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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: May 5, 2020  
**Location:** Via Zoom  
**Present:** Anne Goslin, David Woods, Barry Hersh, Rebecca Shannonhouse, Elena Kalman  
Alternate: Dee Davis Oberwetter.

**REGULAR MEETING**

**I. Call to order**

The meeting was called to order 7:05 p.m. Anne Goslin is the chair of the current meeting.

**II. Approval of April 7, 2020 Meeting Minutes.**

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2020 meeting. There were no changes to the minutes noted.

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

**III. New Business**

There is no new business scheduled for this meeting.

**IV. Old Business**

**A. South End [Including: 650 Atlantic Street (Blickensderfer Building), 79 Garden Street, 130 Henry Street & 340 Washington Blvd. was noted]**

Participants: James Travers, Transportation Bureau Chief, City of Stamford; Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief, City of Stamford; Ted Ferrarone, BLT.

Presented: A. Goslin introduced the various projects in the South End and provided an update from the last meeting.

1. Anne noted on April 13, 2020 a demolition notice was issued for 340 Washington Blvd. This was a house at the corner of Pulaski Street and Washington Blvd., part of the Charter Communications site. It was demolished by April 27, 2020. Anne inquired about the duration of the notice-feedback period. She also noted there were April 13, 2020 demolition notices for houses at 130 Henry Street and 79 Garden Street. There was a CEPA action threat on the Garden Street and Henry Street



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buildings back in 2016. Demolition applications were pulled. HPAC submitted delay requests for Garden Street and Henry Street along with 644-650 Atlantic Street (Blickensderfer Building). Anne also noted HPAC received a Legal Notice for a May 12, 2020 Planning Board meeting to review Master Plan revisions proposed for the South End.

2. Anne asked James Travers to speak first. Jim started with a Complete Streets Plan for Garden Street. The City sees opportunities for street and walkway improvements. They look at mobility options so they will have a better road network in the South End. He sent a report today via email. When they looked at Garden Street, they noted it is narrow and one-way traffic. BLT owns a number of the properties along the street. Garden Street is often home to garbage. There is unregulated parking - commuter parking, etc. They asked, can they widen Garden Street sidewalks and provide bike lanes with a very narrow right of way? It is not conducive to pedestrians and safe traffic.
3. The cross section or landscape proposal is two 10 ft. travel lanes, plus a parking lane on one side. It will go from one-way to two-way. They will move parking to one side of the street and introduce ADA-accessible sidewalks, trees and two bike lanes. They will add pedestrian level lighting. The proposal has all of these. The projects that have addressed these changes have improved their neighborhoods. Today it is just an alleyway street. Jim noted some of the police reports for the neighborhood. When we put more people on the street, they see less crime. They are promoting minimal width travel lanes. He suggests this is the right size for this road. This design requires the taking of two properties at the corner. (130 Garden Street and 79 Henry Street). He does not like that but believes it is important.
4. Anne has some questions. She asked if he worked in historic districts before. Jim said yes, in New Haven. He said the cross section shown would be the entire block to Dock Street. Anne asked where he did this in New Haven? Then, he said New Haven is quite different. The roads are wider and were designed for two-way traffic. He said they went through a similar process with a vocal bike use group.
5. E. Kalman pointed out this plan proposes to take down three National Register Historic District contributing buildings. Jim said he does not take that lightly. D. Woods further asked if the City has done a traffic analysis of this road and if a report was compiled that proposed this level of improvement? Did the City analysis suggest a road of this scale for this neighborhood? Jim responded they see some results of their designs with increased pedestrian use and decreased numbers of accidents. He further said he did this design with his experience. (No study or report was done by the City.) He further said, with Stillwater Avenue, they realigned the road and it is a safer route. He thinks this creates a neighborhood feel. It could increase the value of the neighborhood. They also want better mobility because of proximity to the train station.
6. B. Hersh questioned if the plan will increase the roadway and sidewalks by a factor of three. Jim confirmed. The plan will also add bike lanes in both directions. This will lead into a Community Center at the end of Garden Street at Henry Street. Garden Street is one short block. Barry asked if they can have just one bike lane and narrower sidewalks? Jim noted it is very important to have bike lanes and handicapped accessible sidewalks and trees. This leads to houses on the south side of Henry Street. Jim further added he came up with this design. He did the analysis. David asked if there was a report or a direction from the City that suggested a road and pedestrian section of this



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scale and use? He said he looked at the South End Neighborhood Study. Barry pointed out the report also said that historic homes are to remain. Jim added the only way to get it to work properly requires the widening that is proposed. It is not an overly wide or too large of a street as it is proposed. Jim also said we should let BLT talk about the development proposed for Garden Street and Atlantic Street.

7. R. Shannonhouse asked about the bike lanes and where they connect. Jim said they are putting bike lanes in various places in the City. With more bike lanes, there is increased community activity and better air quality. Rebecca followed up on the traffic analysis. Has there been a Traffic Study for this street? He said that will be done with a development proposal. It has not been done yet. He said there is significant development proposed and there has not been a Traffic Study yet. They will do one when the design is proposed. Rebecca generally questioned how a design was done and there is no report of development proposal. Rebecca also asked if the project will receive Federal funding? James said no. There is funding by Charter for the areas around the train station. This project will use some of those funds.
8. Anne asked again about the 2018 South End Study and said this area was designated as an area to be preserved. Anne called on Ralph to talk about the Master Plan. Ralph said the western side of Garden Street is where most of the buildings have been demolished. It makes sense to widen on the western side. He said this is not a Traffic Engineering issue. They do not need to increase capacity. They want to get 10 ft. side sidewalks. They want 15 ft. sidewalks on commercial streets. The sidewalks need at least a 5 ft. path - 6 ft. is better for ADA accessibility. Trees are important. They have to include storm water management. Houses on Garden Street have limited off-street parking, so parking along the street is important. He added there is limited street parking all over the South End.
9. Ralph continued; the Master Plan changes they are proposing supports transportation-oriented development (TOD) projects. They propose to take Atlantic Street out of the Urban Mixed-Use category and put it into Master Plan Category #4 – for work/urban use. The Blickensderfer Building needs special consideration. They suggest coming up with a way to save the older portion of the building. The building has a narrow street front so any addition will need to be compatible with the open space to the north.
10. They want to preserve as much of the historic character as possible. They are serious with saving the Blickensderfer Building. They want to balance the street improvements with the community development. These are substandard streets and they need to make a trade-off. There was an effort to balance the needs.
11. Anne asked Ted to present. He said he does not have much to add at this point. He said much of the improvement is coming at their (BLT) expense. He said Garden Street is not great. They do not want to take down historic buildings. He said they have done outreach in the community. He added the neighbors are supportive of the pre-proposals. Anne asked if they support the widening. Ted said yes. Ted said they do not have a complete plan for the area yet. Ted said they support saving the Blickensderfer Building. He did not mention his plans for the back part of the building that dates to the 1930s (called the Schick addition). The street improvement plan proposes taking down the 1930s Schick addition.



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12. Elena asked Ralph what the various categories mean? She wants to be sure new development does not overwhelm the scale of the existing community. He said Categories #4 and #6 are like an RM-F zone; there are 4-story buildings, pretty much in context with what is there. Ralph added the zoning strategy has to create a transition between the historic context of the older neighborhoods and the newer development around the train station and the higher density buildings.
13. Jim Travers said he works with the police department. He shared the proposed streetscape. He added, what is there is deficient. This area needs improvements for pedestrian use, light and air. Anne asked if they have considered any alternatives. Jim said this is the most prudent and cost-effective plan for this street. (He did not say if there were alternatives to this plan.) He added they have guidance from the City for the street improvements. He added, any widening will show the two houses at the end will need to be removed. Jim said this design is directed by the Transportation Department.
14. Anne asked if anyone else would like to ask questions. Rebecca said they heard alternatives have not been considered. She asked, have they looked at a single lane and sidewalks? Jim said they do not want to design a street that does not have two lanes and handicap accessible sidewalks. Rebecca said she has a concern this is being done before there is a development proposal. Jim said every street needs to be two-way. Rebecca added she has not seen a documented need for a street of this size. Has the City consulted historic community guidance standards? She has looked at web sites that have guidance for historic streetscapes. There are some guidelines from SHPO. Jim said they looked at the "Urban Street Design Guide". Ralph added, from their perspective, where they have minimum sidewalk and street width, widening works for all.
15. Ralph added they are in touch with SHPO regarding the Blickensderfer Building. They will continue to have that dialogue. Ralph said they do not have guidelines for historic streetscapes. They looked at streets and walks along Hope Street. He added it is a discussion to be had. Rebecca said the City has guidelines. Ralph said they will be looking at those and they are being updated. They are working with DSSD. Rebecca asked if HPAC can be included in that review, as they impact guidelines for historic districts. Rebecca noted this would be an important project for HPAC to assist with. All generally agreed.
16. D. Davis said she walked the streets the last few weeks. There is nothing about the street that is good. She said there should be a balance in working in the district and saving historical buildings. Can the district be improved so it has a historic feel? It may be possible we cannot save a single house but we may be able to improve the community, with a historic character. Can we look at it as a whole? Anne said we ought to advocate for saving historic properties in National Register Historic Districts. Jim added there are a number of traffic studies in the City. They are funding a Traffic Study of the whole downtown. Congestion around the Transportation Center is a big issue.
17. Anne asked Mark Diamond if he had anything to add? He said, why can't bike lanes go on Pacific Street or Atlantic Street? Those are both adjacent streets. Jim said he thinks they are necessary on all streets.



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18. Anne asked Judy if she had a question? She asked, why are we allowing a registered district to be taken one by one? It is in the Master Plan. They (the City) accepts that BLT will be tearing down buildings. The City has to address these issues. The City is not doing their job if they are only looking at transportation. Ralph said it is a goal to have a balance of these various issues. Judy said the City should support the Master Plan.
19. Brad Shide (Preservation CT) noted BLT has owned this site for a long time. In 2016 they wanted to demolish properties. He believes BLT bears some responsibility for how this looks now. They have asked Ted (BLT) to address why they have not supported historic development. He asked, can these properties be incorporated into the plan? Many cities have narrow streets. Why do all the streets in the area need to be expanded? The City needs to look at this.
20. Sue Halpern asked why hasn't BLT protected the buildings they own? Ted said they have been boarded up, where they can, and have tried to clean up their properties. They are working on these streets all the time. Ted said it is not accurate that they have not cleaned up their properties. They are moving forward in good faith. Ted said they are improving the four buildings on Henry Street for low-income housing. Brad noted they (BLT) have stopped work on repairing the houses. Ted claimed the community is not honoring their side of the deal. It wasn't clear to which deal he was referring.
21. Brad added, the parties should all get together. He has a landscaper looking at the street options. They have folks that can roll up their sleeves and come up with a plan to rehabilitate the Henry and Garden Street buildings. He suggested a joint working arrangement and a meeting as soon as possible with the City coordinators. Ted said they are happy to sit down / get together for a meeting to discuss the options. SHPO does not know what their plans are. BLT has not provided concept plans. Brad noted, the various parties and the street concepts can all live together with the historic buildings.

A motion was discussed. Elena said there is just one important motion, that HPAC does not support tearing down historic buildings. Rebecca added HPAC should encourage Jim Travers and the City along with HPAC, to meet with Brad Shide to discuss street options. HPAC should also be included in the process to update City street guidelines, as they relate to historic communities. Barry supports a motion that opposes demolition of historic buildings and will look for street design options that can preserve the existing houses. David said HPAC should recommend the City do a traffic and street study for Garden Street. He said the proposed improvements do not seem to fit the scale of this historic neighborhood. Anne added there should be an alternative design for Garden Street that will support preservation.

(The motion was moved by E. Kalman and seconded by R. Shannonhouse, and carried unanimously.)

The Resolution is provided as written by Anne Goslin after the meeting:

*The City did not demonstrate the need for increasing the street width to the extent that could drastically change the character of the National Register Historic District; the Commission cannot condone the street widening without a Traffic Study and cannot condone the demolition of the National Register Historic District contributing resources. The Commission does not wish to stand in the way of development but wishes to work with the City, BLT, Preservation CT, and Historic Neighborhood Preservation to develop a plan to incorporate the existing resources. It also wishes to be involved with developing the City's street design guidelines.*





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**B. High Ridge Office Park, Building No. 3**

Participants: None are noted.

Presented: Anne Goslin introduced the project and provided an update from the last meeting.

1. Anne contacted Building Official, Bharat Gami. She asked why a demolition request was not sent to HPAC? We understand it was sent to neighbors. He said a demolition request for a structure less than 50 years old does not require notification to HPAC. He claimed the Certificate of Occupancy date was in the spring of 1970. Anne asked how the City determined the Certificate of Occupancy is the start date for aging? She understands it was reviewed by Legal at the City, and they made the determination. Anne questioned that opinion.
2. Elena added there should be other considerations for determining if the demolition notice should be issued for review, in addition to the age criteria. David agreed, saying the Certificate of Occupancy is only one part of the construction process. David said the issue of the start point for dating may be argued forever and there may not be a resolution. There is also a building permit date, and there may be a temporary Certificate of Occupancy. Many times the building is complete and tenants take occupancy before the Certificate of Occupancy is issued. Anne added newspaper articles documented occupancy in October 1969. If the City recognizes it as close to 50-years-old (by only a month or two) why wouldn't they comply and issue the demolition notices properly? There are many questions. The City should have used an abundance of caution with the reporting of the demolition requests.
3. David also pointed out the demolition may not be allowed as long as there is a pending legal case, as it is understood with the Board of Representatives. Ralph weighed in, saying the case before the Board of Representatives may delay new construction, but it may not delay any demolition.
4. Anne said HPAC should go on record as opposing the demolition. All generally agreed. Anne also asked what the next steps can be? Anne asked if the City can issue a demolition permit when there is an active protest? Ralph said he is happy to investigate. Ralph said the law suit is about a "physical cultural establishment." The new construction is a new establishment. It is not about the demolition of an existing structure per say. David asked if we can contact the City's attorney? Ralph noted the Board of Representatives has an independent council for this case. HPAC could contact the independent council or could seek an opinion from the City attorney. Anne said she will look into that with Ralph's help.
5. There was a discussion of a motion. Anne said she wants to go on record as objecting to a potential demolition. Anne also formulated a resolution to request an opinion of the City Council. All generally agreed. Anne will draft the request for review.

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



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The Resolution is provided as written by Anne Goslin after the meeting:

*Building No. 3 in High Ridge Office Park is a significant Futuristic-style building designed by Victor Bisharat that is an integral part of an eligible National Register Historic District, including buildings and landscape. The Commission opposes its demolition and seeks to gain clarity on the City's process for determining a building's age.*

**C. Communications**

Presented: Anne said there is a project in Shippan of a single-family house that has a proposed second story addition. All generally agreed this is outside HPAC's scope of review. Anne will contact Vineeta Mathur, Associate Planner at the Land Use Bureau.

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

**V. Adjournment**

A. Goslin adjourned the meeting at 9:25 p.m. (There was no further discussion)

Drafted by David W. Woods AIA, May 6, 2020,  
Secretary, Historic Preservation Advisory Commission

Meetings are normally on the first Tuesday of the month starting at 7:00 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2020. - via. Zoom.