

**RECONVENED MEETING OF
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**

ONE JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

6:30 p.m.

**March 25, 2015
reconvened from March 4, 2015**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Joseph Almeida; Vice-Chairman/Planning Board Representative William Gladhill; Members John Wyckoff, George Melchior, Dan Rawling, Reagan Ruedig; Council Representative Esther Kennedy; Alternates Vincent Lombardi and Richard Shea

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

ALSO PRESENT: Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner

I. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

1. 30-42 Maplewood Avenue

The discussion for Maplewood Avenue was moved to the end of the agenda in order for Mr. Cracknell to bring in the paperwork detailing the approval. Mr. Cracknell provided a review. All performance standards have been met.

*Ms. Ruedig made a motion to **approve** the revisions to 30-42 Maplewood Avenue. Mr. Gladhill seconded the motion.*

*The motion **passed** unanimously with all in favor 7-0.*

II. WORK SESSIONS (CONTINUED)

All "Request to Postpone" matters were taken out of order for the purposes of postponement.

B. Work Session requested by **44-46 Market Street, LLC, owner**, for property located at **44-46 Market Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (change exterior cladding, replace doors, windows) and allow new construction to an existing structure (construct one story rear addition, construct small additions on second

Request To Postpone

floor) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 117 as Lot 31 and lies within the CD 5, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts. *(This item was postponed at the February meeting to the March meeting.)*

The Chair read the notice into the record.

*Mr. Wyckoff made a motion to **postpone** Work Session B to the April, 2015 HDC meeting. Mr. Gladhill Seconded the motion.*

*The motion **passed** unanimously with all in favor, 7-0.*

C. Work Session requested by **7 Islington Street, LLC, owner**, for property located at **40 Bridge Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow demolition of an existing structure (demolish building) and allow a new free standing structure (construct three story mixed use building with below grade parking) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 126 as Lot 52 and lies within the CD4, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts. *(This item was postponed at the February meeting to the March meeting.)*

The Chair read the notice into the record.

Steven McHenry and Brandon Holben of McHenry Architecture were present to speak to the request. They stated that they would not cover the entire evolution of the design this evening as they have done in the past. Mr. McHenry covered the highlights of the changes from past designs page by page. On page 1, the highlight is the removal of the attic level and light wells. There is a garage entrance that has been moved to the Bridge Street elevation. The streetscape along the Bridge Street sidewalk has been enlivened by a variety of storefronts. Page 2 has to do with context and the steps involved in the review process. Page 3 has to do with context photographs which the Commission has seen a number of times. Page 4 is an analysis of the code requirements versus what they are proposing on their schemes. It also depicts the context map which shows removal of the existing building. Page 5 shows context maps with the scale of buildings within a 375' radius of the center of the lot. Page 6 has to do with familiar buildings highlighted on the previous map. Page 7 has to do with familiar architectural styles and details in the project neighborhood. Page 8 is an elevation study from the Bridge Street side. Mr. McHenry stated that there are 2 project options indicating a fresh start. Option A (from the Bridge Street side) is a single 3-story building with a gabled roof. Option B is a mass that is modulated into two main masses with familiar historical vernacular. Page 9 has a slightly skewed perspective of Option B. Page 10 has a bird's eye view (so massing could be seen) from the Islington Street side. Page 11 is a view of the rear (west) elevation. Page 12 is a closer view of what is depicted on Page 11. Page 13 is the proposed Plan View. Access to parking on the site has been a long and controversial topic. In 2006, when the project was first proposed, parking was not required on site. There were several different options proposed at the time. Among them was access to parking from Bridge Street. They are now reviving and revising that scheme. These plans show views in Option A. Page 14 shows the same views in Option B. They are requesting that the

Commission agree this evening on whether to go with Option A or B. Electronic 3-D depictions show both options.

Councilor Kennedy stated that on the previous design, the plans depicted houses going on Bridge Street. She does not see that on the new plans.

Mr. Holben showed the view going up Bridge Street on the slide presentation.

Chairman Almeida opened the public comment hearing.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE REQUEST

William Brassel of 7 Islington Street was present to speak to the request. He stated that he likes option B because it represents the flow of the neighborhood well. In particular, the cupola has been removed from the top and that brings the profile down. In addition, coming in off Bridge Street for parking is much better than coming in from Tanner Street as was the case previously. Option B seems to be a good fit in terms of form and function.

Dave Carrier of 7 Islington Street was present to speak to the request. He is also in favor of Option B. He feels the architects have been very responsive to everything being said at these meetings. He feels the building stands on its own, but also compliments the Buckminster building. Issues remaining are minor (such as finishes). He feels everyone is going in the same direction now.

Rick Beckstead of 1395 Islington Street was present to speak to the request. He said that this request has come a long way over the past year. The garage entrance on Bridge Street is better than on Tanner Street as it was in the past. He feels the revised plans compliment the time period.

Mr. Wyckoff inquired about how the grade can come down 8' on the garage.

Mr. McHenry stated that it is a tight grade, but it doesn't have to come down 8' because most of the first floor is higher. At the left side there is approximately a 5' grade change from corner to corner, but he acknowledged that it is tight to be sure. That is why the garage door is set back from the sidewalk so that transition can be made.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that looking at level one he is not seeing two storefronts as indicated on the drawings.

Mr. Holben stated that the floor plans are mislabeled. Sheet 13 is actually Option B. Sheet 14 is actually Option A.

Mr. Shea stated that the plans are terrific in terms of scale and likes how it is broken down into what appears to be two masses. He feels the height is good for the neighborhood. Looking at the

floor plan, he inquired as to whether the building comes right up to the sidewalk and whether the door on the left (storefront door) will have steps up to it.

Mr. Holben stated that the building does come right up to the sidewalk and the door is not an active door. The active doors are located in the center.

Mr. Shea stated that the sidewalk is narrow at this point; it is only about 5'. He is concerned that walking down Bridge Street, one would not see oncoming cars. He inquired about whether that corner could be changed (eroded) to be safer for pedestrians.

Mr. Holben spoke to that issue and stated that one of the new character based zoning requirements is that 50% of the frontage needs to be at the minimum setback, so they are right at the edge of where they can be. He agreed that 5' is narrow and stated that they will look into the matter further.

Mr. McHenry stated that the doors on either side of the center doors are there to build in flexibility to the space. The first floor can be broken up into 2-3 tenants. Those doors could be set-in based on tenant need. In all, there could be 4 active doors in this area.

Ms. Ruedig stated that she can see how Option B is a more familiar shape and would be preferred, but she feels that the forms for A are simple, are a better fit for the surroundings and echo the surrounding homes in that area. The only negative is that there are only 2 active doors.

Mr. McHenry stated that there is also an active door in the inset cut-out but it is not in view on the straight cut elevation view.

Mr. Lombardi stated that he appreciated all the work the applicant has done to date. He agrees with Ms. Ruedig in that Option A is a better fit. He would rather see a modern structure in this place. He likes the gabled area.

Councilor Kennedy thanked the architect for all the hard work and stated that this is a vast improvement over prior plans. She spoke of Portwalk; how doors are lacking at the site and that this feature makes it seem as if there is one continuous building. Going forward, she would like to see more doors to make it look like individual quaint buildings coming together. In Option A, the building looks to be massive; it is not broken up, but she liked the way it honors the architecture of the homes in the area. Option B does not do this and is pretty stark. One of the missions is not to overtake, but rather to celebrate the existing architecture in the area.

Mr. Shea feels that the gabled end in Option A overpowers the Buckminster home and that is why he favors Option B. He understands that some do not like hip roofs and perhaps there is a different way to handle the roofs, but Option B is understated and he prefers this.

Mr. Gladhill stated that these plans are a vast improvement over previous plans. He agrees with Mr. Shea that the left side of Option A overpowers the Buckminster mansion. Option B is a

different form and it doesn't feel as if it is competing against itself, although it will stand out in its surroundings a bit more. He is ultimately happy with either option.

Chairman Almeida stated that he is concerned about the gable in Option A and how it seems to overpower Buckminster. He prefers Option B. He felt that there is a better rhythm on the street with this option and it respects the rhythm of the other homes on Bridge Street. This site and building are transitional in nature. It is transitioning from larger to smaller buildings and different architectural styles. There is a wide variation in roof pitches and styles in this area. Option B truly respects Buckminster and the nature of the architecture and the transition much better than Option A. He likes the garage entrance on Bridge Street instead of on Tanner Street. The reduction in height of the building has satisfied a lot of people. There is still room for improvement if the applicant can get further away from the Buckminster house, even if it is only inches.

Mr. Holben pointed out that Option A is further away from the Buckminster house than Option B.

Ms. Ruedig inquired about how much of the lot the building is taking up in comparison to other lots in the area.

Chairman Almeida inquired about the glass above the door on the bottom right (Sheet 8). It appears to be an extension of the garage door. It looks enormous and out of proportion with the house next door.

Mr. McHenry stated that they will closely examine this.

Mr. Wyckoff reiterated his support for Option B and would like to see the doors on Sheet 8 set into the building. This creates an option such as what there is at Popovers. One can enter and go to the left or the right so it would be possible to have additional smaller commercial units. He stated that having the 2 separate store front (active) doors (as in Option B) is important. He would also like the doors to be wood.

Mr. Holben switched the slide show to depict the back of the project.

Ms. Ruedig stated that the back appears a little bare.

Councilor Kennedy stated that abutters on Tanner Street and Buckminster are happy about the traffic change on Tanner Street. She also inquired about how the open lot would look.

Mr. Holben stated that there may be a fence there and that large trees are there but have not been depicted on the plans.

Councilor Kennedy stated that the Commission and the public should know about that.

Chairman Almeida inquired as to whether anyone has heard from abutters on Tanner Street.

Councilor Kennedy stated that there is someone on Tanner Street that is concerned about this project but is apprehensive about coming to the meetings.

Chairman Almeida stated that it is very important that they hear from people and urged that if someone cannot come to meetings, they can write to the Commission to voice their opinion.

Several Commission members inquired about bringing in photos of the back stating that the slide show graphic of the back of the building doesn't represent what it would really look like, or what people would experience on the ground.

Mr. Shea stated that whether it is Option A or B, he asks that the back entrance doors be changed so that they do not look like front entrance doors. Also, regarding the emergency egress out of the garage in the right hand corner; it is at the property line (Sheet 13) and there should be fencing in this area.

Mr. McHenry stated that at least 5' along the back of the building must be maintained for egress purposes.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that the building does not loom over the other homes even though it is larger. This is in the central business district whereas the other homes are not. He feels the applicant has done a great job and that taking away the 4th story has made a significant difference.

Councilor Kennedy stated that the air conditioning units will be close to the housing and that there would be noisy condensers running all the time.

Mr. McHenry stated that they will put them up and out of view on the roof, not on the ground.

Mr. Lombardi stated that in Option B there are balconies in the back. This seems intrusive to the neighbors located on the rear side of the building. It seems as if when standing on the balcony, one is peering down into the residences.

Mr. Holben stated that the balconies are set back and solid railing material could be considered for more privacy.

Mr. McHenry stated that they will put in more solid railing. The railings are not meant to enable anyone to peer down into the residences. He was hoping they would come away from this evening with strong support for Option A or Option B. At this point, they would like to make additional changes and return for another work session.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Councilor Kennedy made a motion to **continue** the request with another Work Session at the April 29th, 2015 HDC meeting. Ms. Ruedig seconded the motion.

The motion **passed** unanimously with all in favor, 7-0.

- D. Work Session requested by **Hayscales Real Estate Trust, owner**, for property located at **236 Union Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow demolition of an existing structure (demolish existing structure) and allow a new free standing structure (construct two family residential home) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 135 as Lot 22 and lies within the General Residence C and Historic Districts. *(This item was postponed at the January meeting to the March meeting.)*

Mr. Wyckoff made a motion to **postpone** Work Session D to the April, 2015 HDC meeting. Mr. Gladhill seconded the motion.

The motion **passed** unanimously with all in favor 7-0.

- E. Work Session requested by **Ronald C.J. Cogswell, owner**, for property located at **180 Islington Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow a discussion concerning the existing 2 story structure and options for site (including demolition) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 137 as Lot 19 and lies within CBB and the Historic Districts. *(This item was postponed at the February meeting to the March meeting.)*

Mr. Wyckoff made a motion to **postpone** Work Session E to the April, 2015 HDC meeting. Mr. Gladhill Seconded the motion.

The motion **passed** unanimously with all in favor, 7-0.

- F. Work Session requested by **30 Maplewood, LLC, owner**, for property located at **30 Maplewood Avenue (46-64 Maplewood Avenue)**, wherein permission was requested to allow a new free standing structure (construct mixed use 1 1/2 to 5 story structure) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 125 as Lot 2 and lies within the Central Business B, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts. *(This item was postponed at the December 2014 meeting to the March meeting.)*

Mr. Wyckoff made a motion to **postpone** Work Session F to the April, 2015 HDC meeting. Mr. Gladhill seconded the motion.

The motion **passed** unanimously with all in favor, 7-0.

- G. Work Session requested by **HarborCorp LLC, owner**, for property located **Deer Street, Russell Street, and Maplewood Avenue** wherein permission was requested to allow a new free standing structure (construct mixed use building containing 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. *(This item was postponed at the February meeting to the March meeting.)*

The Chair read the notice into the record.

SPEAKING TO THE REQUEST

Chris Thompson, Carla Goodknight, Susan Duprey and Travis Meadow were present to speak to the petition. Mr. Thompson stated it has been a long and complex progression for this project and he feels they have come full circle. They have consolidated all comments and have made requested changes. They have completed the TAC process as well as the work with the Trees and Public Greenery, and Parking and Traffic Safety Committees. They are now working with the Planning Board. They are excited to be back to present the changes. He thanked everyone for the depth and breadth of input. They have reduced mass dramatically. They have worked hard to achieve a varied, but cohesive skyline and individual expressions of the buildings within the mass. They have done much more to enhance entrances and exits. They now have a sky bridge and have done a lot to activate the streetscape. They are pleased with how Maplewood Avenue has come together. The liner building has transcended being a liner building and now looks less like that than it did previously. The back of the project meshes much better now in keeping with the overall vision of the project. Carla Goodknight and Bill Bartell of CJ Architects were present to speak to the request. Ms. Goodknight took the Commission through the Table of Contents. The applicant brought material samples this evening to show the Commission and hopefully make decisions about preferences. Ms. Goodknight showed the building in 3-D graphics on the slide presentation and described details of the plan. In the table of contents, the first 3 sections are where the evaluations will occur. Sections 4-7 are details and elevations that are included for the Commission to analyze and ensure they are covering all details. In section 8, there are materials such as brick samples to review with the Commission. They have used 3-D imaging to illustrate their points this evening. Sheet 2.0 depicts segments in order to get a feel for the massing at the pedestrian level. Sheet 2.1 illustrates the various details of the hotel, condominiums, conference center, Whole Foods and a green roof. There are now wider sidewalks. Sheet 2.2 highlights parks and open areas that will be developed with the project. Russell Street will have green space. The Deer Street Plaza was developed as a result of straightening of the road. This area is activated by the café. They have added a Vaughn Street pocket park on city property. It will create greenery in the foreground coming down Maplewood Avenue. The Green Street dining plaza will support the restaurant as well as other outdoor uses. On Sheet 3.0, the retail liner building has become a building in its own right. On Sheet 3.1, awnings have been added and sidewalks have been widened. This is a nice scaling element for pedestrians. They have added sloping elements to the roofline to enhance it. Granite sills are also featured as well as other finer details. The brick will be one of three colors for the buildings in this area. There is also variable width siding which lends itself to the common thread in the span of building throughout the project. On Sheet 3.2, there is an overview of the corner of Maplewood looking back at Vaughn Street. On Sheet 3.3, there is a visual of how the building

has been pushed back. There is a pocket of retail tucked in under the garage. This graphic clearly depicts the different architectural expressions. There are horizontal striations that span the façade that serve as a unifying architectural feature. There are also varying window treatments. Sheet 3.4 depicts the terminus of Portwalk. Sheet 3.5 shows the sections of the buildings that have been broken up substantially. There is now a light and airy entrance to the conference center. They have stripped the brick from the Center. The buildings now look distinct. Sheet 3.6 depicts an aerial view over the hill looking at the transparency of the conference center. The green roof will provide great views of the City. Sheet 3.7 depicts much of the garage façade that has been rotated off the common public way. They have added awnings and timber brackets. There are decorative metal railings at the top. Quality materials are being used throughout. Sheet 3.8 shows an overview of Deer Street with brick and lighter metal and glass composition at the center. Sheet 3.9 depicts pitching roofs. Sheet 3.10 looks down Russell Street to the Bridge connecting the conference center with the Sheraton. They attempted to tie the look of the Sheraton with the building across the street. Sheet 3.11 depicts a much lighter metal and glass form. They have introduced the trellis form (discussed at the last meeting) over the open area. The top floor is stepped back. The stepping firewall element is present. The bridge is box truss with steel beams and a curtain wall. They are using 3 different types of brick/colors on the Maplewood Avenue retail. On Sheet 3.12, the entrance has been pulled around to the conference center around the corner so it is no longer under the bridge. The horizontal elements are brought across the facade. There is now a wider sidewalk in this area. There is a glass separation element which serves as the entrance to the hotel. There are doors in the glass structure. Sheet 3.13 shows quite a bit of development on one end of the project to create a gateway effect. The building has been rounded and they have done quite a bit of work on accentuating the roof. Sheet 3.14 depicts what has been done to the top floor. The arched openings above echo the arched openings below. Dining for the hotel is outdoor, and there is a lot of landscaping in this area. Sheet 3.15 shows another view of 3.14 and how it fits so well into the area. Sheet 3.16 depicts a view of the Green Street plaza out front of the hotel. Sheet 3.17 moves around the hotel building and shows the retaining wall and screen fencing on the sidewalk. Sheet 3.18 shows the garage architecture with the granite banding and headers. They've developed larger roof elements to give more depth and articulation of the skyline and a feel of more variety across the garage façade. Sheet 4 provides detail on elevations. They will supply the Commission with large format copies of the elevation sheets.

Chairman Almeida asked that the Commission provide their comments sheet by sheet and then public hearing will follow this comment period.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 2.1

Mr. Shea inquired if there was something that could be done with the sidewalk in this area and whether the handicap access could be developed under the bridge (for cover in inclement weather). He inquired about how tractor trailers would access the dock.

Mr. Meadow stated that they would be directed in through Market/Russell/Deer Streets and then back to the dock.

Mr. Wyckoff recommended the applicant not use up public areas completely with restaurants. The associated outdoor seating takes up a lot of public space.

Ms. Goodknight stated that this is a pretty large area.

Mr. Cracknell stated that it would be of value (at the next meeting) to evaluate the green space horizontally. There is not much greenery in between the buildings in Portsmouth.

Chairman Almeida stated there is quite a bit of space for the parking plaza proposed, which is great, but urged the applicant not to give it all away to parking and wondered how 4 buses pulling in at the same time could be accommodated. He feels that this issue won't be solved tonight.

There was some discussion regarding parking spaces that have been removed in order to achieve better traffic control entering and exiting the site.

Chairman Almeida requested that the spaces that have been removed to allow for buses, laundry trucks, loading and unloading be shown on the plans.

Mr. Wyckoff requested drawings of the 3rd floor walkway and roof garden.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 2.2

Councilor Kennedy inquired how one would get across the RR tracks.

Mr. Thompson stated that it can be crossed on the sidewalk.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 3.1

Chairman Almeida loves the rear entrance to the parking garage (Maplewood entrance). He stated that the large roof expressions celebrate the height and that isn't something that they want to celebrate. It draws the eye up to this level. If this could come down over the garage entrance it might provide some protection for people down below. He stated that he likes the elevation on the corner.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that to remove an architectural detail because the Commission doesn't think it is necessary is not the best approach. The applicant has brought in design elements similar to an old train station. For the Commission to nibble away at chunks that various members don't like concerns him. Architecture is both an art and a science. He felt that there is too much microdesigning going on.

Chairman Almeida does not want anyone to feel restricted in providing their opinion on the design. That is, in part, what they are charged with doing. He would like to ensure that everyone has the chance to comment and that those comments will be fully considered.

Ms. Goodknight stated that all comments are considered and out of that comes a better design and plan.

Mr. Gladhill likes the ornamentation on the roof line. It may draw the eye up, but it is not boring, it is enjoyable to look at and it breaks up the roof line, which is visually pleasing.

Mr. Lombardi agrees with Mr. Wyckoff about the roof line.

Ms. Ruedig stated that regarding the condo building on the end, she felt that it was more interesting before it was more streamlined. The storefront could be simplified and slightly more contemporary.

Mr. Goodknight stated that what they were trying to accomplish by introducing historic type details was to bring in variety and differing expressions of buildings.

Mr. Ruedig felt that this is too contrived. It is a new building and she prefers to make it look new.

Ms. Goodknight stated that they were trying to keep with the character of Portsmouth and that when someone walks around the site, that it would not look monochromatic in design, detail and color.

Councilor Kennedy stated that she is happy that another door has been added and inquired if there would be a pool anywhere.

Mr. Thompson stated that there is no pool.

Councilor Kennedy is concerned about the height of the buildings. She does not want to accentuate the height. She stated that residents are having a hard time with the height. She also stated that she cannot find the highest point.

Ms. Goodknight stated that the 4 series of sheets depicts building height; 4.2 and 4.3 show the highest point.

Chairman Almeida stated that there is a sheet that shows building height every 5'.

Mr. Shea stated that the 3 large hip roof add-ons seem to serve no purpose other than snow being able to slide off the roof easily. It may look a little lighter if this were a flat section. He stated that lighting will be really important on the back side for safety at night. He asked for clarification on what is open, what is paneled and what will be open air.

Mr. Meadow stated that there will be panels behind more ornate grills. There is a line between making it light and airy and not being intrusive on the neighborhood. The arch form is a way to lighten the garage. When the larger roof elements were added some of the smaller ones were removed in an effort to balance the space. A lot of care was taken with the scale of the elements

in relation to one another. This is a way to engage the façade and balance all elements. The sloped decking in the garage would not be visible to the eye from the outside. Those elements would be broken up with the grill façade.

Chairman Almeida stated that on the previous view in November that the approach was a lot more open. The wall appears to be 7' and it seems to close it off unnecessarily.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 3.3

Mr. Melchior stated that the buildings are very different in architectural style which contributes to the garage looking like an orphan. While he appreciates the challenges of visually breaking up a long façade and working with a utilitarian structure as a parking garage, he felt that the density of the ornament is too high compared to any other façade in the project. It makes the garage stand out too much. He is concerned with structural considerations coming after design/architectural details. Structural details must come first. He also stated that lighting inside the garage affects lighting outside the garage and requested that the applicant be careful with cutoffs and there are elevation as well as pedestrian line of sight considerations to take into account.

Councilor Kennedy felt that there is still a lot of space that doesn't have the look and feel of accessibility, particularly on the rounded building on Sheet 3.3.

Ms. Knight stated that there is a door to the left and right of the rounded area.

Mr. Lombardi stated that approaching the building from Vaughn Mall there is a canyon feel (this is visible on 3.4 and 3.5). He felt that it would be nice to have an outstanding architectural detail in this space. What is seen now in this area is a store sign.

Ms. Ruedig stated that there is more that can be done with the connections (horizontal lines, etc.) between the facades. The differences between the buildings seem forced. She felt that this can be done a little better and that they could speak more coherently with one another. The exteriors should represent what is behind them not just a facade on the outside trying to tie it all together.

Councilor Kennedy inquired about the color of the painted steel.

Mr. Meadow stated that it could be any color but that black is the color typically used for ornamental steel. However, there are no limits to the color variations available. This could be part of the horizontal continuity for connections between the buildings.

Chairman Almeida felt that the canopy over the top would be better served down low over the doors. There is a pair of uncovered doors right now over the boutique. Moving this canopy would respect the pedestrian scale and provide some cover for people walking in the area.

Mr. Wyckoff agreed with Chairman Almeida regarding the canopy. He also stated that he is happy about the back side. However, using a different type of iron for Whole Foods is really the

only piece the gives him heartburn. He felt that something needs to be done with this but he doesn't really know what.

Chairman Almeida stated that there is a lot to this plan and more to be done but it was now time to give the public a chance to voice their perspectives. He opened up the public hearing.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE REQUEST

Patricia Bagley of 213 Pleasant Street was present to speak to the request. She inquired about the iron work on Whole Foods and why it stands taller than the garage next to it. It draws attention to the height.

Mr. Meadow stated that the reason for this was to give this building architectural prominence. It is trying to meld what is essentially a one story building (Whole Foods) with a 3-story parking garage. It will, in effect, extend the entrance appearance of the Whole Foods building giving it ownership over the garage.

Ms. Bagley stated that while she understands this point, focus should be taken away from the height, deemphasizing it.

John Guilbert of Thornton Street was present to speak to the request. He stated that he appreciates the work put into this project. One thing he really likes about Portsmouth is Commercial Alley and other quaint alleyways. This project is 3 ½ city blocks long, 660' along the back, and one of the highest buildings in Portsmouth. There will be no throughways and he would not want to walk along the length of it. He inquired as to why this long site wouldn't be split up into different areas so people can see and walk through it. In addition, a 3-D model of the project has been requested for quite some time. He would like to see one displayed publicly. There have been models of past projects displayed in the public library. He felt this would engage the people of the City more. It is difficult to get a handle of what the completed site would look like without this.

Mr. Gladhill stated that he has been a big proponent for walkthrough areas in the past, but in areas such as this where there are railroad tracks, for legal and safety reasons, cut-throughs are discouraged.

Mr. Guilbert felt that this is only an excuse and that commercial access is the priority, not the town and the people. He stated that the applicant was interested in a cut-through at one point but this has changed. A cut-through would break up the facade and make it more proportionate and appropriate to the town.

Chairman Almeida stated that for the past three years, the Commission has worked extremely hard to produce the website (allowing people to view drawings) and also to provide ample opportunity to publicly speak about this project. Three D models have been produced for the City at great expense. He pointed out the digital 3-D model up on the screen this evening.

Mr. Guilbert stated that he cannot rotate or move around the digital model. To the point of publicly speaking at meetings, people do not turn out for them. There are only a few people present tonight.

Chairman Almeida stated that the 3-D model on the screen tonight can be rotated anyway that Mr. Guilbert requests.

Mr. Cracknell stated that City ordinance requires that any and every applicant for a major project submit electronic drawings when they file for a public hearing; which the applicant has just done. He stated that the model seen here tonight was just received yesterday. It is already being inserted into the City's 3-D model. It will be available for the public hearing next week. Mr. Guilbert will be able to go online, look at the 3-D model and rotate it. There will be a long period of time (months) to comment on the project as well. The hearing must be opened, referred to the Planning Board, who reviews it and submits an advisory opinion back to this Commission. The earliest this Commission would be able to vote on it is May. He stated that there would be plenty of time for Mr. Guilbert to evaluate it and provide his opinions.

Mr. Guilbert stated that these plans are not easy to find on the website.

Mr. Cracknell stated that this is the first time he has heard this, but will take a look at it.

Mr. Guilbert stated that this project will have an enormous impact on the city and he, along with many other residents, does not take this lightly. He still would like to see a physical (not electronic) 3-D model in a public space like the library. He can't really tell the relationship to other buildings with the electronic version.

Jerry Zelin of 70 Kensington Road was present to speak to the request. He stated that he echoes the comment of Mr. Guilbert regarding the mass of the building. He felt that the ideal would be to have 2-3 buildings that emulate the scale respectful of the north end (such as that which Ms. Goodknight put up at 233 Vaughn Street). He senses that the HDC, though they haven't taken a vote, is content with the mass of the building. He feels that a single building is being designed as a neighborhood. It looks like a series of separate buildings strung together attempting to look like individual buildings. On the front side, this has been achieved. He stated that more information is needed in order to determine if this has been accomplished on the back side. There is the sense in the back that it is only a building that is 200' long. He wondered how this would look from the north end, and at the pedestrian level, how would it look from a stroll down Maplewood Avenue. He realizes there are onsite design constraints with this project. He asked whether there would be rooftop parking and wondered what that would look like with car headlights and tops of the cars in view.

Mr. Meadow stated that there will be parking on top, but from the street, cars will not be seen.

Mr. Zelin stated that on Sheet 3.12, the roof treatment looks odd in that the white portion appears tacked on and the windows look like a "clock radio" or plastic squares. He would like to see

more variability in the roof line. In terms of the canyon effect, a clock or bell tower might be a nice feature in this area and would not have to fill the entire view corridor.

Tom Holbrook of 86 Morning Street was present to speak to the request. He stated that this is much better than the Portwalk project but that this should not be the measuring stick. He hasn't heard discussion about how this project historically fits into Portsmouth. He finds the 3-D computer depiction false. He has a business on Fleet Street, and it is a canyon. It is cold and windy. When there is a tall building next to another tall long building, it becomes cold and dark. Also, he feels the depiction gives a false sense of greenery. He has never seen a 3-story tree that the City has not cut down. In addition, where there is outdoor seating, there is black fencing around it. This cuts down on sidewalk width and the consequence is that it is very unappealing to walk through (Popover's, for example). There has been much talk about the façade of the building(s) and tying them together through contiguous design elements. He felt Portsmouth should not be building fake historical buildings. If this is done, it should be done well. In addition, when this much of a lot is covered, it is cold, windy and dark and the computer depiction looks falsely light and bright. For traffic and safety (on Sheet 3.1), there are 4 places within a short distance to make left turns. This will be very challenging to traffic patterns. Lastly, he felt that the question is whether the project destroys the historical look and feel of the town, not necessarily what individual opinions are.

Rick Beckstead 1395 Islington Street was present to speak to the request. He stated that Parking and Traffic Safety have signed off on the plan. The garage front should be in the back. It looks like a back to him. He is concerned about the facades and whether they will hold in a severe winter like we just had. Some of the views for the condos will be the back of the site and the parking garage. He appreciates what Mr. Thompson has done to date. He inquired as to whether a Whole Foods has ever been built in a historic district.

Chairman Almeida stated that there is one in Boston.

Barbara DeStefano of 99 of Hanover Street was present to speak to the request. She is a Portwalk resident and enjoys living there. She looks out at the "canyon" (she faces it) and doesn't feel that it is cold, dark and windy. She has been following the project from the beginning. She likes the different look of the buildings. She also felt that the project doesn't have to match historic Portsmouth, but she does like the idea of the train station look. She felt that the back of the project looks fine and this part of the project is not going to be perfect. She is anxious to see the project get rolling. This is part of the new Portsmouth, and it doesn't have to look like everything else. She likes Portwalk, yet feels this project will be a big improvement over Portwalk. Portwalk is flat, one height on top, and she likes the different heights of this project.

Dick Bagley 213 Pleasant Street was present to speak to the request. He stated that the processes put into place are working very well and that this Commission is doing a great job. He felt that there should be no rush with this process. He felt that we are trying to align the developers and the community more closely. The compromise happening with this project is accomplishing this. He would like to see the building divided into 2 or 3 buildings and not 60' tall, but the developer doesn't have to do this. On Sheet 3.1, the corner doesn't work for an 18 wheeler. His biggest concern is that there is going to be traffic problems with turning for trucks.

Patricia Bagley of 213 Bagley Street spoke again. She stated that she is also concerned about 18 wheelers making right turns and the problems this will create. It will be hard for trucks to see people approaching on the right side.

Mr. Zelin stated that when considering whether to grant the Conditional Use Permit, all the pros and cons, particularly around the volume of the building should be taken into account. Therefore the traffic issues are within the purview of this Commission.

Chairman Almeida asked that the Commission continue to provide their input on the Sheets.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 3.6

Councilor Kennedy inquired about the stair tower.

Ms. Goodknight stated that this is the egress stair tower from the garage to exit pedestrians off the garage roof.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 3.7

Chairman Almeida stated that he sees doors on either side of the seating area that do not seem to be covered. This reminds him of Brattle Square in Cambridge which has been very successful. It may be worth looking at a picture of this area contextually.

Councilor Kennedy inquired about the type of metal for the awnings.

Ms. Goodknight stated that some awnings will be metal, some will be canvas and this will be specified.

Mr. Lombardi stated that the roof of the conference center tower is cut off flat. He stated that it is not adding volume.

Chairman Almeida stated that the top of the tower element could be celebrated more.

Councilor Kennedy thought that the culture that was there previously (Italian) should be celebrated by a monument. She thought that something that is representative of a gift in response to the loss would be appropriate.

Mr. Shea stated that there is a lot of emphasis on the Conference Center tower but the entrance doesn't seem comparable.

Chairman Almeida stated that the brackets on Whole Foods should be continued throughout the length of the building.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 3.9

Mr. Lombardi stated that Portsmouth is a city of bridges. The high bridge in Portsmouth is anchored on either side of the river. The drawings of the new bridge are very elegant and it is also an anchored structure. The Memorial Bridge is anchored by the towers. He inquired whether the project bridge could be anchored or grounded in a similar manner.

Mr. Ruedig stated that she feels the glass walkway isn't appropriate to the project. It could be interesting in other situations but that it doesn't really fit in this project.

Mr. Gladhill gets the feel of an airport when looking at the glass walkway.

Mr. Lombardi inquired as to whether the glass walkway can structurally be at ground level.

Ms. Goodknight stated that they were working towards a lighter translucent feel with the walkway.

Councilor Kennedy has concerns with the bridge/walkway and inquired whether it could be moved underground and the glass structure removed completely.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 3.11

Mr. Wyckoff inquired about the second floor timbers. They have a traditional pergola type look.

Ms. Goodknight stated that these are a wrapped metal expression.

Chairman Almeida stated that the bridge is an exciting feature of this project and also finds the recessed areas at the tops of the buildings interesting. The bridge however, is very delicate and narrow and wondered if it could be an opportunity to add mass in an area that wouldn't detract from the project. He likes the light conservatory approach.

Councilor Kennedy stated that she doesn't like the white overlays on the building.

Ms. Goodknight stated that they will take another look at this detail.

Chairman Almeida stated that the windows should dominate over the signage.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 3.14

Councilor Kennedy has a difficult time locating the doors in the building and feels that there is a lot of space/building without doors.

Ms. Goodknight showed the doors on the 3-D digital depiction.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that he doesn't want to change the design. He thinks it will be very successful.

Ms. Ruedig stated that more doors would be helpful.

Ms. Goodknight stated that they will re-examine this detail again, but that they also need to keep security in mind.

Chairman Almeida commented that he likes this building and that it has come a long way. He feels that it will be very successful.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 3.14

Mr. Shea stated that the entrance to the hotel is a bit hard to find. He inquired whether there is a retaining wall holding the sidewalk back from the face of the building. The windows disappear behind the sidewalk.

Ms. Goodknight stated that it appears the windows disappear on the drawings because of the landscaping.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 3.17

Councilor Kennedy inquired about the kind of material that will be used for the siding.

Ms. Goodknight stated that it is a product called Boral siding. It is a green product that is more stable than PVC. It is a painted wood look.

Chairman Almeida stated that there has been great care taken with the detail in the back and that it doesn't look like the back of a building. Regarding the deck in the back, he inquired if this space needs to be 2 stories.

Ms. Goodknight stated that there is a regulation that requires a certain amount of open space above the deck.

Ms. Goodknight brought samples/choices for building materials that the Commission can choose from. She showed samples of brick types.

Ms. Goodknight stated that at this site, there are places where there will be a 60' travelway between the buildings because of the railway. At other sites in downtown Portsmouth where there are adjacent lots without a street in between, this does not happen.

It was decided by the Commission not to go through choices for materials for all elements this evening due to the length of the meeting so far. However, the Commission did briefly look at brick samples.

Comments from the Commission on Sheet 3.18

Chairman Almeida stated that if the height of the foundation could be decreased, it would be helpful.

Ms. Goodknight stated that this element can be scaled.

Chairman Almeida expressed that he hoped members of the public in attendance felt they had ample opportunity to comment this evening, and if they did not, please let him know at this point.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Mr. Gladhill stated that the HDC meetings for April will be on the 1st and 29th of the month.

Mr. Gladhill made a motion to continue the work session at one of the two HDC meetings in April, 2015. The applicant will let the HDC know for which meeting they will return. Mr. Shea seconded the motion.

*The motion to continue **passed** unanimously with all in favor, 7-0.*

III. ADJOURNMENT

At 10:42 pm, it was moved, seconded, and **passed** unanimously to **adjourn** the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Toni McLellan
Acting HDC Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Historic District Commission meeting on April 29, 2015.