

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES OF MAY 10, 2005**

Present: Jay Gregory, John Pesce, Jeanne Boyle, and Stephen Coutu.

1. Approval of March 9, 2005 Minutes

On a motion by Mr. Coutu, seconded by Mr. Pesce, the minutes of March 9, 2005 were approved by the Committee and made part of the DRC official record.

2. Approval of Regular meeting of March 15, 2005 Minutes

On a motion by Mr. Pesce, seconded by Mr. Coutu, the minutes of March 15, 2005 were approved by the Committee and made part of the official record.

3. New Business

A. Roscommon's Lighting

Chairman Gregory noted that Mr. Ethan Sluter from Roscommon is back before the committee on a different kind of lighting since the Magniflood lighting previously approved by the committee was not available now and he was having difficulty with the manufacturer being responsive enough.

Mr. Sluter states that in the process of investigating all the other options with the lighting, his proposal was to have the Magniflood people provide the lights. When it came time for them to provide use with the schematics that we needed, they were not the most responsive. While he investigated other companies, the Holophane representative who is located in the Foxboro area was very helpful in figuring out solutions for not only Roger Willams Avenue, but for our side as well. Since this company has a great reputation, he thought it might be a good idea to reconsider our previous decision. At this time, he distributed pictures to the Committee of the new lighting. He states that it is similar in style to what the Committee had already seen with the Magniflood lighting. It is a contemporary light that has down lighting and feels it will fit it with the site and did a formal lighting study and it matched up well with the previous lighting.

Mr. Gregory asks about the cast iron poles on the street and wasn't that discussed at our previous meetings? Ms. Boyle answered yes. Mr. Gregory noted that with this new lighting it is cast aluminum. Mr. Sluter stated that it was only available in aluminum, but this new lighting is available in both the cast iron and aluminum. For the parking area we propose aluminum since it is more durable in regard to corrosion, however, the cost iron could be utilized on the street which is what the DRC originally approved. The aluminum could be inside the building. The company has identical poles in cast iron and aluminum.

Mr. Gregory asked Ms. Boyle if the DRC was going to hold off its opinion on the street lighting and leave that decision to the full review commission to decide what they wanted in the waterfront district. Ms. Boyle answered yes.

Mr. Gregory asked Mr. Sluter what a light fixture such as the one he is showing would sell for? Mr. Sluter said approximately \$2,000 +/-.

Mr. Gregory asked him if Rossccommons has chosen its design? He states he is looking at the one with the decorative base and the tapered pole. A pole that is smooth and thinner at the top than at the bottom. That is the same one we are proposing to the committee. Mr. Gregory states he will leave that to his decision of Rossccommons and he does not have too much concern about the fine detail on the pole, but is more interested in the quality of the pole. Our interest lies in the road throughout the district as much as anywhere else.

He asked if Mr. Sluter is still looking for the same variance in height that we discussed before? Mr. Sluter answered yes; a 14 foot pole.

Mr. Coutu asked if the poles that were previously approved had the gooseneck? Mr. Sluter stated they were similar, but not exact and not as exaggerated as that. Mr. Coutu stated in regard to the lighting inside the building that the goal was to make it somewhat consistent to what will be on the street because these lights will be visible from the street. He does not want to belabor the point, but it does have some ramifications throughout the waterfront. He said that he and Ms. Boyle have discussed this issue looking at some other developments coming down the line with respect to what type of street lighting we should have on Roger Williams Avenue and Waterfront Drive itself.

Ms. Boyle states that the design they choose will not be for Roger Williams Avenue only. What the Commission is going to be looking at is the whole standard that we will be using throughout the Waterfront District. She states this particular light is not what we approved before with the Magniflood light. We are not looking for something that is faux historic, but one of the things that was nice about the Magniflood design that was previously approved was that it was half contemporary and half historical so it could mix and match as to whether it was a historic portion of the waterfront or something that was more contemporary. This new light presented here tonight is more contemporary. She asked if Mr. Sluter looked at any other lights from this manufacturer that might be more comparable to the design of the Magniflood? He answered that the company does have a variety of lights that are similar with the down lighting type of light and arm fixtures. The DRC at this time again reviewed the pictures submitted at the previous meeting. It was the consensus of the Committee that they liked the first pole that they saw at a previous meeting because it was more of a historical looking pole and did not like this new design submitted by Mr. Sluter. Ms. Boyle said there is no consistent historic pattern in the Roger Williams Avenue. After a discussion they asked Mr. Sluter to find one with a different mounting. Mr. Sluter said he would be happy to bring in another design. The DRC decided they would have an afternoon meeting to decide the lighting. Mr. Sluter states it's about a 10 week lead time to get the lighting, and they would not be moving in until September. This timeline would not interfere with them laying the sidewalks or pavement.

Mr. Coutu states to have the light over the sidewalk the poles have to be almost in the back of the right-of-way and should be located on the edge of the roadway that way the light is shining into the roadway and not into people's homes. For the parking area it does not matter. Ms. Boyle agreed. Mr. Sluter states most of the light is straight down with full cutoff and there are different levels of it.

Mr. Gregory asked Mr. Sluter what his site plan calls for is the placement of the lights? Mr. Coutu stated that he has looked at the light poles in Warren and Barrington and they are right at the curb in the grass strip area between the curb and the sidewalk.

MR. Gregory states he does not have much concern as other members may have as to what the lighting is inside the individual developments because we will have developments that have

a historic flair and others that will have a more contemporary flair to them. One light is not going to work for everyone, but we want to be consistent on the public ways. Ms. Boyle states that where they are visible from the street you don't want some jarring conflict between the lighting. It's best to choose something that is middle of the road. They discussed maybe having the fluted poles on the street with the different heads depending on the style.

Mr. Sluter showed the DRC another light option that he found in Providence which he felt looked very good in a historic neighborhood. He suggested that the Committee take a ride over to Smith Hill and Dean Street in Providence where there is a small park to see these lights which are a very nice design.

The DRC decides to have Mr. Sluter follow up with another manufacturer for the lighting and he and the DRC will meet again next week. Ms. Boyle states that the meeting will still need to be posted 2 days in advance.

Mr. Gregory apologizes any inconvenience to Mr. Sluter. Ms. Boyle asks Mr. Sluter if he could provide anything to her by Monday so that she can send it out to the Committee members in time for them to review it. She noted that the lighting issue on the street will need to be reviewed by the full Waterfront Commission.

The DRC deferred the decision on the lighting until next week.

#### B. Signage for the Dexter Road Business Park

Mr. Michael Geisser presented. He distributed some preliminary designs to the Committee for a business sign, something that would let people know that there are business down there and people could come in through Massasoit Street and divert people from traveling through King Philip Road which is residential section. He said at present there is no identity. There is a telephone pole with some old signs hanging there and the businesses that are located down there would like a nice sign. It would also clean up that intersection. We proposed to put the sign on that median near the exit from the Henderson Bridge.

Mr. Geisser explained that there is a utility pole in the middle of the median strip which has power and since there is power there we decided that an illuminated sign might be the best way to go. It would be seen by people going from all directions. We would also like this sign to somehow connect to the Waterfront Commission District and have the design express the branding. A member asked if RIDOT has been receptive to this. Mr. Geisser states he did talk with DOT and the two issues are that it meets their acceptability for location. There is a policy rule that states that they do not want commercial signage on public land. He states he was told at all levels that that rule was written by James Capaldi and whatever he feels would serve the public interest. He is looking to the City to tell him if that is something the City of East Providence would like. Mr. Geisser stated that it is his feeling after speaking with some of the city officials such as zoning and planning that this sign would be something beneficial to the City.

Ms. Boyle states she did discuss this issue with the City Manager and he indicated that he would be willing to send a letter of support to DOT and that he has no problem with this conceptually. Mr. Gregory asks if the Planning Board has reviewed it. Ms. Boyle states she does not think it is within the Planning Board's jurisdiction.

Mr. Gregory asks Mr. Geisser if this sign is for profit. Mr. Geisser stated no. The sign itself could be expensive and he would ask the other businesses to pay a portion. He said he has to pay the state a fee every month and has to carry liability insurance. \$3,000 to \$10,000 ongoing lease, insurance costs with state. These costs are on-going and he will ask the other businesses to help defray the costs of the sign. Mr. Geisser states he has spoken to some of the other businesses and will talk with more businesses down in that area of Dexter Road such as Aspen Aerogels Inc., Pond View and the oil company.

Mr. Gregory asks Ms. Boyle what the involvement is with the Waterfront Commission. She states that Mr. Geisser has voluntarily come before this committee and it is up to the Committee to consider whether the sign should have the waterfront district branding on it or it can just say "Dexter Road Business Park". We can also use this as an opportunity to promote the existence of the district. Mr. Geisser is requesting a recommendation from the DRC and some input on the design of the sign.

Mr. Gregory states he does not have any problem with this. Mr. Geisser states he would also add landscaping on the bottom of the sign to make it look very nice. Ms. Boyle states that the City Manager's support would also have to be required, but if this is a sign that the DRC has embraced and there is a sign incorporated in it that gives us a little more visibility to the waterfront district, then that makes it all the more easier for the City Manager to support this with the Director of DOT. There is also a public benefit with it in the promotion of the waterfront district.

Mr. Geisser said it would be an enhancement to have the waterfront district on the sign from a business person's standpoint. Mr. Gregory states by bringing in companies also such as Aerogels it brings up the area and quality of the neighborhood and he said it would be a marquee project and intent for the City that in bringing in these types of people brings up the Dexter Road neighborhood. He states he would like to have a waterfront presence on the sign.

Mr. Geisser suggested that the sign is presented as a three sided sign. The original concept was to have a four sided sign with the sign when you're leaving Dexter Road having the logo on there saying the City of East Providence and maybe some wording on one part of the sign thanking the people for visiting our waterfront district. He said he would like an endorsement to allow us to start the process.

The DRC decides to entertain a motion to recommend the sign

Motion

On a motion by Mr. Pesce, seconded by Coutu, the DRC voted unanimously to give a written recommendation to Mr. Geisser to endorse the sign concept subject to reviewing it before it is put in.

Mr. Gregory asks Director Boyle to draft up the letter with his signature. It will be done for the next meeting on May 17<sup>th</sup>.

At this time, Mr. Gregory thanked Mr. Geisser for considering the Design Review Committee about this sign.

## 2. Staff Report

Director Boyle reported that she and Diane Feather are giving a tour of the Waterfront District to the Women and Transportation Group. They have hired a bus and we will be taking them along the waterfront and showing them the different sites and emphasizing the transportation ones. She invited the DRC. She states there has been a very good response to this.

Ms. Boyle reported that the planning intern for the Waterfront Commission will begin work on June 1<sup>st</sup>. One of the projects she will be working on is an analysis of the different options available for lighting. She noted that she and Stephen Coutu have attended preliminary meetings for projects that are getting ready to submit their applications. The Tockwotton Home is finalizing their plans and will be before the Waterfront Commission within the next few weeks. She noted there is another development on Waterman Avenue by FRE. They have received their preliminary determination from the CRMC. She and Mr. Coutu met with them and also RIDOT staff to work out the access arrangements to the property and they are anticipating their plans sometime in June. It will be 120 unit six story condominium development at the end of Waterman Avenue at the site of the old American Trophy building.

Ms. Boyle also reported that the GeoNova development is supposed to submit their plans on May 15 but it will probably be a little later since they still have some design issues to work out.

Regarding the BP Amoco site, Ms. Boyle reported that she has had some meetings with representatives with BP Amoco and also that Unocal has also contacted her and they will probably put their property on the market in late summer.

She noted the transportation issues are very challenging in that it has been a little more complicated than we anticipated. The Warren Avenue Connector will be going out to bid this year and hopefully construction starting this year.

Ms. Boyle reported that she and Mr. Coutu attended a meeting with Senator Reed, the City manager, and members of the City Council. One of those topics was funding for the Waterfront District. Senator Reed was very helpful and they will be providing some funding for an analysis of some of the drainage issues in the Waterfront as well as working with Senator Chafee and Congressman Kennedy to get some funding for the next piece of Waterfront Drive.

Mr. Gregory asked Ms. Boyle if Senator Reed was happy with what he has seen so far. Ms. Boyle stated yes and he said that one of the reasons that they like to work with East Providence is because they know that when we get the funding it is well spent. The senator mentioned again how this waterfront district is a model for redevelopment in other parts of the State. She said that Senator Reed told her he met with representatives of Aspen and how they complimented the Commission and professional staff on how easy we were to work with and how quickly and smoothly the process went.

Mr. Gregory states that he would like to pursue the issue that came up two meeting ago when he requested the new member from RIDEM, Mr. Gray to join the DRC. The issue was the legality of it and whether or not he could be a voting member on the DRC since he was not a voting member of the Waterfront Commission, but an at-large member. At this point, someone from the DRC asks if a non-voting member on the main Waterfront Commission is allowed to be a voting member on the DRC or Hearing Panel. It was answered yes, Ms. Boyle and Mr. Coutu are. She said the Ordinance provides specifically for that. Ms. Boyle explained that the language states as far as the composition of the design review committee, that it shall consist of three commissioners. We have four; the City Planning Director, or his or her designee, the Public works Director or his or her designee, and four other individuals. She said they do not

even have to be ex-officio members, they can be someone from the community provided that they have these qualifications, an architect, a landscape architect, someone familiar with the financial aspects of real estate development, and a member professional engaged in other design trades as determined feasible and appropriate by the Commission. She said that the composition of those fields of expertise happened to be covered by the expertise of the commission members, so there is nothing in the ordinance at all that would preclude Mr. Gray from being on this Design Review Committee.

Mr. Gregory feels that Mr. Gray, who is the Assistant Director for DEM is such a vital component and tremendous asset and everything we do is subject to DEM approval. He is very interested in being on the subcommittee. Ms. Boyle agreed. Mr. Coutu said that he agrees and states that he would think DEM would want someone from there seated on the committee to see the early stages of all of these projects throughout the waterfront. The sooner they are brought into the process the better. In reference to the RICRMC Ms. Boyle states that CRMC is brought into the process as soon as we get a complete application. We immediately refer it to CRMC for their input.

Ms. Boyle states that technically having four members on this committee is not consistent with the regulations. It shall consist of a minimum of three members. We can do seven, but anyone joining the committee, must have the expertise.

She suggests that the commission revisit getting the architect on board. This way you have someone that is working for you and we are not dependent upon a volunteer such as Mr. Torrado to fit it into his busy schedule. We must try again to get someone as the architect and if not a local architect, maybe get a company that has a satellite office. Ms. Boyle mentioned Sasaki might be good because they are doing projects in Rhode Island and they have a national reputation.

Mr. Gregory states he would Ms. Boyle to ask Chairman Rogers to put this issue on the next Waterfront Commission meeting. Ms. Boyle agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne M. Boyle  
Interim Executive Director

JMB/sac

