

**Methuen Historic District Commission**  
**June 26, 2008 at 7:00 P.M.**  
Great Hall – Searles Building  
41 Pleasant Street  
Methuen, MA 01844

**MEETING MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order of Regular Meeting**

Vice Chair Welch called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

**2. Roll Call**

Raymond Dufresne, Chair	Absent
Martha Welch, Vice Chair	Present
Joseph Bella	Present
Peter Cameron	Present
Robert Fabino	Present
Christine Metzemaekers	Present
Katherine Robinson, Alternate	Present
David Sigillo, Alternate	Absent

**Others in Attendance**

Lynn Smiledge, Historic Planner, City of Methuen  
J.D. Shi, Methuen  
Joe Fisichelli, Methuen  
Bill McQuade  
David Spada  
Paul Selnau

**3. Acceptance of March 27, 2008 and May 22, 2008 Minutes**

MOTIONS BY Commissioner Fabino to accept the minutes of the March 27, 2008 and May 22, 2008 meetings. Both motions seconded by Commissioner Bella.

UNANIMOUS VOTE for each.

**4. New Business**

**Public Hearing: Bill McQuade**

51 Osgood Street: installation of three telecommunications antennae

Mr. McQuade described the proposed installation which includes 1) two antennae mounted flush on the stairwell tower at 69 feet from grade and painted to match the brick and 2) a single

antennae enclosed in a faux brick chimney constructed of radio frequency transparent material. There were no comments on the application during the public hearing session.

Commissioner Robinson stated her opinion that the faux chimney addition was a pseudohistoric artifact and suggested instead that the chimney box be painted black, charcoal gray, or dark green to look like a piece of mechanical equipment and blend with the roof. Mr. McQuade agreed with the suggestion.

MOTION by Commissioner Robinson to approve the application with the following condition:

- The antennae enclosure on the roof will be painted charcoal gray or a dark color to resemble mechanical equipment and blend with the roof.

Second by Commissioner Fabino.

UNANIMOUS VOTE.

**Public Hearing: J.D. Shi**

270 Lawrence Street: installation of two awnings

Mr. Shi described the proposed awnings and circulated a fabric sample. They will be fabricated with Sunbrella material in dark green with gold appliqué letters. The applicant confirmed that the awnings would not be retractable. There were no comments on the application during the public hearing session.

Commissioners discussed the overall use of color on the building façade and suggested some color alternatives for the awnings. Mr. Shi agreed with the scheme as finally proposed.

MOTION by Commissioner Fabino to approve the application with the following conditions:

- The awning material will be Sunbrella fabric in dark green with white lettering; there will be no lettering on the upper story awning
- The entrance doors will be painted white to match the window trim
- A small, non-fluorescent light fixture will be installed above the doors

**Public Hearing: Paul Selnau and David Spada**

254 Broadway: plans for commercial building

Mr. Selnau, project architect, described the proposed plan as essentially identical to the one approved in 2004 in basic form and mass, with minor footprint changes dictated by the proposed tenant type. The plan features clapboard-style HardiPlank siding and a stone base in a gray-brown color. Roofing materials include asphalt shingles in a charcoal with green color and standing seam green metal. The white trim and sign band are solid vinyl. Windows are fiberglass; the white columns are fiberglass reinforced concrete. Mr. Selnau circulated samples of the siding, metal roof material, asphalt shingle and stone block.

Mr. Selnau and Mr. Spada provided additional detail in response to questions from commissioners. The solid vinyl material substituting for wood is Azec. Windows are Pella fiberglass with divided lights in the upper sash and single lights in the lower sash. The building footprint has decreased in size from 22,500 SF (original proposal) to 19,700 SF; Mr. Spada stated that his was driven in part by assumptions about the City's Master Plan criteria. The flexible building design allows for a maximum of five first-floor and three second-floor tenants;

it will be marketed for medical offices, banks and retail. The building is sited at the street with parking in the rear.

Mr. Spada reported on several changes to the plan requested by the Community Development Board at its last meeting.

- The dumpster will be enclosed and moved to a location not visible from the street
- The sidewalk and landscape strip have been reversed; the sidewalk is now on the street side and the landscaping on the building side
- The number of parking lot poles and lights has been decreased; a photometric study will be performed
- Guardrails will be added to the perimeter of the parking area; wood rail and posts is the preferred material

Mr. Spada will return to the Historic District Commission with landscape and lighting plans for the commercial building and a signage plan that includes both the commercial and assisted living buildings. He noted that he plans to implement consistent lighting across the site.

Vice Chairperson Welch opened the public hearing portion of the meeting. Joe Fisichelli, an abutter to the property, spoke in favor of the project and described it as a large improvement for the town. No one spoke in opposition to the project.

Discussion ensued between Mr. Selnau, Mr. Spada and commissioners on the changes to the Gleason Street and Broadway elevations relative to the original plans. These include modified corners and entrances, the replacement of windows on the first story with flat expanses of siding, and removal of the bay. Mr. Spada confirmed that the entrance at Gleason and Broadway is oriented at a 45-degree angle and features aluminum doors with sidelights. Commissioners concurred that the changes to the current building plan impart a dressed-down, utilitarian appearance compared to the original plan. Mr. Spada agreed to add three windows on the Broadway elevation under the projecting roof.

Mr. Spada agreed with Commissioner Robinson's suggestion to use standing seam metal on the turret roof instead of asphalt shingles. He confirmed that architectural asphalt shingle was intended for the balance of the roof. Commissioner Robinson noted that the standing seam projecting roof over the first story was shallower than that on the original plan, exposing the unattractive transoms over the windows. Mr. Spada and Mr. Selnau agreed to explore alternatives to remedy the situation, including increasing the height of the windows and reducing the depth of the transoms, and/or increasing the pitch of the projecting roof. A window will be added under the left tower between the downspouts.

The applicant was asked to return to the Historic District Commission with revised drawings and a sample fiberglass window. He confirmed that all the windows in the building would be made of prefinished, commercial grade fiberglass material that resembles wood. The Commission expressed its strong preference for window muntins applied to the window exterior versus between-pane or interior muntins. The color and texture of the HardiPlank siding was discussed. Mr. Spada and Mr. Selnau agreed to investigate alternatives to the white vinyl fence around the roof mechanicals; these will include a painted aluminum fence.

Chairman Ray Dufresne's comments on the building plan, relayed to the Commission by email, were read as follows:

I believe the massing of the building and the placement on the site are consistent with our goals for new buildings in the district. The design elements are also consistent with other buildings in the area and I believe the building will fit in well to the surroundings.

With regard to materials, I am concerned with some of the substitutions from the previous submittal, specifically the windows and the vinyl trim. I am concerned about the durability of the windows selected for a commercial property. The Commission's view has to balance the short term costs with the long term view. If the windows selected will not stand up over time, the property will begin to detract from and not enhance the appearance of the district. I know that the developer is bringing samples of the materials to be used. I defer to the Commissioners present to determine the viability of the proposed selections.

The one design element that I feel detracts from the general appearance of the building is the faux hip roof at the southwest corner. It appears to suggest an entrance that is not there. The columns are nearly flush to the building. Most striking is the conflict with what appears to be a drive up window. I think that corner would look better without the columns and hip roof.

The Commission and applicant agreed to continue consideration of the application until the next scheduled meeting on August 28, 2008, or until an earlier special meeting can be scheduled. Ms Smiledge will attempt to reschedule the regular meeting for Tuesday, August 19 at 7:00 pm. Issues to be addressed by Mr. Spada before the next meeting include the turret and bay windows; additional windows on the first story; the projecting roof slope and associated window height and transom concerns; and the fence surrounding the mechanicals. The applicant will submit a separate application for signage to be considered at the August meeting.

Mr. Spada noted that although his goal is to initiate the project in the fall, it would likely be postponed until spring 2009 as he markets for tenants.

## **5. Other Business**

**Violations:** Ms. Smiledge reported on letters sent to Vintage Rose and Taekwondo America. The Commission will grant a 30-day extension to Ms. Chang of Taekwondo America for her temporary banner; Ms. Smiledge will contact her about the lease end date and invite her to attend the next meeting. She provided an update on the neon sign issue at Greener Cleaners and agreed to investigate the roof banner at Wise Guy's on Hampshire Street.

MOTION BY Commissioner Metzemaekers to adjourn the meeting. Second by Commissioner Robinson.

**UNANIMOUS VOTE.**

Meeting Adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynn Smiledge