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CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
888 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
STAMFORD, CT 06904-2152

(FINAL) Minutes of the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission (HPAC)

Date: Regular Meeting held: March 5, 2019

Location: Stamford Government Center
6th Floor Safety Training Room
888 Washington Blvd., Stamford CT 06904

Present: Anne Goslin, David Woods, Barry Hersh, Rebecca Shannonhouse, Elena Kalman

REGULAR MEETING

I. Call to order

Meeting called to order 7:10 p.m.

A motion was made to have R. Shannonhouse and E. Kalman assigned as voting members for this meeting.

Anne Goslin (Vice-Chair) will chair the current meeting.

A resignation letter from Lynn Drobbin has been submitted to the Mayor and Marty Levine, Special Assistant to the Mayor. Lynn is supposed to meet with the Mayor as part of an exit interview. It is understood by the group the resignation has not been formally approved.

(The motion was moved by B. Hersh and seconded by D. Woods, and carried unanimously.)

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2019 meeting.

(The motion was moved by B. Hersh and seconded by R. Shannonhouse, and carried unanimously.)

III. New Business

A. Gateway Site - Charter Headquarters

Applicant: Building & Land Technology (BLT)

Participants: Meaghan Miles, Carmody Torrance Sandak Hennessey, LLC; Rachel Cain, BLT; Thomas Madden, City of Stamford

1. Meaghan made the presentation. There are two (2) applications. One is a Text Amendment to the Zoning Board. The other is a modified Site Plan. This is part of the expansion of Charter Communications' corporate headquarters. She noted, for context, the site is known as Gateway Harbor Point. It is bordered by Pulaski Street and Washington Boulevard and the highway and railroad tracks to the North. The current applications are:

ZB Application #219-01: Text Amendment

ZB Application #217-16 (2nd MOD): General Development Plan (GDP), Site & Architectural Plans and/or Requested Uses, Coastal Site Plan and Special Exception.



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2. The approvals go back to 2010. This is a brief overview of the approvals to date. There was a GDP in 2010. On that plan there was Office Building #1 and #2, and a 6-story residential building with 100 units. The South End Historic District cut through the site at Henry Street. There were improvements to the Mill River walkway. The plan was modified in 2014 and 2015. The Site Plan presented today has Tower #1 that was approved last year. There are now details for Tower #2 (that partially falls within the Historic District). The site will be office solely. The parking has expanded. The Mill River improvements are unchanged.
3. The site is at the edge of the South End Historic District. But the site has changed and Henry Street no longer goes across the site. Pulaski Street has become a major road. There will be improvements to the roads in the area. Pulaski Street is now the new “visible” border for the Historic District. The district map has not been changed to address the changes to Henry Street. The design landscape plan shows a considerable amount of landscaping on the Mill River site, the top of the parking deck and the area along Pulaski Street. There are two small buildings (houses) that remain on Pulaski Street. One is mid-block near the parking entrance and the other is at the corner of Pulaski Street and Washington Boulevard.
4. Elena said she has an interest in Pulaski Street. She is concerned with the loading dock and how it will impact the streetscape. She also noted the entrance to the parking garage on Pulaski Street. Thomas Madden added the parking entrance on Pulaski Street exists now. He said the entire site is a TOD development. The Doggy Day Care building is now up for sale. Meaghan said the towers maximize the floor area (FAR) for the site. They do not anticipate any additional development on the property. They do not control the house site at the corner of Washington Boulevard and Pulaski Street. Thomas added the site is important to the City of Stamford and Charter Communications has made an important commitment to have their headquarters in the City.
5. Barry said they do not think the Historic District line has changed. Rachel noted most of the office structure is outside of the old Henry Street Historic District line. Henry Street is on the East side of Washington Boulevard and cuts toward the west across the site. Barry also asked about the parking structure entrances. The parking is shown on the plan presented. The visitor parking is at the plaza level. Barry said he thinks the Commission’s role is to review the effect on the Historic District. Meaghan added this plan adds about 288 spaces to the garage. Barry asked if there will be a side walk on Pulaski Street. Thomas said yes. It may not be visible on this landscape plan.
6. David further asked about the parking and loading dock entrances on Pulaski Street. There was also an explanation of the automobile access to the site. Meaghan said there is a ramp up to the deck level on the Washington Boulevard side. The entrance to the parking garages is also adjacent to the up-entrance plaza level ramp. She further noted more than half of the parking will enter and exit on Washington Boulevard. But they did note there will still be considerable site access for automobiles along Pulaski Street.
7. David also asked if there can be some additional thought put into the landscape plan and the building massing on Pulaski Street that extends up to the corner with Washington Boulevard. He added that some attention needs to be paid to the corner lot. David also asked if the part of the landscaped area at the corner of Washington Boulevard and Pulaski Street can be developed in the future. Meaghan said no. It is used for the FAR on the site. It must remain “empty”. Elena added to the comment and asked if the corner lot can be used as a public amenity of some sort. Thomas said there may be some issues with public use of the corner lot as it is privately owned. All generally agreed that the owners



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should consider both landscaping and a public feature at the corner if it is to remain empty. The corner can better address the development scale with the Historic District across the street.

8. Barry asked what action is needed by HPAC? What recommendations should be made by HPAC to the Zoning Board as a part of their interest in the Historic District? Thomas added the new development plan will be progressing through the Zoning/Land Use Boards in coming weeks and a “recommendation” or a resolution should be provided to those Boards.
9. Anne said she thinks HPAC can form a resolution, and she understands there is concern with Pulaski Street. She added there should be improvements to the loading dock design and to the landscaping on Pulaski Street. All generally agreed the Commission’s primary concern is with the Pulaski Street improvements. There should be better design attention to the appearance of the truck dock. Maybe limiting the size of the loading dock. The Commission further supports the connection to the Mill River walkway. All generally agreed the improvements to the loading dock should consider including a green roof. Anne noted the Commission should have an updated presentation of the plans. Thomas Madden suggested the Commission ask the applicant to present several designs for the loading dock and landscaping along Pulaski Street. All generally agreed.

Resolution

Anne formulated a resolution: The Commission has no objections to the application, but asks to review a revised landscape design for the Pulaski Street side of the building, including: loading dock, green roof option, parking entrance, and landscaping along Pulaski Street. The owners should give special attention to the corner lot with Washington Boulevard. The group also agreed to provide a statement of their resolution to the City’s Land Use Boards.

(A motion was made by A. Goslin and seconded by R. Shannonhouse and carried unanimously)

B. Review of By-laws and Procedures

Participants: Anne Goslin

1. Anne noted the Commission voted on By-laws (distributed to HPAC members before the meeting) in 2014. They were sent to the City for review. Marty Levine recently informed her they do not need approval from the City (Mayor’s office or Counsel). Anne asked if the members had suggestions for revisions.
2. David commented the By-laws might address the procedure when a member of the public wants to talk about an item that is not on the agenda. Previous to the meeting, Marty advised there is no obligation by the Commission to take such comments. He also stated the Chair should consider cutting off those comments when they happen.
3. Barry said he believes if a person comes to the meeting then they should be allowed to talk or ask questions. All generally agreed this is the current policy, as it may relate to a specific agenda item. The Commission has never cut off a member of the public addressing an item before the Board.
4. Rebecca and Elena also added the language in the By-laws may be OK as is. It addresses the Chair’s responsibility and options for establishing public comments, the time allowed, and the ability to cut off discussion when it does not pertain to the subject.



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Resolution

All generally agreed to leave the language as it is in the By-laws. No changes will be made at this time.

(A motion was made by A. Goslin and seconded by E. Kalman and carried unanimously.)

IV. Old Business

A. Section 7.3 Revisions

Participants: David W. Woods

David noted Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief and Vineeta Mathur, Associate Planner, made a presentation to the Zoning Board last week on what they are calling “Omnibus Changes” to the Zoning code. They expect there will be an informal comment period that goes through April 15, 2019. They expect to pick up any comments at that time and then submit to the formal review process. The final changes are intended to be incorporated toward the beginning or middle of next Summer.

Anne sent the first draft of Section 7.3 to Brad Schiede at SHPO.

(The item was Tabled without further decision. Review of status will be on-going.)

B. Tax incentives

Participants: Rebecca Shannonhouse

1. Rebecca said there is not all that much to add to the previous presentation. She made copies of tax incentive programs from a few other cities. This one is from New Haven. One is for new construction as well as historic renovation or restoration. All generally say taxes are frozen according to a formula, and then taxes are phased in over time. Some say the construction must increase the property value by 35 % or more. Some say renovations need to follow Secretary of the Interior Standards. Some are just for single-family projects. Some are for commercial and single-family. There may be limits on the amount allocated to the rehabilitation project. All of them are a bit different. But many communities have incorporated this type of program. It is different than incremental tax incentives that normally pay for public improvements.
2. There is some controversy in some communities with these agreements. The public has concerns that funds will be diverted from other needs, such as school budgets. Rebecca said it is important to note that funds which might go to schools are not combined with this type of tax incentive.
3. In Florida there have been some protections made to address school funds. Barry says in Connecticut they do not have to separate the tax funds, because it is just one budget. The question will be is there enough support for historic preservation to support such a tax incentive.
4. Rebecca said the communities can suspend a tax incentive when they want. Elena said if they do approve it - it tends to stick.
5. Rebecca also noted she included a section on the last page about “Demolition by Neglect.” It was mentioned we have a demolition ordinance that covers this and the demolition ordinance should be reviewed again to be sure the language discourages neglect.



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Resolution

The Zoning Department was approached and diverted the next conversation to the Mayor's office as it is a "tax program" and not one enacted through the Zoning code. The City did agree to a meeting that was tentatively set for March 22, 2019. There are some conflicts with that date. Rebecca will try to reschedule for March 29, 2019. Rebecca will send an article that summarizes the New Haven proposal.

(The item was Tabled without further decision. Review of status will be on going)

C. Intern

Participants: Anne Goslin

1. Anne said HPAC had discussed the potential for an intern at the last meeting. The group generally agreed the intern's first task might be to establish a cultural and historical resources survey. There was a request from Land Use for an updated Cultural Resource Survey and establishing a "Historic Overlay District" that can be incorporated into the Section 7.3 changes. Elena said the City's GIS map and historic district outlines are not complete and should be corrected, but the information is accurate for owners and developers. There was some discussion about including designated historical properties on this map as well. It is understood a list of historic properties exists already and may only need to be made available to the public with the historic district maps.
2. There was some discussion of the tasks for an intern. It is generally understood that the City will get the intern and they will request some input from HPAC for work that needs to be done. Anne will contact the Land Use Bureau and discuss the tasks for the intern.

Resolution

All generally agreed there will be additional discussion with the Land Use Bureau. It was noted there are several different sources of information and it may be the task of the intern to sort through the existing documentation and put it all in one place for easier access.

(The item was Tabled without further decision. Review of status will be on going.)

V. Adjournment

Anne Goslin adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Drafted by: David W. Woods, Secretary: HPAC - March 8, 2019

Meetings are normally on the first Tuesday of the month starting at 7:00 pm in the 6th Floor Safety Training Room. Anne requested the next meeting be changed to April 9, 2019 (second Tuesday). Anne will follow up with Lesley Capp to arrange for the change.