

**Meeting Minutes
State College Borough
Design Review Board
February 4, 2020**

The State College Borough Design Review Board (DRB) met on Tuesday, February 4, 2020 in the State College Municipal Building, 243 S. Allen Street. Chairman Laird Jones called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

Members Present

Laird Jones, Chairman; Michael Sanzotti, Vice-Chairman; Richard Devon; and Eric Boeldt

Members Absent

Veronica Iacobazzo

Others Present

Greg Garthe, Senior Planner – Planning & Community Development; Alan Sam, Arborist; Isabel Storey, Planner; Jeff Spackman, Pennsylvania State University (PSU) OPP; Karl Shellenberger, Buchart Horn; Al Drobka, Architect; Tony Fruchtl, PennTerra Engineering; Mark Saville, HRG Engineering; Parnian Soheili, PSU Journalism student; and Esther Matthews, Administrative Assistant

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Boeldt and seconded by Vice-Chairman Sanzotti to approve the January 7, 2020 minutes. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Chair Report

No report was given.

Public Hour - Hearing of Citizens

No comments or concerns were offered during the public hour.

Signs

Request for Variance - HERE at State College - 131 Heister St; CA Student Living, Owner; CID Zoning District

Mr. Garthe reviewed a variance request for increased sign height. The applicant requested the sign to be 28 feet above the ground due to the design of the grand staircase on the Calder Way side of the building and the distance from grade inhibit installing the sign in a manner which would keep it under the default 25 feet maximum. The request will be presented to the Zoning Hearing Board on February 25th along with the DRB's comments.

DRB Comments included:

- Dr. Devon stated they should stick to code even if they have a different building design and have equal standards for all buildings, otherwise you could begin a precedent wherein others will expect the same. He cited the variance Harper's had applied for and received rather vocal feedback for them to scale back as an example.
- Chairman Jones pointed out there had been other precedents where variance had been granted, but in Harper's case there were other options available for their sign versus the HERE where they are limited. He stated the tradeoff to have the Spanish stairs and courtyard visible was worth it and technically, depending on where it's measured from, the sign would not exceed 25 feet since there is a change in grade.
- Mr. Boeldt commented, based on the scale and location of the building, the sign makes sense due to a lack of other feasible options.
- Ms. Soheili inquired if the sign would block any views or natural light and Mr. Garthe replied no, the sign would lie flat against building.
- Vice-Chairman Sanzotti remarked the sign was small compared to the scale of building.
- Mr. Boeldt motioned to recommend granting the variance and Dr. Devon stated he was opposed.
- Vice-Chairman Sanzotti asked if there would be any additional signage and Mr. Garthe responded there would be one on Heister Street and some internal courtyard signage as well.

Chairman Jones moved to recommend granting the variance, and all were in favor.

Land Development Plans

Final Plan - 706/708 South Atherton Street Apartments (formerly 430 West Irvin Ave); Valient Real Estate Investments LLC, Applicant; CP-3 Zoning District; PennTerra Engineering, Engineer; Albert A. Drobka, Architect

Mr. Drobka's presentation included:

- One major change from the preliminary plan was changing the roof height of each building from being different heights to having them be the same height.
- The property would have a South Atherton Street address instead of a West Irvin Avenue address.
- They chose not to go with additional windows on the sides of the building and instead invested in increasing the load capacity of the roof and added necessary conduits to make the buildings solar ready.

DRB's comments:

- Dr. Devon asked how people would access the buildings from the parking lot and Mr. Drobka pointed out the sidewalks on the external renderings.
- Mr. Boeldt asked if there would be elevators and Mr. Drobka replied no, but there are residential units on the main floor and each unit would have an ADA compliant bathroom.
- Dr. Devon inquired if there would be any planters or green areas. Mr. Fruchtl responded there would be honey locust, viburnum and gingko trees along with the existing wooded areas along the property.
- Mr. Boeldt asked how much of drop there would be from the buildings to the School District parking lot. Mr. Fruchtl answered approximately four to five feet.
- Mr. Boeldt questioned if there would be enough distance between the building and the driveway to also utilize the view of the high school. Mr. Drobka said yes.
- Chairman Jones cautioned against putting gingko trees with berries near sidewalks because the berries fall, making a smelly and slick mess.
- Mr. Sam asked if an area noted on the plans would handle all the stormwater or if they were looking into dealing with it off sight. Mr. Fruchtl replied there will be underground tanks.
- Vice-Chairman Sanzotti asked what the style of the building was, and Mr. Drobka responded it matches the Cliffside Apartments, but there is no real style to it.
- Vice-Chairman Sanzotti inquired if they would be doing anything innovative with the buildings and Mr. Drobka answered they would be using many recycled materials.

Final Plan - West Campus Substation; The Pennsylvania State University, Applicant; UPD Zoning District; Buchart Horn, Engineer; Michael J. Burns, Architect

Mr. Shellenberger's presentation included:

- One major change made since the preliminary plan review was the addition of the landscaping plan, which included some small trees and shrubs along the wall between the substation and Walker Building.
- The proposed substation exterior would be stone which would match the existing building exteriors.
- The updated plan also included exterior renderings.

DRB's Comments included:

- Mr. Boeldt asked if they would be using stone on the outside and Mr. Shellenberger replied yes, to match what exists there.
- Chairman Jones noted from the preliminary plan they plan to demolish the retaining wall and asked if they planned to salvage any of the stone. Mr. Shellenberger said yes, depending on the condition of the stone.

Preliminary Plan - PSU West 2 Building; The Pennsylvania State University, Applicant; UPD Zoning District; HRG, Engineer; Payette, Architect

Mr. Saville's presentation included:

- As a part of the West Deck Parking Structure, the traffic impact study & stormwater calculations had been completed and incorporated into this project as well.
- The plan proposed demolition of several concrete walkways, retaining walls, and small landscaping areas along with the construction of a 98,000 ft² academic building.
- The proposed academic building would house the College of Engineering, including teaching space, as part of PSU's larger master plan to establish a west campus precinct and bring together multiple College of Engineering disciplines including: the School of Engineering Design, Technology, and Professional Programs (SEPTAPP); the Learning Factory; and the Factory for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) lab.
- A tunnel system had been installed when the area was first developed to house utilities to make maintenance, access and upgrade easier as well as allow for more freedom with landscaping.
- The proposal included logistic plans to deal with pedestrian and bicycle traffic during and after construction to maintain connectivity with the Westgate (formerly IST) building and the rest of campus.
- Parking for West Campus would be handled entirely by the new West Campus Parking Structure as per the traffic impact study.
- As part of part of the stormwater management and other improvements, there would be a future building – West 1 Building – located adjacent to this site.
- One goal of the project is to modernize and consolidate SEDTAPP, the FAME Lab, and Learning Factory.
- They would be utilizing a phase process to omit the need for "swing space," that would provide a more economical means of consolidating and migrating the College of Engineering by creating a new space first to move everything into, then start renovations and begin work on the Hammond Building.
- The majority of the mechanical equipment was located in the basement, connecting to the tunnel utility system.

- The site plan included two different pull off spots, one for buses to use and another for people to turn around, which would likely be used for deliveries, as well as taxi/Uber/Lyft drop off and pick-up.

DRB comments included:

- Dr. Devon noted the SEDTAPP program was currently housed in the Hammond building and asked what was being done with it in the next few years. Mr. Saville responded the master plan was to have this new space created in order to transfer everything out of Hammond so it could be manipulated and renovated without disrupting classes, research and other work.
- Dr. Devon queried if there were plans to relocate other engineering units currently scattered around campus. Mr. Saville answered some but not all units.
- Mr. Boeldt asked if there would be service parking. Mr. Saville said yes, most would be focused around the chiller plant and electrical substation but also some parking will be internal in the west parking deck as well as some parking within a consolidated service yard area as a part of the future West 1 building.
- Mr. Sam questioned where the Gill Street bike path would be located and how it would connect with the West Campus quad. Mr. Saville responded that he is not sure of the final configuration, but the goal was to connect the bike paths on the borough side with those on campus. He added that another goal was to get pedestrian traffic to use the Westgate building to cross Atherton Street as much as possible.
- Dr. Devon inquired about seating areas outside. Mr. Saville replied yes, they were in the process of designing so it would tie all of west campus together with a common quad.
- Mr. Boeldt suggested adding an area for food trucks. Mr. Saville responded there would be a dedicated food service space in the West 1 Building in the outdoor plaza space.
- Dr. Devon asked if there would be exhibition and performance space. Mr. Saville said yes.
- Mr. Boeldt questioned if there would be access for trucks to deliver chairs and/or tables to the outdoor quad space. Mr. Saville answered yes, the bike path would be wide enough for vehicles.
- Mr. Boeldt suggested installing conduits for solar. Mr. Saville noted they were required to design for the future addition of solar panels by increasing the load capacity of new building roofs.
- Vice-Chairman Sanzotti asked what was shown on the roof and if it would be a design element. Mr. Saville responded the roof would have sky lights, allowing for more natural light to get into the building.
- Mr. Boeldt inquired if they were designing a building worthy of the next century. Mr. Saville replied yes, they were creating what was necessary to enable the buildings to stay up-to-date as new and different technological solutions arise,

citing as an example space being allocated in the parking garage for a solar panel feed in the future.

- Mr. Sam asked if there would be something to keep birds from flying into the windows on the building. Mr. Saville said yes, he believes they would be choosing a tint which would mitigate the occurrence.
- In terms of lighting this building at night, Mr. Sam asked if there were any concerns about adding to the light pollution. Mr. Saville responded it was something typically included in their lighting plan.
- Dr. Devon inquired about information technology and connectivity. Mr. Saville replied the technology interconnectivity was very integrated and he also noted BIM (building information management) technology has come long way, stating the program Maximo is being used to understand building usage to a new level of detail.

2019 Design Award Nominations

Holtzman and Focus on Appearance Awards

Potential Nominations:

- ❖ 915 Robin Road
- ❖ The State College Area School District
- ❖ The Graduate Hotel

DRB's comments:

- The general consensus was the DRB liked the mural on the side of The Graduate, which added visual interest to what was otherwise a blank wall, but did not wish to nominate the actual hotel.
- Vice-Chairman Sanzotti said The Graduate was a “boutiquey” hotel and the mural represents the style they are going for.
- Chairman Jones commented the 915 Robin Road project was well done and an improvement to the neighborhood.
- Mr. Boeldt said he did not necessarily want to give public institutions the award since they have several resources at their disposal, and he suggested giving preference to residents, which was met with agreement from Chairman Jones.
- Chairman Jones commented he had mixed feelings about having the school district as a nominee, noting there were positives to the design as well as negatives.

All members agreed to nominate 915 Robin Road for the Holtzman Award and continue to discuss potential nominations for the Focus on Appearance Award.

2020 Work Program

Design Review Board Mission Statement

The Board reviewed the current mission and proposed the following changes to staff:

- Mr. Sam suggested changing the fourth bullet to incorporate something about sustainability, such as replacing “enhance community” with “enhance the urban landscape.”
- The DRB unanimously agreed on the removal of the vague bullet about “other plans or projects.”

Mr. Garthe made note of the changes and stated that he will include a revised mission in the next meeting agenda.

Official Reports and Correspondence

Borough Council

No report given.

Planning Commission

No report given.

Adjournment

Chairman Jones adjourned the meeting at 3:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Esther Matthews, Administrative Assistant