

Village of Skaneateles Planning Board Meeting September 6, 2012

In the matter of the application submitted by Adam Weitsman/Krebs Real Estate Holdings for Site Plan Review and to vary the strict application of Section 225-A5 Density Control Schedule for Side yard set-back, Right; and Section 225-69D Non-conforming Buildings, Structures and Uses, Extension or Expansion to construct a handicap accessible ramp to the southeast side of the building and to delete the approved lift proposed for the front porch at the property addressed as 53 West Genesee Street in the Village of Skaneateles.

Present: Bruce Kenan, Chairman
Bill Eberhardt, Member
Megan Keady, Member
Douglas Sutherland, Member

Dennis Dundon, Clerk to the Planning Board

Bob Eggleston, Architect, representing the Applicant
Mike Tutor, for the Applicant

James Lanning, Village Trustee
Francis Moran, Skaneateles
John Granato, Marcellus

Absent: Toby Millman, Member
Riccardo Galbato, Attorney for the Planning Board

Chairman Kenan opened this portion of the meeting at 7:43 pm announcing the application of Adam Weitsman/Krebs Real Estate Holdings for the property at 53 West Genesee Street. Mr. Eggleston introduced himself and presented, "Last time I came to visit, we were bringing you up to date, and had brought the project back to its original intent of restoring the building. We have done and we are actually putting more lumber in now than we are taking out, and beginning to take shape. One of the things that we had proposed for handicapped access; the original design was that this was a new entrance with a 2 story, 3 level elevator structure. Now it is just a 1 story structure. We had proposed putting a lift built into the porch, trying to make it look as appropriate as possible. In looking at it from two points of view – the esthetics, we had taken these windows on the front and made them shorter so they came up to the handicapped lift, we were trying to get this done in bead board. The lift supplier was not too optimistic of our being able to pull off what we wanted to achieve with the esthetics we wanted to achieve. Adam was concerned that it may have been too distracting having the lift there, because it still is kind of an open pit. The porch is a very important, iconic part of the structure."

Mr. Eggleston continued, “So we looked at some options, and came up with the concept of putting a ramp in the back. All our handicapped parking is in the back, so it makes sense to have the entrance for people using, needing accessibility assistance, to be in the back next to the parking, rather than park back here and have to come all the way around to the front. It will be on the east side, so it is adjacent to the original Loveless house, which is, of course, a separate property. Though owned by Weitsmans, it could be in separate ownership in the future. We have in the plan, putting up a dense vegetative border that will screen that. What we have done is changed the interior layout to create a second entrance. We didn’t want people using the accessibility ramp to come in the back door into the kitchen. So we have created an 8 foot by 8 foot second entrance. The service corridor will be separate coming into the kitchen. What we’ll have is a porch that’s 8 foot by 5 foot that comes off the back, covered, and then we’ll have the ramp – pulled away from the edge of the building – coming down with a wood rail to a landing at that point because this is also our second fire exit. There will be 3 steps leading from the back porch onto the sidewalk, or for those wanting the ramp, they can continue down in a dogleg.”

Chairman Kenan asked, “How long is that ramp overall?” Mr. Eggleston replied, “This is 34 feet; it drops 30 inches. Every 30 inches you are required to have a landing. We could physically, geometrically start a ramp here and end it with a straight shot, but we would be going down 45 inches, and right into the parking lot. You have to have a 5 foot landing, and you don’t want to just have a chute right into the parking lot. So we tried doing the dogleg back and around; we thought this was better. If we did the dogleg parallel, so it came back and around, we would save ourselves 2 feet. But we’re able to come out 5 feet, have our 5 foot landing, then come back another 11 feet – back to the front of this and then you are back on the sidewalk.”

Chairman Kenan asked, “So when you get to that landing, before you make a right and go down 3 risers, what’s that a foot and a half?” Mr. Eggleston confirmed that it is 18 inches, continuing, “What we thought we’d do is to make this out of masonry. So we have a more solid end here. We ended up raising the grade 1.5 to 2 feet already, to get a grease trap out here, and have it flow by gravity to the back. So this will be a masonry ramp with the cultured stone on it, railings, and we take off from the masonry ramp here to the wood ramp. We are going to copy the lattice, as a very nice vertical lattice from the front porch – we’re going to follow that detail and similar details on the small porch entrance. What this requires is #1, it is a change to the site plan, so it requires you to approve this site plan alteration. It also requires an additional Variance in that we will be encroaching on the side yard and it will be 14 feet, where 25 feet is required in the A1 District. We already had been granted a Variance for being 21.7; this porch will be at 22 feet, but then this is 14.” Chairman Kenan asked, “And it is a further extension of the non-conforming use, right?” Mr. Eggleston said, “Correct. So it is not a major increase in the area variance. What we felt is that for what we gave up in the side-yard set-back here, preserving the front and eliminating the lift... The lift is a nice idea, but I think it has mechanical issues, being a little bit more awkward.” Chairman Kenan asked, “You couldn’t find a 19th-century precedent?” Mr. Eggleston, “It was real tough, real tough.”

Member Eberhardt asked, “What was the problem with it?” Mr. Eggleston said, “We met with the guy from the lift company, and what we had to have was a double door on it, that swung out. And I had proposed having the side of the lift actually match in with the lattice, and railing, and

stuff to make it look like the porch – disappear.” Mr. Tutor supplemented, “He just said what we wanted to do wouldn’t work. The lift would work, but for us to address the cosmetic side of it, created more problems. He didn’t want to buy into it. Originally, the former architect had planned, a whole different procedure, similar to what you have in the back there, but then he ran into problems with the DOT on the curb cut and widening the driveway. So the more we thought about it, with the designated handicapped parking really in the rear of the building, how can we make this work. I know that not everyone who uses the access drives a car, but there are people who are handicapped who are going to park in the back. I don’t know if there is a right formula, but this seemed to be more conforming to the handicapped persons’ needs. We did not want an exposed elevator; we wanted to blend in. The front porch is the focal point of this building and it’s a sensitive issue, and what we had was not the correct route.” Mr. Eggleston described his personal experience with a west-facing lift that had problems with icing up during wintertime. “We had a lot of resistance from the lift supplier in wanting to push forward and Adam was on the fence esthetically with it, so that’s why we pursued this other option.”

Member Sutherland said, “And it does allow you a bigger porch. I think you are correct. The porch is -- so much of the Krebs comes out of the porch. That the parking is in the back; I don’t think you need to be apologetic; it seems like it is a logical solution.” Chairman Kenan asked, “Are there any other questions? Anyone have a motion to suggest?” Member Sutherland said, “Why don’t I make a motion. But first, other than the porch the rest of the plan is as was approved back a year or more ago?” Mr. Eggleston said, “That’s correct.” **Member Sutherland said, “I move that we recommend to the ZBA that they grant the Variances necessary to approve the plans that were submitted, dated August 27th, 2012, and that other than the changes in the handicapped accessible ramp, the balance of the terms and conditions of the original approval remain as they were. Further, that the revised Site Plan dated August 27, 2012 is approved, with all previous conditions remaining in full force and effect.” Member Keady seconded the motion.**

Upon Members Sutherland and Keady and Chairman Kenan voted in favor of the motion. Member Eberhardt abstained, noting his previous abstentions in this matter, but expressing his opinion that this represents “an improved design.” The Chair declared, “The motion is passed.”

Messrs. Eggleston and Tutor thanked the Board.

This matter was concluded at 7:57 pm.