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By KWilber/Assistant Town Clerk at 1:37 pm, May 11, 2024

# TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

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**March 7, 2024**

**Design Review Committee**

**Zoom Meeting Minutes**

**Approved May 9, 2024**

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.

**Members Present:** Amy Poretsky, Chair; Lisa Maselli, Mark McMenemy

**Members Absent:** David Veron

**Others Present:** Laurie Connors, Planning Director

The meeting was called to order at 8:31am. This meeting can be viewed at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wa2XR64\\_j\\_M&list=PLk479TOxptkXUZUv67gu5ypvXtg4HaU-J&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wa2XR64_j_M&list=PLk479TOxptkXUZUv67gu5ypvXtg4HaU-J&index=2)

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes from 10.12.23, 10.19.23, 11.30.23, 12.14.23, 1.11.24, 1.25.24**

- October 12, 2023: Ms. Maselli made a motion to approve as amended, Ms. Poretsky seconded, Mr. McMenemy abstained; minutes approved;
- October 19, 2023: Ms. Maselli made a motion to approve as amended, Ms. Poretsky seconded, Mr. McMenemy abstained; minutes approved;
- November 30, 2023: Ms. Maselli made a motion to approve as amended, Ms. Poretsky seconded, Mr. McMenemy abstained; minutes approved;
- December 14, 2023: Ms. Maselli made a motion to approve as amended, Ms. Poretsky seconded, Mr. McMenemy abstained; minutes approved;
- January 11, 2024: tabled to next DRC meeting;
- January 25, 2024: Ms. Maselli made a motion to approve as amended, Ms. Poretsky seconded, Mr. McMenemy abstained; minutes approved.

## **Design Review Rubric Review**

Mr. McMenemy presented a checklist he'd created to help the committee evaluate projects, using the recommendations in the design guidelines. Ms. Connors noted that while the design guidelines are voluntary, there are various site design standards in specific districts that are mandatory and should be included; there should be distinctions between the two in the checklist, perhaps using different text color for each, and distinctions between commercial projects and multifamily projects. Ms. Connors added that another important distinction to note was that certain verbiage applies in certain zoning districts but not in others.

Ms. Poretsky suggested a separate checklist for commercial projects and for multifamily projects.

Wordsmithing followed regarding text in the categories of **Building Placement and Orientation, Setbacks and Buffer Areas, Open Space, with Ms. Poretsky made changes to the working document.** Mr. McMenemy suggested the permanent document could include hyperlinks to pertinent bylaws for reference.

The use of rain gardens in open space areas was discussed. Ms. Connors said if they will be required on private property, such as in the case of the common driveway on Ridge Road, it must be maintained by the people who live/work there and not the Department of Public Works. It was suggested that Stormwater Management be a separate category.

**Pedestrian Accommodations** was next discussed. Ms. Maselli asked about linkage between adjacent commercial properties. Ms. Connors said the zoning bylaws allow for property owners to make written agreements to share parking, she thought that should be included. Mr. McMenemy noted that it could be included in the **Parking** section.

### **Design Review Guideline Discussion, Sign Bylaw and Sign Guideline Discussion**

Ms. Poretsky said she was considering presenting one part of the sign bylaw at Town Meeting in April and the other part, with changes relative to signage in the downtown, at the Fall Town Meeting, to make it more palatable for voters.

Mr. McMenemy said he could prepare a checklist based on the bylaws. Ms. Connors said she could go over what he'd prepared for the design guidelines checklist to simplify some of the language.

Discussion about Design Review, the sign bylaw and the sign guidelines will continue at the next meeting, which was proposed for March 28<sup>th</sup>.

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

Ms. Maselli added that she was concerned about the way the sidewalk was presented for the fire station and asked Ms. Connors who she could speak to about that, she was concerned about ADA compliancy. Ms. Connors said she could send her an email which she would forward to the Applicant.

Mr. McMenemy asked if the fire station project was exempt from any bylaws, particularly any regarding grading. Ms. Connors said the needs of the specific project need to be balanced with the design guidelines; the fire station needs to be on a flat site given the length of the trucks. Mr. McMenemy said in this case, there is a retaining wall, 30' of land, and another retaining wall. Ms. Connors said there are also significant retaining walls at Northborough Crossing and other areas of town. Mr. McMenemy said none of those are double retaining walls, which look unnatural. Ms. Connors said she indicated in her review letter to the DRC [dated February 26, 2024] that the Applicant was looking for guidance from the DRC about the various retaining wall options. Mr. McMenemy said they'd documented that, but the FSBC had voted the day before. Ms. Maselli said they'd heard that the decision for the wall was going to be made by the FSBC even though the project was going through the Design Review process, the DRC wasn't given the opportunity to say much, which she said was the same when she'd brought up her question about the sidewalk. Ms. Poretsky agreed and said that was why she hadn't brought it up, to avoid wasting time.

Mr. McMenemy said he didn't think they needed to waste their time trying to come up with solutions to non-conformities of the bylaws if they're exempt from the bylaws.

Ms. Maselli made a motion to amend their previous adjournment time to 10:04am. Mr. McMenemy seconded the motion. Roll call vote followed, all were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by  
Michelle Cilley, Board Secretary