

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

EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

6:30 p.m.

**February 13, 2019
Reconvened from
February 06, 2019**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Vincent Lombardi; City Council Representative Doug Roberts; Reagan Ruedig, Martin Ryan, Dan Rawling; Cyrus Beer; Alternates Heinz Sauk-Schubert and Margot Doering

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Vice-Chairman Jon Wyckoff

ALSO PRESENT: Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner, Planning Department

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I. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

1. 12-32 Porter Street

The request was for to remove six faux chimneys, cap the roof, and add a rubber membrane over the cap. There were not comments.

2. 410, 420 & 430 Islington Street

Mr. Cracknell said the changes related to the new rear construction and that the applicant wanted to change the cladding from aluminum double-hung windows to an Ultrex composite window and might want to change the double-hung windows to casement or awning windows. Sarah Howard was present on behalf of the applicant and said some windows were already casements and would remain so and that all would have spacer bars.

(At this point, Chairman Lombardi stated that Mr. Sauk-Schubert would be the alternate voting member for Vice-Chair Wyckoff, who was absent.)

*Ms. Ruedig moved to **approve** the two Administrative Items as presented, with a stipulation on Administrative Approval Item #2: The SDL (Simulated Divided Lite) windows shall include a spacer bar and half-screens.*

*City Council Representative Roberts seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0*

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS (OLD BUSINESS)

A. *Work Session/Public Hearing* requested by **City of Portsmouth, prospective owner, and Redgate/Kane, potential lessee**, for property located at **62 Daniel Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow renovations to the existing buildings and the construction of new mixed-use buildings as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 106 as Lot 8 and lies within the Character District 4 (CD 4), Character District 5 (CD 5), Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts. *(This item was postponed at the January 9, 2019 meeting.)*

The petition was postponed at the February 6, 2019 meeting.

III. WORK SESSIONS (OLD BUSSINESS)

A. *Work Session* requested by **RJF-Maplewood, LLC, owner, and RW Norfolk Holdings, LLC, applicant**, for property located at **111 Maplewood Avenue**, wherein permission was requested to allow a new free standing structure (construct a 4 – 4 ½ story mixed-use building) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 124 as Lot 8 and lies within the Character District 5 (CD 5), Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts. *(This item continued from the January 9, 2019 meeting.)*

WORK SESSION

Lisa DeStefano of DeStefano Architects was present on behalf of the applicant. She introduced the owner Michael Kane of the Kane Company, and the design team of Haril Pandya and Stefan Vogelmann of CBT. Ms. DeStefano stated that they had been before the Planning Board and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and that the Planning Board liked the pedestrian connectivity from Maplewood Avenue to the 3S Arts Center, the corner gateway green area, the parking, and the fact that the building was other than a residential one or a mixed-use hotel. She said they had supplemental design sketches in addition to the original packet.

Mr. Pandya reviewed the petition. He said the building would be a 3-1/2 story one and that street trees, pedestrian crossings, and so on would be incorporated. Ms. DeStefano said the new footprint combined a few schemes from the previous work session that included more fronting on Maplewood Avenue. Mr. Pandya said they were creating an urban edge and a community pathway that would include stairs to connect to Maplewood Avenue. He said that some transition pieces would have warm tones mixed with metal ones or more contemporary transitional pieces and noted that there would also be brick tones that would reflect Portsmouth's traditional and historic tones. He discussed the façade, elements, and scales and showed several examples of other Portsmouth buildings that were influential to the project's design. He said they broke down the height and verticality by using windows, intersecting volumes, elements, different materials, and so on. He said they carved away at the Vaughan Street façade by creating decks and pedestrian-friendly visual elements, a passageway for people to walk through the building, retail and cafes. Ms. DeStefano said there was no back door to the building and that the parking would be hidden under the building.

City Council Representative Roberts said there was a long wall with nothing of interest to pedestrians along Maplewood Avenue and Raynes Avenue. He asked why someone would walk

there. Mr. Pandya said those things were still in discussion and that they wanted to make it an active area. Ms. Ruedig asked if there were doors to activate the wall. Mr. Pandya said it could be an opportunity. Mr. Cracknell said it was a zoning requirement.

Ms. DeStefano discussed the bays, noting that they projected toward Raynes and Maplewood Avenues. She said the Maplewood Avenue façade was reduced in scale and could have different materials. She discussed the upper window pattern and the lighting.

Chairman Lombardi said a significant portion of the building faced south and thought something interesting could be architecturally to take advantage of the sunset views. The glass was discussed. Mr. Pandya said it would have solar protection as well as some transparency. Ms. Ruedig said she favored the asymmetrical park instead of the round circle and square in the corner. She said she was hesitant about the wall going so close to Maplewood Avenue because it wasn't the urban dense center of town, and that it made her a bit cautious to see a huge wall right up on the street, facing 2-1/2 story residential buildings. It was further discussed. Mr. Pandya noted that there was more solidity at the bottom of the Maplewood Avenue façade and more light on the top two stories, so the top piece could be set back more to read as a lower piece. Ms. Ruedig asked whether the applicant would consider setting the 111 Maplewood Avenue building back enough so that the facades lined up. Ms. DeStefano said the landscape architect would look at the void between 111 Maplewood Avenue and the rest of the project. It was further discussed. Chairman Lombardi asked about the proposed property line. Mr. Kane said the site would evolve and wasn't sure if the line was where they wanted it.

Mr. Rawling discussed the original site plan and said he was pleased to see the building location developed and detailed and thought that it presented a cleaner slate for future development. He encouraged doing landscaping screening in front of the parking lot, with access points around the other parts of the building. He felt that the Maplewood Avenue façade needed more scaling elements because it would be the most important elevation. He said he still had concerns about the monolithic massing of the building that had several elevations of over 100 feet long, which were in contrast to the historic context buildings in the neighborhood. Relating to the mechanical equipment on the roof, he said the Commission would want to see more than metal boxes on the roof and suggested screening or incorporating them into a design element. He recommended moving one-story and two-story elements away from the Maplewood Avenue façade's big setback and use some modules similar in scale and massing to some of the residential units on the other side of the street. He referenced an example of a 4-story building broken down with different layers. He suggested entrances and smaller scale elements on the one-story level because of the houses around it. He said he liked the texture in the smaller sketches of the elevations, noting that there used to be a lot of glass but that it was breaking down into textual forms. He said he preferred the triple divisions instead of the normal double ones, which he thought was effective on the smaller-level elevations but when blown up, lost the texture. He said that he thought the feeling was better in the previous version, the contemporary expressions, shadow play, and dimensionality on the upper stories. He thought the penthouse step-back levels needed more expression, which he further discussed, as well as the importance of having deep recesses and textures. He said the Maplewood Avenue elevation stood out more when there were more interesting things going on with the rest of the building and felt that the new version read as a curtain wall box with a base on it. He said the important corner didn't read as a signature

element and suggested that it could be more distinct. He said the new version of the Raynes Avenue with the projecting piece looked like a combination of masonry panels and glazing. Mr. Pandya explained that they were the fins and that they planned to make other places for that sort of thing. Mr. Rawling said that could work but still felt that breaking it down into smaller scale modules of 30-40 feet would work better with the neighborhood's context.

Mr. Ryan said he was concerned about the siting of the building at first but liked the direction it was going in better. He said he liked the open corner but was concerned that the project was trying to placemake it and preferred to see more meat to it, like a colonnade or a structure that was scaled down, an element that would help transition the scale into the rest of the building or enclose the space. He said he liked a lot of the language and that he liked the glazed corners, which he noted was something not seen in town. He said he also liked that there was no real back of the building. He thought that more could be done with the long facades to break up the rhythm, like some distraction or creative playfulness. He said the scale and massing were good and suggested a sidewalk against the Maplewood Avenue façade. He asked whether an open space was a parking lot, and it was further discussed. Mr. Ryan said that open space was important as well. He concluded that the project was on the right track and said the language was right, he liked the transparency, and that it was in the right part of town.

Mr. Sauk-Schubert asked where the main entrance was, noting that there was no articulation. He discussed the arch. Mr. Pandya said the piers were the heavy components and the arch was set within to create an in-and-out hierarchy. Ms. Doering said what excited her the most were the non-colored sketches because she saw wonderful changes in the size of the openings and different support elements in between. She said the cantilever element seemed wimpy compared to the other elevations and agreed that breaking things into smaller pieces was a way to break the huge one-plane façade. It was further discussed, as well as the brick tone. Ms. Doering said the park read as an entrance, yet there was no real welcoming entrance. Mr. Kane said they hired a landscaper who would address it and make it stronger. Ms. Doering also discussed what the views of the building would look like leaving the city and suggested that the rooftop mechanicals be looked at more. Ms. DeStefano said the penthouse was set back so far that there would be light up there and that it wouldn't look like just a flat roof. Ms. Ruedig said she appreciated the inspirational photos and details and thought it was important that the building have details because it was very visible from all around. She said that, even though it was an office building, details were crucial to make it not seem like an office park in the middle of downtown. Chairman Lombardi said he agreed with all the comments.

There was no public comment.

The applicant indicated that they would continue the work session to the March meeting.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to **continue** the work session to the March 6, 2019 meeting.*

IV. WORK SESSIONS (NEW BUSINESS)

1. Work Session requested by **PNF Trust of 2013, Peter N. Floros Trustee**, owner, for property located at **266-278 State Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (278 State Street) and new construction to an existing structure (4-5 story addition at 266 & 270 State Street) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is located on Assessor Map 107 as Lots 78, 79 & 80 and lies within the Character District 4 (CD 4), Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts.

WORK SESSION

The architect Michael Keane was present on behalf of the applicant. He reviewed the history of the site. He noted that they were originally going to have four stories instead of three but the developer wanted to add more space. He said they met with the Planning Staff and reworked the design based on their comments. He said they were considering breaking the floor lines between the Times Building and the addition to rearticulate the cornice line and would place the fifth-story penthouse on the Times Building instead of the addition so that they could set it back from Pleasant and State Streets. He said they added a mansard roof on the fourth story of the addition to pick up the cornice line. He further discussed the elevations, the mansard roof, the dormers, and the storefront. He said the arches in the Times Building would be restored at ground level. He said the storefront would be created after the arches and that they would eliminate the mezzanine in the Times Building. He noted that the elevator would stop at every half level.

Mr. Rawling said that recreating the building as reminiscent of the previous building was the right approach and that it was great to see the old arch openings honored, but he recommended some doors. He thought the general scale and mass were good but suggested that there be shed dormers in-between the doghouse dormers and that the railings move out to the roof edge on top of the mansard. He said the penthouse needed to be a real design piece to the building and should be able to stand on its own. Mr. Ruedig said she thought the new building's massing was very appropriate. She agreed that the penthouse could be designed differently because it looked too much like a box. She said the location was a focal point of historic downtown, so it was important that the building be a quality one and not look like anything was slapped on. She added that it was important to have well thought-out details and good texture and that it be contextual to the location. Mr. Ryan agreed and thought the penthouse looked foreign and should have some references to the two buildings. He said it should be hidden because it would either be read as bad mechanicals or would look like some odd architecture on top of the building. Mr. Beer said the penthouse wasn't acceptable and thought the building would be fantastic without it because it fit into the neighborhood.

Mr. Sauk-Schubert said he had problems with the elevations and thought the rhythm didn't make sense. He said he didn't understand the division and asked why there was pilaster. Mr. Keane said they were trying to get the verticality back and that the window rhythm would evolve. City Council Representative Roberts said he agreed that the penthouse should be hidden because it was too prominent. He suggested making it as invisible as possible or reducing its size so that it didn't seem like such a mass on top of the building. Ms. Doering said she also had issues with the penthouse and thought it needed to be architecturally interesting on its own and reference the building. She asked whether the property would be a rental one. Mr. Keane said he didn't know. Ms. Doering said the owners might not want to deal with the planters on top.

Chairman Lombardi said the overall massing was great but thought the penthouse needed work. He said the project was going in the right direction. He emphasized that the penthouse couldn't be just a box but had to relate to the building and also be able to stand on its own. Mr. Rawling reiterated that moving the railings up to the edge would do a lot to screen it. Mr. Cracknell suggested reducing the overhang. The penthouse was further discussed. Mr. Ryan said the language was very 1960s international style and that using that particular image to explain the massing didn't help. He said the horizontal rails and big glass expansions did not relate to the front façade. Ms. Ruedig asked whether the added height would require a variance, and Mr. Cracknell said it would.

There was no public comment.

The applicant indicated that he would return in April for another work session.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to **continue** the work session to the April 2019 meeting.*

V. ADJOURNMENT

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to **adjourn** the meeting at 8:15 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
HDC Recording Secretary