

GREAT BARRINGTON DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MASON LIBRARY
231 MAIN STREET

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2024
5:00 P.M.

PRESENT: **JENNIFER CLARK**
JACKIE KAIN
JAMES MERCER
JB BRODEUR
FRED CLARK

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Clark called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

II. MINUTES: JANUARY 24, 2024

MOTION: Mr. Clark to approve the minutes of January 24, 2024

SECOND: Ms. Kain

VOTE: All in favor

III. DISCUSSION:

The Committee set a meeting for Tuesday, February 27 to discuss a sign application for a business on Railroad Street and, if necessary, further discussion of 9 Elm Court.

IV. PERMITS: 9 ELM COURT

Ms. Kain recused herself.

Architect Glenn Goble was present with Steve Mack Civil Engineer for Foresight Land Services. Several members from the W.E.B Dubois Center were present including Ny Whitaker, the Executive Director of the DuBois Freedom Center and Eugenie Sills.

Mr. Goble gave a comprehensive presentation of the proposed project to renovate the Clinton Zion Church on 9 Elm Street. He explained the historic significance of the site.

Mr. Goble said a new entrance will be added as well as stairs and an elevator. He said that is all that is being added. He said the existing basement is shallow. It was dug out by church members to create a fellowship hall that served that purpose for many years. The ceilings are too low to invite the public in. The building will be raised 24 inches to allow the space to be renovated into a usable area. Raising the building will make the current entrance difficult to access. The grade around the building will also be raised and a retaining wall be added. A

sloping walkway will allow access to the new entrance into the basement level. All 3 floors will be accessible from the basement by the elevator. The basement entrance is the preferred access because the existing entrance will be 4 feet above the street level requiring a 70 foot handicap ramp that would take up a large part of the small site.

There will be two egresses from the lower level.

Mr. Mack explained the site saying it is very small, 4800 square feet including the building. He said there won't be any parking on the site with limited parking on Elm Court.

Mr. Mack said the wall on the property will be 4 feet high at the steepest point. The wall wraps around to the south to stairs that will be an exit for emergencies.

Mr. Mack said the drainage on the site will be along the wall to the road on the south side. On the north side there is a new sidewalk. Prior to the installation of the sidewalk there were old wood timbers along the road that took care of the run off.

Mr. Clark said the sidewalk was installed with a grant the Town received.

Mr. Goble said the sidewalk has changed the neighborhood.

Mr. Clark asked if the intent is to remove the sidewalk.

Mr. Goble said yes.

Mr. Mack said the curb would remain to direct the drainage. He said Mr. Rembold, Assistant Town Manager, recalls the curb needed to go in along with the sidewalk.

Mr. Goble said retaining the sidewalk would be a significant barrier.

Mr. Mack said keeping the sidewalk would result in a 5-foot retaining wall that would then require a railing because the land slopes down from the sidewalk. The goal is to not have a high retaining wall.

Ms. Brodeur asked if the existing front door will be used as an exit. She asked if the glass around the elevator could be removed or pushed into the building because it detracts from the old humble building. She said the large glass elevator seems too much.

Mr. Goble said moving the elevator structure would be a loss of valuable space.

Ms. Whitaker, the new director, said materials haven't been picked yet. The goal is to create a place where there will be an experience by those visiting. She said the elevator is part of how people will transition through the building.

Mr. Clark said the new addition should be easily identifiable by using different materials.

Mr. Goble said the glass around the elevator provides visitors a view of the neighborhood. He said it is important for people to see as part of the entrance.

Mr. Clark said he is disturbed that we are seeing this application at this advanced stage. The retaining walls change the ground surface and creates a barrier with the neighborhood. You have created problems with excessive retaining walls around a historic building in a historic area.

Mr. Clark said the elevator tower overwhelms the belfry the most iconic part of the building.

Mr. Goble said wanted to make the elevator smaller but couldn't because of the shape at the top of the elevator.

Mr. Clark said he admires the problem solving skills but this takes away from the character of the building. The building does not feel integrated into the neighborhood.

Mr. Goble said the elevator needs to go to the third floor.

Ms. Clark said we will meet again next Tuesday, February 27. She asked that any additional information be provided before the meeting.

Ms. Brodeur said this is a well thought out plan. We don't mean to negate all the hard work that has been done.

Ms. Whitaker said this is a project of re-imagination and preservation.

Mr. Mercer suggested another walk around the site. If there is another walk around the site the Committee might see that some of these things need to be done.

Mr. Clark said the character is being changed dramatically.

V. CITIZEN'S SPEAK TIME:

No citizens spoke.

Having concluded it business, Ms. Clark adjourned without objection at 5:58 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly L. Shaw

Kimberly L. Shaw
Secretary