

**MINUTES  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
ONE JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**6:30 p.m.**

**JANUARY 4, 2017**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Vice Chairman Vincent Lombardi; Members Jon Wyckoff, Dan Rawling, Reagan Ruedig, Richard Shea; City Council Representative Nancy Pearson; Alternates John Mayer and Martin Ryan

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:**

**ALSO PRESENT:** Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner

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Vice Chairman Lombardi called the meeting to order. He introduced the new Commissioner Martin Ryan.

Vice- Chairman Lombardi then asked former Chairman Joe Almeida to approach the dais. He presented him with a gift as a thank you for his service to the City and for the guidance he brought to the HDC over the past ten years. Several other Commissioners also thanked Mr. Almeida for his mentoring, public service, integrity and commitment.

Mr. Almeida said he was proud of the work the Commission had done over the past decade, especially the completion of the 2016 Design Guidelines, and he urged them to continue the good work. Mr. Almeida said the Commission had done a great job in enforcing the Ordinance and did their duty to the best of their ability.

**I. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

1. Chairman
2. Vice Chairman

*Vice-Chairman Lombardi was nominated for Chairman, and Mr. Wyckoff was nominated for Vice-Chairman.*

*It was moved, seconded and **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0) to elect Vice Chairman Lombardi as Chairman and Jon Wyckoff as Vice Chairman for the coming year.*

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. December 7, 2016

*It was moved, seconded and **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0) to approve the December 7, 2016 minutes as amended.*

### **III. REQUEST FOR ONE YEAR EXTENSION**

1. Request for one year extension of Certificate of Approval for 346 Pleasant Street, granted on February 3, 2016 – submitted by the Mark Wentworth Home

*Ms. Ruedig made a motion to **grant** the one-year extension. Mr. Shea seconded.*

Ms. Ruedig stated that the project involved a small amount of work and was straightforward.

*The motion **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0).*

### **IV. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS**

1. 40 Bridge Street
2. 235 Islington Street
3. 303 Islington Street
4. 30 Maplewood Avenue
5. 50 South School Street
6. 28 Dennett Street

Mr. Cracknell suggested that the first three petitions be pulled for discussion.

#### **1. 40 Bridge Street**

Mr. Cracknell reviewed the changes. Jeremiah Johnson of McHenry Architecture on behalf of the applicant was present to speak to the petition and described the changes in detail.

Vice Chairman Wyckoff said the Commission had been concerned about the granite veneer on the side switching off to a parched finish. It was discussed and then ascertained that it would show most on the west elevation going up the stairs and would be granite. Vice Chairman Wyckoff said he was okay with it because it was in the back.

Mr. Shea asked whether the material on the front, back and sides would be changed. Mr. Johnson said they would but noted that the front did not need to be changed. The differences between Hardiplank and Boral were discussed as well as the issue of whether Hardiplank could be painted on site. Mr. Shea said he preferred to have more information on the Hardiplank before approving it. Vice Chairman Wyckoff suggested stipulating that it be field painted. Ms. Ruedig suggested a stipulation that the dimension match the material.

*Vice Chairman Wyckoff made a motion to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for the application, with two stipulations. Ms. Ruedig seconded the motion. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0).*

## **2. 235 Islington Street**

Mr. Cracknell read the changes. The architectural designer Brandon Holben was present on behalf of the applicant and gave a brief overview.

Vice Chairman Wyckoff asked about the canopies. Mr. Holben said the roofing would be replaced. Vice Chairman Wyckoff and Ms. Ruedig agreed that they wished to retain the original granite steps, and it was further discussed.

Mr. Rawling explained why the design needed some fine tuning. Mr. Shea suggested a design utilizing the steps. Vice Chairman Wyckoff suggested moving the steps into the center.

*Ms. Ruedig made a motion to move the petition into a public hearing at a future meeting of the applicant's choice. Vice Chairman Wyckoff seconded the motion. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0).*

## **3. 303 Islington Street**

Mr. Cracknell reviewed the changes and said they were minor and consistent with the original approval. Ms. Ruedig questioned the guardrail, but because it was in the back of the building, she said she was fine with it.

*Mr. Rawling made a motion to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for the application as presented, and Ms. Ruedig seconded.*

Mr. Rawling stated that the changes were minor, would barely be noticed, and followed the original intent.

*The motion **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0).*

## **4. 30 Maplewood Avenue**

Mr. Cracknell reviewed the changes. Mr. Wyckoff said the changes were minor. Mr. Rawling noted that, even though it was a minor change, the Commission saw similar changes made on other projects, and the applicants came before the Commission afterwards.

Jennifer Ramsey representing the applicant was present to speak to the petition and stated that the new construction had not occurred, and Mr. Rawling then agreed that there was no issue.

## **5. 50 South School Street**

Mr. Cracknell said the material was changing from plywood to Azek trim. There was no discussion among the Commission.

#### 6. 28 Dennett Street

Mr. Cracknell said the front gutters were being changed to match the back ones.

Mr. Rawling said the gutters looked huge. Chairman Lombardi asked whether the gutters were covered. Mr. Cracknell said they matched the approved back gutters. Mr. Rawling suggested a more historic type of gutter because it was the front of the house. It was further discussed. Vice Chairman Wyckoff suggested stipulating that a case style standard gutter be installed on the front, and Mr. Rawling agreed.

*Vice Chairman Wyckoff made a motion to **remove** the petition for a separate hearing, and City Council Representative Pearson seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0).*

*Ms. Ruedig made a motion to **grant** the Certificate of Approval to Petitions #4 and #5. Vice Chairman Wyckoff seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote (7-0).*

*Vice Chairman Wyckoff made a motion to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for petition #6, with the following stipulation:*

- 1) *That a standard K-style gutter with round downspouts be used.*

*Mr. Rawling seconded the motion. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0).*

### V. WORK SESSIONS

A. Work Session requested by **Unitarian Universalist Church, owner**, for property located at **206 Court Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (construct 3 story addition) and allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (misc. renovations) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 116 as Lot 34 and lies within the Mixed Residential Office and Historic Districts. *(The applicant has requested to postpone review of the application to the February 2017 meeting.)*

### DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

This item was postponed to the February 2017 meeting.

B. Work Session requested by **Thirty Maplewood, LLC, owner**, for property located at **46-64 Maplewood Avenue**, wherein permission is requested to allow a new free standing structure (construct new mixed use, 3 to 3 ½ story building) as per plans on file in the Planning

Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 125 as Lot 2 and lies within the CD 4, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts.

Chairman Lombardi read the petition into the record.

Jennifer Ramsey of SOMMA Studios on behalf of the applicant was present to speak to the petition and stated that she wanted to focus on the Conditional Use Permit (CUP). She noted that the applicant was giving more than 30% of the site back as public space. She reviewed the arcade and landscaping plans. She said the applicant would landscape some of the property connecting to the VFW building as well as rebuild some of its stairs and perhaps include a mural. She reviewed the penthouse component, the awning design, the materials and the parking. She noted that the materials would be brick modular masonry and wood.

Vice Chairman Wyckoff asked how the copper and granite materials would be justified as quality materials. He noted that the gray masonry seemed like cement block-type units. It was further discussed. Ms. Ramsey said the product was used in all of their buildings as well as several Portsmouth residences and that it would be made in small brick modular sizes.

Ms. Ramsey reviewed what the first floor would look like and said that it would be in a similar product but with a larger block style. Vice Chairman Wyckoff asked whether the color on the bottom would be permanent. Ms. Ramsey said the product was different from precast. Mr. Rawling remarked that he had seen the samples and did not support the materials or the colors.

Mr. Cracknell reminded the Commission that a CUP was required because the penthouse was approximately 10% bigger than what was allowed. He noted that the public benefits included underground parking, wide pedestrian sidewalks, and alleyways between buildings as well as high-quality building materials. He emphasized that the Commission needed to give the applicant feedback on whether a 4-story building was appropriate and that it was important to confirm the bigger picture before getting lost in the details.

The scale was then discussed. Mr. Shea said he felt that the massing was okay but that the rendering seemed much busier and needed clarification. It was further discussed, as well as the walkways, colonnade areas, and potential restaurant and storefront space.

Mr. Shea confirmed that the project would be giving back a wider sidewalk, trees and greenery, and a seating area. He asked whether the covered parts would be part of a restaurant or storefront, and Ms. Ramsey said they would. He asked whether the garage entry and exit were the only ways in and out, and Ms. Ramsey agreed. Mr. Shea said the rendering didn't feel like a continuous building and felt that it should represent Portsmouth's historic district. Mr. Mayer agreed with Mr. Shea. He said the massing was an improvement and that he liked the rendering of the Maplewood Avenue and Deer Street corner. He said he felt that the civic space was overstated and thought the wide sidewalks would be sufficient.

Ms. Ruedig said that the site plan was much improved and felt that the different openings and outdoor seating were important. She said the massing was fine. She said it was difficult to make a contemporary building in a historic context. She suggested that the corner façade be brought

into the rest of the building but noted that she didn't want to see everything echo traditional styles. She said the overall project design seemed to be traditional with contemporary materials and that the development of the details would make the building distinctly contemporary but still able to fit into the District.

Mr. Rawling explained why he thought the site plan was strong. He said he supported the 3-dimensional qualities of the building because they animated the skyline and got away from the box buildings. However, he said that creating a 3-story building with the setback away from the corners diminished those qualities and created another flat-topped building with another penthouse box on it with a smaller scale. He said the building needed a tall, strong corner. Vice Chairman Wyckoff agreed with Mr. Rawling about the strong corner but had no problem with the massing otherwise.

City Council Representative Nancy noted that the mural and public art were a win-win for everyone.

Chairman Lombardi concluded that the Commission felt that the general massing was good but that the corner needed to make a statement for the building. He agreed with Mr. Rawling that perhaps the penthouse needed to be in a different spot. Ms. Ramsey stated that the penthouse could be moved out further. She also noted that the forthcoming details might help in understanding the style.

Mr. Cracknell said the option of going with the traditional building design with contemporary materials rather than a contemporary design with traditional materials seemed to be the right one.

Mr. Rawling noted that the color copies made the materials look different from the black and white copies and were not as acceptable. He suggested something that looked more unified and also asked for more details. Mr. Shea suggested materials native to historic seaport New England, like brick and pine, rather than concrete gray blocks.

Mr. Ryan asked whether the rain screen was a natural finish. Ms. Ramsey said it would have the appearance of natural wood. Mr. Ryan suggested terra cotta.

### **Public Comment**

Rick Becksted of 1395 Islington Street said he appreciated the massing and scale but was concerned that the public space would be turned into restaurants. He said the windows on the parking garage looked awkward and thought the vehicles within would be seen from passersby. Ms. Ramsey said the vehicles would not be seen.

No one else rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public comment session.

### **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*The Commission recommended another work session at a future meeting.*

B. Work Session requested by **393 New Castle Avenue, LLC, owner**, for property located at **390 New Castle Avenue**, wherein permission is requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (restore and renovate existing one story building, convert to dwelling unit, restore and renovate existing garage) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 207 as Lot 6 and lies within the Single Residence B and Historic Districts.

Chairman Lombardi read the petition into the record.

The architect Anne Whitney was present to speak to the petition, along with the owners Mark and Ellen Hepp. Ms. Whitney said the building was in rough shape and needed minor changes. She said the structure would be raised 18 inches to get it out of the flood zone. She discussed other changes, which included bringing the existing windows up a foot, removing the front awning, replacing the fencing and metal door, placing window boxes on the street side of the house, putting shutters and the cupola back, and adding another layer of vertical siding and perhaps finials. She said the back and waterside elevations would be raised to create more access to the basement and that the garage front doors would be replaced with a roll-up door.

Vice Chairman Wyckoff recommended an automatic door opener for the existing hinged doors. Ms. Whitney said they wanted to replace another door with a four-panel one. Chairman Lombardi asked whether the Inspection Department would require a second egress, and Ms. Whitney said she would find out.

Ms. Ruedig said the property was very special and thought it was fantastic that it would be renovated because it would be a great example for Portsmouth to see. She said the building had a quirky history and felt that making the windows smaller would change the building's character. Ms. Whitney said they wanted to install a bathroom, and it was discussed further. Mr. Shea agreed that as much of the original building features as possible should be retained and that the windows should be saved. He encouraged more restoration.

Mr. Rawling agreed that the appearance and proportions of the existing windows should be maintained and suggested keeping the framework and moving the window box up. It was further discussed.

Ms. Ruedig said she encouraged not putting in an overhead garage door because it would change the building's character.

There was no public comment.

## **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*The applicant stated that they would return for a public hearing at a future date.*

D. Work Session requested by **Deer Street Associates, owner**, for property located at **165 Deer Street (which has been subdivided into five individual lots)**, wherein permission is requested to allow demolition of existing structures (demolish structures) and allow new free standing structures (construct two new mixed use buildings) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 125 as Lots 17-2 and 17-3 and lies within CD 5, Historic District, and Downtown Overlay Districts.

Chairman Lombardi read the petition into the record.

Tracy Kozak and Mark Moeller of JSA Architects were present on behalf of the applicant, along with Mark Moeller of Deer Street Associates. Ms. Kozak said they wanted to develop five lots and noted that Lots 4 and 5 were in the District. She reviewed the packet and said the applicant wanted to remove the two existing buildings on Lots 4 and 5. She also noted that the owners were willing to salvage or repurpose the buildings.

Mr. Moeller discussed the architectural aspects. Ms. Kozak said the project was almost a contemporary design using traditional materials. The design was further discussed.

Mr. Mayer said he was concerned about the project's scale and noted other private development projects that caused the loss of view sheds, open areas, and the opportunity to walk between buildings. He suggested that the applicant use North Cemetery and North Mill Pond as historic focal points that people could look at between buildings. Ms. Kozak said their project would have lots of open space and gaps between the buildings. She also stated that Lot 2 would be developed as an open space and plaza. It was further discussed. Mr. Shea said he hoped a big wall wasn't built and that the project related to the North Cemetery. He said if the buildings were too tall, it wouldn't be a pleasant place to walk. The surroundings and views were further discussed.

Mr. Shea asked what the allowable height was for buildings, and Mr. Cracknell said it was 50 feet or four stories. He said an additional story or ten feet on top could be included if community space or workforce housing was provided. Ms. Kozak said the Building 5 would have an additional story because it would be workforce housing.

Mr. Shea asked whether Lots 4 and 5 were looked at differently because they were in the Historic District. Mr. Moeller agreed that they were, and it was further discussed.

Mr. Rawling suggested that the freestanding buildings on Lots 4 and 5 be sculptural, with space around them. He thought the other proposed buildings had authentic materials, nice textures and were well expressed. He also liked the pedestrian amenities. He said he looked forward to seeing everything applied to the project.

Vice Chairman Wyckoff said he understood the phasing aspect but was afraid that it would be so far down the line that the workforce housing might not happen. He referred to the Portwalk development's phasing and said that a lot of promises were lost. He said he would like to see an equitable replacement of the two 4-unit buildings that would be demolished and suggested reproducing the workforce units in the Lot 6 building, which would be the first to be constructed.



As for the massing, he liked the fact that the buildings were not going right to the lot lines. He asked whether the buildings would be wood framed or steel framed, and Mr. Moeller said they would be steel-framed.

City Council Representative Pearson said the City was looking at the Bridge Street lot in conjunction with the Worth lot, so the entire side wouldn't be blocked by buildings.

Ms. Ruedig said everything in the project sounded hopeful and felt that the views from across the North Mill Pond were important. She said she hoped archaeologists would be employed to properly document everything. Ms. Kozak said they planned to hire archaeologists.

Chairman Lombardi said Vice Chairman Wyckoff's comment about workforce housing on Lot 6 was a good one because more workforce housing was needed and Lot 6 seemed to be more connected to residential areas than busy Maplewood Avenue. He said he was excited about the project and agreed that the views across the Commons would be important. Mr. Rawling said it would be nice if the street character could be enhanced by Lot 6.

Mr. Moeller noted that they were planning a number of balconies similar in character to the triple deckers.

### **Public Comment**

Rick Becksted of 1395 Islington Street said the Commission determined the character that the City would look at. He said the workforce housing on Lot 6 was more appropriate because it had less scale. He noted that the civic space was being used to create public access, yet he thought it was a tradeoff and part of the deal.

No one else rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public comment session.

### **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*The Commission recommended another work session at a future meeting.*

### **Other Business**

Chairman Lombardi stated that City Attorney Sullivan wanted to meet with the Commission. Mr. Cracknell explained that it involved clarifying what constituted a conflict of interest in representing clients that came before a board. He said they would also discuss topics like the 'right to know', public records, and the right to request issues. He said the meeting would occur either on February 8 or 15.

Chairman Lombardi said the Commission also needed to discuss their 2017 work plan.

Mr. Cracknell distributed a schedule of meetings noting the number of past meetings held. He pointed out that Administrative Approvals had helped to shorten meetings.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

*At 10:15 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and **passed** by unanimous vote (7-0) to adjourn the meeting.*

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
HDC Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Historic District Commission meeting on February 1, 2017.