

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

OFFICES OF PLANNING COMMISSION
PO BOX 715
EAST DORSET, VT 05253-0715

TELEPHONE (802) 362-4571
FAX (802) 362-5156

DORSET DESIGN REVIEW BOARD September 16, 2015

Members present: K. Wallace, (Chairman), P. Palmer, L. Bowden.

Absent: Bev Buber, Jim Clubb, Bob Escher

Guest Speaker: Devin Colman

Also present: Tyler Yandow (ZA), Danny Pinsonault (PC), Linda McGinnis, Bill Bridges (ZBA), Jane Bridges, Kay Manly (PC), Gay Squire (PC), Nancy Faesy, and Arnie Gottlieb.

Minutes: R. Nawrath

The meeting started at 5:30 pm.

Devin Colman's Presentation

Devin Colman is the State Architectural Historian for the VT Division for Historic Preservation which is part of the Department of Housing and Community Development. He coordinates historic architectural preservation on behalf of the state. He gave a power point presentation entitled Preservation at the Local Level. The biggest take-away point is that historic preservation, if it is to occur at all, must occur at the local level. Even designation as a National Historic Landmark cannot protect a structure from demolition or alteration without underlying local regulation. Visit www.historicvermont.org for more information about the state's role.

There are 3 parts of preservation: 1-Federal (National Parks and landmarks); 2-State: Division for Historic Preservation; and 3-the local level such as the DRB.

- If a building is on the National Register, it is just an honorary designation. The power is in local hands.
- There are only 2 buildings on the National Register in Dorset: the Lefevre Marble House on West Road and the Wilson House in E. Dorset.
- We have two districts:
 - Kent Neighborhood District
 - Dorset Village Historic Village
- The State Register of Historic Places lists many Dorset properties.
- Local designations: Set up by Vermont statute.
 - **Design Review District** – This district is not necessarily historic but designates important locations where design considerations may be important: “areas containing structures of historical, architectural, or cultural merit, and other areas where there is a concentration of community interest or focus of activities”.
 - **Historic District & Landmarks** – This type of district has documented historic structures, landmarks, or archeological sites which are worth protecting.

Different standards can be applied to each type of district.

- In Dorset: we have Design Review Districts. There is a designation process to approve a Design Review District (85% of residents have to approve of it), it then goes to a townwide vote.
 - 1985 Design Review District designation was created
 - 1997 there was a boundary increase in the Design Review District
 - Maps in this presentation should become part of the new criteria document being prepared by the DRB.

The Local Regulatory Process in Dorset: Observations by Devin Colman

- Demolition needs to be included in our new bylaws. On what basis do you decide whether a building should be demolished or saved? We need a clear and concise definition.
- Alterations and additions need further definition
- A design area is protected from what is to COME IN: not necessarily protect what is there. Remember, just the designation is not enough.
- We're not a museum, we are a living area. Consider that some things are temporary

What do we want to be as a DRB?

- Common sense should be used, but that does not mean that standards need to be so flexible as to be ineffective. He specifically said, in response to a question about more modern materials, that materials which may be acceptable on new structures, such as cementitious clapboards, are not appropriate for historic structures.
- In any district overseen by the DRB, care should be taken to define what type of structures are subject to review. For example, is it necessary for picnic tables to be subject to review? What about trash receptacles and bike racks? How should signage be regulated?
- It is important for the DRB to make defensible decisions. To avoid being viewed as the "style police" and considered a hindrance to the everyday lives of residents, the Design Review Board has to have clearly defined standards and guidelines by which they review and evaluate projects. This is exactly what the revision of the DRB design criteria is intended to address.
- People just want to know the rules; what are the parameters?
- Suggestion: provide information to the prospective home buyer that homes in the Historical District are more desirable and more valuable since neighboring properties cannot become something which does not fit in with the overall historic character of the area. This preserves the individual's own house value.

The DRB provided Devin Colman with a draft of their revised criteria and are eagerly awaiting his input.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kit Wallace, Chairman

cc: T. Yandow, Devin Coleman and the Design Review Board Members.

Pdf to Rob Gaiotti

Devin Colman

State Architectural Historian

802-828-3043

Devin.colman@state.vt.us