

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

EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

6:30 p.m.

March 14, 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Vincent Lombardi; Vice Chairman Jon Wyckoff, City Council Representative Doug Roberts; Dan Rawling, Reagan Ruedig, Martin Ryan; and Alternates Molly Bolster, Cyrus Beer

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Richard Shea

ALSO PRESENT: Vincent Hayes – Land Use Compliance Agent/Associate Planner

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I. WORK SESSIONS

A. Work Session requested by **Portsmouth Housing Authority, owner, and Ed Pac, LLC, owner**, for properties located at **140 and 152 Court Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow demolition of an existing structure (partial demolition of building at 152 Court Street) and allow a new free standing structure (construct a new free standing residential structure) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 116 as Lots 37 & 38 and lies within the CD 4 and Historic Districts. *(This item was continued at the March 7, 2014 meeting to the March 14, 2018 meeting.)*

Ms. Ruedig recused herself from the petition. Chairman Lombardi read the petition into the record.

The project architect Carla Goodknight and Craig Welch, Executive Director of Portsmouth Housing, were present to speak to the petition. Ms. Goodknight gave an overview of the application, noting that they wanted to promote the development of mixed income multi-family projects using incentives such as parking relief and increased heights. She reviewed the site plan and discussed the building's mass and height. She reviewed the building style options, noting that Option 2 was the Commission's preferred style.

Mr. Welch said they wanted to develop something that fit within the neighborhood context as well as the Historic District. He said their organization was a local non-profit one, and that the goal was to develop a property with a number of affordable units for people, two-thirds of which would have a yearly income of \$30,000-\$50,000. He said the proposed building would improve the site and relate well to good urban design principles.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said there were concerns about massing and what would be given up and gained. He asked how much the other one-third of the units would rent for. Mr. Welch explained that Federal loan tax credits would be used and that they would be regulated to provide housing

for people with incomes at 60% of the area's median income. He said that 40-45 units would be available and that those renters would be income-qualified each year, and the rest of the units would be at market rate. He said the goal was for them to trail market rate. Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked whether the rest of the units would be workforce housing or up to the maximum. Mr. Welch said they would not. He said they were calling them market rate units because they would not be restricted. He said they also wanted to house people who made around 65% of the area's median income. He said the affordable units would be \$886 for a one-bedroom, maxing out at \$950 with utilities. Chairman Lombardi asked about the unregulated units. Mr. Welch said that, if they had to go higher than \$886, the goal was to have those rents trail the market, and he felt that those rents would be lower than other new housing in the City. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said that the term 'trail the market' was a vague one and asked what the market trail would be if a two-bedroom in another newer building went for around \$2500. Mr. Welch said their goal was to have a one-bedroom renting for \$1200 and a two-bedroom renting for around \$1500 a month.

Mr. Ryan asked what would happen if there were 400 applicants for the 45 units. Mr. Welch said they would have a tenant selection plan with restrictions on people who made below the 60% median-income figure. He said they would also do background and credit checks and show preference for Portsmouth residents or workers, veterans, the elderly, and the disabled. Mr. Ryan asked what would happen if a person's income increased within a few years. Mr. Welch said they wouldn't penalize people for increases in income. He said they would do an annual certification and that the person wouldn't be part of the tax credit restricted group, so the next available apartment would go to someone in that group.

City Council Representative Roberts said it would be great if the first floor could be activated with more doors so that it would make the development feel more like a neighborhood. Mr. Welch agreed and said that the parking use was proven to be below the parking requirements in the Ordinance, thus making it easier to have more street activation.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff noted that the Federal traditional liner building had doors on both sides, and he asked whether someone entering the building would be restricted to the liner building. Ms. Goodknight said the apartments would be more compact, so they wanted to develop community space in a large common area that would be a potential connector between the liner building and the main building. Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked whether a retail café type of space could be developed in activating the first floor. Ms. Goodknight said the storefront was preferred but that they wanted to review it at a future meeting.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked whether there were photos of the back of the building. Ms. Goodknight said they were in the 3D model. She distributed photos showing the Feaster Building from across Mill Pond and said there would be low impact from that vantage point. Mr. Beer asked whether the parking behind the fire department would be moved behind a separate building. Ms. Goodknight said the firehouse needed that space for maneuvering.

Mr. Rawling said he was in support for the massing version as shown on Figure 8.2a and the liner buildings (Figure 8.3a). He said he liked the additional glazing and storefront appearance and hoped to see hipped roofs on the larger structure instead of flat roofs. He also noted that he

liked the softer detailing on the 8.2 schemes and that the larger building had a harsher, institutional feel. He said he thought, however, that the project was going in the right direction.

City Council Representative Roberts asked whether the front building would normally be directly in the middle. Ms. Goodknight said they would address it in the next round.

Mr. Ryan asked whether the vehicle access could be at the lower part of the site and the pedestrian access toward Court Street. Ms. Goodknight said there was two-way access behind the Feaster Building and a 9-ft grade change from Court Street to the back of the building, with no internal ramping. Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked whether there could be ramping. Ms. Goodknight said that a lot of parking space would be lost and that it would be further discussed at the Planning Board and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings.

Public Comment

Tom Ferrini of 69 Taft Road said he was a board member of the Portsmouth Housing Authority and felt that their mission would produce a valuable, heartfelt, non-profit housing project for Portsmouth. He said he was in favor of the project.

Patricia Mattie of Portsmouth said the project was long overdue in Portsmouth and noted that younger people wanted to rent small places and didn't necessarily need parking.

Barbara DeStefano of 90 Brewery Lane said she was paying less money at her new development than she had at Portwalk and that the Brewery Lane condominiums had filled up right away because people were going for smaller units. She said she liked the mixed-income idea and thought it was the perfect place for the development because it wouldn't block anyone's view.

Sandy Dika of 333 Marcy Street said the City desperately needed that type of housing and hoped that the project could go forward.

Nia Farley of 110 Court Street, Unit 2, said she supported the need for workforce housing but was concerned about the building being higher than the zoning height variances and concerned about how many cars would access the garage coming from the Feaster Building lot.

A resident (no name given) of 110 Court Street said she was concerned about the number of additional vehicles and the building's size, but otherwise favored workforce housing.

A resident (no name or address given) said she was on the Portsmouth Housing Authority Board and thought the project would be a nice addition to the downtown area, especially for people who wanted to live closer to their workplace.

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

Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked Ms. Goodknight to explain the parking entrance in more detail. Ms. Goodknight explained where the parking would be retained and how the roadway would access the existing on-site parking. In response to further questions from the Commission, Ms.

Goodknight said that the corner of 110 Court Street was used to access a certain portion of the building and had some parking but that it was a dead-end street and was also used for emergency vehicle access. She said the project would have to work with a civil engineer on whether the back of the building could be accessed from Parrott Avenue. She said they would also introduce screening and fencing in that area.

The applicant indicated that they would return for another work session.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to **continue** the work session at the April meeting.*

B. Work Session requested by **29-41 Congress Street, LLC, owner**, for property located at **29-41 Congress Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (exterior repair and maintenance to the existing brick façade) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 117 as Lots 10 & 11 and lies within the CD 5, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts. *(This item was postponed at the March 7, 2018 meeting to the March 14, 2018 meeting.)*

Ms. Ruedig resumed her voting seat. Chairman Lombardi read the petition into the record.

The applicant Keith Frizzell said he wanted the Commission's guidance regarding future renovations to his home. He said there seemed to be a variety of brick types on the building and thought some bricks could break if they were repointed, and he asked what he would replace them with. He showed two brick samples that he said his mason felt were the closest match to the existing bricks. He also asked how he would perform maintenance on the sandstone part of the building and what kinds of problems he could encounter.

Ms. Ruedig said sandstone was a terrible architectural material and difficult to repair, but that there were mixes that could be used to patch it up. Mr. Frizzell said he wanted to remove some of the flaking and loose pieces and preferred to replace them with a precast product that would blend in. Ms. Ruedig said she thought that doing as little as possible from a preservation standpoint was preferable. She said that specialized masons could recommend a breathable paint.

Mr. Frizzell said he wanted to do some repointing on the brick side and wanted a path to continue in case he ran into problems. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said Mr. Frizzell should defer to his mason for bricks that were compatible. Mr. Rawling suggested that Mr. Frizzell match the patch if a brick was taken out of the middle of the patch, and if the patches looked bad, to match the brick that was there. He also encouraged the use of a precast lintel or sill that matched the brownstone material. Mr. Ryan suggested consulting an envelope architect who had infrared technology that could highlight problems.

Ms. Ruedig said that a very soft mortar should be used if the entire building was going to be repointed. Mr. Frizzell said he didn't want to take down the front. Ms. Ruedig said it was rare to

have a face rebuilding and that she liked the patches and quiriness on that façade and hoped that the original brick could remain. Vice-Chair Wyckoff agreed and said he found nothing wrong with the patches. It was further discussed.

Ms. Bolster asked the Commission to explain a past procedure on another project as an example of what the Commission did not want. Vice-Chair Wyckoff noted that the joints were filled with white mortar that could be seen from a distance. Ms. Ruedig said the joints should be recessed. Mr. Rawling suggested a product called Liquid Dirt that would prevent the mortar from being so white. It was further discussed.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission recommended that Mr. Frizzell return for an administrative approval if he had major changes during renovation, such as having to replace several lintels, headers, and sills or having to use a different material.

II. ADJOURNMENT

*At 8:15 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and **passed** unanimously to adjourn the meeting.*

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
HDC Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Historic District Commission meeting on April 04, 2018.