

Chelsea, Vermont, Development Review Board
Draft Meeting Minutes October 16, 2019

Members Present: Anne Carroll (Chair), Laurence Allen, Johanna Welch, Ed Kuban, Jr
Others Present: William Smith, applicant, Susan Elder, Timothy McCormick (AO, Clerk)

The Public Hearing on an application by William Smith on Behalf of the New Creation Fellowship Church (#ZP19-17, Parcel #110-052.000)

For a Conditional Use Permit to: Construct a roof over the existing handicap ramp, construct an emergency exit in the back of the building which will require a variance from the property line setback, replace the wooden siding on all wood buildings with vinyl siding, construct a wooden cross on the front of the new building. The property is located at 289 Vermont Route 110, Chelsea, Vermont.

Anne Carroll opened the meeting at 6:00 pm. The hearing began with a reading of the minutes as posted and published. The applicant pointed out a correction to be made in the posted notice: The church is named the New "Creation" Fellowship, and not the New "Christian" Fellowship as posted. No conflicts of interest or ex officio conversations were disclosed. William (Bill) Smith was present as applicant for the Church. Susan Elder was present representing the Town as an abutter to the project. All interested parties were sworn in.

Anne asked Bill to explain the project. Bill chose to begin the testimony by discussing the proposed roof over the handicap ramp. He described the dimensions and location planned for the roof and explained that it was previously permitted by the Development Review Board (DRB). The Board examined the file and the approval is referenced in permit #ZP17-10. He said that the project was not started because the Church did not own the building at the time the permit was granted. As a result, the permit expired two years after the approval. Bill said that he was thankful that no one was harmed due to the falling snow from the higher roof of the brick building. He further explained that ice on the ramp after melting is even a bigger problem than the snow falling off of the roof. He said that the roof will be supported by 6 x 6 inch posts and will be constructed primarily over the main portion ramp and not the "sloped" portion of the ramp.

The discussion moved to the issue of an emergency exit in the back of the building. Bill stated that State Fire Marshall said wouldn't require a fire exit but thought that it would be a good idea. Bill said that the front of the building was used for education and ministry, and the back of the building reserved for children's classrooms. He would like an emergency fire escape in the back of the building because he is concerned about the potential for harm to participants (obviously fires, and due to recent events, the possibility of shootings). Bill said that the only exit in the back

of the building would be through an existing service door with a 4.5 to 5 feet drop to the ground. He said that he does not like the idea of making children jump that far to the ground and, as a bus driver, even the thought of making children jump from the back of an emergency exit on a bus makes him uncomfortable.

Bill is proposing the emergency exit door and stairway off of the back northwestern side of the white building, and is not proposing any extension of the building itself. Tim handed out copies of a drawing where the stairway would go relative to the neighbor's property line. The drawing shows that the stairway would be extremely close to the property boundary if not over the boundary. Bill said that he did quite a bit of research and was told by the abutter that property surveys of the subject area do not exist. He said the boundary information is unclear at best and was told if surveys were done, the results may be unexpected by owners of both properties. He was told that the matter was better left alone.

The Board questioned legal issues concerning easements, boundary line agreements etc. Bill said that he discussed the matter with Tim Ward, the person renting the neighboring property. Tim Ward said that he does not have an issue with the proposed stairway location and said that he would provide Bill with a letter stating that so that Bill could have it for the hearing. Bill did not realize until the day of the hearing that Tim Ward was not the owner the neighboring property, but rather it is owned by Arnold Preston. Bill was not provided with a letter from the owner for the hearing. Johanna asked Tim if Mr. Preston knew about the proximity of the proposed stairway to the property line. Tim stated that he was not sure, but that the Arnold Preston was sent a notification of the hearing.

Next, the vinyl siding was discussed and Bill said that he contacted the State Department of Historic Preservation and was told that that there was no issue with the vinyl siding. Bill mentioned that the appearance of the building will be maintained even though the materials differed. The wooden cross is proposed to be centered in the front portion of the white building. Bill had photos of the proposed cross and all of the proposed changes in the application. Ed mentioned that he did research on the review of crosses by Zoning Boards and could find only one case regarding the placement of three crosses.

Anne asked for another look at the proposed porch roof and asked Bill how far it would extend from the building. There is a small set of stairs at the front of the ramp and Bill said that that the roof would extend over the stairs. The roof would maintain that same distance from the building where the overhang extended over the part of the ramp.

The DRB questioned whether there were any issues around approving only some portion of a pending application. Susan Stated that the Select Board received the application and did not have any questions other than how the cross was to be constructed. Bill said that it would be made of wood and would not have any type of lighting.

A motion was made to close the meeting and the meeting was adjourned at 6:35pm. The DRB went into deliberation.

Organizational Meeting

After the hearing on application ZP19-17, the Development Review Board (DRB) discussed the possibility of a small stipend available for DRB members who attend meetings.

The DRB also discussed the number of regular members on the Board and who that number affects voting and decisions.

The DRB Meeting ended at 6:50pm.

Submitted by,
Timothy McCormick, Administrative Officer and DRB Clerk