



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

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January 25, 2024

Design Review Committee

Meeting Minutes

Approved March 7, 2024 as Amended

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, signed into law on March 29, 2023, this meeting was conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance by members of the public was permitted but it was open for public comment.

This meeting can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1D1-nam-Ggs&list=PL2mWMhvXDP2jEcEYII3OQcq1H4fkZ1CI8&index=36>

Members Present: Amy Poretsky, Chair; Lisa Maselli, David Veron.

Others Present: Laurie Connors, Planning Director; Robert Frederico, Building Inspector and Zoning Enforcement Officer; Marc Theiss, Janet Slemenda, Amy Dunlap, Nicole Capistran, Jim Jackson, Ray Dunetz, Tim Alix, Todd Ashford, Kaylee Olson, David Parenti, Fire Chief; ~~John Rapa~~.

The meeting was called to order at 8:30am.

Review of Fire Station Design

Amy Dunlap, HKT Architects, described the design process approach taken in developing options for a new fire station. Those options were presented to the Fire Department and the Fire Station Building Committee and ultimately a design was approved by the Fire Station Building Committee and HKT was given the green light to move forward.

Site design was discussed:

- Twenty-three staff parking spaces will be on the east side of the apparatus bay, thirty guest parking spaces will be on the west side, with access onto West Main Street.
- A retaining wall will wrap around the back of the site. Conversations are ongoing regarding design.
- There will be retaining walls on the East and West sides of the site.
- Granite curbing is proposed for the parking and driveway areas. Sidewalks and the apparatus apron will be concrete.
- Storm water retention areas were proposed.
- The locations of the transformer, generator and dumpster locations were shared; these will be relocated due to requests for driveway access between the parking areas for fire personnel only.
- Landscaping has been designed to promote safety and line of sight. Proposed plantings including low growth shrubs, ornamental grasses, perennials will be further reviewed.
- Lighting will be coordinated with the retaining wall design.
- An LED sign/message board (to announce Town events, emergencies) was proposed for the front.
- The location of six apparatus bay doors was shared, with exits planned from both sides.

- Design of the arches, use of banding, and window design was shown.
- A clock is proposed to be placed on the training and hose tower.
- A pitched roof is proposed for the administrative wing, which could be used for solar panels. A flat roof with pitched roof monitors was proposed for the apparatus bays.
- Images of neighboring sites and businesses were shared for context, and a graphic was shown indicating the massing of the building relative to abutting buildings.
- Elevations were shared.

Ms. Dunlap said the next step is to meet with the Building Committee to approve the schematic design. The design would then be sent to a cost estimator, with the goal of receiving an estimate in late February.

Ms. Poretsky asked if Ms. Connors would like to speak to anything in her review letter.

Ms. Connors asked if they'd considered terracing the retaining wall to break up the massing. Ms. Dunlap said the height might need to increase since the grade is steeper as they go back into the hill, another option would be to slope the wall. Ms. Connors requested that the Planning Board submittal include the location of the solar panels and the size of the installation, that it be put in the context of the expected use of electricity and if whether there would be a net gain or a deficit in between the expected use versus the power that will be generated, and if that would be on an annual basis.

Ms. Poretsky started with landscaping questions and comments.

She asked about the approximate heights at each end of the south wall? It was stated that the South East side would be approximately 12 feet high and the South West feet is 30 feet high. She would like to see the height of the 30 foot wall reduced and a sloped/graded landscape hill as much as possible. She asked if there is going to be a fence on the wall? She would like to see pictures of the wall and fencing and requested the wall and fence materials for the next meeting.

Ms. Poretsky asked about the retention basin that was near the building. Discussion followed regarding plans for the stormwater treatment area. Ms. Capistran said the schematic shows some surface treatment areas and that they are also looking into below grade systems.

Ms. Poretsky mentioned that the grading plan shows the plantings in the swale and drainage area. Depending on the plantings they could block the drainage swales. Ms. Dunlap mentioned they are still working on the landscaping plan. Ms. Poretsky commented the snow storage area in the back of the site looks too small.

Mr. Veron asked about snow storage and he stated the site is tight for snow storage. Ms. Dunlap stated snow removal areas are being reviewed. Mr. Veron suggested they may need a heated apron or working with the DPW for snow removal. Chief Parenti said plans include a heated apron in both front and back. Mr. Veron stated piling snow in front of the site not an option as that would block line of site. He also asked if the parking lot lights were on the retaining walls? Ms. Dunlap stated they were but they are still looking at different options. Mr. Veron asked about the snow sliding off the roof and if there would be protection over the front door for snow and rain. He requested a plant listing for the next meeting.

Ms. Maselli asked if an abutter notice had gone out. Chief Parenti stated that they are working on one now.

Ms. Maselli noted that the site abuts the Hillside Grill; since they'd had to carve out part of the hill during construction, she expressed concern about possible blasting at this site. Chief Parenti said no blasting permits were pulled at the time of Hillside Grill's construction; if blasting needed to be done now, it would be done according to the laws of the Commonwealth. Mr. Veron asked if there was a way to re-engineer this without a wall. Ms. Capistran said parking for program needs is pushing the site back into the hillside.

Ms. Poretsky asked about the size of the building. The plans state 22,000 sf but her calculations are closer to 30,000 sf. Ms. Dunlap said the designs need to be updated and the building is around 30,000 sf. Ms. Poretsky asked that for the next meeting could we get a plan that shows the dimensions of the building? – Width, Depth and Height.

Ms. Poretsky asked if, because of the wall on all three sides, the plan leaves less room for expansion. Ms. Dunlap said this design includes projected staffing and equipment and operations looking 40 years out. Ms. Poretsky asked why the footprint had changed since 2019. She noted there was an additional 5,000 sf feet and additional parking which pushed the building and parking back onto the site possibly causing the need for the wall. Chief Parenti said that 2019 was just a conceptual design, no site survey had been done.

Ms. Poretsky next suggested changing the design and putting the training room under the administrative side of the building, which she thought would provide room for snow storage. If the training room was downstairs they would also be able to pull the parking closer to the building which could possibly bring down the size of the wall. Chief Parenti said that would not benefit them or the community. Ms. Poretsky said that at over \$600/sf, plans should be based on fire station needs only. If it wasn't used for the community maybe the training room could be smaller and less parking spaces required. Chief Parenti did not want to reduce the parking. Mr. Frederico said a room such as this, which could be used for emergency services, should be at grade level. Water table in the area was discussed as a concern for putting the room below grade.

Ms. Poretsky suggested displaying the Northborough fire department emblem on the hose tower instead of a clock.

Ms. Poretsky asked about the material to be used around the apparatus bay doors; she preferred brick. Ms. Dunlap said that is being discussed, it will most likely be a panel product. Ms. Poretsky preferred a design with six arches that she felt was more classic than the two proposed. She shared images of other fire stations, including Natick's. She asked if a design could be shared at the next meeting showing six arches.

Ms. Poretsky asked if they would consider Kal-Wal vs. Roof monitors; she showed a picture of Roche Bros in Westborough, they use a form of Kal-Wal over the vegetable section of the store. Ms. Poretsky thought it would be less chance for leaks and lower maintenance.

Ms. Poretsky asked what materials would be used for banding and for the bottom of the building. The architects noted that materials are still be discussed.

Ms. Dunlap asked for clarification regarding the comment made that the window patterns in their design are industrial or modern. Ms. Maselli said the windows in the front have an almost art deco look. The schematic being shown doesn't provide any dimension or depth; she thought the design was bland. Ms. Dunlap said these are conceptual schematic elevations and not representative of final materials, they will look at the color options and materiality to see if that helps convey the ideas better.

Ms. Maselli requested elevations as seen from the street. She requested to see red brick specified on the plan, and she thought red doors were a classic look. She also wanted to see arches in doors and windows, a cornice or a higher parapet so that the windows on the roof couldn't be seen, and no metal on the front of the building.

Ms. Maselli asked how deep the recess at the front door was. Mr. Theiss believed it was about 2' deep. Ms. Maselli suggested at least 4' to give people more protection from the elements.

Ms. Maselli hoped to have a three-dimensional image of the building for the next meeting.

Mr. Frederico stated that due to the new energy code, electric charging stations will have to be shown on the plan and a section of the roof will have to be designated as solar ready.

There were no questions from the public. There were no further questions or comments from staff or committee members. Ms. Poretsky noted receipt of two letters from the public.

Regarding the time needed to incorporate the changes discussed, Ms. Slemenda asked for time to discuss with the team, as they take direction from the Building Committee, they will need to meet with them first.

Review of Minutes—tabled to the next meeting.

Ms. Maselli made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Veron seconded the motion. Roll call followed, all were in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 10:07am.

Respectfully Submitted by
Michelle Cilley, Board Secretary