

SITE WALK – 11 MEETING HOUSE HILL ROAD – July 17, 2019 – 5:30 P.M.

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

CONFERENCE ROOM “A”

6:30 p.m.

**July 17, 2019
Reconvened from
July 10, 2019**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: N/A

ALSO PRESENT: Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner, Planning Department

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Chairman Lombardi said the 56 Middle Street petition was withdrawn and the petitions for 15 Mt. Vernon Street and 179 Pleasant Street were requested to be postponed.

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **postpone** the 15 Mt. Vernon Street and 179 Pleasant Street petitions to the August 20, 2019 meeting. Ms. Ruedig seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

I. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

Note: Administrative Item 3, 180 Washington Street, was pulled for separate review and discussed at the end of the Administrative Items. Item 5 was an added item.

1. 410-430 Islington Street

The request was to replace wood steps with granite ones, replace basement windows, and modify the water table.

2. 109-111 Bow Street

The request was to replace an aluminum gutter in kind. It was stipulated that the gutter be painted to match the siding and trim.

3. 180 Washington Street (39 Gates Street)

The project architect Juli MacDonald was present on behalf of the applicant, along with the owner Alison Jewett and the Green Mountain Window representative Andy Keefe. Ms. Jewett said the existing windows were not original to the house and wanted to replace the storms. Mr. Keefe said the new windows would have the same sash and match historic windows, but the existing windows with aluminum tracks would have a sash and vinyl replacement kit.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the vinyl was a deal changer, noting that the building was a prominent one in a prominent location. Ms. Jewett said the vinyl windows would only replace a few upstairs windows. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said that would be worse. Ms. Ruedig said she was fine with vinyl liners on the west and north facades. Mr. Rawling said they couldn't be allowed on such a historic house, and Chairman Lombardi agreed. Mr. Ryan suggested that the most prominent windows be the single hung and that the less obvious windows have jamb liners.

*Ms. Ruedig moved to **approve** the item, with the stipulation that the main elevations on Gates and Washington Streets shall have the Green Mountain window with the concealed jamb liner.*

*The motion **passed** by a vote of 5-2, with Mr. Rawling and Chairman Lombardi voting in opposition.*

4. 621 Islington Street

The request was to replace a window with a door that would match the existing doors.

5. 70 Court Street

Mr. Cracknell said the request was to remove a window air conditioner that was temporarily installed on the rear addition, where there was an existing condenser. It was stipulated that a cover be added to the condenser and that the conduit be covered and field painted.

*Ms. Ruedig moved to **approve** Items 1, 2, 4 and 5 with their respective stipulations, and City Council Representative Roberts seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

At this point in the meeting, Mr. Cracknell left and Peter Stith took his place.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS (NEW BUSINESS)

1. (*Work Session/Public Hearing*) requested by **56 Middle Street, LLC, owner**, for property located at **56 Middle Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (2-story rear addition) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 16 as Lot 19 and lies within the Character District 4-L1 (CD 4-L1), Downtown Overlay and Historic Districts.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

The petition was withdrawn by the applicant.

2. (Work Session/Public Hearing) requested by **Argeris & Eloise Karabelas, owners**, for property located at **11 Meeting House Hill Road**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (replace windows, siding, and trim) and construction to an existing structure (new rear shed dormers) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 103 as Lot 59 and lies within the General Residence B (GRB) and Historic Districts.

WORK SESSION

The project contractor Rick Becksted Sr. was present on behalf of the applicant and introduced the owner Argeris Karabelas and his associate David Adams. Mr. Becksted said they wanted to restore the Captain James Driscoll House as much as possible to its origin, including:

- Rebuild the front entryway;
- Rebuild the two chimneys and add bishop caps;
- Replace all the windows with Green Mountain ones;
- Raise the back wall of the house and finish off the roof;
- Eliminate a 3-ft overhang on the back addition and extend the other side of the addition; and
- Eliminate a garden shed.

Ms. Ruedig asked why 12-light awnings were chosen instead of traditional ones. Mr. Becksted said the traditional size could be awkward for the rooms and awning windows would be more private. Ms. Ruedig commented that the windows were very large. In response to Vice-Chair Wyckoff's questions, Mr. Becksted said some of the windows were egress style and that the bedroom windows would mimic the double hung. He said the back cedar shakes would be kept, the sills would have a two-inch face and the door would be a good-quality wood one. Mr. Rawling thought the windows should have the same rhythm as the rear windows and that the big windows were out of character with the house.

The door was discussed. Mr. Becksted said it would be 6'8" and that the surround would be rebuilt. He said the existing door was in bad shape. Mr. Ryan asked why the existing bump-out door wasn't matched instead of having steps. Mr. Becksted said it would look overpowering on a small house, and the existing dormer stood out away from the back wall and would create planes.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked about window specifications, noting that usually the trim and moldings were specified. Mr. Becksted said he had samples of the existing windows and would duplicate them. Chairman Lombardi said it could be submitted as an administrative approval. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he thought the large windows were horizontally massive. Mr. Becksted pointed out that there was a window on the second story that wasn't shown in the drawings and would be replaced. The Commission agreed that the original 4A windows looked more appropriate for the house, and it was further discussed.

It was agreed that the bright red brick would be used. Mr. Rawling suggested a stipulation that architectural asphalt shingles with a wood-tone color be used. Mr. Becksted agreed and said the chimneys would be taken all the way down and then reflashed.

Public Comment

Paige Trace of 27 Hancock Street said it was a successful project.

David Adams said the plan was the best hope that the house would ever have. No one else rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the work session and opened the public hearing.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Mr. Becksted gave a brief synopsis of what he presented during the work session. He said he would submit molding samples and an updated window schedule as an administrative approval.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR AGAINST THE PETITION

Eddie Kane said she was an abutter and applauded Mr. Becksted's project.

No one else rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public hearing.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for the application as presented, with the following stipulations:*

- 1. The applicant shall update the window schedule to reflect the original sheet 4A dated June 14, 2019.*
- 2. The original trim shall be submitted for Administrative Approval.*
- 3. Half screens shall be used.*
- 4. The applicant shall use wood-tone shingles.*
- 5. The applicant shall use Old Port restoration brick.*

Ms. Ruedig seconded.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the project would preserve the integrity of the District, conserve and enhance property values, maintain the special character of the District, and have compatibility of design with surrounding properties.

*The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

3. Petition of **Drew & Brittany Schulthess, owner**, for property located at **15 Mt. Vernon Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (extend roofline of the existing house over the attached garage) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 111 as Lot 33 and lies within the General Residence B (GRB) and Historic Districts.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to **postpone** the petition to the August 20, 2019 meeting.*

III. WORK SESSIONS (OLD BUSINESS)

A. 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. *(This item was postponed at the June 12, 2019 meeting to the July 2019 meeting.)*

WORK SESSION

The architect Michael Keane was present on behalf of the applicant. He noted that they were granted a variance for the structure and lot coverage. He reviewed the previous work session and said they proposed to do the following:

- Return to matching dormer roofs and a storefront and use a similar treatment on the State Street elevation;
- Tie the building in with the 84 Pleasant Street one;
- Set back the first entrance door three feet, and the second another eight feet;
- Eliminate the roof to the penthouse to step it back further from the roof edge, with adjustments made to the State and Pleasant Streets sides to make the footprint smaller;
- Restore existing openings on the west elevation and replace a door into a window;
- Install underground parking on 84 Pleasant Street; and
- Potentially add a setback fourth story.

Mr. Rawling said he supported the pilasters as they were because they added interest but suggested refining some of the details because they projected out. He recommended mixing the flashboard and the claps to add some texture. He said he preferred standard dormers and the previously proposed glassy storefronts and thought a storefront entrance was needed on Pleasant Street. He suggested an opaque railing with infill to scale the penthouse down and some screening to add some interest, and he thought penthouse could be more special by adding transoms over the door to get a garden pavilion feeling.

Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he thought the new location for the garage was successful and was glad that the Times Building façade on Church Street would be left alone. He preferred the new storefronts instead of the glassy ones. He said a door on Pleasant Street would be fine but thought people would look into all the windows. He said he didn't want to see anything else on the penthouse that would make it taller, noting that transom windows might push it up. Mr. Keane said he could use a shorter door, and Vice-Chair Wyckoff said that would help. He said the flat roof was awkward and preferred the dark railing on top. He recommended that attention be paid to the rounded windows and the door system. City Council Representative Roberts said he agreed and suggested setting back the top rail a few feet so that it didn't come out to the edge. He also recommended a door on Pleasant Street to activate that façade.

Ms. Ruedig said the building design was safe and suggested that the applicant develop material and details to make it more interesting. She said she liked the recessed entry between the two

buildings and was happy to see the Times Building fully restored. Mr. Ryan said he agreed with most of the comments. He thought the design didn't make as much of a statement as the previous design, noting that the rails used to be more decorative but were now bland and not something normally seen on top of a building. He asked whether roofing linked the dormers. Mr. Keane said it was roofing material and that the fascia would be painted to match, and that the roofing on the sloped areas would be imitation slate. Mr. Ryan said the linked entry could use more articulation. Chairman Lombardi said it was a very safe proposal and felt that the building as designed wasn't a noticeable building. He said he could go either way with the storefront glass.

The rail system was further discussed. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he was the only one who thought the rail was successful but could see how someone might think it was an off-the-shelf system. Mr. Keane said the revised design was a result of the Commission's previous comments and that he thought the rail should be more ornamental. Ms. Doering said the penthouse had a more contemporary feel to it with traditional elements but was different than the bottom part of the building. She said the rail could be the transitional piece, something between a classic rail and a simplistic one. She said the previous rail was too heavy and preferred the simpler look. Mr. Rawling said it looked like a deck at the edge of the roof and suggested a mixture of opaqueness and screenings. He thought it might be more effective if the scale was dropped and some of the previous patterns were simplified. Mr. Ryan said the rail made the project and that it was important to get it right, and he thought it looked like mechanical screening. He said it should be more of an architectural statement than the penthouse and that it needed more character.

There was no public comment.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

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

B. Work Session requested by **Alan W. & Wendy G. Wong, owners**, for property located at **179 Pleasant Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow the construction of a new free-standing structure (garden pergola) and new construction to an existing structure (replace roof and structures of existing ells and expand middle ell) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 118 as Lot 15 and lies within the Mixed Research Office (MRO) and Historic Districts. *(This item was continued at the June 12, 2019 meeting to the July, 2019 meeting.)*

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to **postpone** the petition to the August 20, 2019 meeting.*

C. Work Session requested by **Dagny Taggart, LLC, owner**, and **Mark A. McNabb, applicant** for property located at **3 Pleasant Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow renovations and new construction to an existing structure (3-story, 2000 ± s.f. addition to the rear and modify the roof of the building with office space) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 107 as Lot 31 and lies within the

Character District 5 (CD 5), Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts. *(This item was continued at the June 12, 2019 meeting to the July, 2019 meeting.)*

WORK SESSION

The applicant Mark McNabb, project architect Tracy Kozak, and landscape architect Robbie Woodburn were present to speak to the petition. Ms. Kozak briefly reviewed the history of the building. She said they wanted to put an addition on the back and on the roof, remove the awnings on the front windows, and add interior storm windows. She said the landscaping plan was a big part of the project to enliven the pedestrian experience by widening sidewalks, creating outdoor dining and spaces for street artists and musicians, and eliminating the clutter of electrical wires and trash receptacles. Ms. Woodburn briefly discussed the paving pattern for the courtyard. Ms. Kozak said the existing bank would be repurposed as a restaurant on the first floor, with offices on the second and third floors, and that the street level would be public realm.

Ms. Kozak reviewed the floor and roof plans, which included the following:

- Replace the large mechanical units with an interior mechanical area and screen it behind a parapet wall;
- Add new louvers;
- Add an oval-shaped office to the new roof;
- Keep part of the existing back addition but remove the angled wall and square the addition;
- On the west elevation, replace the bank door with copper or mahogany to be more in keeping with the fenestration, and move the circular awnings to allow more light;
- On the east elevation, carry the limestone banding around; push back the top level; put the office suite entry on the curved corner; and add balconies to the upper two levels; and
- On the north and south elevations, raise the alleyways to be flush with the sidewalks; bump out the curve; add a door to the north elevation for alleyway access.

Ms. Kozak showed 3-dimensional views of the building elevations and said the building would not be taller than its neighbors. She said they preferred the original glazed brick and would bring a wood element on the back of the building and roof to relate to Portsmouth's maritime culture. She reviewed window details. She said they would replace the curvatures and hierarchy of molding sizes, start detailing on the rounded balconies, paint the railing and include a cooper mesh inset panel to tie into the copper panels. Mr. McNabb reviewed the mechanical equipment.

Ms. Ruedig said the addition to the roof was interesting and was comfortable with the back addition but hoped the wood wouldn't be too bright. Ms. Kozak said she would bring samples of materials at the next work session. Mr. Rawling said he was comfortable in general with everything but thought the materials on the rear addition and the curve were unsettling. He said he was thrown off by the wood and suggested that the vertical lines switch to horizontal for balance. Ms. Doering said she liked the back addition and thought it had a nice balance of new and different mixed with some historic elements. Mr. Beer said he liked the roof overhang more than the existing roof and liked the oval penthouse. He suggested removing the awnings and adding transom lights and a fan light to the front entryway. He thought the lintel on top of the second-floor window didn't look strong enough to hold the weight above it, and he said the wood didn't work for him either. Mr. McNabb said the rendering's color did it a disservice.

Mr. Ryan said the small door didn't live up to the front entry, and he thought the masonry openings looked cheap and didn't belong on a building of urban character. He said the marble and copper infills on the front of the building were better materials to front the courtyard. He thought the landscape and roof plans were great. City Council Representative Roberts agreed. He said the dome and increased height improved the proportions but thought the back was unsettling due to the colors. Mr. Sauk-Schubert said the penthouse was fine but thought one corner didn't work because it seemed chopped up. Chairman Lombardi agreed with Mr. Ryan about making the back as attractive as the front. He said the wood brought attention to the mechanical equipment in the back of the penthouse. Mr. McNabb agreed that something was missing and that they would look at it. He said they would also consider switching the wood to copper.

Public Comment

Esther Kennedy of 41 Pickering Avenue said she thought the chimney was compromised and that the rooftop looked like two trailers hooked up to the mezzanine of a school. She said she was disappointed that there were four stories instead of three and thought the composite on the back of the building looked heavy on top and drew one's attention to the eyesore on the rooftop.

No one else rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public comment.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously that the applicant would **return** for a work session/public hearing at the August, 2019 meeting.*

D. Work Session requested by **Dagny Taggart, LLC, owner, and Mark A. McNabb, applicant** for property located at **Daniel Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow the construction of a new free-standing (3-story, 50,000 ± s.f.) commercial structure as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown in Assessor Map 107 as Lot 27 and lies within the Character District 4 (CD 4), Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts. *(This item was continued at the June 12, 2019 meeting to the July, 2019 meeting.)*

WORK SESSION

The applicant Mark McNabb, project architect Tracy Kozak, and landscape architect Robbie Woodburn were present to speak to the petition. Ms. Kozak said the building was part of a two-building parcel and would share goals of enhancing the pedestrian experience and creating a vibrant sense of place. Ms. Woodburn said they proposed making the sidewalks on Pleasant and Daniel Streets wider and burying the utilities, which would allow trees to be planted on Daniel Street. She said they wanted to incorporate the inspiration of Portsmouth's maritime history into the project by transitioning from the brick sidewalks to granite and bluestone bands for the courtyard. She said a low fountain would be included and mural walls would screen the utilities.

Chairman Lombardi asked if any part of it would be permeable. Ms. Kozak said it would be addressed at the site plan review. She said the existing parking lot would drop twelve feet and a

parking lot would be added below the building. Mr. McNabb discussed the underground parking, noting that there was no observable water table, that it was 24 feet above sea level, and all ledge.

Ms. Kozak reviewed the site's history, noting that it was the only site that had a large wooden gambrel 4-story structure that stood for 300 years until 1965. She said the project would bring some of the iron and wood legacies back. She reviewed the historic context of the home styles in the area and said they would incorporate those historic elements into the design by using copper, wood, and granite materials. She said the view of the building would be a mass timber construction with exposed iron work, like shipbuilding. Mr. McNabb said the green bands would have artwork with mosaic-type seaglass and that public art would be incorporated into the building. Ms. Kozak reviewed the floor and roof plans and elevations. She said that, even though the design was contemporary in the Historic District, great care was taken to tie everything to something historic that had meaning. She noted that the Commission encouraged creative design that wouldn't mimic historic examples from previous periods.

The Commission gave their opinions. Ms. Doering congratulated the applicant, saying that the design was old and new and the project was well researched. Mr. Salk-Schubert agreed and said he liked the articulation of the different facades. He suggested interference patterns for the water theme. Mr. Rawling said the design was exciting and all the pieces were extraordinary and had texture, scaling, creative materials, and back-and-forth referencing. He said his only concern was the treatment of the wave bands on the streetscape where artwork was proposed, followed up with a mural wall in the landscape, and he wondered if it pushed it too far. He thought something sculptural might work better than a patterned graphic. Ms. Ruedig said the design was very different, and she applauded the applicant for an artistic design that the Commission had never seen before. She said the design was so different, however, that she had trouble figuring out its compatibility and contextual nature for its surroundings. She said she supported contemporary designs that represented the early 21st century but had to see some contextual reference. She thought the materials were an interesting choice but preferred more straight lines on the main elevations, noting that the context of historic buildings was straight lines except for some curved corners. She thought the inner courtyard could be more playful and reflected more in the building and on the main thoroughfare to bring it into the context of the forms and shapes. Ms. Kozak said it would be more contextual to have the embellishments on the streetfronts and not on the alleys, and Ms. Ruedig agreed, saying that maybe the curved embellishments stood out to her.

Mr. Ryan said the massing, scale, streetscape and fenestration were excellent and thought that some pushing and pulling could make the sculptural building better, noting that some of the banding could be unsettling. He liked the top canopy and thought the banding on top of the storefront worked but wasn't crazy about the intermediate banding. He said it looked like some large timber structures would be involved. Ms. Kozak said there would be some steel internal to the building but that exposed parts to the public would be heavy timber. Mr. Ryan said the design didn't have to be so literal in the metaphors and felt that some of the forms were too broadly sweeping. He said the landscaping and urban planning were terrific but was disappointed by the little fountain. He said he'd like to see some larger gestures broken up a bit and suggested that the waves didn't have to be so literal. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he thought the roof looked like a small stadium. He thought the Daniel Street façade was successful and liked the curves and upstairs canopies. He said the building reminded him of building in Colorado. He hoped the

applicant wouldn't be too playful with the copper banding over the first floor, and he suggested filling it up with tile or broken bits of glass or murals. He said he thought the design was too much for the area and wasn't sure if it was successful enough to be built right away.

Mr. Beer said he was very opposed to the project. He said the inspiration for downtown buildings followed a common language that gave Portsmouth a sense of place, and he felt that the design was not compatible and didn't look anything like the historic buildings. He said visitors came to Portsmouth to see the city's sense of character and place. City Council Representative Roberts said the design had a lot of good things, like proportion, pedestrian streetscape, mass and scale, but that his design aesthetic tended to be more conservative. He thought downtown buildings should be more functional, and he felt that the wood and basketry materials were excessive. He wasn't sure if the art form design was appropriate in that location. Ms. Doering said she found the facades of Daniel and Penhallow Streets unsettling. She loved the gundalow woodwork idea but struggled with how it met the other walls and thought it was harsh. Chairman Lombardi said history was dynamic and that he had hoped to see a design like the applicant's for a long time instead of modern duplications of historic buildings. He said it was a beautiful building that had a place in Portsmouth. He liked the banding but thought the wood could be more subtle. He thought the rooflines and flowing of the waves were perfect.

The Commission offered additional comments:

- The façade on the corner of Daniel and Penhallow Streets seemed out of place and could be toned down to fit in better with its surroundings;
- The crosspieces on the corner were jarring and the vertical lines were busy, and the middle band and swoops didn't enhance the Daniel St façade; and
- The forms that worked were scaling the street scale and breaking down the scale of the huge building, which was one of the core pieces of fitting the building into the town, but there was concern that turning the building into a Gaudi-like one with extra flourishes would diminish the building's attractive quality.

Public Comment

Esther Kennedy of 41 Pickering Avenue said the building would be fine in the north end. She said the neighborhood was one of Portsmouth's oldest and felt that the building would not meet the neighborhood's context and that people would only see that building and not the others.

John Ricci of 912 Sagamore Avenue said he was a downtown property owner and thought the design celebrated Portsmouth's shipbuilding history and was what the city needed, noting that he was tired of the same brick and granite new developments that tried to recreate history.

Rick Becksted of 1395 Islington Street agreed that the building would fit better in the north end. He said the building was too high and too big and should blend in better with the historic district.

Paige Trace of 27 Hancock Street said the design was thrilling and thought the seaglass wasn't necessary on the copper, as long as real wood and copper sheeting were used. She said the height could overwhelm the Customs House but thought it was an exciting building.

Bill Wagner of 11 Taft Road said he remembered what the town was like before the McIntyre building that he felt destroyed the look of the Customs House, but he thought the new building would be a strong asset to the neighborhood and would be a pallet for future downtown projects.

Mr. McNabb said there was a huge outcry for contemporary architecture but also an outcry for things to stay the same. He said he cared deeply about the downtown area and had not done a contemporary building before. He said it was difficult to make the project work in a half-acre site but felt that it fit in and was a significant beautification of that corner.

No one else rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public comment.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to **continue** the work session to the August, meeting.*

IV. ADJOURNMENT

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to **adjourn** the meeting at 10:30 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
HDC Recording Secretary