

EAST AURORA PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING

December 6, 2011

7:00 PM

PRESENT:

Dan Castle, Chairman
Lowell Dewey, Vice Chairman
Allen Ott Jr.
Anne Redmond
Kristin Cameron
Frank Mesi
Stacy Oar
Alternate Bud Babcock

ABSENT:

Also Present:

Code Enforcement Officer, William Kramer
Catherine Wood, Deputy Village Clerk & Secretary for the Planning Commission
Susanne M. Wolff, Retiring Deputy Clerk & Secretary for the Planning Commission

Others Present:

Philip J. Silvestri, Silvestri Architects, PC
John Wabick, Vice President of West Herr

**Review of Development Plan for
East Aurora Buick Pontiac GMC
535 Main Street**

Chairman, Dan Castle, opened the meeting at 6:43 PM and noted that a quorum was present for the meeting tonight.

Lowell Dewey made a motion to approve the minutes from August 2, 2011 & September 6, 2011 as written, seconded by Allen Ott with a unanimous vote to follow.

John Wabick announced that they had gone back to the drawing board as requested by the planning commission in regards to changes being presented for East Aurora Buick Pontiac GMC located at 535 Main Street, in order to come up with a more unique design. Philip Silvestri of Silvestri Architects was introduced to display the new design plan to everyone. Mr. Silvestri explained how current architectural designs are being driven by manufacturers each looking for their own image. After the first design was not acceptable to the East Aurora Planning Commission, Mr. Wabick and Mr. Silvestri decided they wanted to get the Planning Commission's input before going back to GMC to present the commission's thoughts. The initial design, as shown on a large poster, has the east side canopy being removed from the structure and the front facade changed. The existing peaks and roof structure will be removed and updated. The canopy is removed to allow more frontage for display. A picture of the building as it stands today, the first drafted design and the newly presented design, was passed around to everyone at the table. It was noted by Mr. Silvestri that GMC does not want the prototype

changed, so the architects attempted to incorporate East Aurora architecture with the corporate design by adding brick elements to the lower level, with the rest of the prototype remaining the same. They hope this is moving in the right direction.

Dan Castle asked about the external lighting in the modifications. Frank Mesi also inquired about recessed lighting. It was responded that there would be minimal changes to lighting. The soffets and recessed lighting fixtures could have possible updating for efficiency purposes only, but no additional lighting is planned.

Mr. Wabick reiterated that this would be the same footprint of the building with just a removal of the canopy. The parking, lighting, and building itself all remain the same but the main entrance moves to Main Street with continued accessibility on the side. There is a drive from all corporate dealerships to want to upgrade their facilities. Frank Mesi said that the brick does soften the appearance in comparison to the first design, but suggested perhaps more wood to the design or something additional such as a mahogany front door. Dan Castle brought up that the corporate prototype is ok for Orchard Park or Transit Road; however that just doesn't work here in East Aurora. Mr. Wabick said that while he does agree with that point, the changes could enhance the experience for the customer here in East Aurora.

Lowell Dewey mentioned that the commission was waiting on the design guidelines from Robert Corby, and he wondered what those guidelines would point to for this structure.

Frank Mesi brought up a Cadillac dealership he saw in Greenwich, CT that was atypical to the strict corporate prototype. Specifically, the roof structure was peaked and not flat, and that it had more of a wowing appearance. He said there was a big gap between the amended design presented to the planning commission and the variation he saw in Greenwich.

John Wabick explained that corporate is driven by planning volume and projected sales. He said that this means with a smaller store, there is more flexibility for optional changes to prototype. However East Aurora is in a high volume category for GMC, thus the dealership is expecting to have a more "commercial looking" plan. Dan Castle told Mr. Wabick that GM corporate offices need to realize that East Aurora is not a good fit for that prototype. John mentioned that the design is driven more by the interior, such as how many people and offices are needed, and Dan Castle responded that the outside is the focus. John explained that the initial pitches in the roof were originally for the showroom, and now more offices are needed, so this is logistically driven.

Frank asked if every dealership is silver and black, and Mr. Wabick and Mr. Silvestri affirmed this. Kristen, Anne and Dan more specifically agreed that the stark white was presenting a stronger concern. It was suggested by John Wabick and Philip Silvestri that in place of the white we could change it to gray. Allen Ott suggested more brick maybe and that the grand entrance doesn't fit East Aurora at all. John and Philip compared the front to their Lockport facility and its entirely metal front. This is a "brand wall" and how manufacturers all want that center element. The planning commission asked if this could be brick or wood, however John Wabick said this would be a very hard sell to corporate GM. Mr. Silvestri said that what could be done is to place additional brick on the structure where the dark gray color is located on the second design, and eliminate the white at the top of the roof by making that dark gray. It was agreed that this would help. Frank Mesi asked again about more wood, possibly having the half moon area in a wood format. Dan Castle explained that the houses on Main Street retain a residential feel, and that this is the theme in the mid-Main area, not a sterile corporate theme. Dan identified that the question

at hand is how we can make this appear more residential. John Wabick responded that this is a car dealership. Mr. Wabick did say he does want all of this feedback from the commission, but he doesn't think that GM will approve anything like that. Mr. Wabick verified his great deal of experience with this industry and said that his gut feeling is simply that GM will not approve too much change and that corporate may just look elsewhere to place their prototype design. Frank joked how the Big me - Little you mentality from GM is what got GM in trouble in the first place. John responded that they're all getting that way. Frank said that he liked the idea of moving the brick up and having the dark gray at the top of the roof. Mr. Silvestri responded that yes, he thinks that's reasonable. Dan Castle asked about the possibility of using the East Aurora Roycroft printing to soften the appearance of the letters. Lowell asked about a two-story facade look or something pitched to consider a taller look. Dan pointed out that it doesn't say West-Herr anywhere, and John explained that corporate actually will no longer allow that because the name follows the community now. Dan also discussed that he wanted John and Philip to let GM corporate know that East Aurora Village is a National Registered Historic District by New York State. Allen Ott also said that he liked the idea of moving the brick up and having the dark gray at the top of the roof. John Wabick suggested that they do that, email it over, and get feedback. After that they can email it to GM. At this point Mayor Allan Kasprzak said that we should email and get the suggestions from Robert Corby. Bud Babcock spoke up that in summary, he wanted to say that we see improvements, and we don't want GMC to move their location out of East Aurora if the village puts a lot of pressure on them for architectural changes. Bud suggested that if we compromise with the grand entryway, as a trade off could we eliminate the "box-look" by adding some detail around the top of the roof? Frank suggested extending out even just a few inches, like a cap to the roof. Lowell asked about a bay look to the windows rather than just flat, but Dan Castle pointed out that old-fashioned car dealerships always had flat windows. Philip Silvestri said that he knows what the committee wants, and to let him come up with a new rendering. John discussed again the need to make sure we are going in the right direction with GM because he did not want to get the committee's hopes up and then have GM deny these changes. It was planned that the new design would be emailed to the committee by the end of the week, and Mr. Wabick and Mr. Silvestri would be added to the agenda for the December 19th board meeting in order to give a small presentation that night.

Kristin Cameron made a motion to close the meeting at 7:30 PM seconded, by Frank Mesi and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Wood
Deputy Village Clerk & Secretary, Planning Commission