

Methuen Historic District Commission
August 19, 2008 at 7:00 P.M.
Great Hall – Searles Building
41 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844

Draft MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order of Regular Meeting

Chairman Dufresne called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

2. Roll Call

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

Others in Attendance

Lynn Smiledge, Historic Planner, City of Methuen
Tom Harkins, Northroad Wood Signs
Tom Head, Barlo Signs
Terry Scanlon, 96 Pleasant St., Methuen
Emily & Ed Sewasky, 90 Davis Rd., Methuen
David Spada
Paul Selnau

3. Acceptance of June 26, 2008 Minutes

MOTION BY Commissioner Metzemaekers to accept the minutes of the June 26, 2008 meeting.
Motion seconded by Commissioner Welch.

UNANIMOUS VOTE.

4. New Business

Public Hearing: Deborah Ingalls/Tenney School PTO
75 Pleasant Street: installation of sign

At the outset Mr. Dufresne informed the applicant that it was incumbent upon her to obtain permission from the property owner to install the proposed sign. Ms. Ingalls stated that she had gained support from the DPW department, the school superintendent, and others and could supply documentation.

Ms. Ingalls described the sign's communications objectives and stated that its design and placement were chosen to fit in with the area and be respectful of neighboring residents and the historic Tenney stone wall. Mr. Head, of Barlo Signs, provided the following sign particulars: 4' x 8', 32 square feet, painted steel frame, aluminum message board with plexi cover, and interchangeable vinyl letters. A site plan sketch was circulated; it shows possible locations 40' and 56' from the stone wall. The sign is doubled-sided; in its proposed location, the message boards would face both Pleasant Street and cars exiting the school grounds. Ms. Ingalls stated that landscaping around the base of the sign would be installed and maintained by a PTO volunteer.

Commissioner Welch expressed her belief that the Tenney School principal had not approved the sign. Ms. Ingalls volunteered to obtain written approvals from the principal and two other Tenney School administrators. She added that the \$6,000 sign was being totally underwritten by the school PTO; all four grammar schools in Methuen are in the process of obtaining similar PTO-funded signs. She reiterated the importance of the signs in communicating with parents and involving them in their children's education.

Commissioner Robinson asked about the proposed blue color of the sign frame and suggested that a shade that matched the trim on the school building would be preferable. She also proposed a more modern sans serif font that complimented the stainless steel lettering on the building. The applicant agreed to supply an accurate color sample and match the lettering with the building font.

The Chair solicited public comment. No one spoke in favor of the sign. Mr. Edward Sewasky of 9 Davis Road spoke against the sign, questioning its validity as a means of informing parents and expressing concern that it would be considered an eyesore by the neighborhood. Mr. Terry Scanlon of 96 Pleasant Street opposed the sign's proposed location at the school entrance, but not the sign itself. He stated that the sign would present an additional safety hazard at an intersection that is already dangerous.

Commissioner Metzemaekers credited the PTO for its fundraising success and expressed understanding of the difficulty schools have communicating with parents, but stated that the current proposed location was problematic. Mr. Fisichelli requested additional information in the form of written approval from the school principal and paint samples; he would prefer a design better suited to the historic district. Discussion ensued between commissioners, Ms. Ingalls and Mr. Head about the sign materials, location alternatives, public safety concerns, and vehicles for school communications.

MOTION by Commissioner Welch to table the application until the next Historic District Commission meeting and to ask the applicant to supply the following:

- Lettering samples and color chips for primary and secondary choices
- Site plan to scale; site photographs
- Written approval from the school superintendent and Tenney School principal
- Police approval of sign size and location

Second by Commissioner Metzemaekers.

UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Ms. Smiledge will schedule a site visit to the school for commissioners.

Public Hearing Continuation: Paul Selnau and David Spada
254 Broadway: plans for commercial building

Mr. Fisichelli asked to be recused from discussion of the application.

Mr. Selnau, project architect, compared revised building renderings with the original plans, pointing out the changes that had been made to comply with the commission's requests. Windows and a bay were added, the metal roof was restored, the canopy was made deeper, and muntins were restored to the second story windows. He supplied a sample Pella fiberglass window in white with between-the-glass muntins and sample colors for the HardiPlank siding, metal roof and stone base. Mr. Spada confirmed that painted aluminum fencing would be used to screen the roof mechanicals. The applicants agreed to add interest to the projecting bay by replacing the HardiPlank siding with panels.

There was no public comment for or against the application.

MOTION by Commissioner Welch to approve the application as submitted. Second by Commissioner Bella.

UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Tom Hawkins of Northroad Wood Signs presented a preliminary sign plan that includes building and tenant identification. Sketches were provided for frieze building /tenant signs and a freestanding directory sign. The proposed signs will be fabricated of aluminum-clad MDO, a durable resin-based material. The color scheme is black, dark green, and gold or off-white with dimensional gilded letters.

Commissioner Robinson suggested that the directory sign was too wide for its proposed location. Mr. Spada agreed to eliminate the side posts or use a single post. Mr. Hawkins will supply material and color samples when the sign application is formally reviewed at the next Historic District Commission meeting.

5. Other Business

Violations: Ms. Smiledge will solicit applications for Certificates of Non-applicability from the First Church Congregational and 36 Park Street.

Other Business: Ms. Smiledge will contact the Laborer's Union and the VFW about the status of the railroad depot project. She will send a letter of thanks to Wendy Frontiero and Caroline Rufo on behalf of the commission for the wonderful walking tour brochure.

Commissioner Robinson expressed her concern about the demolition of the fire-damaged St. Anne's home on Broadway, which serves as a reminder that the Commission must work to reinstate the demolition delay ordinance. Ms. Smiledge will attempt to schedule a meeting between the Mayor and Chairman Ray Dufresne to discuss to issue.

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

UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn Smiledge