

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

**EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**6:30 p.m.**

**March 12, 2014  
reconvened from March 5, 2014**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Joseph Almeida; Vice Chairman Tracy Kozak; Members Richard Katz, John Wyckoff, George Melchior; City Council Representative Esther Kennedy; Planning Board Representative William Gladhill; Alternates Dan Rawling,

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Reagan Ruedig

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

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**I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (CONTINUED)**

- D. August 21, 2013**
- E. September 4, 2013**
- F. September 11, 2013**

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve all of the above-referenced minutes as presented.*

**II. WORK SESSIONS**

*The Board's action in these matters has been deemed to be quasi-judicial in nature.  
If any person believes any member of the Board has a conflict of interest,  
that issue should be raised at this point or it will be deemed waived.*

A. Work Session requested by **Bradley Boisvert and Karen Bannon Boisvert, owners**, for property located at **124 State Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (add elevator at rear of building, construct stair access, construct walkout decks and add doors at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> levels, construct dormer, add skylights, and replace windows) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 107 as Lot 55 and lies within Central Business B and Historic Districts. *(This item was postponed at the March 5, 2014 meeting to the March 12, 2014 meeting.)*

The project architect Mr. Brandon Holben of McHenry Architecture and the owners Mr. Bradley Boisvert and Ms. Karen Boisvert were present to speak to the petition.

Mr. Holben stated that it was their third work session, and he would focus on the Commission's feedback. The project's scope was window replacement throughout, rooftop modifications and

skylights, and a walkout roof dormer on the rear of the building. Mr. Holben went through the submittal package that included existing conditions, views, and setbacks. He showed the second-floor plan with a proposed deck from the walkout kitchen level with a spiral staircase. He project previously had two double doors in the center window location, but they were going back to the original window locations and adding a door. Chairman Almeida asked if they were staying within the existing masonry openings. Mr. Holben stated that they were and would lower the sills.

Mr. Holben next showed the new roof deck with the walkout dormer. The deck had been pulled back to 6' within the existing roofline and would carry through some of the shingling and drip edge and still maintain the slope of the deck. He showed the roof plan with revisions and stated that they had more of a straight shed dormer the last time, but he tried to soften the edges and maintained some of the roof edge. He showed the skylight detailing for the Velux solar-powered skylight on the front units and the updates of the ones over the ridge. Chairman Almeida asked if the flat ones were comparable, and Mr. Holben told him no because they were fixed. Mr. Holben went through the elevations and pointed out the State Street rendering of the proposed skylights and rear elevation and how the corners would soften the appearance of the dormer. He also pointed out the skylight aerial view and the closed dormer and showed how the dormer was pulled back so that just the bow projected out. The view from the park showed how the roof edge went through and the bow above it had a tapered shape to its base so that it didn't impose on the lower roof. The window sill was the standard ½" sill, and he showed an example of it with the brick mould around the jamb and the sill on the granite. He handed out a historic survey that was done in 1978 on the 1850 colonial Greek revival.

Ms. Boisvert said that The State of New Hampshire had verified that the front of the house was redone in 1853 in Greek revival, making the windows large. The brick on the front of the house was updated to that period as well. She had hired a restoration expert to go through the house, and he discovered that the floors were raised. Mr. Boisvert said that the original foundation had stone rather than brick on top, and the casing was in stone, so it was probably lifted up. Ms. Boisvert said she tried to find pictures of the house from an earlier era to see if it had changed and to figure out what style of window should be on the front of the house and whether it should remain 2/2, which looked like the renovation from 1850.

Mr. Wyckoff said that what Mr. and Ms. Boisvert described made sense. He cited the Athenaeum as an example that was altered around the same time period. The windows were larger and had a bigger glass size, so 2/2 seemed appropriate for that time. He asked Ms. Boisvert if she knew whether the wood windowsills were put in at that time. Ms. Boisvert said the windows were built at the same time as the house at 126 State Street, which had granite sills. Mr. Wyckoff asked why she was going through the extra effort of putting granite in. Ms. Boisvert replied that it was appearance and maintenance.

Mr. Katz thought that the changes were a vast improvement over the previous submission, especially because the cornice remained and the dormer and balcony were not as loud. He regretted that Ms. Ruedig wasn't there because he would have liked to hear her comments as a preservationist that the changes respected and did not assault the original structure. Mr. Melchior said the applicant still had the challenge of solving the curved portion of the upper

balcony and the shadow it created. He mentioned the cornice line and visual transition. Mr. Katz agreed and said it would be better if it were straight. He asked if it would create a hardship. Mrs. Boisvert stated that the issue was space on the deck. Mr. Boisvert asked if the Commission wanted them to bring the rest of the deck out. Mr. Wyckoff replied that if the entire balcony were projected one foot more to the edge of the bricks and didn't have a curve, it would be a good compromise and would allow more room on the balcony, as long as it didn't extend beyond the cornices. He thought it would be appropriate to its surroundings, and he pointed out the picture of several other buildings that had straight rails. Mr. Katz said that it looked like the straight section was as close to the cornice as possible. Chairman Almeida stated that when looking at the small bit of roof area, there was at least a foot or 14", but they couldn't do two rows of shingle, so there would be no harm in taking it up. He mentioned a 20' span and said it would have to be sensitive to the existing cornice. Mr. Rawling suggested that the edges of the deck board be cut back at an angle. He envisioned the brick cornice and fascia with another wide fascia on top of it, which would make for a wide band. He said the original cornice of the fascia could be articulated to minimize the deck end. Chairman Almeida said it could be canted back. Mr. Wyckoff said that by using the metal, everything would be minimized.

Chairman Almeida asked Mr. Holben to discuss the form of the dormer and explain the materials. Mr. Holben stated that they wanted to use lower maintenance materials to tie it together with the roof form, and metal seemed to work well. They squared out the dormer with the bracket awning over the doors, but there was a prominence to the corners where it projected out, especially on the east side where it stepped out, so they folded it back to show the existing chimney. Vice-Chair Kozak was concerned that the canted roof on the chimney side meeting a perpendicular wall would look bizarre from Court Street and asked if they could carry the steep roof pitch all the way back. Mr. Holben said they would be going into the chimney at that point. Mr. Rawling pointed out the diagram showing the left side of the roof and asked if they could drop it straight down and model it on the right side so that the windows or doors would look like a box bay. It would make a shorter shed dormer and give a strong roof edge along the more visible areas. He spoke about getting rid of the angle part and jogging it down.

Mr. Holben asked if there was opposition to pushing the deck out to realign it back to the window space so that they could recapture some of the space from the deck. Vice-Chair Kozak stated that it should read as a dormer and maybe have a railing. It was starting to look like a penthouse on top of the roof. The simpler it was, the more successful it would be. All the different roof pitches and little pieces on the edges were fighting that goal.

Councilor Kennedy asked what the window height of the skylight was. Mr. Holben said the existing did not have a skylight. Mr. Wyckoff asked how many skylights there were. Mr. Holben told him six, three that were visible from State Street and three toward Court Street. Mr. Wyckoff said that the rendering showed five skylights. Mr. Holben said it was an example of the material calling out the bronze finish. Councilor Kennedy stated that she was uncomfortable with things on State Street, like dormers, so she wasn't sure about the skylights. Mr. Holben told her that the consensus from the previous work session was that those issues were approved and everyone was happy with the skylights and the material. He noted that Councilor Kennedy hadn't been at that meeting.

Chairman Almeida asked that they resolve the dormer issue. Vice-Chair Kozak told the applicant that if they built the form of a shed dormer, it would fit well with the building, especially if standing on Court Street and looking back. She felt that they were almost there except for the roof pitches on either side, which eroded the concept. Chairman Almeida agreed and said it could be a shed form as wide as the deck and going all the way to the same height as the proportion of the doors. Where the slope came down, they were staying away from the chimney and exposing the roof on either side of the dormer. Mr. Holben said there was no prospective view of the dormer on the chimney side because that side of the building couldn't be seen. Vice-Chair Kozak was concerned with the silhouette of the Court Street side.

Mr. Rawling asked whether it could become the shed dormer as wide as the deck if the side toward the chimney went back a little and returned to the chimney. Mr. Holben said he liked the idea of shed with a box form. Mr. Katz asked if it was an attempt to diminish the mass of the dormer. Mr. Holben said that it would still maintain the area. Vice-Chair Kozak suggested making it a simple form. Mr. Wyckoff said if they kept it away from the chimney, they would still have their deck. Mr. Holben said the stairs wouldn't work if the deck was pulled a foot. Mr. Rawling said they might have to raise the height of the chimney.

Councilor Kennedy said she was still concerned about the front of the house showing the skylight because it wasn't part of the Historic District culture. Ms. Boisvert told her that the houses across the street had skylights. Mr. Gladhill asked why there were two doors on the back of the second floor and not just one. Ms. Boisvert replied that one door opened to the dining room and gave an open air feeling, and the other door was convenient for using the staircase. Mr. Rawling asked if they were proposing a wide horizontal door with two solid lights because in the elevation drawings it seemed to be two glazed areas. He thought that a garden-style door rather than a commercial-looking door would work better.

Chairman Almeida referenced the new Pella windows and said they could get the identical detail and thickness to match perfectly with the back windows. The 2/2 were appropriate, but the back had existing 6/6 windows that were quite large. He asked if they would use 2/2 windows on the back. Mr. Wyckoff said that he didn't have a problem with 2/2 windows all the way around. Mr. Gladhill thought the openings had been altered in the back like they were in the front and asked if they were the original openings for 6/6 windows. Mr. Holben said that the openings were very close. The State Street side showed the original 3/3.

Chairman Almeida referenced the State Street elevation and thought that what made the skylight look worse was that they were showing the ridge higher than the chimney. Mr. Holben said it was shown in the elevation that it reflected. Chairman Almeida said it would be very difficult to see that roof surface, and he also saw the ridge. He reiterated that there were dormer challenges and a lot of comments from the Commissioners on how to simplify it.

Chairman Almeida called for public comment but there was no one to speak to the project.

*Vice-Chair Kozak moved to **continue** the work session to a work session/public hearing at the next meeting, and the motion was seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously with all in favor, 7-0.*

B. Work Session requested by **HarborCorp LLC, owner**, for property located at **Deer Street, Russell Street, and Maplewood Avenue** wherein permission was requested to allow a new free standing structure (construct mixed use building to contain hotel, conference center, condominiums, supermarket, and parking) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 125 as Lot 21, Assessor Plan 118 as Lot 28 and Assessor Plan 124 as Lot 12 and lies within the Central Business B, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts.

Chairman Almeida reminded everyone that they had discussed work session formats and adopting a four-step review process, of which Step 1 was the neighborhood context. He hoped that the applicant had followed the procedure so that they could tackle the issues one at a time. The review process would begin with the applicant providing a narrative presentation to explain and support their submission packet, and the time allotted would be up to 45 minutes. The Commission would ask questions for 20-30 minutes. Public comment would take 30-45 minutes, limiting each comment to 3-4 minutes and a few minutes for follow-up questions. The summary would be allotted to 20 minutes and, if time allowed, the applicant could introduce a bit of what they would discuss at the next meeting. Councilor Kennedy asked that the paperwork be presented ahead of time if the applicant referenced the next meeting.

Mr. Chris Thompson, Principal Partner at HarborCorp, and his design team Ms. Carla Goodknight, Mr. Heinz Sauk-Schubert, and Attorney Susan Duprey were present to speak to the application.

Mr. Thompson thanked Mr. Cracknell and the public for taking the time and energy to make their project as successful as they could. They were excited to be there at last, after going through a significant process to get to where they were. It was their first work session in pursuit of a Certificate of Approval and ultimately a Conditional Use Permit. Their project was a dynamic and complex one that included a Whole Foods market, a conference center, a parking structure, a boutique hotel and condominium units. They had their initial Charette and completed the design review on January 16 after two public hearings. They had processed a lot of feedback received from the various Boards and the public. Their project was still preliminary but was much improved from when they started back in December. They viewed their relationship with the City as a partnership, which was how they thought of it 25 years before when they developed the Sheraton Hotel. He hoped that people felt that the Sheraton's design had stood the test of time. They had also gone through a design for the Westin Hotel and Conference Center, which was a 200-room hotel with two dozen condominium units, and a conference center and parking garage of similar size as their proposed new project. With the Commission's input and engagement, they were committed to making the project a success. They would focus on the first step of the process, which was an excellent framework for a complex project like theirs. They would look at its historic context and use it as a way to identify design propositions to continue to move forward. Mr. Thompson said that the word 'context' came from the Latin word 'contextus' and was a great metaphor for their process. It was a complex site and was, in many ways, like an unsettled debt to Portsmouth because of the challenge to the developers and design community to figure out how to respond and move forward in the erasure of an entire neighborhood. Their job was to take that history and legacy and pull it together in a project that had a great sense of place and a high-quality design and

could stand the test of time. They were asking the Commission's advice on how to determine which exemplary surroundings they wanted to use as a platform to make an excellent building.

Ms. Goodknight told the Commission that they would be doing the surrounding neighborhood context, which was Step 1. It sounded simple enough, but the context was very diverse. The study that they did included the 300 and 500 feet from the project site. They would review the historic significance of urban renewal and its continued effects because it was the starting point of where they had evolved to. She hoped their presentation would identify what the key concepts were behind the architectural terms and what they meant moving forward.

Mr. Sauk-Schubert stated that he had been a planning and design consultant since 1975 as well as a building project manager and had moved to Portsmouth in 1969. He wanted to discuss the time during the urban renewal and spread it out into a larger context indicating a few key words in terms of how they viewed the future. He mentioned events such as sending a man to the moon in 1969, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, and Women's Rights. The outlook for changing the world was dramatic, and he thought the urban renewal programs were part of that outlook. By the time urban renewal took place in Portsmouth, many locations felt that it was really not a good idea. Given their mandate to analyze their context, they had asked what the historical context was. The Commission needed to digest the information that he would throw out at them and formulate it so that they agreed and moved forward to achieve something that would stand the test of time. He asked how they would achieve that, what the context was, and what they would abide by.

Mr. Sauk-Schubert explained that urban renewal came about in Portsmouth when the 1957 Portsmouth Housing Authority was established and the executive director Walter Murphy had a vision of creating an individual empire for himself. He figured out that the Federal Government would pay for a lot of the expenses. Mr. Sauk-Schubert showed an image of the execution of the urban project on Vaughan Street, which made clear the devastating effect it had on the Historic District. He asked how they would make sure that they did not err again, as well as forty years from then when people would ask if the buildings reflected Portsmouth's historical attributes. He didn't feel great about some of the buildings they created, but he understood the process. The project was surrounded by store parking lots and empty spaces, and except for the hill that was historical, the rest receded into the background. They were confused as to how the Commission would see them and perceive the historic context to be, and they needed to work on that to proceed forward. He felt that they were still responding to that era in ways that he was afraid they hadn't reconciled and were dealing with its effects whether they acknowledged it or not.

Chairman Almeida stated that urban renewal removed huge amounts of historic resources and left them with massive football-sized lots as well. Mr. Sauk-Schubert agreed. He felt that the Portsmouth Housing Authority had an agenda, and the City Council had gone along with it and approved the plan to launch the urban renewal in 1967. The Housing Authority evaluated the properties and arranged for people who lived there to move. Now the City had a focused view of what to safeguard in Portsmouth. He wondered what the Planning Department had said back then. The parcels were huge. Mr. Murphy produced brochures for a mall and 14-story hotels, and so on, but none of it came true. Lots were empty for a long time and the City didn't step in.

They should have made smaller parcels. He hoped the HDC could help them arrive at something that would achieve the dreams that the HDC had about what the project should be about.

Chairman Almeida thanked him and said it was important to hear from someone who was there. Mr. Wyckoff thought Mr. Sauk-Schubert had touched on some futuristic vision of Portsmouth. He remembered the front page of the Portsmouth Herald back in the early 1970s when it proclaimed that Portsmouth was the 'new Boston', and it showed an image of a serpentine 12-story hotel with every room having view and people flying around with jetpacks on.

Ms. Goodknight referenced an in-house study they did that looked at circulation patterns and density in the City and how much of the density was in the current configuration. She pointed out red zones that continued along peripheral streets, and green zones that had more seasonal pedestrian circulation. The projected pedestrian circulation illustrated much of the new development, like Portwalk, the Sheraton, and their current project. The depiction showed that the areas in the Northern Tier would help draw some of that activity and energize the area. She went through the submittal package that began with property site sections and various views to give a context of the larger buildings and their connection to the Northern Tier. The massing studies were looked at separately from the building elevations to focus attention on the different types of buildings. Shown were elevations and heights, the variety of building masses, vantage points, and the site apex. The key plan was a documentation of the streetscapes, the site context at 300' and 500' from the project site, and peripheral images.

Ms. Goodknight then turned the presentation over Mr. Sauk-Schubert to speak about the evolution of the development post-urban renewal. Mr. Sauk-Schubert stated that the diagram illustrated to what degree the urban renewal project decimated the area and left it relegated to parking lots or worse. The green rectangles reflected buildings that were before and after the renewal. The one recognized as the Portsmouth Herald was occupied in 1972, and the other building was the Parade Mall surrounded by a parking lot. The City Council voted in 1979 to get out of the public parking business. In the 1960s, the original parking garage fell down, so there were no parking lots for a long time. Parking then became an issue, and the garage was built. He showed other original structures and some that were moved to save them. Other structures were built in the 1970s. The Sheraton was a remarkable addition in size and structure and fit in well vertically. He believed that size and height were not the issue but that infrastructure was, and the masses were articulated appropriately.

Ms. Goodknight continued going through the submittal package, showing aerial views and a collection of different articulations, façade treatments, building masses, pedestrian experiences, and site images. There were also drawings and images of windows, dormers, storefront styles, cornice details, and breaking up of the masses. Mr. Sauk-Schubert pointed out the upper left elevation that he thought had a strange consistency in terms of balance. One of the piers seemed to support a window rather than the masonry and it looked like it shifted. On the left side of the tower, the pier became narrower as it moved from the base. He wondered what happened, and thought they needed to learn to look at things more closely.

Ms. Goodknight summarized her presentation by showing the variety of window designs, setbacks and erosions, varied rooflines and fenestration, and other design elements. She said that it was helpful to see them illustrated in site context examples.

Chairman Almeida stated that the Commission had received some good information, but he didn't want to go too far beyond what they had discussed. He thought it would be a good stopping point to have the public give their comments.

Chairman Almeida asked if there was anyone in the public to speak to the application.

Mr. Jerry Zelin of 70 Kensington Road thought it was nice to see that kind of presentation of context, and he wished he had seen it in projects such as 111 Maplewood. It was a testament to new provisions in the Zoning Ordinance that required the developer to provide that level of detail without the context, and it was wonderful to see it. There were large lots in the north end, but it wasn't manifest destiny that every large lot had to be filled with a single large building. He was not criticizing the project but simply urging the HDC and the developer that, if they were going to fill up a lot with a building, at least fill up each single lot instead of having one enormous building that filled up three aggregated lots. He was happy with the way the project was going.

Mr. Dick Bagley of 213 Pleasant Street said that he echoed what Mr. Zelin said. He referred to Slide 12 and said it was an exciting introduction to context, and he thought Mr. Sauk-Schubert had articulated the citizens' viewpoints. When the citizens spoke, they were labeled as anti-development. An important issue was context, and as Slide 12 illustrated, the 111 Maplewood project had been approved by the HDC and was then subject to a lawsuit. At the rescheduled hearing, the Zoning Board decided that the building was okay because the street was wide enough that they didn't have to worry about the historical structures on the hill. It was an amazing conclusion for the Zoning Board to make. Context made it essential for everyone to get together to focus on how the project could be consistent within the context of large lots and the remaining historical houses on the hill. It wasn't all about height. The design review rules were essential for the community to move forward with all the Boards, and most important, the Planning Department, City Attorney, and the City Council who let it all happen.

An unidentified citizen stated that she agreed with everyone else, and it was refreshing to hear urban renewal described as a disaster for a reason to do better rather than an excuse to continue make things unpleasant. It was interesting to see the design of the Sheraton compared to the recent large structures that had gone up. She remembered when the Sheraton project was put together and wound up being a little too big, but at least people got together to talk about it. She agreed that it would be nice to avoid one enormous monolithic building.

No one else rose from the public rose to speak.

Mr. Rawling felt that the concept of Portsmouth in general was pedestrian, so the pedestrian quality of the site was very important. Something that contributed greatly to pedestrian appeal was the amount of texture and reveal and a sense of 3-dimensionality to the surrounding spaces as well as little eccentric details. He found that blocks of buildings developed in a flat style had nothing to lure the person in. He referred to the entrance area of the building in the corner and



said that when it was first presented in the design review, it looked as if it was broken into a series of different blocks, and each block was interrupted by alley-looking spaces that turned into front entrances. It was a contradiction in itself to make an alley entrance. The buildings were first painted a grayish color that didn't look good, but the color was changed to tie it in with the aesthetics and pop it forward, creating a floor above the entrance that was an unanticipated result. The building's implementation suggested that something was supposed to break it up and recede, so it united the building. He wanted to draw attention to those pieces of it and some of the inconsistencies, like the detail and irregularities that were reflective of that. The building on the left side was supposed to be different from the building on the right side, but they were now united. Stylistically, there should be expression of things, like brick that would remind people of other parts of Portsmouth. The most important part of it was the pedestrian qualities. Another part of it was variation to break up the mass of the building.

Mr. Wyckoff thought it was a very good massing study. He appreciated the 3-dimensional cubes that led him to be more forgiving of the parking garage on Maplewood Avenue. Breaking up the project was a successful idea, and as it went down toward Market Street, it could have smaller elements like a gable roof, or perhaps a different function. He thought it was an opportunity to get a good visitors center on the Market Street extension that would be similar to the Savannah and Charleston visitor centers. He thought if the project was reduced in function, it might help reduce the size of the buildings. A supermarket and convention center were good things, but it would be difficult to design them and connect them to the Sheraton. He agreed with Mr. Rawling about the pedestrian experience and felt that the sidewalk should be wide, especially going down Deer Street. He thought the parking garage right up against the sidewalk should be more like the Hanover Street Garage that was set back 20' from the walk, which softened it a bit.

Councilor Kennedy said that, in regard to the massing, all she could envision was the Planning Board information that was brought forward. She hoped that the applicant really thought about the massing of the project and perhaps interconnecting the smaller buildings. She wanted to see the hill honored because people had spent a lot of time and energy to save those houses, and she hoped the integrity of the entire community that was taken away was considered. One of the reasons that she ran for City Council was because of what was happening to the area. She had not been on the City Council when the other big buildings were approved, and she wanted to make sure that what was done with the project would make people proud. It was a great opportunity to make it the gem of the north end. It seemed like the developer was reaching out to people through the Portsmouth Advocates. One thing that brought people to Portsmouth was its history; otherwise, they may as well go to Boston or New York City. She hoped the developer remembered that and really looked at the context of the surrounding historical buildings. She remembered as a child when the homes were taken down and she had seen a lot of transition in the area. People were proud of the Rockingham, with its great architecture, materials, craftsmanship and long history, and that's what people were looking for.

Mr. Gladhill had high hopes that the project would head in the right direction and get there so that the City would have something to be proud of on that lot. The developer had done it before. He remembered the vacant lots before the Sheraton was built. The developer constructed three other buildings with various shapes and materials, green space, and pedestrian-friendly space, and he was sure they could do it again.

Mr. Melchior stated that he agreed with some points that were made, but he had a wider context view. He viewed the site as more of a transitional opportunity, working in layers with a nice study of the context of the site's perimeter. He wanted to challenge the higher frequency of vertical accentuation closer to the pedestrian corridor on the Market Street side. Looking beyond the greater site, there were topographical differences going from the top of the hill down that the developer had to reconcile. View sheds were greater than the perimeter of the site, and they had crossroad view sheds as well, like the working port, the commercial area of Portsmouth, the cemetery, and South Mill Pond. The third reconciliation of the site's perimeter and topography was the various building heights currently in place. Going beyond the discussion of architecture, there was a center of gravity that had elasticity toward a certain area in terms of height and massing, but there were other buildings that added to the height discussion, like the Sheraton, which had height, even though it had been minimized through texture and relief. He thought the context was more challenging than just the discussion of the massing and the architecture of the perimeter itself. He wanted them to keep in mind the crossroads of view sheds and the reconciliation of heights across the topography as well as the view shed from Market Square back on the river to Market Street.

Vice-Chair Kozak stated that she wanted to build on what Mr. Melchior had just said. She thought the applicant's analysis was thorough, but she hoped that that they would also look at the greater district because that was the heart of the Historic District as a whole. The Commission's latest guidelines indicated 500', and the applicant said that they looked at the entire district for recognizable patterns that were truly the essence of pedestrian flavor. However, there tended to be a pattern of periphery sites that transitioned from one zone to another, for example, big zone, little zone, residential, commercial, and there were a lot of aspects of that periphery next to the site coming in from Market Street and Maplewood Avenue. There were the big buildings like Portwalk and smaller buildings, with a lot of periphery conditions where she hoped the applicant's solution was not abrupt. She thought the essential pattern of Portsmouth's core district was simple volumes and the views in-between them. Great artists came to paint beautiful vignettes of Portsmouth, and they didn't paint the new buildings. Sometimes it was a detail like an elaborate door, but usually it was a little space next to a big building. That's what seemed to stick in people's minds about Portsmouth, the simple volumes and spaces in between, which were as important as the simple lines. Portsmouth had a dynamic roofscape and great silhouettes of roof lines as one came into the City, and some recent buildings hadn't kept up with it. The project was at the crossroads of the entrance to the City, so it was crucial that it maintain that.

Mr. Katz said he was struck by the direction of the presentation as far as the amount of work that had gone into approaching the subject. It probably indicated the realities of a reaction and not an altogether favorable reaction of the direction in which that area of town was going. He wasn't an architect, so he wouldn't set his parameters of what the applicant should design or build, but he wanted to emphasize that the applicant was willing to work to reflect the attitudes of the HDC and the sometimes emotional attitudes of people who didn't approve the direction the City was going in. He knew that New Hampshire courts had a tradition of advocating strong property rights, and if the applicant pushed hard enough, they would get what they wanted, but if they were willing to accept input from the HDC and from the public, their road would be a lot smoother. He knew the project would be built and he welcomed it, and he was eager to see the

end result. The HDC was getting small glimpses of what the project would look like and he thought that was preferable to having the whole thing tossed on them at once. The developer was not encountering an entirely hostile environment, but they had to show their willingness to the concerns seriously so that they would not have to go to Concord to have it decided.

Chairman Almeida referenced the late 1970s and early 1980s when the developer came to Portsmouth and attempted a very large hotel in the Historic District. They had a brochure that proselytized place, privilege, price and perfection, and that was something that the Sheraton had done. He wanted that wonderful piece of history that showed that the developer of the Sheraton at that time really understood that Portsmouth was the most desired place to live and work, that it was a privilege to build there and that there should be pride in the development. A certain amount of perfection was expected by the community, and the presentation had taken it up where it left off. The developer showed that they got it and understood where they needed to go. They weren't there yet, but they were willing to listen, and he hoped that their words that night would still apply. He said that the massing discussion would have a direct reference to the Conditional Use Permit, and he wanted to make sure that the applicant was aware of that.

Councilor Kennedy asked which step the Conditional Use Permit came up on. Mr. Cracknell told her that it was after the work sessions were completed.

Chairman Almeida told the Commission to remember the Conditional User Permit and satisfying the criteria of Steps 1 through 4. When the Commission first met the applicant at the joint work session, they were bothered by the mass that acted as a dam to pedestrians' corridor views. It had brought up the downtown parking garage that cut the Historic District in half, and the danger of the developer doing the same thing with their building mass that could dam the views and access through the Northern Tier. It was important that the openings of the development stay, not so much the small ones but the large ones that sunlight traveled through. It was a huge challenge to the developer. Examples of the kinds of things that would make the mass and context were the Sheraton and the Deer Street properties where the pedestrians passed through. He thought the applicant presented the context very well and proved that they understood, and he appreciated their historical knowledge and thought it was important for everyone to hear as proof of the applicant's understanding and in moving forward.

Mr. Wyckoff remarked that one of the best features of the Sheraton was the flight of steps coming up on Market Street. He referenced Picture 11 that showed a view of the hill between two 5-story buildings as proof that what had happened in the last five years hadn't been all bad. Chairman Almeida was glad that the steps were brought up because it was a strong neighborhood context that the Sheraton had contributed to.

Mr. Thompson thanked the Commission for all their comments, which he felt hit home and represented exactly what they were trying to accomplish. He especially thanked Mr. Katz because he agreed that the process they had gone through had involved meeting with all the Boards and the advocates, and Mr. Katz was right in saying that target-focused critique made any project better. They still had a long way to go, but that's what they were on board for.

Mr. Cracknell said that everyone was aware of the four-step process, and the applicant had covered the language of the surrounding neighborhood context. The Board was very articulate in defining how the neighborhood's existing context spoke to the site, and it was clear that they needed to think about the massing model as they moved into the second step. He reminded the Commission of their conversation back in November when they agreed to adopt the four steps as a guideline, and he asked that they review all the steps to understand what to expect of the next step. He would try to schedule a full meeting each month to handle the application, given its complexity. He thought they could transition into the massing model at the next meeting and then move toward the façade treatment, getting into the architectural styles of not just the context but the building itself. The fourth step would be looking at the elevations and the architectural details leading toward the public hearing and discussion of the Conditional Use Permit.

Chairman Almeida stated that the Conditional User Permit needed to be discussed along the way and not just at the end. Mr. Cracknell replied that when they got into the massing model at Steps 2 through 4, it would be more about the property than the surrounding context. Step 1 was about the form and the design of the property. He agreed with Chairman Almeida that as they looked at the mass of the buildings, they had to be cognizant of anything over 45'.

Chairman Almeida asked if the next discussion was related to the context of the neighborhood. Ms. Goodknight said that it related to the current neighborhood context as evidenced by the public feedback they had received as far as new directions versus existing directions. They had discussed drawing elements from the context and moving past that to look at other methods of preservation, and so on. One of her goals in presenting site context was to internalize the terms that they discussed, like architectural styles and details, and they looked at those things in multiple forms, which helped to internalize what the words meant and put images to them.

Chairman Almeida said the Commission wanted to be sure that they used the Four Steps tool properly. There were two parts of Step 1, one that included detailed maps and descriptions of surrounding character, which they had just done. Another part of Step 1 was to identify and use that character to help define the appropriate scale and design. He felt it was appropriate if that was the discussion Ms. Goodknight wanted to have. Ms. Goodknight gave a quick overview of what was coming. Mr. Sauk-Schubert would talk about preservation standards, and they would look at large buildings in town that were older and newer. They would also present proposed architectural interpretations that had been discussed with neighborhood groups.

Mr. Sauk-Schubert stated that regulations did not guarantee beautiful buildings. He was responding to some of the information given to the Commission from some of the City groups that wanted to see contemporary architecture infiltrate the Historic District. Brick buildings were more forgiving than excellent contemporary structures, and there were very few excellent contemporary structures. He thought it was interesting to reflect on the times. They had started out by looking at the 1960s and 1970s when the regulations were written and it was suggested to introduce something that didn't look like an original structure. He was always struck by how ugly some of the buildings were when he went to Philadelphia, and he gave the example of the National Archive Library. He showed views of various structures within Philadelphia and said that there was a website that cautioned people not to show that building. Good ideas on paper were just good ideas on paper that didn't guarantee anything. There were examples of context

where contemporary styles were introduced into a more historic setting, but the craftsmanship necessary to do that was gone in many regions.

Ms. Goodknight moved into the general context and showed examples of older large-scale buildings in town. She noted regular and varied window patterns and roof lines and the number of stories next to one another, which illustrated that some had flat roofs and regular window patterns with a smaller mass and pedestrian level of details. She said they should ask themselves why people found asymmetry and variety more pleasing. She pointed out the dormers, varied roof lines, and pitched roof over a large building versus the smaller roof treatments or the setback. There were ways to manage the volumes on the upper floor regions and various materials and treatments to break up a façade. It was interesting to see the newer interpretations compared to the old ones. She showed the images they had looked at with the neighborhood groups, images like the Westin, which was a historic and modern mix, the Nike store, and other industrial, historic, industrial-modern, and very modern buildings. She showed the garages and said if the facades were removed, the insides would look the same. They had engaged 3S for suggestions on how to incorporate art into the garage façade facing the Vaughan Street Art Center. She showed wide-angle images of buildings and greenery. They wanted appropriate direction based on all the context studies they had done and the styles presented to them as well as the preservation briefs, the Historic District, and convergent influences.

Mr. Katz was intrigued by the possibility of using more advanced architectural features as far as the implementation of the final product, and he asked the reaction to that approach. Chairman Almeida asked if it related to neighborhood context. Mr. Katz said the Commission had told people that being stuck in the past was not really the entire direction that the City should go in. He mentioned the term 'phony colony' and said it was food for thought. Chairman Almeida was tying it into the contextual discussion, and other than having the worst example of a parking garage in the country, there was no context for a parking garage in the neighborhood. He knew it was a tough issue for the applicant. He had previously mentioned that he used to live next door to a parking garage, and the amount of noise and light that came out of it had been terrible. Introducing that function into that neighborhood context was a further challenge, and there could be potential complications.

Mr. Rawling verified that the Commission could be open to the styles but could not comment on stylistic things that they saw on the buildings. Ms. Goodknight said they were just trying to open up the dialog and move beyond context. Mr. Rawling saw in some of the examples the differences in buildings that were flat and unfriendly and the ones that had texture and engagement. Councilor Kennedy reminded everyone of what Vice-Chair Kozak had said about being bigger than 500 feet. Christian Shores had the oldest house in Portsmouth, and then there was the hill, and they had to ask if they were going to compliment that area or build a massive structure. When thinking about urban architecture versus more traditional and historical architecture, the decision should be based on whether they were going to compliment the historical. There could be some creativity, but they wanted to compliment the old houses that people spent a lot of time and energy saving and supporting, and they should ask how they would celebrate and honor it by creating a building that everyone was comfortable with.

Mr. Wyckoff said that he had previously remarked that the original Westin project would be too tall in today's world, and he thought that the Commission worked out a good compromise for the parking structure that didn't look out of place, so he felt that the architectural style had a lot of merit. The parking structure had an almost industrial style to it and was successful.

Chairman Almeida called for more public comment. There was none.

*Chairman Almeida moved to **continue** the work session to the April meeting, and the motion was seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously with all in favor, 7-0.*

### **III. OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Almeida mentioned that Mr. Wyckoff had put together some information, and he referenced the cover letter regarding a petition to change or replace windows. They needed to pressure the City to give them the first step of the guidelines because it couldn't wait for the other design guidelines. Mr. Wyckoff thought that there should be blank spaces next to certain elements like the window sill indicating the width of those items. Someone could fill in the information on the blank spaces. Chairman Almeida agreed that it should be done, but they didn't have the time to do it. Mr. Cracknell suggested setting up a meeting to discuss it. He understood where the blanks and spaces should go, and they should figure out whether or not they could use it in some revised form as an interim instead of window design guidelines. They wouldn't save any time issuing two RFQs because it took 90-120 days to get someone on board with a contract to do it. They needed a cover sheet with a checklist.

Mr. Melchior said they could have a meeting the following month one and go through it outside of the regular HDC meetings. They could do the cover letter in a half-hour. Mr. Rawling said that it wasn't complete but was a good working document for people to look at and evaluate it for what was there and what wasn't. Mr. Wyckoff asked if they could make suggestions about the cover letter as far as storm windows or whether the windows were historic and they wanted to preserve them.

Chairman Almeida said that anything that got them to the point where they were not obsessing about storm windows was fine. They had talked about it for years, and they had attempted to have the Commissioners write guidelines or worksheets, but they were already putting in 20-hour weeks on the effort and he didn't think it was fair to ask Mr. Wyckoff or Mr. Rawling to spend any more time on it. Mr. Cracknell told them that he used the Newton, MA guidelines because they covered everything to do with half screens, window preservations, and so on. Councilor Kennedy thought it was great that Mr. Wyckoff was willing to do it.

### **III. ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:30 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Acting HDC Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Historic District Commission meeting on May 14, 2014.