

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

**Remote Meeting Via Zoom Conference Call**

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Per NH RSA 91-A:2, III (b) the Chair has declared COVID-19 outbreak an emergency and has waived the requirement that a quorum be physically present at the meeting pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8, as extended by Executive Order 2020-5, and Emergency Order #12, Section 3. Members will be participating remotely and will identify their location and any person present with them at that location. All votes will be by roll call.

**6:30 p.m.**

**May 13, 2020**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Vincent Lombardi; Vice-Chairman Jon Wyckoff; Members Reagan Ruedig and Martin Ryan; Alternates Heinz Sauk-Schubert and Margot Doering

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Dan Rawling, Cyrus Beer, City Council Representative Paige Trace

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

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**I. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS**

**1. 403 Deer Street, Unit 13 (*postponed at the May 07, 2020 meeting to the May 13, 2020 meeting.*)**

Mr. Cracknell said there were 12 changes since the project was approved in 2019 and that most of them were minor field changes that the contractor made, independent of the applicant or the HDC. He emphasized that screens were not specified on the approval and that full screens were not requested. He said the contractor installed full screens on all of the building's 40 windows. He reviewed the changes, which included the installation of transoms with three lights and doors with nine lights because the originally-approved lights were not available.

The full screens were discussed. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the screens should have been mentioned during the original presentation and that he didn't feel badly about requesting that half screens replace the full screens. Mr. Ryan said it was the Commission's fault that half screens weren't noted and that they didn't have the right to impose the added cost on the applicant.

Ms. Doering asked how the left-hand railing got aligned with the opening between the two buildings and had to shift to the left. The applicant Doug Palardy said the original plan was to keep the deck in place but they eliminated it due to the rot. He said there was also an issue with footings on the ground to make the deck a stable platform, so the stairs were rebuilt and the railing got shifted to the right and sort of married with the door and the landing on the left-hand side. Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked why the 3-light tall transom was installed instead of the 5-6 small panes of glass. Mr. Palardy said it never dawned on him to check the transoms at the top of the door. Vice-Chair Wyckoff verified that the units were ordered with the transom installed on the top already. Mr. Palardy said it came as a complete package from the manufacturer and that he would see if it could get changed. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said that plugging in a unit out of a catalog was a new construction method that shouldn't have been done on a historic building. The half screens were further discussed. Mr. Cracknell said that some of the burden was on the Commission but that the Commissioners had approved what they saw, which was no screens. Ms. Ruedig said it was unfortunate that the full screens were installed because they were black mesh screens that hid the windows. She asked whether some screens could be removed and others left on guestrooms that weren't seen from a main view. Mr. Palardy said he would contact the manufacturer to see if it was possible to get half screens. Ms. Ruedig said the other items were fine and thought the light fixtures were more interesting than those that were originally approved but that the 9-panel door looked like new construction and was more inappropriate than the transoms. She suggested that the applicant check with the contractor to make sure the full screens weren't the contractor's fault and might have been a mistake in the manufacture. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said that, because the windows were Andersen ones, it would make no difference to the window by removing the full screens and installing the half screen. He also thought the contractor might have ordered the wrong door and transom. Mr. Cracknell suggested approving the application with a stipulation that a subsequent administrative approval would be needed for the screens to be replaced by half screens and for the door and transom to be replaced with the originally-approved door and transom.

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **approve** Administrative Approval Item #1 with the following stipulation:*

- 1. The applicant would return for an Administrative Approval for the window screens, door, and transom window. With a preference for Half-Screens and the originally approved door and transom window.*

*Ms. Ruedig seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 5-0.*

**2. 73 Daniel Street (postponed at the May 07, 2020 meeting to the May 13, 2020 meeting.)**

Mr. Cracknell said the request was to install a 6"x6" louver vent on the building that would be painted the color of the brick and sized the brick's length and width. He said there were two

options for its location, one high up in the arch and one lower. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he didn't like either location. Ms. Ruedig said she preferred the one in the lower position because it didn't compete with the arch. Mr. Ryan said he wouldn't vote for either one, noting that it was an air intake and not an exhaust. He asked why it couldn't be in the interior, seeing that it was for a boiler. At this point, Mr. Sauk-Schubert joined the meeting. He said the applicant had previously mentioned that they had to bring fresh air from the rear of the building. Mr. Cracknell said the Inspection Department required the intake vent for the boiler room and that there was no other viable exit because of the restaurant. Ms. Doering said she wouldn't approve it if it wasn't necessary but that she'd opt for the higher location because it wasn't right next to the door. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he preferred it down because he thought there could be a light fixture at the upper location. Mr. Sauk-Schubert said he liked the idea of a light fixture/intake combination, and several Commissioners agreed. Mr. Cracknell suggested stipulating that the vent be made smaller and return as an administrative approval if the smaller dimension didn't work. He also thought that a light was a tasteful way to screen the vent. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said a lot of buildings had a bronze or copper nameplate with the building number and client name on it that stood out from the building a few inches and allowed airflow in the back of it. Ms. Ruedig suggested continuing the request to the next meeting. Mr. Ryan also asked that Mr. Cracknell confirm that the vent was a code requirement.

*It was moved, seconded, and **passed** unanimously (6-0) to **continue** the item to the May 20, 2020 meeting.*

## **II. WORK SESSIONS (OLD BUSINESS)**

A. Work Session requested by **132 Middle Street LLC and 134 Middle Street, LLC, owners**, for property located at **132-134 Middle Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (re-pointing brick, roof replacement, add ADA accessible entry, and front entrance renovations) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 127 as Lots 11 and 12 and lies within the Character District 4- L1 (CD 4-L1) and Historic Districts. *(This item was postponed at the April 15, 2020 meeting to the May 13, 2020 meeting.)*

## **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*It was moved, seconded, and **passed** unanimously (6-0) to **postpone** the petition to the June 3, 2020 meeting.*

B. Work Session requested by **GBK Portsmouth, LLC, owner**, for property located at **134 South Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (add roof deck) and renovations to an existing structure (update lower façade, entrances, decks, and exterior lighting) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 101 as Lot 64 and lies within the General Residence B (GRB) and Historic Districts. *(This item was postponed at the April 15, 2020 meeting to the May 13, 2020 meeting.)*

The applicant Ben Kelly and the project architect Brandon Holben were present to speak to the petition. Mr. Holben noted that the Commission's prior feedback was taken into consideration. He reviewed the petition in full.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the applicant took the Commission's comments seriously, especially by making the trim look beefier around the balconies. He said it was a nice positive look to the old building and that he was in full support of the project as it was. Ms. Ruedig agreed. She said the Commission didn't have purview on colors but thought that the applicant could be creative and buck the current trend of blue and gray. She said the rooftop addition was great and that cleaning up the back was a big improvement. She said she preferred to see wood balconies instead of metal ones on a building in the middle of the south end and thought the façade needed to be treated more conservatively. Mr. Ryan said he felt the same way about the rails but thought they were fine. He suggested using a wood cap on the top portion of the handrail so that it didn't look so severe. Ms. Doering agreed with Ms. Ruedig that the railings shouldn't be so modern, especially if they were original to the building. Mr. Holben said the railings were not original and were poorly constructed, and he explained that heavy posts would have to be placed on the corners to make wood railings work and that it would look too heavy. He said the lighter material simplified it and let the original trim show through. He said the wood cap was a good idea.

Mr. Sauk-Schubert suggested that a wooden top railing might enhance the façade a bit. He suggested a separate base for the rooftop structure to delineate the progression from the deck to the exit enclosure. Mr. Holben said they wanted to keep it simple. Chairman Lombardi said he agreed that such a traditional building should have a traditional front façade and that he would miss the wood on the front. He also thought that a wood top rail would be a good compromise.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

## **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*The applicant said he would **return** for a public hearing at the June 3, 2020 meeting.*

C. Work Session requested by **KWA, LLC, owner**, for property located at **165 Court Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow renovations to an existing structure (renovate store-front with new glazing and new canopy system) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 116 as Lot 27 and lies within the Character District 4 (CD 4), Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts. *(This item was postponed at the April 15, 2020 meeting to the May 13, 2020 meeting.)*

The architect Brandon Holben was present on behalf of the applicant. He reviewed the petition and said they wanted to improve the street appeal with storefront glazing and a new canopy system. He showed a few canopy designs and said they wanted to tint the upper level windows and storefront windows and do the canopy in a lighter accent color.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said it was a nice, clean renovation. He noted that the rods went up to the brick but that there was no plate. Mr. Holben said the rods might become more decorative and explained that tabs would be bolted onto the steel beam at the base and that the frame elements would attach. He said the canopy would be supported like a sun shade. He said there was a plate and that a few bolts would be anchored into the mortar and would look more crafted. He said the rod would be at least  $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick. He said they would do more exploratory work when they removed the existing canopy and that they might have to add another steel plate or tube to get the new canopy supported properly. He said the custom-made canopy would have a polycarbonate made of a higher-grade material that wouldn't become cloudy over time.

Ms. Ruedig said she was glad the canopy would have a steel frame but would miss the brush aluminum for the window finishes, which she felt was an important aspect of the building's design and timeframe. She asked if the canopy had a slope. Mr. Holben said the existing one sloped into the building but the new one would slope out. He said the canopy had some diffusion to it so that it wouldn't let a lot of light in and would protect the interior elements. Chairman Lombardi said he agreed with Ms. Ruedig about the aluminum windows but didn't have a problem with the dark color. He noted that the canopy followed the trapezoidal shape of the corner and the street had a curve, so he wondered what the canopy would look like curved. Mr. Holben said they had considered it but favored the current shape of the canopy. Mr. Sauk-Schubert asked if the black finish was the anodized aluminum storefront or the painted black aluminum storefront. Mr. Holben said they could go anodized, which would have a more metal look and would contrast between the painted wood above and the metal storefront below. The canopy was further discussed.

Chairman Lombardi noted that the glass windows were fewer and larger. Mr. Holben said they gave more consistency to the sides of the panels. Mr. Sauk-Schubert verified that the frame of the canopy was welded and he suggested that the pieces closer to the core extend into the corner and attach to the angled piece where the angle would bisect. It was further discussed. Vice-Chair Wyckoff compared it to a hip roof going around the corner and thought it would accent the storefront entrance better than the proposed rods going way out on each sidewalk of the square. Mr. Cracknell said it would require an easement from the City.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

## **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*The applicant said he would **return** for a public hearing in at the June 3, 2020 meeting.*

D. Work Session requested by **St. John's Church, owner**, for property located at **105 Chapel Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (construct new addition for ADA compliant entrance) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 106 as Lot 62 and lies within the Civic, Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts. *(This item was postponed at the April 15, 2020 meeting to the May 13, 2020 meeting.)*

The project architect Michael Campbell and a member of the project team, Rob Stevens, were present. Mr. Campbell reviewed the petition and said the purpose was to provide handicap access to the church that would begin in the lower parking lot. He also noted that the addition had three French doors that would spill out into the courtyard for interior and exterior events.

Chairman Lombardi asked if the large sanctuary window would be kept. Mr. Campbell said it would become a doorway to the church foyer but that all the other windows would remain windows. He said the doors on Chapel Street at the top of the handicap ramps would be replaced by two 2'8" doors and one 3-ft door with a sidelight. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he wasn't comfortable with that. He said the marble keystone detail looked out of place and complicated and thought it should be the same brick material as the church or smaller. Mr. Campbell said the intent was for them to match what was on the church.

Ms. Ruedig said it was a nice addition and connection to the two buildings. She said she would do away with the keystones and just match the brick arches of the side of the 1950s building. She said the ramp fit in very well. Mr. Ryan said the addition was placed onto a very prized example of historic architecture in Portsmouth and should not confuse people about its time and place. He said it concerned him that the applicant was copying a lot of the details of the church and trying to make the addition seem like it had always been there. He said the back of the building was more successful and should also be the same kind of language used on the front of the building that would eliminate any confusion about the history of the building complex. He said the proposed design was crowding the detail of the entrance into the 1950s building and was a bit awkward by trying to compete with the church and the parish hall.

Ms. Doering said she agreed with the comments about the keystones being heavy. She said the HDC guidelines indicated that the addition not compete with the main building and that it be more diminutive. She agreed that the back side of the building could also work just as well on the front and would allow people to see the different eras and the building's progression without taking too much away from the aesthetic. She said should could support either design and would encourage the church to consider going with something more daring.

Ms. Ruedig said the addition was clearly a contemporary one, even though it used a lot of the same language as the church. She said the windows were big and spaced closer together, which made the addition airier and brighter, but thought the windows could be even bigger to make the building even lighter and the more transparent structure. She said it should still be traditional because the church was one of the focal points of downtown Portsmouth and had a rich history. She said there were ways to make the addition a traditional 2020 building and thought the applicant was going in that direction. Vice-Chair Wyckoff agreed but said he felt that it was too complicated as far as the keystones and maybe the cornice. Mr. Ryan said the building would present as a 2020 addition and would look 'fake historic'. He said the arched windows were not needed or genuine and felt that the addition was almost mocking the church's history and doing it a disservice by grabbing elements off the church and creating the new addition. He said the other rendering in the presentation was more appropriate and tasteful and wouldn't compete with the church. Mr. Sauk-Schubert said the keystones should also reflect the pier at the corner and that the fascia should return and make a clean cut toward the original building. He said he liked



the handicap ramp and the capping and thought the cut stone wall was handsome but couldn't see the elevation and how it interfaced with the other elevation. He said the contemporary addition looked handsome but wasn't sure about the brick arches.

Chairman Lombardi said the cornice crowded the building a bit but that he could understand why. He said he liked the addition's massiveness but thought the ramp was also substantial and that the center of it could be lighter. Mr. Campbell said he would place a continuous cap on it and that the interior could be a metal railing and not masonry. Chairman Lombardi said he liked the back of the new building and thought it would be a wonderful addition to have a space that spilled out to the outside so easily. He thought the traditional approach for the addition was appropriate and had no problem with the arched windows.

Ms. Ruedig asked about the window in the back behind the hip roof, noting that it could be a trap for water and snow. Mr. Campbell said insulation would get the water out from behind it and that the hip roof would make it blend it better.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

#### **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote (6-0) to **continue** the work session to the June 3, 2020 meeting.*

#### **III. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
HDC Recording Secretary