and contrasting tones helped make the building massing more downtownish. .

There was discussion about the windows and doors for the commercial storefronts, which were a light color. Ms. Molloy asked if they had considered doing this in black. Ms. Ames spoke about wanting to differentiate the commercial space from the upper residential space. Ms. Molloy said retail space with black windows highlighted what was inside, and was attractive to business owners.

Ms. Sherman said the main entrance to the internal mall commercial space had almost a residential window proportion, and asked why there were so many mullions for the windows. She said it was a big façade, and said if there were larger glass panels, it would look more interesting and contemporary. She noted that all the window sizes there were the same. Ms. Ames said they'd been looking at maintaining the patterning with the other storefronts, and also articulating band coarse components, but said this could be revisited. Ms. Sherman said larger windows for the main entrance could be more commanding. She noted that it was a multi-height space, so the windows should say this.

Ms. Dill said she agreed with what Ms. Sherman said about the entrance. Concerning the siding, she said she wanted to be sure it was understood that the smooth version of the Hardiplank clapboards would be used. There was discussion.

Ms. Bodo noted that the HDC had a big discussion about putting mullions in for the windows for the entryway to the new Town Hall. She said they ultimately decided that it

made a better statement if there was clear glass for the entry way. She said this had worked out well, and said it was an inviting entryway.

Ms. Olshansky said it would be helpful to focus on one architectural area at a time at this meeting. She said she'd like to talk about color. She noted her recent color presentation to the Planning Board. She said her interest in being on this subcommittee was to create an aesthetically pleasing, harmonizing whole with the color palette. She noted the 20 standard colors that were available. She said a goal with the color palette was to break up the mass and tone things down, noting that this was a huge project in the downtown next to a residential neighborhood. She said she, Ms. Bodo and Ms. Meeking had gone through the color palette and looked at colors that might harmonize. She said it was felt that there needed to be more than 3 colors for a project as large as this.

She said they came up with muted tones that wouldn't jump out, weren't heavy or dark, and would blend well together. She spoke about a khaki brown color she liked as part of the 4 colors they came up with. She said she wasn't in favor of blue tones, and said they looked cold. She said the 4 colors would look nice with the brick, the window color Ms. Ames had described, etc. She said she, Ms. Bodo and Catherine Meeking agreed that these colors would work well together and would break up the mass of the buildings. She said she was suggesting replacing the most recently proposed colors with these 4 colors. She said there wasn't overwhelming support for the color palettes presented to date. She suggested that the khaki brown, timber bark and the brick should be on the building facing Mill Road, and said other building faces could have the Monterey taupe and Woodstock brown.

Ms. Molloy asked if each building would have its own color story. Ms. Olshansky spoke further on this. She said the colors they proposed were all neutral colors so wouldn't jump out, and weren't too heavy or light. She said given the sentiment of members of the community about 3 and 4 story buildings there, the goal was to tone things down but also make a beautiful, aesthetically pleasing project. She said she thought black windows were stunning, and noted that they were used for the Madbury Commons project. She also said Monterey taupe and timber bark were used for that project.

Ms. Sherman said she thought some of the colors in the 4-color palette Ms. Olshansky had provided were too close. She also said she wasn't a big fan of the blue, and said it was an anomaly. She said there was very little difference in the facades of the buildings, and asked if where to break them vertically was based on the floorplans. Ms. Ames said it was based on that and also on slight projections of the buildings. She noted in response to a question from Ms. Sherman that the sides of the projections would be a vertical piece and not a horizontal piece.

Ms. Sherman suggested that the cobblestone trim color could be a bit brighter. She also said while there were some projections, the buildings were basically very flat and large.

She said she understood using the dark color to help with definition. She said there wasn't enough brick, and said she'd like to see the brick turn the corner more strongly. She asked if there was any chance of having more brick on the buildings, and said the anchors seemed weak. Ms. Ames said they could work with Mr. McCauley about expanding the proportion of brick. Ms. Sherman said she understood the concept of having brick at the corners, but also noted the large percentage of brick in the buildings at UNH.

Ms. Bodo said color was so subjective. She asked about the colors in the elevations provided for the meeting. Mr. McCauley said they came from the conversation where more muted colors were asked for. He said his concern was that they were constructing about 50,000 sf of new commercial space, and needed to create excitement for the eye, and draw people in. He said the color palette Ms. Olshansky had spoken about created almost a Madbury Commons color scheme, which was great when one was sitting on the curb line, but said it would be lost at Mill Plaza. He said he realized some people would like the project to be invisible, but said they needed the commercial space to be successful.

Ms. Bodo said the colors shown in the elevations tonight were drab and didn't draw her in. She noted that the 911 Madbury building had an army fatigue green color, and said this had been an unpleasant experience for people in Town since it was a landmark building on the corner. She said for the Orion project, the HDC worked with architect Lisa Stefano, and wanted something fun that created a walking experience. She said the Mill Plaza project would be accepted better by the community if the upper floors were neutral, muted tones. She said the lower floors should be exciting and visually appealing with more colors, awnings, great lighting, signage, framing around doors, etc. She noted that most people wouldn't look at the top floor when going into a building.

Ms. Ames said there were neutral colors for the storefronts at this time, and said awnings, etc. made of canvas were more adjustable than building materials in terms of what colors could be included in the storefront. She agreed that having awnings with different colors would create more excitement along the storefront area.

Ms. Dill said Ms. Bodo had said much of what she wanted to say. She said the wide belt courses on the first floor of buildings seemed to be occasionally used for signage, and said what was placed there could bring a lot of life to that area. She said she was in favor of seeing more brick. She asked how long Building A was, and was told it was 350 ft. She said they needed to make sure that whatever was done there was compatible with what was being done to the new buildings. She asked whether the brick facing would be the same for the new buildings and the existing building.

Ms. Ames said the existing brick facing at Hannaford would remain. Mr. McCauley said Hannaford and Rite Aid had long term leases, and said CDA had provided proposals for

doing something to liven up the color of the brick for their building. He said Ms. Ames had presented them with some options, but said until Hannaford and Rite Aid signed off on this, what they had agreed to was being presented.

Ms. Dill said she was surprised about this. She said she'd taken some pictures of Building A and said the brick there wasn't several different colors. She said she couldn't believe these businesses would have any objection to having clean looking brick. Mr. McCauley said Hannaford was offered a new façade, and turned it down at a meeting. Administrator Selig said that was correct, and said this happened last summer.

Ms. Molloy said she liked the elevations, their verticality, and the contrast in the spaces that made it look like there were lots of places to explore. She said she understood the idea of colors with less contrast perhaps being more appealing to people, but also said a lighter building that was set back 500 ft from the road would create more pushback than a building that was darker and would sink into the background more. She said with the dark colors, the commercial areas could be highlighted more. She also said the commercial level colors could be changed up more. She said she liked the idea of making the commercial space mor interesting. She said she personally liked the deep colors, and would almost like to see each building have its own color story. Ms. Ames said in some ways they did this, and spoke further on this.

Ms. Molloy asked if there could be more interesting texture provided with vertical boards. It was noted that the architectural standards didn't permit this. Ms. Molloy asked if there was any way to incorporate more texture. Ms. Ames noted that there was a wood-grained clapboard option.

Ms. Olshansky said about 80% of Madbury Commons was Monterey taupe, and she spoke further about the colors there. She spoke about the views of the Mill Plaza buildings from different perspectives.

Chair Rasmussen said he was hearing that members of the subcommittee wanted the Faculty neighborhood facings to be more neutral but wanted those facing Mill Road to be more exciting.

Ms. Bodo said the colors in the elevation of Building C facing Mill Road worked for her, but said the views of the 4 stories of Building B didn't. There was discussion.

It was noted that the first floor of everything was pretty much brick.

Ms. Sherman asked what the storefront height was. Ms. Ames said it was about 10-11 ft. Ms. Sherman said in some ways the renderings didn't help envision things, because the contrast of the dark trim and the building color against the brick wasn't seen. She also said the proportions weren't right in the samples that were provided. She spoke further on

this. She said she agreed that the 3-story elevation of Building C facing Mill Road had a certain charm to it because they looked like individual buildings. There was discussion about the view of the buildings from the street perspective, as compared to how they looked from further away.

Ms. Sherman said Building B looked like a heavy building sitting on top of a squished first floor. Chair Rasmussen asked if it was the proportions in terms of height to width that made the 3-story elevation in Building C look so much more pleasant than the 4-story elevation in Building B. Ms. Sherman said yes, and asked if there was any way to introduce more of a horizontal element, even at the top, or to increase the visual height of the commercial area by bringing the brick up higher so it looked like a 3-story section on top of a 2-story section. She said right now there was too much on top and not enough on the bottom. Chair Rasmussen said with a 3-story building, there was a sideways rectangle, and with a 4-story building there was a vertical rectangle, and said these played out different to the eye. Ms. Sherman said exactly.

Chair Rasmussen noted that Durham's standards made it difficult to add a horizontal element above the first story, and said this would require a waiver from the Planning Board. Ms. Ames said according to the regulations, there needed to be a differentiation between the retail level and the upper floors. Chair Rasmussen also said the upper floors needed to be a consistent color and material.

Ms. Sherman said the brick could perhaps go up to the windowsill, not the entire second floor, so the lower level wouldn't look so squished. She said it didn't have to be straight across. She said it was a proportion issue, and said the color issue was almost secondary. She said what she was reading from the discussion was that if the proportions were right, the colors would be an easier solution. Ms. Molloy said she could see that too. Ms. Olshansky agreed. Ms. Sherman asked if the proportion issue could be addressed as a problem, and a solution could be sought. She suggested a possible vertical band of brick.

Mr. McCauley spoke about finding some accent points to break up the verticality. He said when they looked at this in the past, they came up against the design standards. He said perhaps the lintels, brick areas could include granite, etc.

Ms. Sherman said there was more going on than the renderings showed. She noted with the samples the timber bark, khaki brown, and cobblestone combination, along with the bronze window color, and said there was a lot going on with those colors. She said the colors should be presented in proportion to the brick. Ms. Olshansky agreed and said they looked beautiful together.

Ms. Molloy asked if there would be limits or recommendations as to what colors businesses using these spaces could use. Ms. Ames said there would be a palette of colors to select from.

Ms. Sherman spoke about avoiding the file cabinet look of the upper floors of Building B possible ways to get the first story to appear more vertical. She spoke about a possible pitched roof and Chair Rasmussen noted that it would add to the height. She said perhaps the sign band could be broken into smaller sections. Ms. Ames also noted the idea of reducing the mullions in the entrance area to make the commercial zone more distinct.

Ms. Bodo said downtown Durham was tired, and said there were many possibilities here.

Ms. Ames said it was important to evaluate the brown tones proposed now, and said there were some concerns about them not being as vibrant as they were hoping for. She said that was the reason for the trend toward the blues. She said she was hearing that it was the proportionality of the brick base for the 4-story building that was the issue. Ms. Sherman said the mix of colors proposed now was nice.

Administrator Selig said when he traveled, he looked at the architecture of buildings. He said with the modern mixed-use buildings that had a mix of clapboard in multiple colors, and brick, one out of 10 of these buildings looked good. He said the materials in them looked dated very quickly. It was noted that Hardiboard had to be repainted every 25 years or so. Administrator Selig asked if the design could be refined to withstand the test of time, and could be something Durham residents would be proud of and that would bring people into the site to shop at the businesses there.

Administrator Selig said the committee should also discuss the views from Faculty Road, in terms of the proportions and colors.

There was further detailed discussion about the different views of the buildings from Mill Road. There was further discussion about the colors, and the proportion issues. Ms. Dill said she hadn't seen a commercial building that didn't have a first floor that was taller than the others.

There was additional discussion about how the façade of Hannaford and Rite Aid would be updated. Ms. Olshansky asked if the applicant would be able to make the colors there align with Building B. She said she'd seen various colors on other Hannaford buildings. She also said she'd love not to see a green roof on Building A, and said there were other nice colors for metal roofs.

Mr. McCauley said the goal from the beginning had been to tie the new buildings in architecturally with the Hannaford building, and said they wanted it to look like one project that came together. He said Hannaford wasn't always cooperative with their efforts. Ms. Olshansky noted she'd seen Hannaford stores that had false second stories. Mr. McCauley said they'd pushed for that. He noted that the current Hannaford building was built in the early 1970's, and said there were structural limitations to adding onto it.

Administrator Selig said Hannaford didn't believe that making an additional investment in the façade would lead to additional sales, so their priorities were elsewhere. Mr. McCauley said he thought he could make an argument that better alignment between the look of the buildings would create a more inviting environment to help promote more sales. Ms. Dill said she was glad CDA was trying to do that. She said a refaced Hannaford would increase sales there, and would also draw people into explore other businesses. Mr. McCauley said they were trying to create a commercial environment that lifted the Town.

Chair Rasmussen asked for further input at this point as they were getting closer to 4:00 pm. Ms. Molloy said she'd like to see something brighter, and more unexpected.

Ms. Olshansky said she liked the façade of Building C facing west, and said it looked like Portsmouth, with a streetscape. She said Building B would read as a 4-story dormitory with three stories of students. Mr. McCauley noted that Building B was two stories of commercial, with office space on the second floor, and two stories of residents. Ms. Olshansky said that wasn't distinguishable on the drawings, and said it would still read like a 4-story building. She noted that people hadn't realized that Riverwoods would be so huge.

Ms. Olshansky said the neutrals in a beautiful color palette would be more appreciated by the community, for the façade facing Mill Road. She said perhaps there could be more contrasting colors along the streetscape, but said the view from Mill Road would be more handsome with muted neutrals. She said awnings could do a lot to spark the streetscape. She said the blues were a mistake, and said she'd rather see the khaki brown and timber bark colors. Ms. Bodo said she agreed with Ms. Olshansky.

Ms. Molloy said more time was needed to discuss the back of Building C facing Chesley Drive and Faculty Road.

There was discussion about whether another meeting was needed, as suggested by Ms. Dill. It was noted that there were some components of the architecture that hadn't been touched on. Ms. Innes said it would be helpful to know what architectural issues were outstanding and still needed to be discussed.

Ms. Dill noted the really tall lights in the Plaza now. It was noted that different lights were proposed, but that this wasn't part of the architectural design. Chair Rasmussen said that issue was part of the lighting plan and would be discussed by the Planning Board.

Ms. Dill said she didn't care for the lattice for the garage on Building C and asked if anything could be done with it. She also said the view of Building C from the back

looked bleak and uninviting, like a prison. Ms. Innes said another version of the view showed plantings, including a climbing plant over the wall, and said they were looking at adding that. Ms. Dill said the colors on the back of Building C weren't good and she suggested going with warmer colors like khaki brown, timber bark, etc. She also said some brick would be good, but not countryside red. Ms. Ames said countryside red was no longer the brick color.

Ms. Molloy asked if some curves could be added to the retaining wall. Ms. Ames said it was textured, and also said the intent was to soften it. It was noted that the walkway curved. There was discussion on the texture of the wall.

Administrator Selig said this view of Building C reminded him of a Hampton Suites at a suburban mall, and said it wasn't very welcoming. He said it was flat, with faux railings, etc. and said it seemed out of context with downtown Durham. He asked Ms. Sherman about proportions and colors that could make this vantage point special, and noted that a lot of people traveled on that pathway.

Ms. Olshansky asked if the chimney on that building could perhaps be brick, to warm up the view a bit.

Ms. Ames showed a previous version of an elevation of the back of Building C, before the blue tones were added, which she said showed the softened retaining wall with more texture and plantings

Ms. Sherman said the color in the elevation wasn't particularly nice, and said the building needed more definition. She noted that the elevation rendering probably didn't show what was actually intended there, and said one couldn't see the trim, the definition of the mulleins, etc. in the elevation. She said it would be good if some of the colors, etc. they'd been talking about today were included, and shown.

Administrator Selig said the Planning Board and the applicant had a lot of things left to work through. He suggested scheduling another meeting of the subcommittee, which would give the applicant time to make changes based on the discussion today, bring it back to the subcommittee, and then there could be more refined comments on the minor details.

Ms. Sherman asked if anyone had thought about doing a mockup on a 4 by 8 board with real materials, so people could actually see all of this together. She said the drawings were at a very small scale, and said even if the rendering was blown up, it was really hard to put all the pieces together. She said a lot of work that had been done wasn't being expressed.

She said the colors were less important than the proportions right now. She said given that there were 2 stories of commercial space, there should be some way to get the base of the building to be bigger. She considered whether there could be a different fenestration pattern for the windows on the second floor. Mr. McCauley spoke about having a larger window line on the second floor. Ms. Sherman asked if there was another architectural device to give the base of the building more height in order to get the proportions right.

Ms. Ames said the challenge was that the ordinance required differentiating the first floor from the upper floors. She said a question was whether they could stretch the appearance of the first floor, and said the team needed to look at this again.

Ms. Dill said in Dover, offices on the second floor typically had something on the window to identify the business.

Ms. Sherman asked if there was a way to break up the horizontal band with a different material. She said if the proportions were better, she thought the colors would read better.

The group agreed to have a second meeting. Ms. Ames said she couldn't make the changes based on the discussion today before the next Planning Board meeting. She asked what the outstanding issues were.

Ms. Dill said the balconies needed to be discussed. There was discussion that they would be dark bronze, the same tone as the window sashes.

Ms. Olshansky said in some of the drawings, it seemed like the belt course was wide. She said she didn't know how that interfaced with Ms. Sherman's suggestion about the first floor, which she said she agreed with. She also asked about a possible window element for the corner brick areas. Ms. Sherman said that would make the corner verticality stronger. Chair Rasmussen said that was the opposite direction from what they wanted to go in. Ms. Sherman said if it was more vertical, it wouldn't hurt.

Chair Rasmussen asked Ms. Sherman what she would be looking at doing if there were no architectural standards to deal with. Ms. Sherman said she would do a material change up a story and a half, to the windowsill on the second story. There was discussion about this with Ms. Ames. Chair Rasmussen said he'd have to look at what that would mean in terms of having to get a waiver, a variance, or nothing. Ms. Molloy asked about possibly keeping the band course the same width. Ms. Ames said they would have to look at this both ways to see which worked visually. She spoke further.

There was discussion that the second meeting would be held after the October 14th Planning Board meeting. Chair Rasmussen said this would give Ms. Ames time to put another view together, and they could then see if it was coming together the way they

wanted or not. It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on October 23rd at 2:30 pm.

Chair Rasmussen closed the meeting at 4:36 pm.

Victoria Parmele, Minutes taker