

1 BENNINGTON DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD MEETING
2 BENNINGTON FIRE FACILITY
3 130 RIVER STREET
4 BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201

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6 TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2014

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8 MINUTES
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10 BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Copp-Chair; Barry Horst-Vice-Chair; Bill Barney;
11 Charles Kokoras; Ron Alderman; Milt Surdam
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15 ABSENT: *Dan Malmborg*

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17 ALSO PRESENT: Dan Monks-Zoning Administrator; Larry Frank -Architect for Southern
18 Vermont College (SVC); Karen Gross – President SVC; Patrick McArdle-Rutland Herald; Linda
19 Bermudez, Recording Secretary; (6) Citizens
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22 At 6:30 P.M., Charles Copp called the meeting to order.
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25 **1.MINUTES OF MAY 06, 2014**

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27 No questions or corrections regarding minutes of May 06, 2014.
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29 *Barry Horst moved to approve the minutes of May 06, 2014 as submitted. Charles*
30 *Kokoras seconded the motion. Motion passes. (Milt Surdam abstained; Dan Malmborg absent)*
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34 **2. INTERESTED PERSONS – APPEAL RIGHTS – READING OF WITNESS’ OATH**

35 Dan Monks read of this oath.
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39 **3. DISCLOSURE OF EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS AND CONFLICTS OF**
40 **INTEREST**

41 None were noted
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44 **4. SOUTHERN VERMONT COLLEGE (SVC), IRA & MARCIA WAGNER 897**
45 **MONUMENT AVENUE**

46 Dan Monks reviewed the project. The applicants are seeking site plan approval to
47 convert a residence (formerly known as “the Gate House”) into office space for Southern
48 Vermont College (SVC). Mr. Monks noted there had been a continuance granted at the last

49 meeting to allow the applicants to meet with neighbors to address any concerns. Larry Frank,
50 Architect for SVC and Michael McDonough stepped forward to speak.

51 Mr. McDonough stated that Southern Vermont College (SVC) took over the main
52 mansion in 1974 and has always wanted to unite the estate back with the "Gate House" (897
53 Monument Avenue) as part of the school. We now have this opportunity and would like to
54 provide the school with the "identity" that it has been lacking. Where we now have only a small
55 sign, the "Gate House" will create the identity statement.

56 Mr. McDonough continued by stating the building would be used as a visitor's center and
57 admissions office. It will be the first place for all prospective students and their families to
58 experience SVC and it will convey the presence of the mansion. Mr. Frank noted that any
59 changes would be internally only. There will be no changes to the exterior of the building. The
60 addition of overhead lighting for the entry way will be residential in character (not commercial).
61 The driveway access will remain the same. Currently this holds (2) parking pads and (3)
62 additional parking spots within the garage).

63 Hours of operation will be 8:30am – 5:00pm. There will be some staff that will work
64 later occasionally, however no visitors are expected. Tours will be conducted twice a day.
65 There will be approximately (10) "Welcome Events" per year. They are conducted only (1) day
66 on the weekend and expect 3-10 visitors. The larger "Open House" events are held twice per
67 year. These however are conducted up at the main building (mansion).

68 The campus security is maintained 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year.
69 The "Gate House" will now be included in security's patrols. Signage is still being worked on
70 and will be proposed at a later date. Currently a "garbage corral" already exists on the west side
71 of the garage. SVC intends to maintain this with residential type trashcans. Mr. Frank noted that
72 some neighbors were concerned about the viewing of the parking pads. We are working on how
73 to address this. We are considering shifting the pads slightly or perhaps shrubs to screen the
74 view.

75 Barry Horst asked if the lighting would be on all the time. Mr. Frank stated that they
76 would prefer to have it on at least through the early evening. There is no plan as of yet but
77 would certainly consider suggestions. It could be turned off by 10:00pm.

78 Ron Alderman asked further about the parking capabilities. Mr. Frank stated there are (7)
79 total parking spaces. Mr. Alderman asked if there is expected to be (6) staff members wouldn't
80 there be a need for more parking for visitors. It was explained that many of the staff travel
81 offsite for work. Not very often are all employees present at the same time.

82 Mr. Alderman also asked Dan Monks if the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) had
83 weighed in on this project. Mr. Monks noted that there is no change in the footprint and this
84 building is not in the "Historic District". They have no jurisdiction here.

85 Barry Horst asked if more parking was needed where it would go. Mr. Frank stated that
86 would need to be studied further. There is no anticipation for additional parking in the near
87 future. Mr. McDonough stated that although they expect up to (10) visitors a day, they would
88 not all be there at once. They are scheduled, staggered and have little overlap.

89 Karen Gross stepped forward to speak. She noted that this was a very important project
90 for the college. It is important to connect the community with the college as a partnership in
91 success. She stated that studies have shown that a student and their family typically decide in the
92 first (14) minutes of a visit if they will be going to that college. It is very important that this
93 space feel like "a home". All the lighting and finishes will be as if it were a home and
94 maintained as such. Ms. Gross confirmed that many of the staff on the road up to (12) weeks a
95 year. She noted on her first visit, as with many students and families, she turned into the "Gate
96 House" first thinking it was the college. Because it was not she, like many others, had to back
97 out onto Monument Avenue and continue to Regwood Drive to enter.

98 John Carpenter stepped forward as a resident and neighbor. He stated he lives directly
99 across the street. Mr. Carpenter stated he supports SVC, however is concerned with the traffic
100 flow. He does not feel the "Gate House" entry is wide enough for two cars to pass. He
101 suggested the entry be from the Monument Avenue side but have vehicles exit from the
102 (existing) Regwood Drive access.

103 Mr. Carpenter also noted concerns regarding foot traffic. He suggested communication
104 be made with the Town to have the sidewalk extended at least up to the "Gate House". Lastly,
105 Mr. Carpenter expressed concern regarding any new signage. He is in hopes it will not be
106 "commercial" looking.

107 Ron Alderman noted that before any signage can be placed, the applicants must come
108 before the Board again.

109 Paul Palladino stepped forward as a resident of 989 Monument Avenue. He has lived
110 there for 50 years and is concerned about a "business" being on Monument Avenue. His
111 daughter tried to buy it. There is a lot of work that needs to be done. They wanted to bring it
112 back to the way it was in 1910. Their offer was turned down.

113 Andy Anderson stepped forward as a neighbor. He stated he is concerned for the
114 "character" of the neighborhood. This was a "homestead". Someone was willing to purchase it
115 and keep it a homestead, and now SVC's project will change the character of the neighborhood.
116 Mr. Anderson continues by reading a portion of the Design Review Board's rules/regulations.
117 He stated that according to the regulations the DRB must uphold (as he recited) this change in
118 use must be disproved. He stated this was "office space" and will "dramatically change" the
119 neighborhood. Mr. Anderson felt SVC had plenty of land and should build a new
120 Administration building on their campus.

121 Mr. Anderson continued by stating that there were other "former Everett Estate
122 buildings" still in this area. He asked what if SVC decides to "snatch" those up as well. What
123 are their 5 and 10 year plans? Charlie Copp stated that they couldn't speculate "future plans".
124 The board can only deal with this site plan before them.

125 Michael Corcoran stepped forward as a neighbor on Regwood Drive. He expressed
126 concern regarding traffic on Regwood Drive. There will be safety issues.

127 Michael McDonough stated that SVC has a commitment to the "Gate House" and the
128 campus as an "institutional" to preserve the character. This is higher education not a business.
129 All historic structures will retain their architectural character. Only repairs to rotted trim will be
130 conducted externally.

131 Karen Gross stated that SVC is a small private college. They want to remain a small
132 private college. That is part of its charm. There will only be small growth. It is not intended to
133 be a "mega school".

134 The board had no further questions.

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137 ***Barry Horst motioned to close the hearing and move into Deliberative Session.***

138 ***Charles Kokoras seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. (Dan Malmborg***
139 ***absent)***

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141 Dan Monks explained to the neighbors present that a written decision would be mailed to
142 each of those who spoke this evening.

143 John Carpenter asked if the decision would be set in stone. Mr. Monks stated that the
144 decision could be asked to be reconsidered and/or ask for an appeal within 30 days.

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147 **5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

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149 *Ron Alderman motioned to keep Charlie Copp as Chair and Barry Horst as Vice Chair*
150 *(no change in officers). Charles Kokoras seconded the motion. The motion carried*
151 *unanimously. (Dan Malmborg absent)*

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155 **6. OTHER BUSINESS**

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157 There was no other business this evening.

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160 *Barry Horst moved to close the meeting. Charles Kokoras seconded the motion. The*
161 *motion carried unanimously. (Dan Malmborg absent)*

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165 Respectfully submitted,

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168 Linda E. Bermudez

169 Secretary

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