

**GREAT BARRINGTON DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MASON LIBRARY**  
**231 MAIN STREET**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2024**  
**3:15 P.M.**

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Clark called the meeting to order at 3:15 P.M.

**MINUTES:** No minutes were reviewed for approval.

**PERMITS: 9 ELM COURT**

Ms. Kain recused herself from the discussion.

Ms. Clark said she like how the motion was made at the February 27 meeting. She said she would like to discuss a new motion.

Mr. Mercer made a motion to rescind the motion for the 9 Elm Court application made on February 27, 2024, Ms. Brodeur seconded, all in favor.

Ms. Clark said she sent a motion and report for the review to the Committee. The report is titled the *Design Advisory Committee Report March 7, 2024*. (attached to these minutes)

Ms. Clark summarized the report. She said she looked at the General Standards and Design Review Standards to put the report together. She said she is not questioning the worthiness of the project.

Ms. Clark said she is not in favor of the project even with the motion. She said the neighbors will see the building as an oddity that is not in harmony with the neighborhood.

There was discussion of the motion and report. The Committee was in agreement with the language as submitted and discussed.

Mr. Mercer made a motion to accept the motion submitted by Ms. Clark to approve the plan submitted by the DuBois Freedom Center for the renovation of Clinton Zion Church while noting concerns about

1 the massing of the addition, which appears inconsistent with the neighborhood's architectural style, as required in Design Review Standard 2.c of the Design Advisory Standards 7.19.5 in the Zoning Bylaw. The committee suggests considering the use of colors and materials that will harmonize with the building's and the neighborhood's architecture.

2 the roofline of the addition, which appears to be out of character with both the building and the neighborhood's character as required in Design Review Standard 2.d of the Design Advisory Standards 7.19.5 in the Zoning Bylaw.

3 the front door, which is not accessible from the exterior and which does not align with the rest of the neighborhood as required in General Principle 1.c of the Design Advisory Standards 7.19.5 in the Zoning Bylaw. Ms. Brodeur seconded.

Vote: Mr. Mercer and Ms. Brodeur aye, Ms. Clark, no.

Mr. Mercer made a motion to attach the report dated March 7 to the letter of recommendation to the ZBA, Ms. Brodeur seconded, all in favor.

**CITIZENS SPEAK TIME:**

There were no citizens present to speak.

The next meeting will be March 20, 2024 at 5:00 PM.

Having concluded its business, Ms. Clark adjourned without objection at 4:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kimberly L. Shaw*

Kimberly L. Shaw  
Secretary

## **Design Advisory Committee Report**

March 7, 2024

W.E.B. DuBois Center for Freedom and Democracy  
9 Elm Court  
Restoration and Exterior Alterations

After thorough review and deliberation, the DAC has voted to approve the proposed plan submitted by the DuBois Freedom Center. However, during our review, there were notable concerns raised as detailed below.

### **Summary**

The W.E.B. DuBois Center committee, architect Clark Green + Bek, and civil engineer Foresight Land Services presented to the Design Advisory Committee (DAC) on February 21 and February 27, 2024.

Four principle alterations/ additions are proposed.

- 1 The building will be raised 2'-0" to allow use of and access to the lower level. New 18"-4' high retaining walls are proposed around the most of the property. (check heights).
- 2 A new elevator tower and wrap around stair will be added at the northwest corner of the site and will become the new principle entrance.
- 3 A new sloping walkway will be added along the north edge of the site along Elm Court.
- 4 Existing sidewalk will be removed along north side of building.

The overall project additions and alterations have been added to allow the former neighborhood chapel to be repurposed as a museum and education center with a potential draw beyond the immediate area. Each of the previously described alterations and additions are required to provide sufficient minimum program area (elevating the building), to provide accessibility and public access through one entrance (elevator and stair) that is accessed via a sloping walkway. The impact of these elements is exacerbated by the small site.

### **Design Advisory Committee Review**

General Principles and Design Review Standards are included in the Town of Great Barrington Zoning By-law 7.19.5. We show these below, *followed by commentary in italics*.

General Principles.

- a. Preserve the distinguishing qualities of the building and its environment.
- b. Avoid the removal of historic or architectural features if possible.
- c. New development should harmonize with existing use, scale, and architecture of the existing buildings in the vicinity.  
*Comment: The front door will be used only as an exit and not accessible from the exterior. A front door that cannot be used from the exterior is out of character with the residential neighborhood and does not align with this principle.*
- d. Contemporary design for alterations and additions should not be discouraged when such designs are compatible with the surrounding environment.

Design Review Standards

- a. The height of the proposed alteration should be compatible with the style and character of the surrounding buildings.  
*Comment: Because the existing church is smaller and has less mass than the adjacent buildings, raising the church by 2'-0" will keep the height and mass compatible with those buildings.*
- b. Proportions of windows and doors should be compatible with the architectural style and character of the surrounding buildings.  
*Comment: The proposed modern windows and doors of the addition will complement the existing building.*
- c. The relationship of the building massing and spaces should be compatible with the adjoining structures.  
*Comment: Massing of the addition appears inconsistent with the neighborhood's architectural style. The committee suggests considering the use of earth tone shades of alternative materials to better harmonize with the existing architecture and neighborhood.*

- d. The design and shape of the roof should be compatible with the architectural style of the surrounding buildings.

***Comment: The flat roof of the elevator tower addition is distinctly different from the building's sloped roof, the bell tower roof, and all rooflines in the neighborhood. The roofline does not align with neighboring structures.***

- e. The Landscape should be compatible with the surrounding area.

***Comment: The area surrounding the existing church is urban and largely paved. The proposal will pave existing grass areas to provide the required walkway which, while a significant change, will be consistent with the area.***

- f. The scale of the structure should be compatible with the architectural style and the character of the surrounding buildings.

***Comment: The scale of the proposed work is comparable with the surrounding area.***

- g. Architectural details including signs, materials, colors, and textures shall be compatible with the building's original architectural style and should enhance the character of the surrounding area.

***Comment: To the extent that the proposal includes materials and colors those items are consistent with the architectural style. New signage and final material and color choices should be evaluated when they become available***