Recommendations for a Municipal Ordinance
To Create a Design Advisory Board

Background

Whereas: The Somers 2004 Plan of Conservation and Development recommended the creation of a public advisory body to promote and encourage the highest quality design and development standards reflecting the character and heritage of our community, considering existing structures, architectural design and style, compatibility with surrounding properties, the Town's codes, and its comprehensive plan of development; and

Whereas: The Somers Board of Selectmen established an ad hoc Study Committee to review methods and techniques to accomplish these objectives, and

Whereas: After review of processes and standards established by other municipalities, consideration of appropriate organizational structures and input from residents provided at a public hearing on the methods and techniques that can accomplish these objectives, this ad hoc Study Committee recommends these goals can best be accomplished by the creation of a Design Advisory Board.

- The Design Advisory Board will consist of members who have expertise in or are professionals in the area of design, planning and/or development.

- The Design Advisory Board's primary functions will be:
    - the establishment and updating of architectural and site design guidelines,
    - review of applications for conformity with recommended guidelines, and
    - forwarding of non-binding recommendations to the Somers Zoning and Planning Commissions, as applicable.

NOW THEREFORE, The Somers Board of Selectmen hereby establishes a Design Advisory Board and adopts the following ordinance:

1. Creation

1.1. A Design Advisory Board is hereby created as an advisory board to the Somers Zoning and Planning Commissions to promote and encourage the highest quality design and development standards in the Somers community considering existing structures, architectural design and style, compatibility with surrounding properties, the Town's codes and comprehensive plan of development.

2. Purpose

2.1. The Purpose of the Design Advisory Board is to:

2.1.1. Provide guidance in preserving and improving the appearance and architectural heritage of the community;
2.1.2. Preserve and enhance the value of buildings, structures and property;
2.1.3. Make recommendations to land use boards and other agencies of the Town of Somers on future or pending projects prior to the issuance of any building permits;
2.1.4. Develop and publish guidelines for community design standards appropriate to Somers;
2.1.5. Assist property owners, design professionals and others to understand the specific elements of site design and building appearances that are desired within the Town of Somers.

3. Membership, Terms and Qualifications

3.1. There shall be 5 members appointed to the Design Advisory Board. Membership will be by recommendation of proposed members by the Somers Planning and Zoning Commissions to the Somers Board of Selectmen, who then confirm these recommendations through their appointment to the Design Advisory Board.

3.2. Terms of Appointment to the Design Advisory Board shall be for a three-year term, which may be renewed by the Somers Planning and Zoning Commissions and the Board of Selectmen. To stagger the Terms of Appointment, one of the initial member's terms shall expire one year after initial appointment, two will expire two years after initial appointment, and the remaining two members appointments shall expire at the normal three year expiration date. Should a member be unable to complete the appointed term, vacancies will be filled by recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commissions to the Board of Selectmen for their confirmation.

3.3. Members of the Design Advisory Board shall meet the following criteria for nomination and appointment to the Design Advisory Board:

3.3.1. Residents of the Town of Somers;
3.3.2. Persons who are not currently members of the Planning or Zoning Commissions;
3.3.3. To the extent available, have qualifications, skills or demonstrated interest in one or more of the following or related areas: (1) architecture; (2) landscape architecture; (3) planning/design; (4) engineering; (5) graphic arts; (6) building construction/development; (7) professional backgrounds relating to design or related fields and (8) historical preservation.

4. Organizational Structure

4.1. The Design Advisory Board shall be organized as follows:

4.1.1. At its initial meeting and at its first meeting on or after January 1 of each year thereafter, the Design Advisory Board shall elect from its members a Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary.

4.1.2. The presence of 3 members shall constitute a quorum to transact business.

4.1.3. The Design Advisory Board shall adopt operating procedures consistent with the terms of this ordinance.

5. Applicability

5.1. Design Review is required for all new non-residential and multi-family construction and all substantial alterations of non-residential and multi-family structures.

6. Procedures

6.1. The Design Advisory Board shall:

6.1.1. Meet at least once per quarter, or whenever needed to consider applications referred to it by the Somers Land Use Staff.

6.1.2. Submit its recommendations to the Somers Zoning Commission in writing at least five (5) days prior to a meeting by the Somers Zoning Commission on the application.

6.1.3. To the extent feasible in its written report, include specific recommendations regarding plan modifications which the Design Advisory Board finds desirable based on the General Design Guidelines contained herein and the specific Design Guidelines developed by the Design Advisory Board.

6.1.4. Not delay any actions by land use boards and town agencies on an application due to the failure of the Design Advisory Board to act in a timely manner.

6.2. Property owners/developers are encouraged to meet with the Somers Land Use Staff in the early stages of planning to obtain ideas about particular concerns or issues that may arise during the review of the project. These points can then be incorporated into the project design before making a significant investment of time and money. The time and/or additional reviews by the Design Advisory Board depends upon the complexity of the project.

7. General Design Guidelines

7.1. The Design Advisory Board will develop, maintain and update design guidelines to help applicants understand design considerations in Somers. Such guidelines will be

referred to the land use boards and town agencies for review and comment. The Design Advisory Board will consider the following in its development of these guidelines:

7.1.1. The basic design for the proposed uses, buildings or development.

7.1.2. The relationship between the buildings and the land.

7.1.3. The relationship between uses and buildings/structures.

7.1.4. The overall physical appearance of the proposed development and its compatibility with surrounding neighborhood.

7.1.5. Relationship of width to height of new structures.

7.1.6. Outdoor lighting.

7.1.7. Design of streets.

7.1.8. Blending of street and mechanical hardware into the overall design.

7.1.9. Impact on the historic significance of the site and the affected area.

7.1.10. Compatibility with the Plan of Conservation and Development of the Town.

7.1.11. Location and dimensions of pedestrian walkways, sidewalks, malls and paths.

7.1.12. Types, styles and colors of building materials, exterior facades and facing, fenestration (design and position of windows in a building; a structural opening) and fire retardant characteristics.

7.1.13. Signs.

7.1.14. Landscaping and Screening.

7.1.15. Parking.

7.1.16. Special architectural features.

7.1.17. Effect on the health, safety and general welfare of the community.

7.1.18. Conformity with other appropriate laws, codes or ordinances.