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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: December 3, 2019
Location: Government Center
6th Floor Safety Training Room
888 Washington Blvd.
Stamford, CT 06901
Present: Anne Goslin, David Woods, Barry Hersh, Rebecca Shannonhouse.
Elena Kalman was absent.
Dee Davis has been designated as an Alternate to the Commission and is attending for the first time.

REGULAR MEETING

I. Call to order

The meeting was called to order 7:05 p.m.

A motion was made to assign Rebecca Shannonhouse and Dee Davis to be voting members for this meeting. Anne Goslin (Vice-Chair) will chair the current meeting.

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

II. Approval of November 12, 2019 Meeting Minutes.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2019 meeting. There were no changes to the minutes noted.

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

III. New Business

There was no new business for this meeting



CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

Page 2

IV. Old Business

A. One Atlantic Street

David Woods recused himself from the presentation. Anne Goslin has provided notes for the meeting.

Applicant: SH Atlantic LLC, Owner

Participants: Jerry Kiley, representing the owners; Jason Klein, Carmody Torrance Sandak Hennessey, LP, Attorney for the applicant.

Presented: J. Klein introduced the project and noted this was reviewed and approved in June by HPAC.

1. Previously, the Commission approved the exterior alterations; the conversion of the north windows to doors, incorporating the decorative metalwork; and encouraged the owners to find a single tenant for the 1st floor use.
2. The owners returned to the Commission because a single tenant cannot be found. Conceptual drawings were presented for the division of the space. One potential tenant is a bank. Should a restaurant(s) be added, a kitchen and bathrooms will be added in the annex, with a breakthrough to the 1931 building.

The following resolution was made by Barry Hersch, seconded by Anne Goslin, and approved by all. The Commission approves the division of the 1st floor interior to accommodate more than one use with the following conditions:

- a. The prior conditions regarding the door metalwork and the requirement to review proposed changes to the exterior and 1st floor interior remain.
- b. The murals, clock, and arches must not be removed, and if covered, they must be covered with materials that can be reversed.
- c. Best efforts must be made to preserve the floor.
- d. Professional photographs must be taken to document the interior prior to any construction.
- e. The photographs must be sent to the Commission; Archives and Special Collections, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut; Stamford Historical Society; and Ferguson Library.



CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

Page 3

B. South End Study Proposal

Applicant: South End, Ad Hoc Committee

Participants: Sue Halpern, Carmine Tomas, Sheila Barney

1. Presented: Sue Halpern introduced the information from the last meeting and gave a recap. Sue said this group would like to obtain a State grant to study the South End to come up with tools for restoration, zoning, and possibly set up a Local Historic District. Anne added Mary Dunne of SHPO supports the Study by a letter provided, but has not yet endorsed a Local Historic District. There is a letter of support from Wes Haynes. There was a South End Neighborhood Study executed a little over a year ago. The Study recommended keeping all historic buildings and preservation goals for the Nathan Wilder neighborhoods. It also recommended development of a tool for the Zoning Code to transfer development rights.
2. Sue said she believes Mary Dunne supports the Study. They must follow the steps in the book. They want to start with a Development Committee to lay the groundwork for the Study. They have presented to the City. Their objective is to study what remains outside of the historic neighborhood. There have been so many studies. They want to work with HPAC and the Zoning Board. Sue added they do not have any protections now.
3. Anne noted the property owners within the NR district have the potential benefit of tax credits, and potential CEPA protection now. B. Hersh said HPAC wants to save neighborhoods. He likes the study that was done a year ago. It was a broad-based study. Barry added he wants to think about the goal for this group. He assumes the goal is to preserve buildings or structures in the South End. There should be real goals for a group of buildings or specific buildings within the neighborhoods. This is better than more rules or regulations.
4. Sue said the Neighborhood Study stated there should be a rationale for preservation, or ordinances, etc. When you get to the build-out in those neighborhoods there is an issue. Sue is asking for support to set up a Study Committee. That is the first thing. Barry asked if they can use the existing Study from a year ago? Anne said she believes they are trying to follow a step for a Local Historic District.

Anne asked for comments from the public.

1. Ralph Blessing introduced himself. He reiterated the same comments from the last meeting. They share the goal for preserving the South End. The Study was done with the goal to save as much as possible. In the areas of the Study there are truly historic buildings. They (the City) want to provide protection as noted in the changes proposed to Zoning. They want to have buildings "on the ground" that can have access to funds. That is why they have recommended the Trust Fund. They want to promote the development rights where there are not any historic buildings or character. He does not like transfer of development rights. He said the Land Use Bureau supports these three main goals. He wants to be allowed to develop tools to support these three goals and support development where there is not historic character.



CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

Page 4

2. Anne asked what they can do about tear downs? Ralph noted the Land Use Bureau can look into ways to support those. He added the Zoning Code should make “disincentives” for tearing things down. And, the Demolition Ordinance will be strengthened under Section 7.3 to make an historic building harder to tear down.
3. Ralph further said he wants to work with the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) and homeowners to develop preservation tools. He does not think the Historic District is the way to go as it is too restrictive. There are better ways to get the goals accomplished. That is the offer he wants to make.
4. John Wooten introduced himself. He said he lives in the South End. He is a member of the NRZ. This affects everyone in the South End and they have no idea about it. He said it is one thing to block a developer; it is another to get approvals for small construction projects. Many people in the South End are waiting at this time to see where such a study is going. The neighbors are concerned about historic preservation. He suggests there should be more communication with Ralph, rather than another study. He added there are other options for development, such as condominiums. He wants to understand how they can develop, by working with developers. He said we do not need another study. He suggests looking at projects for restoration or improvement, and work for funding. There are houses throughout the South End that can be supported.
5. Anne asked Sue if they can identify areas for the District. Sue says that will be part of the Study Committee. They want to canvas the whole neighborhood. John added that the community needs to get together. He said there is an effective neighborhood group and it is the NRZ.
6. Ted Ferrone, of BLT, introduced himself. He said they are in favor of historic preservation. They have done a number of projects in the South End. There is nothing that prevents this group to do outreach now. They (BLT) are not in favor of this proposal. The protections are already built into the Zoning Code. They have done the research and do not believe there is benefit for a “Local Historic District.” It will just make it harder to do development and more red tape. Anne added it would be a “separate” local government. Ted added there needs to be a two-thirds vote to make this happen and does not believe the votes will support it. He added the changes have been good, including changes to the proposed Zoning Code Section 7.3. There needs to more incentives to invest in properties.
7. Carmine Tomas introduced himself. He said he presented at the last meeting and asked why is it so difficult to start a Study Committee? Barry noted there is still some confusion about the purpose of this Committee and it overlaps work that has already been done. Anne added she does not know if another study is the best way to get things done.
8. Sheila Barney introduced herself. She said if they do a study, they can send it out to see if there is interest. She is a historic building owner. There are a lot of possibilities for persons who own houses and are not aware of the options. They do not know where to get money or support. There can be presentation support from SHPO. It is understood that a lot of people do not know about these options.



CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

Page 5

Discussion

1. Anne asked for observations from the Commission. She wants to help with preservation and wants to help find more preservation tools. Barry said he wants to find ways to work with the Land Use Bureau. He does not think a designation of a Local Historic Neighborhood is the right route. Rebecca said she supports historic preservation. She has concerns about the approach. She asked who will be on the Ad Hoc Committee? She asked how would the Study be done? There are many things to be done in the steps to create a Historic District. There seems to be many questions. She asked what the effect would be on development while the Study is in progress? If the Study takes a year, what would go on? Would that stall current projects? Ralph said there could not be a moratorium. They are normally limited. Moratoriums infringe on peoples' development rights. Rebecca also noted the details have not been presented. She asked why the group has not worked with the NRZ? Sue added the plan was to come back to the NRZ after the Study is started. Sheila said they do not have anything to say to the NRZ at this time.
2. Rebecca asked Ralph what is the harm of a study? Ralph said they (the City) have done these studies. If the question is what funds are available, then let's get Mary Dunne here. They know a lot about buildings that have been lost. He said he is committed to the plan. He wants to help find a way between the various options. If they need help to contact owners, the City can do that. Ralph added he does not think a study is needed. They know a lot about buildings that are historic, and what is lost and what has potential. The City has a new Zoning proposal in place.
3. Dee Davis said she is new on the Commission. There are lovely buildings in the South End. She said she is not clear why this Study is needed. She does not understand the goal. Why can't they take what they have already to get the community to come together.
4. Rebecca said this group has good intentions. Maybe the group wants to find a way to proceed but this way may not be the most beneficial. Barry asked what the downside is? Is it that a study diverts attention from doing real preservation? He believes it is a very long road. Rebecca said she does not think there is enough information at this time.
5. Rebecca said she hears this group wants to have a voice. Mary Dunne and the City may be able to help guide the group so they can have a voice. David said he agrees the group is seeking a voice and they may find more support in the Zoning Code changes.
6. Rebecca asked Ralph about the difference between a Local Historic District and an Overlay Zone. Ralph said the changes to the Zoning Code contemplate a new "Overlay Zone". There are two differences. The Overlay Zone does not have an additional governing body. The Overlay District is a more flexible tool for development. The map for such a district will need to be created and approved by Zoning. It can be initiated by any group to the Zoning Board, and can be supported by HPAC. A Local Historic District will be a local governing body to review proposed changes to properties. How it will interact with the Zoning Code is not well understood at this time. Rebecca added maybe there should be a study to see how the South End can become an Overlay District.



CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

Page 6

Resolution discussion

1. Anne wants to help get State support and education. She noted HPAC was asked to provide a letter of support. The group agreed to draft a letter over the next week. Anne will provide that to the Land Use Committee of the Board of Representatives.
2. Barry said the letter should say HPAC supports preservation and neighborhood development. We will support an option for State assistance and support in the community, including working with the City to develop programs. HPAC supports assistance offered by Ralph to provide educational programs and guidance to persons seeking to preserve a structure. HPAC supports the development of the "Trust Fund" that has been proposed by Ralph Blessing in the Zoning Code. All generally agreed HPAC does not support the Local Historic District Study. HPAC would like to add that it encourages the potential of creating an "Overlay District" as it is proposed in the Zoning Text Changes. A Zoning Overlay District can be more effective and can be achieved in a more simple way under the existing Zoning proposals.
3. HPAC supports historic preservation in the South End and encourages appropriate development with the City's current planning effort. The group has concerns about the effectiveness of a Local Historic District.
4. HPAC wants to support funding options and other tools within the City's Zoning or potential Overlay District. The group will ask SHPO to present the advantages of the National Register Historic District.

All agreed to review a draft of the resolution over the next week before issuing to the City. The discussion identified the following bullet points for the letter:

- To commend and support the group's efforts to study ways to preserve the South End National Register Historic District's character and to encourage appropriate development.
- To not support a Local Historic District Study, in part due to a lack of information; in part due to HPAC's support of the 2018 South End Neighborhood Study, and in part due to the Land Use Bureau's efforts to revise Zoning Regulations to strengthen processes to review demolitions and development by establishing historic overlays.
- To encourage studies to explore ways to implement the recommendations made in the 2018 South End Neighborhood Study and to support and develop criteria for the proposed changes to the Zoning Regulations, including historic overlays.
- To invite SHPO to speak to South End residents about National Register Historic District advantages (tax incentives, qualifications for grants, potential code exemptions, technical assistance, and CEPA actions).

(A motion was made by B. Hersh and seconded by D. Woods and carried unanimously)



CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

Page 7

C. Communications

There was no discussion on this agenda item.

V. Adjournment

A. Goslin adjourned the meeting at 9:45 p.m. (There was no further discussion)

Drafted by David W. Woods, AIA, Secretary
December 6, 2019
Historic Preservation Advisory Commission

Meetings are normally on the first Tuesday of the month starting at 7:00 pm in the 6th floor, Safety Training Room. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 7, 2020.