

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

OFFICES OF PLANNING COMMISSION
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DORSET DESIGN REVIEW BOARD Special Meeting of October 25, 2021

Members present: Arnie Gottlieb, Jim Clubb, Lindy Bowden, Michele Pagán, Ruth Tanenhaus, Kit Wallace
(chair)

Also present for the applicant: Steve Bryant of the Dorset Inn, Allan Sullivan (attorney representing applicant),
William Morrissey (Weatherization Works)

In addition: Zoning Administrator Tyler Yandow

Minutes: K. Wallace

Applicant: Dorset Inn application for post-installation approval of 2 split unit heat pumps 8 Church Street

Attorney A. Sullivan summarized the application

- The Dorset Inn replaced air conditioner units on the west and south facing facades with cold climate heat pumps; condenser units are located on west facing façade on the wall above the roof of the garden room on the west end of the Inn. Condensor piping across the south façade is covered by a white plastic chase covering.
- The two new Daiken heat pump units replace a single Mitsubishi unit that was damaged by what was assumed to be a lightning strike. The new units are more energy efficient and quiet than the preexisting unit.
- The Dorset Inn believed that the replacement units fell under the category of “Maintenance and Repairs” and so did not initially submit an application. The Zoning Administrator responded to them in writing that this work DID require an application; hence this application and meeting.

K. Wallace noted that the location, size, and visibility of the new units were substantially different (and the units were much more visible from Church Street), and hence they do not fit into the category of “replacing like with like”, which is the general standard for not requiring a permit from the DRB. She cited the new slate roof recently installed on the property across the street as being the type of project which qualified as simple repair and maintenance.

K. Wallace read the relevant criteria by which this application is to be evaluated:

9.4.4.2 Alterations and Additions

9.4.4.2.4 “New exterior wall features, including ...ventilators, and electrical and mechanical fixtures, may be introduced only on non-character-defining elevations. Such features must be located so that they do not diminish the original character of the historic structure or damage historic wall materials ...

9.4.4.2.9 ... “Transformers, meters, pipes, and mechanical-related items must be located as inconspicuously as possible, in rear yard locations or along non-character-defining elevations. Such features should be screened from view. Portable air-conditioning and satellite dishes should be located on the rear or on non-character defining elevations of historic structure.

A. Gottlieb asked the historical sequence of the fixtures.

- The Dorset Inn was purchased by the current owners in 2008, at which point there were more rooms, many of which had portable room air conditioners in the windows. They consolidated and enlarged rooms, so there are fewer units now. In the mid-teens, a Mitsubishi unit was installed on the wall over the garden room, further back from the street and only a single unit. That unit was damaged by a presumed lightning strike, and in 2016 two Daiken units replaced that less efficient unit. These units were wall mounted, and also further back on the west facing wall. In April of 2021, the current 2 heat pumps were installed with associated piping and conduit covers which run up the west wall and along the south-facing/front façade of the Dorset Inn.

A discussion ensued about the location, visibility, and appropriateness of the new heat pumps. S. Bryant emphasized that he was looking for guidelines as to how to get the units approved.

The DRB agreed that these units ARE part of the character-defining elevation in that they are very visible from Church Street. They also agreed that the three factors of importance are:

- Location. These units are high enough on the wall that they are very visible from Church Street especially if the observer is at all west of the main façade. The units they replaced were further back on the roof, and thus somewhat less noticeable than these.
- Visibility. In addition to their location making them visible from the street, their color and size increases that visibility.
- Messiness of the wiring and conduits. These units have a jumble of wires extending from their sides and tops, which then go into a plastic conduit and extend across the primary façade of the Inn. Plastic is not an historic material and the color and material do not blend well with the historic clapboards.

The DRB asked W. Morrissey, designer of this installation, to work on addressing the above issues, and to come back at the November meeting with drawings and a proposal to do just that. Options to be considered:

- Ground mounting of the heat pumps
- If ground mounting is not feasible, moving the units further to the rear to decrease their visibility from Church Street.
- Neaten up the wiring and enclose them in a wood casing; this could be made to look like an architectural feature along the front of the building
- Painting the units white
- Camouflaging the units with some kind of wood slats.

W. Morrissey will prepare a proposal and/.or options for the next meeting of the DRB on November 15.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kit Wallace