
**CITY OF MIDDLETOWN
DESIGN REVIEW & PRESERVATION BOARD**

MINUTES

February-11-2004

Present

J. BIANCO, CHAIRMAN
J. FORTUNA
B. PLUMLEY
P. EVANS
N. STAMLER

Absent

D. BROWN
N. GOFF
M. BRADY
B. KRONENBERGER

Also Present

M. WACKERS
J. TOPSHE
A. RUBACHA
B. WOOD
D. HOPKINS
M. HARVILL
T. MACDONALD
K. SALMOIRAGHI
S. O'NEILL
D. COOPER
P. PATTON

The meeting commenced at 5:33 PM.

J. Bianco, moved to continue with New Business first and return to the Minutes and Old Business at the end of the agenda.

First, Tom MacDonald of East Wharf Architects, presented a proposed new church the congregation of Cross Street A.M.E. Zion Baptist Church at the corner of Wadsworth Street and West Street. Also in attendance supporting this presentation were Debra Hopkins, Rev. Moses L. Harvill, and David Cooper. Tom MacDonald explained that the current Cross Street Church is a 200 year old institution that is growing and needs a new facility to accommodate this growth. Currently, the church is negotiating with Wesleyan to acquire an 8 acre site at the corner of West Street and Wadsworth Street. J. Bianco requested clarification of the site location and the reply was that it is located near Snow School. The site will have three ways of ingress on one Wadsworth Street and two on West Street. The church will have a 700-seat worship center with a balcony with classrooms and offices. 200 parking spaces will be on the property, and a large portion of the property will be left vacant for future development. Tom MacDonald explained that a maximum number of trees on West Street will be preserved and new trees will be planted along Wadsworth Street. Materials that will be used is brownstone, where people can actual come in contact with the building, and a veneer elsewhere. The roof will be made from a green steel material and a copper steeple. The windows will have a bronze tint or stain glass. J. Bianco requested that the grading of the site be explained. Tom Macdonald explained that the property naturally slopes up from Wadsworth Street to the site of the building and then from the building north the site continues to slope downward. J. Bianco commented that while the design is simply, there is a lot going on and that the materials that are going to be selected should not contribute to making the building look busy. The Board would like to see what the selected materials are when that decision has been made. Tom Macdonald replied that this would be possible. The Board wanted to praise the presenters with doing a fine job. P. Evans moved to accept the presented proposal. B. Plumley seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Second, a representative from Holley Dodge presented a change in their signage to remove the top portion of their sign that contains five star rating and replace it with the Plymouth symbol. P. Evans moved to accept the presented proposal. J. Fortuna seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Third, Alan Rubacha, Joyce Topshe, and Peter Patton from Wesleyan and Kurt Salmoiraghi and Stephen O'Neill from VHB presented Wesleyan's plan to relocate parking from College Row. The loss of 65 spaces needs to be replaced somewhere on campus and two locations have been determined as suitable. One

location is an expansion of the parking lot at the Admissions office, which would result in the demolition of 48 Wyllys Avenue and a second location is an expansion of an existing lot on High Street. The Board was agreeable to the expansion of the lot on High Street, but had strong views against the demolition of 48 Wyllys Avenue and replacing it with a parking lot. Adjacent to the Admissions office is the Lacrosse and Soccer field. Wesleyan would have extended the parking lot as close as to the field as possible, but NCAA rule require that any parking and viewing locations be a certain distance from the playing field. Wesleyan commissioned a report to investigate the historic nature of the property and the report came to the following conclusion:

“Evaluation of a historic building considers both the level of architectural significance and the integrity of the building and its surroundings. There are many highly significant individual buildings on Wesleyan University campus. Many are distinguished by an exceptional level of style and/or important historic associations. A few landmark buildings are the work of master builders or architects. While 48 Wyllys Avenue clearly does not meet these high standards of significance, it could be considered at the level of a contributing resource in a historic district, which is defined as a collectively significant entity in which the individual components may lack distinction.

Obviously, since such a potential district no longer exists, the building must be evaluated as it stands today, isolated from its historic context. Although 48 Wyllys Avenue remains a generally well-preserved, representative example of its type and style and stands on the original site, its historic architectural value and integrity are considerably diminished by its lack of context. With the loss of neighborhood houses, the more intangible but important qualities of historic association and setting are no longer conveyed.”

The Board felt the report’s bias and grossly simplifying the issue of 48 Wyllys Avenue. 48 Wyllys Avenue is a fine example of period architecture that once lost will be gone forever. Furthermore, 48 Wyllys Avenue is very much still in historical context. There are no less than six other historically significant buildings, either adjacent to the property or within in a 100 yards. This building’s context is within the confines of a University campus, not a residential setting, as Wesleyan’s report assumes. The Board asked if angled parking could be considered on Wyllys Avenue, but Wesleyan decided that such a scenario would be dangerous for both vehicles and pedestrians. B. Plumely moved to approve the High Street proposal for parking. J. Bianco seconded and the motion passed unanimously. P. Evans moved to deny approval for a parking lot expansion on Wyllys Avenue that would include the demolition of 48 Wyllys Avenue. J. Fortuna seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Fourth, J. Bianco, called for the approval the minutes from the previous meeting. M. Wackers commented that the name of the first presenter still needed to be included. N. Stamler remembered the name as Mark Drew. B. Plumely commented that he was not present at the last meeting, even though the minutes record that he was. P. Evans motioned that the minutes be accepted as corrected. N. Stamler seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Fifth, J. Bianco presented the changes that occurred to the Metro Square plaza. The tower location had been changed, an entrance was added to the Subway to open onto the plaza, and the flag poles were removed. J. Bianco explained that these changes came as a result of the owner wish to implement feng shi principles for the project. These changes unfortunately, were not relayed to the Planning Department or this Board and have been implemented. B. Plumley motioned that the changes in the design be accepted as they had been implemented. N. Stamler seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Sixth, J. Bianco presented the 2003 Design Review and Preservation Awards for nominations and discussion. B. Plumley motioned that the Church Street project and the Inn at Middletown receive the 2003 awards. P. Evans seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michiel Wackers, Community Development Specialist