

**Chelsea, Vermont, Development Review Board**  
**Draft Meeting Minutes June 21, 2017**

**Members Present:** Blaine Conner (Chair), Anne Carroll (Vice Chair), Arthur Goodrich, Richard Allen, Laurence Allen, Debra Melvin

**Others Present:** Bill Smith (applicant), Maggi Kerrin, Susan Elder, Timothy McCormick (AO and Clerk)

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**The Public Hearing on an application by New Christian Fellowship (#ZP17-10)** for the following changes to the former Country Store building: a). a roof over the previously-approved handicap ramp landing, b). a new sign to replace the existing Country Store sign, c). changes to the electric mast and meters on the building exterior, and d). supports and railings for the front porch of the southern building.

The hearing was opened at 6:30pm. No conflicts of interest or ex officio conversations were disclosed. Maggi Kerrin, and Susan Elder (arrived at 6:55pm) were present as members of the Public. There were no other interested parties present, and the applicant was sworn in.

Blaine began the hearing by asking Bill Smith to explain the project. Bill said that he was in the process of buying the Country Store. His church, The New Christian Fellowship, is currently renting the building for church functions. Bill explained that it was necessary to replace the existing Country Store sign because people entered the church not knowing whether the building was a church or a store. Currently, there are temporary church signs in the front windows of the building. The application also included a request for a roof over the existing handicap access landing. The main concern is for safety and liability. Bill stated that he is also plans to construct supports and a railing for the southern building. He mentioned that the building's roof is weakening in this area. The application also listed a request for approval of changes to the electric service from 3 phase to one phase, which will change the mast and add meters to the exterior.

**Sign(s):** Anne Asked about the font of the sign. Bill provided a copy of a sign that he prepared for the Hearing. He explained that the sign will fit into the existing frame of the Country Store sign, and that his intention is to preserve the historic character of the sign and the building. Blaine asked about the color and material of the sign and Bill said that it will be green lettering with a white back ground, and will be made of wood or metal. Arthur asked about an additional sign that was proposed in the application photo for the southern building. Bill said that the sign on that building will look much like the sign that currently exists. He said there will be a small solar-powered light over the southern building sign and the dimensions of the sign will be 36" x 24".

Anne asked if the sign could be made more "antique-looking". Bill mentioned that he wants to preserve the historic character of the sign and the building, but at the same time, if he is going to

spend \$250,000 for a building, he would like the sign to indicate that the building is a church and not a store. Bill compared the situation to Welsh's Hardware store in a historic neighborhood. The lighting for the sign was discussed, and Bill said that he will have small, solar-powered lighting but does not intend to have electrically-powered signs illuminated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He mentioned that the church is available "24/7".

**Handicap Ramp Roof:** A handicap ramp was previously approved for access to the building (application ZP16-01). Bill stated that when the ramp was designed, consideration was not given to winter conditions and the potential liability incurred due to fallen snow from the existing roof. Therefore, he would like to construct a roof over the new handicap ramp landing in front of the newly-installed door. The Board members reviewed the drawing attached to the application, and Bill indicated that any new construction would match the existing character of the rest of the Country Store building.

**Supports and Railings for the Southern Building, and Use of the Southern Building:** The Board asked Bill if he had a drawing of the supports and railings proposed for the Southern Building. The application materials included a photograph depicting one support for the Southern Building porch. Bill stated that there would also be a railing constructed of materials similar to those used for the handicap ramp.

Arthur questioned the Use of the Southern Building, and it was determined that the Change in Use permitted for the initial Country Store application (ZP16-01) did not include the Southern Building. Bill asked what he had to do next, and he was told that he had to file another application to Development Review Board (DRB) for a Change in Use. Bill indicated that he would file another application. Bill was asked if his applications for State permits included the Southern building. He said that the State review included the Southern Building.

**Further Discussion: Historic Character and Use of the Building(s):** Blaine introduced photos for the record to illustrate the historic prominence of the subject buildings. The Board reviewed the photos and discussed the history of the building(s). Bill mentioned that the Country Store sign was put up by the Farnhams, years ago. He also mentioned that the Vermont Fire and Safety Department had reviewed the project for compliance with State codes. The Board determined that the proposed outside electric mast changes were only minor modifications that did not affect the historic character of the building and did not require DRB review. The Board discussed the current use of the second floor of the Country Store as apartments. Bill said that in the future, he may want to convert one or more of the apartments into office space. The Board informed him that this would also require a permit for that Change in Use.

Arthur made a motion to close the hearing, and Richard seconded the motion. Anne abstained. The hearing was closed at 7:17pm.

**Other Discussion:** After the Hearing was closed, Bill asked if an application would be required to change the church windows in the future. This was followed by a discussion of what is

considered “maintenance” in the Village Center Design Control District and which actions trigger permit requirements. The discussion included the addition of steps to a structure, and various types of signs in the village. Bill and Susan left the room, and Maggi introduced herself to the Board Members and left the room.

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**Findings and Decision:**

During deliberation, Blaine recalled some of the questions raised during the previous hearing on the subject property (ZP16-01) regarding changes to the building. There was further discussion about the difference between maintenance and remodeling.

Anne questioned whether a computer-generated sign with standard fonts was consistent with Town character. Arthur pointed out that there were a number of computer-generated signs around the village. Anne acknowledged this, but explained that computer-generated signs can still be made to fit within the historical character of the Town. The discussion began to move toward other permitting issues and then the Board focused on the matter at hand

Larry made a motion to approve the application for the addition of a roof for the handicap landing, supports and railings for the southern building and the proposed new sign. Richard seconded the motion.

The Board voted 3 to 2 with one (Chairman abstained) to approve the application as presented. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm

Submitted by,  
Timothy McCormick, Administrative Officer and DRB Clerk

**NOTICE:** This decision of the Development Review Board (DRB) may be appealed to the Vermont Environmental Court by an interested person who participated in the proceeding(s) before the DRB. Such appeal must be taken within 30 days of the date of the decision, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4471 and Rule 5(b) of the Vermont Rules for Environmental Court Proceedings.