MEMO

To: Historic and Architectural Advisory Committee (HAAC)

From: Emily Heymann, Planner

Date: November 25, 2020

Re: Regulating paint color

Last meeting, we discussed paint color in the Village. Shelburne and many Vermont communities take a middle-of-the-road approach: providing guidance but not outright regulation.

This is what Devin Colman, Vermont Architectural Historian, has said about this issue in an online forum on August 20, 2020:

> *"When a Vermont community inquires about whether or not to regulate paint colors, we always advise against it. It becomes a lightning rod for those opposed to local regulations, i.e. "No one's going to tell ME what color to paint my house..." and the commission can be sidelined as just being the style police.*
>
> *Regulating paint colors can also detract from the primary goals of the local ordinance, which hopefully are trying to save and protect more than just paint colors. Ultimately, paint is a reversible alteration that can be appropriately re-done in the future by a more sympathetic owner.*
>
> *There are exceptions, of course, for masonry buildings but that's more a question of should or shouldn't they be painted at all, and not color.*
>
> *A more manageable approach can be to compile a list of* recommended *paint colors and schemes based on common architectural styles in the community, and provide it to property owners as helpful, but not mandatory, guidance*."

Williston's existing bylaw follows this guidance for masonry. It is silent on color. Appendix Historic Design guide says:

> "*Preserve the original finish of masonry facades.*
> - *Always use the gentlest cleaning methods possible. Some chemical cleansers may be acceptable, but their effects should be researched before they are used, consult the State Historic Preservation Officer for further suggestions.*
> - *Never sandblast masonry. Sandblasting removes water and accelerates erosion. Generally, let painted masonry remain painted, and let unpainted masonry remain unpainted*."

John Marcotte emailed me this example from West Pawlet, VT and said, "*It is a simple 2 color palette, but it seems like it may be inappropriate or at least unappreciated. Just food for thought and discussion*."

This building is the Roy Egg Shop and Painted Furniture Shop. The artisan, Roy Egg, is "known for his brightly colored acrylic paintings of roosters and hens that have developed a local following."

While the red & white checkered pattern may be unappreciated by some, that is a subjective opinion, and others may find it a good example of quirky Vermont character. Either way, it is certainly iconic and memorable.

Here's what Shelburne's Design Guide says:

Color

Color is not a matter considered in the design review process. The guidelines below are included only to assist property owners seeking to select a color scheme for buildings in historic districts.

Color can dramatically affect the perception of a building and its contribution to the neighborhood. It can affect the perceived scale of a building and help blend a building into its context.

With respect to colors on a historic building, a scheme that reflects the historic style is preferred. For a non-historic building in a historic district, a color scheme that complements the historic character of the district is preferred.

1-13. Use one base color, a trim color and one or two additional accent colors for the building, except where precedent exists for using more colors with some architectural styles.

Muted colors are appropriate for the base color.

1-14. Coordinate the entire building in one color scheme.

A color scheme establishes a sense of overall composition for the building.

Photo provided by Don Shall

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends following the guidance of Devin Colman and adopting something like the Shelburne model. Provide guidance with example photos, but not outright regulate specific colors or color combinations. The masonry standard should remain as is: keep unpainted as is and painted keep painted.

	Bylaw Option	Pros	Cons
Least restrictive	**No stance on color**	- No administration responsibility created - No permit hurdle for applicants	- Does not prevent certain colors - Does not provide guidance or insight to help applicants
	Guidance, not regulation (recommended)	- Gives applicants direction and insight in design - Simple to administer - No permit hurdle for applicants	- Does not prevent certain colors - Things will change over time, paint is temporary
	Guidance, regulation at discretionary permit	- Gives the DRB a route in when a big project is proposed (new houses, commercial, etc.) - Allows homeowners flexibility when maintaining their homes - Follows a similar process for Growth Center design review	- Things will change over time, paint is temporary - Creates a regulatory burden when a project goes to DRB. - Language needs to be careful, "use a variety of color & material with restraint" is vague.
	Regulation on only the oldest historic structures	- Greater control over the most historic structures (note: several are brick and cannot be painted)	- Does not regulate new buildings - Complex to administer - More permit hurdle for applicants
Most restrictive	**Require review on all structures regardless of age in Village**	- Greatest level of control over the most all structures, new and old. (note: several are brick and cannot be painted)	- Potential for contention in both the bylaw adoption and administration processes - "Style police" - May colors can also detract from the primary goals of the Master Plan - Can be used in crossfire of neighbor disputes (administrative burden)