



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 4, 2018

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

Present: Lynn Drobbin, 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 assigned as voting member for this meeting to make a quorum.

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

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the September 11, 2018 meeting.

The motion was moved by L. Drobbin; seconded by B. Hersh and carried unanimously.

III. New Business

A. Stamford Media Village (390 Ludlow Street; 700, 850, & 860, Canal Streets)

Participants: William Hennessey, Carmody Torrance Sandak Hennessey, attorney for owner; Jacqueline Kaufman, Carmody Torrance Sandak Hennessey, attorney for owner; Jim Sackett, CPG Architects

1. William Hennessey (Bill) introduced the project. Bill oriented everyone to the site. Number 700 is the northernmost property along Canal Street. The furthest south is 390 Ludlow Street. 700 is the historic building. 860 Canal Street was an industrial building, former home to the Marina.
2. The owners of the buildings received approval to rezone the buildings and site. The building became legally non-conforming when they were zoned industrial. The rezoning would allow business uses and common parking for the group of buildings. The owners agreed to add public access along the marina. At the time, the owners also said the buildings will be renovated like new, except for 860. They needed time to figure 860 out. There is a big environmental issue with 860. The Zoning Board said they should report back annually. There are new owners now as of a year. They want to make an industrial type of building with the "media village" concept that will support the combination of all the buildings.
3. Bill showed a current view of 860 from the other side (East of the site) of the canal. The exterior skin has been taken off. The bulkhead has deteriorated and needs to be replaced. The storm systems need to be replaced. There will be public access rebuilt after that.

Added 01/09/19: "The picture of the 860 Canal Street project shows the structural elements that will remain as part of the new project. The demolition is not "total."



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4. The proposal before the Zoning Board is an amendment to the C-WD regulations. That will allow the same commercial uses across the site.
5. The old building was the subject of a demo permit last March or April. At that time, Jill Smyth from HNP visited the site. There was some discussion that the original building did not have historic value. HPAC was notified via Pappajohn General Contractors. HPAC did not delay the demo permit. Demo permit was allowed to proceed.
6. Jim Sackett of CPG was introduced and said the building at 860 Canal did not have historic value. They have tried to design it to address the historic industrial character of the older buildings in the neighborhood. There is a colonnade of brick on both sides of the property, East and West. The windows will be large but are designed to look industrial. The center of the building will have a more nautical sail like structure that marks the entrance. The South end elevation will have larger glass profile. There is a 5th floor that is set back. The intent is to keep it in a lower profile.
7. He further noted there is also a need for a parking garage. It will have a brick arcade with lattice panels with vines to mimic the colonnade on the office building. The parking garage is adjacent to the building along the canal to the North side. The parking will allow better leasing options for the tenants that have a need for parking greater than the surface parking will allow. There will be a green waterfront. The floors are 16 ft. high at 1st and 2nd floor. The upper floors will be 14 ft.
8. Bill added that the building will have amenities such as food outlets or a food hall. There might be workout amenities. The retail mix has not been set yet and may take some time. There may be a gear shop or swap shop for industrial products that are needed by the tenants in the media industry. In normal business hours the food hall will serve the buildings primarily. In off hours the food hall will be open to public. There will also be public toilet facilities for the marina.
9. E. Kalman asked how the green and landscaping that is shown on the plans and elevations will actually work? How will it thrive? Bill noted that the applicants and owners of the other buildings are committed to make the landscaping happen. Jim said green vines are added to the columns of the building. It is planned to be Boston ivy. J. Kaufman added the area of the parking deck footprint will be matched with site landscaping.
10. Lynn asked what the other buildings are and if they will remain on the site. Bill said the 850(?) building will remain (Cornell Veterinary). They are all brick. They are doing some upgrades. Renee added that she believes the original buildings (390 Ludlow Street and 860 Canal Street) were brick. It is understood that most of that has already been demolished.
11. Lynn also asked if Federal money or grant money will be used. She also asked if there are any Federal permits required including the possibility of a Federal permit for being adjacent to a waterway. Bill said no they do not expect other Federal permits. He added, the marina is already there and it will just be upgraded. They will need a CAM permit from the Zoning Board and the Harbor Management Commission. DEEP has the application.
12. Lynn asked to hear from some of the neighbors. Mark Diamond asked who started the demo of the building. Mark asked if that was premature. Wes Haynes added he went through the building with Jill Smyth last March. He said the building may have had some brick but it did not look good at the time of the visit. It was "egregiously" compromised over many years. HNP said it would support a tax credit. Wes further stated he does not have a problem with the design. They have captured a sense of the other industrial buildings. The original was a light framed concrete structure with steel. This was built by Richards Chemical Company. This one was prominent on the canal. The building has been reworked many times over the years. He further added the design tries to retain the skeletal structure and that is good.



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13. Lynn asked if the building is in the South End Historic District. She also asked why HPAC did not receive a demo permit. This is not a historic building, but it is in a historic district. HNP did reach out to the owners. David noted that HPAC did receive a demo request through the contractor which is not the normal procedure. There was some confusion at that time due to the change in the City's Chief Building Official.
14. Sue Halpern spoke: she lives in the South End and there is concern there will be a bar on the roof. There will be considerable noise on the water. She added they are losing the sense of neighborhood already. Lynn said HPAC does not have jurisdiction over the uses in the building. The Zoning Board will regulate that.
15. Peter Quigley asked if a traffic flow study has been done for the new project. He agrees with the comment about the rooftop bar. Lynn says traffic studies will be a part of the submittals to Zoning. Lynn noted HPAC's jurisdiction is limited to reviews of historic buildings or historic districts. Barry also noted that today the City released the traffic study for the South End. Mr. Quigley noted a Planning Board study of traffic in 2009. He added the recent neighborhood study for the South End is encouraging historic preservation of the South End and questions why the large office and industrial buildings are being proposed and planned.
16. David Michel, District Representative for the South End, asked if HPAC should get notified by the City when there is a demo request. David added that the normal process is working now where a demo request is sent to HPAC and the Commission can put a "stay" on the demolition.
17. David asked what the review response from HPAC should be. Lynn said HPAC has been asked to provide a referral letter to the Zoning Board. Lynn proposed the Commission provide an approval or letter of support for the development and design with the following considerations: The designer has to effectively use design elements that are in the historic district, which reflect the industrial heritage of the neighborhood. They also are using brick and steel and large industrial style steel sash windows. They have used the architectural materials and features that are the character defining features of the South End Historic District.
18. Jackie also noted there is a Site Plan Special Permit Application at the Zoning Board.

All generally agreed the resolution should be that HPAC recommends the Zoning Board approve the design of the Media Village development with the understanding the final construction will look as presented, with materials and design compatible with the National Register listed South End Historic District and the style and window treatment reflects the industrial heritage as presented. Lynn will provide the letter to the Zoning Board.

(A motion was made by L. Drobbin; seconded by B. Hersh and carried unanimously)

B. Changes proposed to Section 7.3 Applications.

Participants: Lynn Drobbin

1. L. Drobbin presented a memo from Ralph Blessing (memo is attached to the Meeting Minutes) on the preliminary suggested changes to Section 7.3 Applications, as they were discussed in meetings on the South End. Some of the suggestions appear in the report that is circulating. Barry added this is an older neighborhood and there is a concern for the South End District maintaining its character.
2. One suggestion in the memo is that an application needs to show context "next to" and near an application site. There is general favor with the revised application requirements.



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3. David asked Renee if there are some changes that have been discussed before which can be reviewed at this time. She said where Section 7.3 fails is that the underlying zoning is too permissive. Section 7.3 of the Zoning Code has worked well when there are more restrictions to the zone where the site is located. Section 7.3 is a good bonus in those cases. She added it was originally written by law review and matches language in other cities at the time.
4. Bill Hennessey added they are working on a regulation change in Norwalk with relaxation of the parking standard. It is a huge item. He added the Land Use staff has always been flexible to work with a Section 7.3 application. It is best to be flexible with parking. And it remains a very useful tool to preserve buildings. Up to now, the Section 7.3 regulation has not allowed a developer to transfer rights to an adjacent or nearby property and that might be an added bonus to strengthen Section 7.3 applications. The South End Study said there should be a version of that.
5. Lynn added that transfer options may allow streetscapes in the South End from being broken up. There was some discussion about Master Plans and mapping of historic buildings. Bill added that there needs to a better map of the listed and significant historic structures. All generally agreed. There is also a need for a Master Plan that identifies suitable locations where larger buildings can be located, and where the smaller scale residential and historic structures in neighborhoods should be saved. The Section 7.3 development tool will need to have a Master Plan document for support.
6. Bill also said that parts of Section 7.3 are difficult. They do not always know what is listed as a historic building. He wants the City to provide better information about historic structures. Wes has the information on historic buildings. HPAC does not have good survey information. Wes says we are under inventoried in the City. There has been some progress in other areas of the City. Elena said there should be an overlay on the GIS maps in the City that shows historic buildings and districts. Ralph Blessing should have an intern that adds that information to City records, maps, etc. Wes added there are grants available for surveys. The survey should be done first.
7. Renee said she went through her list of Section 7.3 applications over the years, and she says they have been largely successful. Renee added it should not be too legally complicated. It has to be easy. Lynn said it needs to be enticing also for the developers. All generally agreed that Section 7.3 should be as flexible and accommodating as possible. Bill added it is pretty flexible now.
8. Lynn said she understands the Post Office project wants to use Section 7.3 for their application. They would get more FAR. Bill added there are some bonuses for area in Section 7.3 regulations. It is understood the Post Office wants to go from wholesale "use" to a retail use and thus will need the parking bonuses. The site does not have enough parking as it is.
9. Rebecca noted that some communities use a tax deferral. She found it in other locations. All generally agreed the option for a tax deferral should be explored as a way to assist building owners with the cost of renovations. That might be added to Section 7.3.

The discussion was tabled, and all agreed to continue to review Section 7.3 and come back to the January meeting with any other suggestions. It might also be a good idea to have the Planning Department come to that meeting to discuss any thoughts or ideas that are coming out of the South End Study. (The item was tabled without further decision. Review of status will be ongoing)



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IV. Old Business

A. Two items forwarded to Anne Goslin by the City.

1. 237 and 239 Henry Streets: Demo requests were forwarded to HPAC last week. A delay was placed on both applications by David Woods for HPAC. Lynn asked what the next steps are. David said that the delay request letter asked that the owner appear before HPAC at the next meeting. Lynn can follow up with the building official to see if the request has been made to the owners. Anne added the owners have had some discussions with Renee and claimed the driveways are too small to allow construction in the back of the property which is why they were requesting demolition. The Commission needs to hear what the issues are.
2. 912 through 916 Hope Street: Zoning request forwarded to HPAC. They want to build a 14-unit apartment project in the Village District. There is currently a single-story historic brick building on the property. Elena Kalman is the architect and recused herself from the discussion. The application suggests the building will be torn down. All agreed the owners should appear before HPAC at the next meeting.

(The item was tabled without further decision. Review of status will be ongoing)

B. South End Firehouse

1. There was a general discussion about the status of the work on the site. Renee noted she was told by BLT they were delayed in getting structural steel. A few noted there is some work going on but it did not appear that much work has been completed on the roof, to enclose the structure. There is no other status. Lynn noted HPAC will send an inquiry

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

C. South End Study Status

It was noted the study is out and will be distributed to the Commission. Barry noted there is a Traffic Study included that should be reviewed.

Added 01/09/19: "Barry attended the Planning Board meeting on November 27, 2018 when both Media Village and the proposed Master Plan Change for 7-9 Woodland Avenue were discussed. There was neighborhood concern about the large scale apartment development proposed for the vacant Woodland Avenue site which is within the South End Historic District."

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

V. Adjournment

Lynn Drobbin adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Drafted by: David Woods - December 17, 2018
Secretary: Stamford, Historic Preservation Advisory Commission

Meetings are normally on the first Tuesday of the month starting at 7:00 p.m. in the 6th Floor Safety Training Room. The next meeting is planned for January 8, 2019.

MAYOR
DAVID MARTIN




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MEMORANDUM

From: Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief 
To: HPAC Members
Date: 12/04/2018

RE: South End Neighborhood Study and Changes to Historic Preservation Zoning Text

As you know, the Land Use Bureau just completed the South End Neighborhood Study¹ which is intended to balance growth and preservation in the South End neighborhood. One key recommendation is to protect as many historic buildings as possible in the neighborhood's historic district. The Land Use Bureau is committed to this recommendation and would greatly appreciate HPAC's support for its implementation.

As a first step, we are currently reviewing Section 7.3 "Special Exception Uses for Historic Buildings" This section applies to historic buildings and structures not only in the South End but citywide. We propose the following:

- The section will be renamed "Historic Preservation";
- The Section acknowledges the role of HPAC in the review process for historic buildings and structures (i.e. buildings on the National or State register, or as deemed historic by HPAC);
- The new section will require review Site and Architectural review for all historic buildings and sites, and development next to historic buildings, not just for those which seek bonuses;
- It rationalizes and expands the applicability of bonuses for historic preservation;
- It establishes additional hurdles for the demolition of historic buildings and structures.

We are currently working on a draft text for recommendations, and once this is finalized, hopefully by the end of this year, we will send the text to you for comments. In addition, we will also solicit comments from City Departments, as well as SHPO and others.

In addition to the zoning regulation changes I am also hoping to engage you in a discussion to make more resources, such as financing tools, available to preservation efforts in the South End and Citywide. I believe HPAC's expertise would greatly enhance our efforts to implement effective preservation strategies in the South End and beyond.

¹ Available here: https://www.stamfordct.gov/sites/stamfordct/files/uploads/10-23-18_sens_final_report_rev_2.pdf