

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

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

7:00 p.m.

January 31, 2007

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman John Rice, Vice-Chairman David Adams, Richard Katz, John Golumb, Ellen Fineberg; City Council Representative Edward Raynolds, Planning Board Representative Jerry Hetjmanek; and Alternate Sandra Dika and John Wyckoff

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

ALSO PRESENT: Roger Clum, Assistant Building Inspector

I. PUBLIC HEARING

1. Petition of **Harbor Corp., LLC** for property located at **Deer Street, Russell Street, and Maplewood Avenue** wherein permission was requested to allow a new free standing structure and connecting walkway to 250 Market Street (+/- 204 room hotel, conference facilities, retail space, condominium units, and a +/- 743 space parking garage) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said properties are shown on Assessor Plan 119, as Lot 1-1C, Assessor Plan 118 as Lot 28, Assessor Plan 125 as Lot 21, and Assessor Plan 124 as Lot 12 and lies within the Central Business B, Historic A, and Downtown Overlay Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Attorney Malcolm McNeill, legal representative for the development team, spoke to the project. He said that they are proposing a 204 Westin Hotel and Conference Center with twenty one condominiums, and a municipal parking garage containing at least 657 parking spaces. The garage will be become the property of the City after the completion of construction. He continued that the applicant had entered into a joint development agreement with the City dated December 14, 2005, which has been approved by the City Council which relates to the development of the site in the ultimate conveyance of the parking garage to the City. Attorney McNeill stated that the City has a special interest in the design and functionality of the parking garage that it will ultimately own and operate. He said that the City must approve all design and functionality specifications. He pointed out that the plans that are presented this evening have been so approved. He continued that the applicant was charged with obtaining all permits prior to conveyance to the City.

The development of the parking garage has also been the subject of a bonding resolution passed by the City in December of 2005 authorizing the necessary funding for the purchase of the parking garage. Attorney McNeill also pointed out that the property is located in the CBB zone. The CBB zone was amended by action of the City Council on July 26, 2006 where various amendments to zoning ordinance were passed that related to the height and use of the building. He said that the building that is being proposed is a permitted use and complies with the recently enacted zoning ordinances and no relief is being requested from the Board of Adjustment relative to the property. Attorney McNeill stated that they have had numerous meetings with the City and their consultants relative to the design and functionality of the building. He added that this proposal is located in an active area of development, the Northern Tier, which the City has encouraged and the Master Plan has encouraged. He pointed out that the Hilton Hotel has been approved and constructed; plans have been recently announced for the intent of development of the Parade Mall, and the probable development of the Portsmouth Herald site.

Attorney McNeill stated that there have been seven work sessions with the Historic District Commission. He said that they have learned from every one of them. He said that the Commission has allowed public comment and where abutters have had an opportunity to say what they thought about the project. He added that they have attempted to listen throughout the process. He said that the presentation tonight will include comments that the Commission has made throughout the process as well as the comments made by the abutters at the work sessions. He reminded the Commission that the development team has been subject to two forms of oversight. As for the parking garage, the ultimate user and owner will be the City of Portsmouth. Attorney McNeill said that they have worked very closely with City and the consultant about issues of functionality and design. The design is a cumulative effort of the developer and the City to make the garage work, look good, and to make it an important part of the Northern Tier development.

Attorney McNeill stated that Ms. Nancy Ludwig will present the design, Mr. Steve Parkinson, Director of Public Works will add his comments, and Mr. Brian Preston of Walker Parking, will speak to the functionality and design of the parking garage.

Ms. Nancy Ludwig, architect for the project spoke next. She showed an aerial photo of the area that clearly delineates the project. Next she showed a diagram of the layout of the building. The parking garage sits at the Deer Street and Maplewood Avenue intersection and the hotel comes up along Russell Street and sits directly across from the Sheraton Hotel. Its entry is off the top of Russell Street. Ms. Ludwig pointed out that Russell Street will be reconfigured. The major entry to the upper level of the parking garage is off of Deer Street and through a large arched opening that looks through to the Northern Tier. She added that the garage has a retail corner at the end of Deer Street where it intersects with Maplewood Avenue. The garage also has an entry off of Maplewood Ave. She said that those spaces will be reserved spaces. She added that the hotel/conference center and the parking garage are two separate structures.

Ms. Ludwig showed the Commission the model with the layout of the structures. She reminded the Commission about their discussions regarding the character of the buildings. She pointed out the fact that the Commission was proud of the Eagle Photo building and how a larger building was broken down into smaller pieces. She said they talked a lot about the masonry and punched openings in the downtown. They also talked about materials used in the downtown area.

Ms. Ludwig said that with the garage, they looked at very different images. She said that early on they were interested in expressing a garage building that was transitional and that had a lot of visibility to and through. She added that at one point they were talking about a steel structure. There was a lot of discussion about the High Hanover garage and how it did express itself with the masonry walls and the punched openings. What was preferred was a strong image on Maplewood Avenue.

Ms. Ludwig spoke about the hotel first. She said that there is a long narrow neck on the property where Russell Street meets Green Street. She said that it was important to break down the mass of the building. She said the way that the building sits on the site and has to make all of the turns and curves, allows it to sit well on the site and it breaks down the mass. She pointed out that where Green Street meets Russell Street, they have created a prominent corner with a tower. They have also expressed the broad glazed openings, the masonry, the string coursing, and have lightened the building.

Ms. Ludwig talked about the pedestrian bridge that is an important connection between the two hotels. She said that there was a change in this elevation. She said they are showing a shallower arch as the ground level of the bridge crosses Russell Street and then incorporate a deeper arch into the wall of the structure. She added that the elevation coming up Russell Street is a series of planes that are of a scale and proportion to buildings that are along Market Street. As you come up to the bridge, they pull the building up a story and have expressed a roof form at the top of the building that will shield some of the mechanical equipment that they anticipate will be part of the project.

Ms. Ludwig showed a view from the corner of Green Street and Russell Street. She said that it showed similar materials being used.

Ms. Ludwig turned her focus to the parking garage. She stated that they have presented several variations of the garage. On the Maplewood end of the building, they have expressed punched openings that are of a scale and proportion that are typical of window openings within the downtown, but the masonry comes up to a height that would meet the bumper requirement. She said that the masonry wraps the Maplewood end. At the corner, they have expressed a stair tower element. She mentioned a very creative suggestion that came from the last meeting about incorporating artwork to enhance the stair tower. Ms. Ludwig pointed out that the last time they looked at the stair tower it was turned the other direction. It is now turned 90 degrees. The glazing system is straightforward with panels at the lower level with glazed openings between. At the entry over Maplewood Avenue, they have broken the masonry and created a broader opening to create a variety along the façade. She added that the façade is delineated with

a series of string courses, the masonry, and the openings. At the lower level, they have expressed the taller two story element with the storefront glazing that will be part of the retail space and then will use a metal panel above it. Ms. Ludwig explained that they have been able to work out a solution to the garage that breaks down the scale of the building. She said that the upper most level occurs on the Maplewood end. The building steps down on Deer Street and it is at that step that they have opened up that elevation to achieve a different look and to create a more open feeling of the garage.

Ms. Ludwig stated that they are looking at an aluminum window system for the hotel building. She said they would like to use an Efcow window with a double hung series. She said that they indicated the historic panning profile that they expect to be putting within the recess. She added that these windows will look similar to the ones that are on the Sheraton although this is a different manufacturer. Ms. Ludwig stated the windows on the upper levels are slightly shorter than those on the lower level. On the second floor of the building they become taller because they have conference facilities on that floor. They will be incorporating an awning system over the retail area.

Chairman Rice asked if they attached a cut sheet of the windows. Ms. Ludwig replied that they have not but there is detail of the window and the panning profile.

Vice Chairman Adams asked what is meant by the panning profile. Ms. Ludwig explained the window is sitting further into the opening so that they can get the sense of brick mold that is attached and comes out beyond the window and it will be slightly more recessed. Vice Chairman Adams commented that it was a handsome detail. Ms. Ludwig added that the Sheraton has the similar detail. She said that they are proposing a cast stone sill. The proposed window system would be oyster white in color. Vice Chairman asked since they do not have cut sheets, were they going to have the windows and mullions cut to size. Ms. Ludwig replied yes, the window would all be made for this project. She said it would be a commercial grade window. She added that she could get a cut sheet to them. Chairman Rice asked what the Commission's pleasure was. Vice Chairman Adams stated that he felt that Ms. Ludwig gave a thorough description of the windows.

Ms. Ludwig talked about roof materials next. She stated that they are proposing to use a simulated slate. This material will go on the mansard form that is along Russell Street and the exterior wall of the condominium level. She added that they are proposing to use a single color. Councilor Reynolds asked if it was a recycled material. Ms. Ludwig replied yes.

Ms. Ludwig showed the Commission a brick sample. She said that they are looking at the Morin Old Port. They would like to use the Morin Old Port on the hotel but would like to suggest a different brick for the garage. She felt that it would help to break down the massing. Chairman Rice pointed out that they would do a mock up for final approval of the brick.

Ms. Ludwig talked about the paneled areas on the hotel. She is proposing that they are looking at using an Azek trim that is synthetic but will look like wood. She mentioned that on the garage they are showing a metal infill panel in the taller masonry opening. She said that they are looking at a material called Luck bond and the color would be oyster white with a matte finish. She added that this material would be used above the storefront. Ms. Ludwig said that they had an opportunity to provide some color with the canopies.

Chairman Rice pointed out that they would need to come before them again for approval of the awnings and color. He added that he would have to see the details.

Chairman Rice asked about the tower on Russell Street and what the connecting material was on the back. Ms. Ludwig replied that it would be the Azek material.

Ms. Ludwig stated that they had a power point presentation that showed ten views from their computer model. She said that the model has been developed in a 3D system. She cautioned the Commissioners that it is a working tool for them, rendered in house and the model does not always have the foreground and the background.

Ms. Michelle Waldron interjected that all of the images on the boards presented this evening were computer generated.

View one showed what a 50 foot building would look like in that area.

View two was looking up the railroad tracks from Maplewood Avenue. Ms. Ludwig said that in the site plan, they have left some area for green space with ornamental fencing. It showed the two story base at the Maplewood entry and the cornice on the upper level. Chairman Rice asked if it was metallic trim in that area. Ms. Ludwig replied yes. Vice Chairman asked what the string coursing material in this area of the building was. Ms. Ludwig replied cast stone.

View three is from across the street on the Parade Mall side looking through the archway. Ms. Ludwig said they would like to have a series of panels there where events could be advertised. The sidewalk coming from Deer Street through the arched opening was also visible. Mr. Golumb asked what the material for the ceiling would be. Ms. Ludwig replied that she thought it would be an aluminum slat that would allow them to do the curve. Ms. Ludwig said that from the third level of the garage there is a pedestrian connection from the garage into the second floor of the hotel. Vice Chairman asked if the entry canopies are slatted. Ms. Ludwig said that they are envisioning a series of horizontals with a glass cover. Vice Chairman Adams asked about the stair tower. One side was in brick and the other side in glaze. Ms. Ludwig pointed out that the stairs are on the right and the elevator on the left. Vice Chairman Adams said that the corners of the stair towers look to be about 8 or 9 inches in width. Ms. Ludwig replied that that was about right. It would have a heavier corner.

View four was from the pedestrian bridge, the second level of the Sheraton lobby area looking back at the Westin hotel. Ms. Ludwig pointed out that the glazing is not accurate in the image. She mentioned that this image showed the lobby area that leads to the conference area. Chairman Rice asked what materials would be used for the bays in the image. Ms. Ludwig replied they would be using the Azek material and that it would be painted. Ms. Dika asked if there was slate above that. Ms. Ludwig replied yes. She added that the image showed a glimpse of the stepped back feature of the condominiums. Vice Chairman Adams asked if the glazing sat on a base. Ms. Ludwig said yes, it would be a narrow base, about 8 inches. Vice Chairman Adams asked if the ceiling material in this area was the same as in the arched opening. Ms. Ludwig replied yes.

View five was a view from Russell Street. Chairman Rice asked what the archway would be made of. Ms. Ludwig replied that it would be the Azek paneled material.

View six showed the view of the other side of the octagonal tower, looking at the entry to the service drive. Chairman Rice asked if there was a pedestrian entryway in the back of the building. Ms. Ludwig replied no, just the archway. Councilor Reynolds asked if there was bicycle access along the road from the back of the building. Ms. Ludwig responded that they would not encourage that. They would encourage the use of the pedestrian walkway. There will be a paved roadway. Vice Chairman Adams asked if they anticipated using gates. Ms. Ludwig replied probably. Councilor Reynolds stated that he thought there ought to be a bicycle path. Ms. Ludwig pointed out a different route. Vice Chairman Adams felt that part of the attraction for the bicycle path was that the area is tree lined and it hints of it. Ms. Ludwig said that it would have to be shared surface since it is currently design as a service road only.

Mr. Don Peterson stated that they had a series of Pre-Tac meetings and one of the issues from those meetings was how the service drive would be used. He said they have been encouraged to limit access for safety reasons as the road is designed to be 12 feet wide. He added that it would be a safety issue to have pedestrians in an area where deliveries are taking place. Councilor Reynolds stated that he felt they should give that particular area more thought. He said that one of the fears about the project is that the structure would be a giant barrier. He felt they should strive to reduce that barrier feel and fact. Mr. Wyckoff pointed out that part of the problem with this was that the drawings show pedestrians in that area with what looked to be a storefront on the first floor. Ms. Ludwig replied that he was right and that these images are just computer models. She told the Commissioners that there is no public access into the building from this area. Mr. Wyckoff asked if there would be enough green space in that area to plant trees. Ms. Ludwig replied yes.

Ms. Fineberg stated that she was surprised that there were no emergency exits on that side of the building. Ms. Ludwig said that there is a stair that comes out to that area but it is an emergency exit only. Councilor Reynolds stated that it would be a mistake to have this green space and not have pedestrian access to it. Ms. Ludwig replied that the green space does not belong to them, it belongs to Gilford.

Mr. Peterson stated that they have built out to their property line in that area. They will have a retaining wall because of the grade change.

Views seven and eight showed the views further along Green Street with a straight on elevation view. Vice Chairman Adams asked what the retaining wall would be made of. Ms. Ludwig said it would be concrete and would be cast in place. It will have an ornamental railing on either end with a guardrail in the middle.

Ms. Ludwig stated that this image shows the kitchen. Vice Chairman Adams asked if there would be ventilation units on the roof and if so, will they be visible. Ms. Ludwig replied that there will be a parapet wall that will cover as much as it can. She added that without the kitchen design, she could not say how big the equipment will be. She said that that type of equipment tends to be held closer to the roof surface.

Views nine and ten showed the views from Raynes Avenue. The parking garage was visible in the image. Ms. Fineberg asked about one of the bays. She said that in an earlier rendering, the stair tower went all the way down to the ground and had a solid base to it. Ms. Ludwig interjected that they have added more masonry as they turn the corner.

Mr. Steve Parkinson, Director of Public Works spoke next. He stated that the City has held a series technical workshops and meetings concerning the project. The City staff has been actively involved in the planning phases. He said that as of date, the garage component meets the requirements of the City. Mr. Parkinson also pointed out that the City had hired Walker Parking Consultants to review the structural components, lighting, facility control systems, traffic flow, accessibility, signage, and material specifications, just to name a few.

Mr. Brian Preston of Walker Parking Consultants spoke to the project. He said that his firm specializes in the design and structure of parking garages and have been in business for the past 40 years. He said that the City asked them to come up with a set of criteria which would be used as a basis of design for the project. The criteria would cover the garage as a whole. Mr. Preston stated that one of the more predominate criteria was the functional design of the structure which involves the overall parking geometrics of the facility, how the vehicles flow through it and the overall comfort level of that. He said that their approach is to use a "level of service" approach with A being the best and F is the worst. He said they review the turning radii, parking space widths, drive out widths, and slopes of the internal ramps. For this project, that they have given this parking garage a level of service rating of B. He said that that is a solid level of service. He added that an A would be for a structure with a high level of turnover, such as an airport parking garage. Mr. Preston stated that they also evaluated the structural durability since the City will eventually own it and so they have set forth material specifications. He said they have also set forth criteria relating to the lighting, the drainage, and the light levels. Overall, Mr. Preston said that the design does conform to their criteria and will provide a comfortable and safe user experience.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that he remembered that the concrete failed on the previous parking garage in Portsmouth. He thought that salt had something to do with that. He asked Mr. Preston how they will avoid that situation from happening again. Mr. Preston replied that this structure will be a precast garage. He said that there would be a double T floor plank that will span over to the exterior wall. He continued that the double T floor plank would rest on a beam with an L on the bottom of it. Mr. Preston added that he was not familiar with the previous garage. He said that they will apply a joint sealant to stop the penetration of the salt and moisture into the crevices.

Councilor Reynolds asked about the interior lighting. Mr. Preston replied that they are proposing a typical garage luminare. He said that it does have an up light but the down light will spread light. There are usually two per bay. He added that the lights are controlled by a photo cell. During the daytime hours, a certain amount of inner lights will be on. At night, the photo cell will kick on the additional lighting.

Chairman Rice stated that at this point in the meeting, he would encourage questions from the Commissioners as they go page by page through the plans.

Chairman Rice asked for questions pertaining to the hotel entry at Russell and Deer Street.

Mr. Golumb asked if they had considered anchoring the bottoms of the bay windows to the building. Ms. Ludwig said that they had intended to leave them room for a sign and had also intended them have the same expression as the middle bay. Vice Chairman Adams stated that he agreed with Mr. Golumb. He felt they looked a little abrupt. Ms. Ludwig replied that they would be projecting two feet from the wall and would be of the same panel material. Vice Chairman Adams asked if was possible to ease the windows back some. Ms. Ludwig replies that they could take a look at that. She asked if they had a slightly angled plane, would that make a difference. Vice Chairman Adams thought that would make sense. He felt that the abruptness of the square line created a shadow underneath.

Vice Chairman Adams stated that he thought this was the only view where they see the capping of parapets on the sloping roof of the centerpiece. He asked what that material was going to be. Ms. Ludwig replied that it would be cast stone.

Ms. Dika asked about the roofing material. Ms. Ludwig responded that it would be of the slate material that she showed them earlier in the presentation.

Chairman Rice asked for questions regarding the view up Russell Street.

Ms. Fineberg stated that she did not find the archway to be as elegant as the previous one. She asked why they made the change. Ms. Ludwig explained that they were trying to come up a more expressive for an arched connection between the two structures. Vice Chairman Adams said that this design reinforced the arch on at least three sides of this building.

Ms. Dika stated that she liked this presentation better than the boxcar look. Vice Chairman Adams asked if the connector would be lit internally in the evening. Ms. Ludwig replied yes. He asked her about the lighting. Ms. Ludwig said that it would glow and would be enough light to walk through. Councilor asked if it could be floor level lighting. Ms. Ludwig thought that was an interesting idea. She added that it would not be any external lighting on it.

Chairman Rice asked the Commission if they felt the archway should take on more importance. Councilor Reynolds replied that he did not feel more importance because there is so much surface area, he wondered if it could be expressed in a color like copper, or a patina finish. Many of the Commissioners thought that was an interesting idea. Mr. Golumb added that he remembered Ms. Ludwig stating that they were trying to tie the design of the building to other Portsmouth landmarks, such as the bridges. He felt maybe the archway could be approached in that way. Ms. Ludwig said that she was hearing a material change to metal. Chairman Rice replied yes. Ms. Ludwig suggested a traditional metal detailing. Vice Chairman Adams asked about the material used on the parking garage in Lewiston, ME. Ms. Ludwig replied that they are structural steel shapes that are painted. She asked if that is what the Commission is interested in. The Commission responded yes. Vice Chairman Adams said that he thought it would create a sense of separation from the bays and the bridge. Ms. Dika stated that she would like to see some differentiation of the arch above the glazing. Ms. Ludwig said they she was hearing that they liked the idea of a greenish color.

Vice Chairman Adams mentioned that he was still having difficulty with the octagon. He asked Ms. Ludwig that by making the top two floors in a lighter material, did she think it reduced the look of the structure. Ms. Ludwig replied yes, and she added that she felt it reduced the scale. Mr. Golumb said that he felt that the first floor windows on the octagon seem to overpower that area. He thought that the September 13 rendering seemed to soften the look.

Chairman Rice asked for questions regarding the Green Street hotel view.

Ms. Fineberg asked if there are any roofing materials beyond the faux slate. Ms. Ludwig replied yes, that a membrane roofing would be used on the flat areas of the hotel and the deck areas. She added that they would not be visible. Only the visible areas will have the faux slate.

Chairman Rice asked for questions regarding the Deer Street garage and convention center.

Ms. Fineberg asked that of the two renderings of this view from the submissions tonight, which one she should vote on tonight. Ms. Ludwig reminded the Commission that the computer models were just a work tool for them. She said she would like her to vote on the rendering and not the computer view.

Vice Chairman Adams asked about the arched pergola that sits over the entrance to the conference center. He asked what kind of material would be used for those vertical elements. Ms. Ludwig replied that they would be a steel frame system. She added that top is not glazed, it is open.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that the rendering of the conference center with five trees in front. He said that the sidewalks are 6 feet wide. Ms. Ludwig replied that they would be 8 foot sidewalks. Mr. Wyckoff asked if 8 feet sidewalks are sufficient for planting trees.

Chairman Rice reminded the Commission that landscaping is not within their purview. Mr. Wyckoff said that the plans show a nice building with soft touches, such as trees, and he does not think they can do that. He did not feel that 8 feet was wide enough to plant a tree that close to the building. He felt that the structure definitely needs trees.

Mr. Golumb asked about the canopy over the entrance. Ms. Ludwig said that it will be the width shown in the plans and will be centered and framed from the steel sections.

Chairman Rice asked for questions regarding the view at Maplewood Avenue and Deer Street.

Chairman Rice mentioned that they will have to see more detailed schematics of the awnings. He pointed out that the Commission does not like to see fixed awnings.

Chairman Rice asked for questions regarding the garage view on Maplewood Avenue.

Ms. Fineberg stated that she felt the December perspective was more successful than the one presented this evening. She said the scale of the spaces have gotten wider. Ms. Ludwig replied that the only change was that the masonry has been extended. Ms. Ludwig stated that there was a revised elevation in the stapled packet.

Chairman Rice asked for questions regarding the Maplewood Avenue elevation, the elevation of Russell and Deer Streets, and the Russell Street elevation.

Ms. Fineberg stated that she did not feel that she had enough information as to how the stepped back condominium floor was going to look. Ms. Ludwig pointed out the area on the model. Chairman Rice asked if it would be visible from the street. Ms. Ludwig said it would not be highly visible. Ms. Fineberg said they would see if from the Sheraton.

Chairman Rice asked if the wall would be covered with a roofing material. Ms. Ludwig responded yes.

Councilor Raynolds asked if there would be rooftop air conditioning units. Ms. Ludwig replied that there would be roof top mechanicals and so they have pitched the roof as such to accommodate that. Mr. Golumb asked if they would have to come back for approval for the mechanicals. Chairman Rice said that was correct. Mr. Clum said that

there is an exception in the ordinance for equipment that is less than 4 feet high and less than 27 cubic feet in volume.

Chairman Rice asked for questions regarding the Deer Street and Green Street elevations.

Ms. Fineberg asked about the roof on the stair tower. Ms. Ludwig replied that it is the same roof that they have used on the other stair tower. She pointed out that there are new elevation drawings in the packets.

Mr. Wyckoff made a suggestion that the arch of the trellis should match the drive through of the pedestrian entry.

Chairman Rice asked how the Commission felt about the enlarged bay at the hotel. He asked if the roof shingles were two different types of materials. Ms Ludwig replied that it was rendered that way so that they can see the break between them. She said they would be using the sample that she showed them this evening.

Chairman Rice stated that this is one of the most complicated and massive projects that the Commission has been involved in. He felt that they have been thorough in their review of it.

Chairman Rice asked if there was anyone in the public wishing to speak to, for, or against the petition.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, AND AGAINST THE PETITION

Ms. Christine Mayhew of 64 Bridge Street thanked the Commission for the opportunity to speak. She stated that she has concerns about the mass, the scale, and the size of the project. She said she would focus her comments on the overhead walkway. She felt that an overhead walkway was appropriate for the gateway to the City and inside the Historic District. She said that she frequently visits Boston and have walked over the Copley Place walkway and even with the size and scale of Boston, she felt that walkway was futurist. Ms. Mayhew said there was no way to make the Sheraton/Westin walkway look desirable. She urged the Commission to not grant approve of the walkway and encourage the architects to come up with an underground solution to the connection.

Ms. Deborah Bouchard-Smith of 298 Myrtle Avenue spoke next. She said that she is in support of the project. She stated that she is a resident of the Northern Tier and she also owns a business on Deer Street. Ms. Bouchard-Smith also has spent 20 years in event/conference planning so she has seen her share of parking garages attached to hotels. In her opinion, she felt that careful consideration to the design of this process has morphed into a thoughtful complex with serious consideration of the input of the public and the Historic District Commission. She hoped that the Commission would vote to approve the design and move the project forward.

Mr. John Grossman of 170 Mechanic Street stated that he agreed with Ms. Bouchard-Smith. He also said that he feels privileged to be a part of the Portsmouth Advocates. They have met several times with the design team and they have responded favorably to their suggestions. One thing did concern him however, was the materials. He pointed out that with the Hilton Garden; they did not see the impact that those materials would have on the project. He said he hoped that the Commission would get a better handle on the materials proposed for this project.

Vice Chairman Adams asked Mr. Grossman what materials he felt they stumbled on. Mr. Grossman felt the use of cementitious materials on the mass of the back of the Hilton Garden Inn is not attractive. He also said that the base of the structure looks like cinder block. He added that the lighting is glaring. Mr. Grossman said that he is stating his concern because he does not have a feel for the materials that are being proposed for the Sheraton/Westin.

Mr. Dick Duchard spoke on behalf of the Portsmouth Advocates. He said he felt that the garage was the most challenging of all of the design elements. He said that the design team has been very receptive to their suggestions. He felt that they have taken what was a monolithic shape and have turned it into an attractive design. He was also pleased to report that one of the ideas presented this evening by the design team was the idea of one of their members, Mr. Dan Rawling. Mr. Duchard stated that the Portsmouth Advocates feel that this structure will fit nicely into the Portsmouth landscape.

Chairman Rice asked if anyone else from the public wished to speak to, for, or against the application. Seeing no one rise, he declared the public hearing closed.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Mr. Katz made a motion to approve the application as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Fineberg, for the purposes of discussion.

Ms. Fineberg stated that overall, she felt they had an excellent product, however, she felt there were still some questions that have not been answered adequately. There are dimensions missing, questions as to where materials are being used, which facades they are being used on, and other details that are missing. She was not comfortable voting up or down on the project without those details. She wanted to know what it will look like when you drive into the drop off area, what are the materials, how big is the interior in that area, and is the ceiling arched or flat. Ms. Fineberg said that she does not have objections to them, she just does not know enough about them to be able to say yes.

Councilor Raynolds stated that he agreed with Ms. Fineberg. He said that they are 95% there but they are not quite. He said there were no exterior light fixtures presented and the changing of the material on the pedestrian bridge. He said he could not vote for it tonight, but it is very close to completion.

Mr. Golumb stated that he agreed with Ms. Fineberg and Councilor Raynolds. He also would like to see information on the mechanicals, where the kitchens would be, equipment for the condos, concern about the bay windows, and the height of the octagon portion. He felt that overall, the project is excellent, but he could not approve it without more details.

Mr. Katz stated that he did not expect the originators of a project of this complexity to specify what type of door knobs they are going to be putting on. He said that he finds it very frustrating to say that you embrace a project in concept 95% but cannot trust them for the other 5%

Mr. Wyckoff stated that he agreed with Mr. Katz. He said that there are only a couple areas, the materials for the bridge and the awnings over the retail space. He felt that either you understand it or you don't. He said he was quite happy with the way it has ended up.

Ms. Dika asked if there was any way that they could approve part of the application and then make a list of the other items that they need more details on. Chairman Rice suggested that they could approve the overall project subject to the applicant submitting a detailed list of materials, subject to more drawings in the drop off area, etc. He said you start to get a lot of stipulations. He said that one thing that got by them was how the condos were going to be expressed. He continued that he felt that most of the members on the Commission embrace this project and want to see it move forward but they want to see if move forward the right way. Chairman Rice suggested that they could table the application to resolve the issues or they could take those issues out of the application.

Vice Chairman Adams stated that it is a massive building of extraordinary complexity. He asked the Commission how many doors are in the structure, how wide they are, what are they made out of, do they have sills, how tall is the parking garage off of the grade. He said that they don't.

Chairman Rice pointed out that on the Deer Street, conference center elevation that has a whole of condos expressed in gray. He asked what it looks like, what is it made of.

Attorney McNeill stated that they fully recognize that this is one of the largest projects they will ever consider. He said that they desire closure for a number of reasons of building this 75 million dollar project. He thought one approach that the Planning Board commonly makes that if there are outstanding conditions, that is either delegated to staff person or the Chairman resolves with the applicant, close the public hearing, and then it is up to the Chairman if it is necessary to come back before the Commission. He added that despite the prominence of the project, the press coverage, the intensity of concern by the City, only one person has come to speak against it. Attorney McNeill said that they do not want to come out of this process with a denial after all of the work that has been done. He added that if this project is going to be extended for one more meeting, he hoped that the Commission would give them the assurance that they would only be talking about the 5% of the project that needs more details. In the desire to finalize the

project and move on to site review and get this project built, that has been funded by the City in terms of the garage, there needs to be closure. He suggested either a conditional approval; subject to regulatory review or that they come back one more time and talk only about the specific issues.

Chairman Rice stated that those were fair comments.

Vice Chairman Adams stated that if the Commission feels that the public interest is better served by this project proceeding, even in phases, then they are given that option to do so. He said that before they go down that road, he suggested that everyone be certain, because the only way that that makes sense, is that they are going to achieve certainty. It also depends a great deal on the applicant to strive to complete that last 5%.

Attorney McNeill said that they will have their commitment to work on the last 5%.

Chairman Rice asked the Commission if they felt they had enough information and detail about the garage to separate it out from the hotel/conference center or did they want to leave it as one large application.

Ms. Fineberg stated that her objections were not because she wants to deny the project, she just wanted more information.

Mr. Katz said that if they are setting up some stipulations, they should be extremely detailed about the details, telling them exactly what they want from them.

Mr. Golumb thought they should have had one more work session but Attorney McNeill stated at the last meeting that they wanted to move to a public hearing. He added that the details that they have asked for are details that they ask others for as well.

Councilor Reynolds stated that he was not inferring that he wanted to deny it. He said that it struck him at the last minute that an exterior light plan would be helpful. He added that a project this large should involve a lot of details.

Ms. Dika mentioned that in addition to the exterior lighting, she added the awnings and their materials, the walkway, and window dimensions. She said that she remembered calling Mr. McHenry back for dimensions.

Vice Chairman Adams recalled that there were a number of dimensions that were not specified in that 6-16 Congress project.

Ms. Fineberg clarified that the reason that they ask for specifics is because what they approve gets built. She said that the Inspection Department is charged with making sure that the plans are adhered to.

Attorney McNeill asked the architects how long it would take them to respond the particular issues being discussed. They responded that they did not know what the issues were.

Ms. Ludwig pointed out that their drawings are scale drawings that for the sake of presentation that were shrunk down and color rendered. She said they would be happy to offer them full size drawings of all of the elevations. She added that the condominium level is drawn and they could produce that for them tomorrow. She said that all of the information that they are requesting is part of the model. Ms. Ludwig said that they did not want to burden the presentation process with the full size drawings but they would be happy to give them to them.

Chairman Rice said that they need detailed drawings of what is going on behind the conference center. Ms. Ludwig pointed out that for the sake of the color rendered drawings they have grayed them out. Chairman Rice also wanted to see how the condominiums are expressed. Vice Chairman Adams asked for details on the new and interesting bridge design with material specifications and color. Chairman Rice also asked for a drawing of the drive up area. Vice Chairman Adams stated that he would like to see a cut sheet on the balustrade that is going along the roof edge along the condos. Ms. Fineberg stated that she would like to see information about the materials for the roof.

Chairman Rice read his list of what the Commission is requesting: interior lighting plan, awnings, walkway bridge, expression of what happens over the conference center, what the roof top condos look like, detail of what the drive up entryway looks like, balustrades, and plans on how the roof materials come together.

Chairman Rice reminded the Commission that they have a motion to approve and a second for the purposes of discussion. He said that he would recommend a tabling motion to a time certain.

Ms. Fineberg made a motion to table the application to the February 14, 2007 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Golumb. The motion passed with a 6-1 vote with Mr. Katz abstaining.

II. ADJOURNMENT

At 10:20 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Good
HDC Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Historic District Commission Meeting on February 21, 2007.