

**MINUTES**

**SITE REVIEW TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**2:00 PM**

**FEBRUARY 4, 2015**

**EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE  
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rick Taintor, Chairman, Planning Director; Peter Britz, Environmental Planner; Juliet Walker, Transportation Planner; Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner; Peter Rice, Director, Public Works; Raymond Pezzullo, Assistant City Engineers; David Desfosses, Engineering Technician; Eric Eby, Parking & Transportation Engineer; Carl Roediger, Deputy Fire Chief; and Mark Newport, Portsmouth Police Department

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**I. OLD BUSINESS**

A. The application of **Harborcorp, LLC, Owner**, for property located on **Russell Street, Deer Street and Maplewood Avenue**, requesting Site Plan Approval for a proposed 5-story mixed use development with a footprint of 63,000 ± s.f. and gross floor area of 327,900 ± s.f., including a hotel/event center with 103,700 s.f. of event center space and 96 hotel rooms, 14 residential condominiums, a 40,000 s.f. retail supermarket, and 540 parking spaces (390 spaces in a garage structure and 150 below-grade spaces serving the retail use); with related paving, lighting, utilities, landscaping, drainage and associated site improvements. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 125 as Lot 21, Assessor Map 118 as Lot 28 and Assessor Map 124 as Lot 126 and lies within the Central Business B (CBB) District, the Downtown Overlay District (DOD) and the Historic District. (This application was postponed at the December 30, 2014 TAC meeting.)

The Chair read the notice into the record.

**SPEAKING TO THE APPLICATION:**

Cliff Greim with Harriman Architects and Engineers was present to speak to the application. The full project team was also present this evening. The applicant has organized the information so that it is clear and concise. Issues that have arisen have been addressed as requested. Mr. Greim covered the changes made since the last meeting. There have been several changes to the width of cross walks. On Russell Street, 6' bike lanes have been added. A bus space has been moved away from the road. Two parking spaces have been removed. Updates to signage and bike boxes have been made. Intersections have been realigned. The applicant feels that there is a good working balance between sidewalk widths, bike lanes and roadways now. The loading dock for Whole Foods remains the same. There are two areas of revision for the Landscape Plan. There are 5 existing deciduous trees within the Vaughn Street right of way. They will preserve these trees. Although this is on City property, the applicant has plans to enhance this area by cleaning it up and supplementing it with some shorter shrubbery. White

Spruce is a preferred species as it stays vertical and columnar, holds its needles, and provides heavy screening. At the north end of the building there is a small outdoor plaza associated with a restaurant. At the intersection of Russell Street and Deer Street, the plaza has been increased in size. As a result, food vendors, art shows, etc. can be accommodated.

Will Gatchell with Harriman Architects and Engineers spoke to the site retaining wall and screening. The wall will be 4' with a 1' curb. There will be a steel picket fence in this area for screening. Detail of the fence has been provided to HDC but is not yet included in the plans given to TAC. The applicant has ensured that the metering is in place and that everything is code compliant.

John Tarr with Harriman Architects and Engineers addressed utilities and lighting. The applicant has spaced lighting to approximately 60'. They are standard fixtures for the City of Portsmouth. A luminaire has been added on the back side of the bridge. There are now 50 bike spaces (increased from 25) and bike racks are located throughout the site. There has also been discussion about a possible location for interior bike spaces. The applicant has worked to accommodate all requests and answer all questions.

Mr. Taintor inquired as to why the applicant has proposed a transfer of land from the City of Portsmouth to the applicant.

Mr. Greim stated that the plaza is integral to the project and that it makes sense for the applicant to own this parcel. It is reasonable that the applicant assume the liability for this parcel and accept the responsibility for maintenance. They will give up some land by the Sheraton and near the roundabout in an exchange of land that the applicant feels is fair.

Mr. Rice stated that since this is the first that TAC is hearing of this proposal (with the exception of Mr. Taintor), he would like time to discuss this option with the Committee.

Mr. Taintor asked if the Committee would like to proceed Sheet by Sheet for review purposes.

Sheet 1 –James Tow is the new contact. The former contact is deceased. The name of PSNH has been changed to Eversource Energy.

Deputy Fire Chief Roediger noted that condo spaces have increased from 14 to 23 and when this goes to the Planning Board, that will need to be updated.

Mr. Desfosses stated that a recordable boundary plan is needed.

#### Demolition Plan

Mr. Desfosses stated that Pre and Post sewer videos will be required. He expressed concerns about the sewer going through Russell Street and the effect that blasting will have on the current piping.

Mr. Desfosses would like to see a cross section through the building depicted on the plans so it can be determined where anchors are needed and how deep the blasting needs to be.

Land Transfer and Easement Plan

Mr. Taintor stated that there would be a license for the period of construction and a permanent foundation easement. He asked that the applicant note those items on the plans.

Mr. Greim stated that if the land in question for transfer from the City of Portsmouth to the Applicant takes place, there would be no need for an easement.

Mr. Desfosses would like to discuss phases for how the project will progress; things such as where material deliveries will happen, where the materials will be stored, etc.

Mr. Greim stated that he will be working on phases next week.

Mr. Taintor stated that the Construction Management Mitigation Plan will come before the building permit and after approval of the project.

The applicant is hoping for Site Plan Approval today unless there are serious concerns about the plans.

Site Layout Plan

Mr. Taintor is concerned about the front corner of the building in that there is a continuous 8' level sidewalk around the ramp. He stated that there would need to be an easement granted for the ramp and requested a blowup detail of that area on the plans.

The applicant did not see anything in the TEC comments of concern.

Ms. Walker requested that the applicant incorporate TEC comments.

Ms. Walker stated that on the Sheraton side she cannot see what happened to the bike lane. It seems to have disappeared.

The applicant will do an interim sketch to show that part of the bike lane.

Mr. Taintor stated that it is not typical to have raised pavers across a driveway but TAC has no problem with this as it differentiates an active pedestrian area.

Mr. Taintor inquired as to why only one driveway is delineated as a pedestrian crossing.

Mr. Desfosses stated that on Sheet C30 where it states that "Exacts limits....to be determined" "DPW" should be added to the note.

Mr. Cracknell feels that the area in question for land transfer from the City of Portsmouth to the applicant should remain (and be maintained) a public space. This space is designed to be independent from the rest of the project. He does not want the City to lose the ability to use this space.

Mr. Cracknell stated that the entrance as currently designed (and separated from the plaza) will allow access to the café only. No one would be able to access Whole Foods through this space.

Mr. Desfosses stated that the plaza is so large of an area that it may be lacking some design elements. For example, if someone were to stand in the middle they would be 25' from any structure. He feels that it is not a welcoming area where people would tend to congregate.

Mr. Taintor does not see a problem with this and feels that 50' (25' on each side) is not a lot of space. He stated that there is flexibility with this much space and can see something like movable chairs in this area.

Ms. Walker stated that spending a lot of time on this at this point is not appropriate as City Council must approve this.

Mr. Cracknell felt that this is in fact a TAC decision. The role of TAC is to make a recommendation to the City Council and it is not only about aesthetics but about public works as well (among other things).

Susan Duprey of Devine, Millimet and Branch stated that the applicant is withdrawing the request for approval today.

Mr. Desfosses stated that he is still uncomfortable at this point with the Green Street layout and the nosing (on the side of the building). Green Street should "T" into Russell Street. However, the applicant is accommodating truck movements and that is preventing this. If Green Street is to lock together with the rest of downtown it should get pulled back 15' or so or, become another street. Losing a portion of the plaza would be a helpful thing understanding that tractor trailers leaving the site would still need to be accommodated. Mr. Desfosses would like the area to be inviting for people to walk around.

Mr. Taintor stated that it is designed the way it is to facilitate trucks leaving the site. Perhaps it should be pulled back some. Alternatively, the lanes could be designed to accommodate cars only while still allowing trucks to get out of the service area.

Mr. Greim stated that they will refigure this area and resubmit the plans. However, if they were to "T" into Russell Street, the crossing would be significantly wider, and the crosswalk would get longer. He pointed out that there wouldn't be many trucks going into, or out of, that area (only a couple/day).

Mr. Taintor stated that there will be some need for traffic movement around the roundabout during construction so this will need construction easements.

#### Parking, Pavement and Signage Plan

Mr. Eby stated that typically bike boxes are not provided unless there is a bike lane.

Ms. Walker stated that there is no way to get to the bike boxes (no bike lane) and that they may not be used much as a result.

Mr. Desfosses stated that there should be a note for temporary traffic lighting provisions during construction.

Ms. Walker stated that the signage on the Deer Street approach is an all-way yield and not a roundabout. This needs to be changed. She also asked that the "Share the Road" signs be removed.

Mr. Desfosses stated that there is a Stop Bar on Deer Street and it is almost on top of the crosswalk. That crosswalk must be squared up and moved so it is out of the driveway.

Ms. Walker stated that the bike lane symbol should be the biker with a directional arrow.

Mr. Eby stated that there are discrepancies on the Plan Sheets between labeling and scaling of parking spaces. He asked that the applicant rectify this and ensure that the labeling and scaling are consistent.

Ms. Walker asked that the applicant coordinate with COAST to designate bus stops and that they have the proper signage.

Mr. Desfosses stated that the City of Portsmouth does not allow signs to be affixed to light poles.

The applicant will remove the pavement markings (sharks teeth) at Portwalk Place.

Mr. Britz stated that Green Street needs Railroad signs.

Mr. Eby stated that on Maplewood and Deer Streets the stop bar should extend through to the bike box.

Mr. Eby asked that a "Stop Here on Red" sign be placed on the pavement in appropriate places. He also stated that sign number 13 should 18'x6' not 12'x25'.

#### The Enlargement Plan

Mr. Eby asked that the crosswalk by the Sheraton be made into two different ramps rather than one. The crosswalk on the driveway side is not needed.

#### Roundabout Plan

The applicant stated that at this point this plan is conceptual.

#### Grading and Drainage Plan

Ms. Walker stated that she has the contracts for the drainage review and the review has commenced. Mr. Pazzulla is the contact for this review.

Mr. Desfosses inquired as to why there are new contours across both roads.

Mr. Greim stated that new pavement across the width of the road would be installed within project limits.

Mr. Desfosses stated that traffic would have to be rerouted for a couple days if this were to happen and that it would have a tremendous impact on the area.

Mr. Greim stated that they would not be replacing the full depth of pavement, but rather would only be profile milling/reshaping the road.

Erosion and Sediment Control Plan

Mr. Desfosses stated that the construction entrance needs to be approved by DPW.

Utility Plan

Mr. Greim stated that the final location for the gas main on Maplewood Avenue would be out in the street.

Mr. Desfosses will work with the applicant to determine the best place for this.

Mr. Desfosses asked that the water main be kept off the street by 4-5'. They will need to remove the valve cluster during construction.

Deputy Fire Chief Roediger stated that the Fire Department connections must be on the street side instead of behind the building. This is where the hydrants are located. He asked that the applicant review air intake and ventilation (there should be more than one intake).

Ms. Walker and Mr. Taintor expressed that there is too much to change to provide conditional approval at this time.

Dick Bagley of 213 Pleasant Street was present to speak to the application. He is not for, or against, the project but has some general comments. The project seems out of character for the City of Portsmouth. He feels that the applicant wants to put too much building in too little space. It is entirely unclear how bicycles will access this space. The bicycle plan does not seem thoughtful and the intent seems to be focused on service trucks coming into Whole Foods. The Maplewood Street entrance seems to be very problematic in that Whole Foods will bring in somewhere around 5,000 cars on a weekday and 8,000 on a weekend day. This will inundate the area with traffic yet the parking seems to be inadequate given the volume of traffic. A construction plan should be part of this review. Mr. Bagley commends the TAC for the constructive review today. He came here to learn more about the project and has learned a great deal about the technical details.

Susan Duprey of Devine, Millimet and Branch stated that the applicant fully intends to address all concerns/issues. She feels that the changes are not substantive enough to prevent approval today. They would like the opportunity to make the suggested changes and be able to move forward with the project.

Ms. Walker asked that the applicant check all plans to ensure that there are standard crosswalks in places where they should be.

The applicant stated that the raised crosswalks are at the garage entrance driveways. The rise will be 4" in a distance of 4'.

Mr. Desfosses feels that the rise is aggressive and asked that the applicant ensure that a car can actually make that rise. He stated that a 2 1/2" rise would be better.

Ms. Walker said this is consistent with what TEC recommended.

The applicant agreed to look at the approach on each side and will make appropriate changes.

Mr. Desfosses stated that Detail A is correct but Detail E conflicts with Detail A. Some details show up 3 or 4 times and are inconsistent. Mr. Desfosses asked that Detail E be eliminated and that all details be reviewed to ensure they are consistent with each other.

Mr. Greim stated that Detail C shows 5' of pavement which is the standard for downtown. Detail C has to do with the concrete loading area and the back driveway.

Mr. Desfosses stated that the roof drains show as 12" pipe on the plans, which are enormous. The applicant should review this.

Mr. Taintor asked that fencing detail be provided.

#### Landscape Plan

Ms. Walker reiterated what was discussed at the last meeting regarding bicycles. She stated that if the applicant is attempting to encourage employees to use bikes, providing bike racks in an unsecured area is not going to go a long way towards that end. There should be an area designated in the garage with secure parking for bicycles. Bicycle parking for residents of the facility would go a long way towards demonstrating that the applicant is committed to providing alternative transportation. This can be as simple as providing a caged in area that is secured.

The applicant stated that they have been working on this.

The applicant is meeting with the Trees and Greenery Committee next week Feb 11<sup>th</sup> for an update.

Mr. Taintor stated that they must be very specific with species, removal etc. with this Committee

#### Lighting Plan

There will need to be an easement for the lighting control cabinet which is shown on private property.

Ms. Walker stated that even though the fixture attached to the bridge is lighting a public way, it should be maintained as part of the private bridge.

Judy Johnson, Architect with Harriman Architects and Engineers, stated that the analysis for building height has been completed. She took a measurement around the building every 5'. She stated that no part of the building is under 45'.

Mr. Taintor stated that they will need to have heights for different planes of the building going forward.

Ms. Walker asked for clarification on the number of public parking spaces available because it is not entirely clear on the plans and that it must be made clear prior to going to the Parking, Traffic and

Safety Committee. She asked that the applicant incorporate additional specificity around a Transportation Management Plan.

Mr. Desfosses inquired about the rerouting of PSNH lines.

The applicant stated that this is depicted on the plans and that they have met with PSNH several times without TAC.

Mr. Desfosses will need to familiarize himself with this part of the plan.

Mr. Taintor reopened the public hearing.

Dick Bagley of 213 Pleasant Street spoke a second time to the application and reiterated that he is not against the project but rather against approval today. He is in support of continuing this thoughtful and important process. There seems to be a large number of issues that need to be resolved. It is unfair to a developer to spend a few years trying to build something, but it is prudent with such a project to do it right. He again commended TAC on their thoughtfulness in being so thorough in bringing forth important issues and discussing them.

Ms. Duprey is reiterating the request for approval today. The changes needed and discussed today are not substantive and they can and are able to make them. She stated that the Sheraton has never had a water problem and that the height of the buildings has been shown on the plans.

The Chair asked if there was anyone else wishing to speak to, for or against the application. Seeing no one rise, the Chair closed the public hearing.

## **DISCUSSION AND DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Taintor can spend tomorrow morning going through the notes from today and can make a list of stipulations. He will work to get them done by noon tomorrow. He would like to have comments back by the end of the day tomorrow in order to send them out by Friday morning. Harborcorp would need to have the changes completed by next Tuesday.

Ms. Walker stated that she feels that this project is not at the point of a favorable recommendation to the Planning Board yet. This is a large project and there has been a lot of redesign. TAC does not typically recommend things to the Planning Board with a lot of stipulations. She feels that this process would be rushed if they proceed forward.

Mr. Desfosses stated that the drainage review has not been completed yet and that there is a lot of water being diverted toward Market Street in this project. This is significant to the City of Portsmouth. Flow should be shifted back toward Bridge Street. Reviewing the drainage plan must be thorough and it will take a significant amount of time.

Mr. Britz stated that things that have been sent to the Planning Board have come back to TAC. He does not want that to happen in this complex project.



Ms. Walker stated that this is still going to HDC.

Ms. Walker made a motion to postpone this matter for one month to the next scheduled TAC meeting (with stipulations as discussed). TAC will provide recommendations.

Mr. Taintor will write up the stipulations tomorrow morning and will circulate them to TAC.

The motion passed unanimously.

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**III. ADJOURNMENT** was had at approximately 4:18pm, was seconded and passed unanimously

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Respectfully submitted,

Toni McLellan  
Acting Secretary for the Technical Advisory Committee