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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: July 9, 2019

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

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

REGULAR MEETING

I. Call to order

The meeting was called to order 7:10 p.m.

A motion was made to assign Elena Kalman and Rebecca Shannonhouse 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 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the June 4, 2019 meeting. There were no changes to the minutes noted.

(The motion was moved by B. Hersh and seconded by E. Kalman and carried unanimously)

III. New Business

A. Applications #219-10, #219-11 & #219-12 - Pacific Street Firehouse

Applicant: BLT

Presentation by: Rachael Cain, Attorney with BLT

1. Anne Goslin opened the discussion. She said the property is a contributing building within the South End Historic District. It was turned over to the buyer, Pacific Street Firehouse, LLC (Building Land Technologies [BLT]), as is. A couple of years ago, BLT approached the Commission to discuss the potential sale. The Commission advocated to save the building, to use the Secretary of Interior Standards for the rehabilitation, and that the sale agreement include a "preservation easement." This meeting will review three applications submitted to the City for: (a) Zoning Map Change; (b) Text Change; and (c) a Site Plan approval with a Special Exception permit for a Section 7.3 bonus application.



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2. Rachel opened by saying they have been working with Ralph on the applications to the City. The fire house was vacant for 17 years. The building did not fall down. It was shored up and restored by BLT. Construction is in progress. Rachael noted there are three different applications. They sent out applications for leasing the first tenant spaces and received 500 responses. They plan on a police substation. It is treated as an office that is covered in a map change. Map change to go from residential to multi-use, NX-D district as recommended by the City. This allows mostly small retail or community services and low scale retail - neighborhood responsive uses. There is a table of about twenty uses in the code.
3. The second application is a Text Change for NX-D, to support a café and some other potential uses. There is also a Text Change or correction to the exemption for café uses and restaurants to be exempt from the liquor buffer. The third application is for the Site Plan and Special Exception. Rachel showed an engineering plan of the parking. They purchased two adjacent properties that will support parking. There is a church next door that has a new owner. They are working with the traffic department. There is an older home on the adjacent property. It is also owned by a BLT, LLC and will be retained. They do not have tenants at this time but are seeking the Zoning approvals. The calculation for the parking is difficult at this preliminary stage. As a result, they have fewer spaces than a restaurant requires, but more than a neighborhood-retail will require.
4. Anne asked if there will be a drive through. Rachael said they have withdrawn that. There were some questions about the Section 7.3 application. Rachael said they are still using Section 7.3 and they will qualify for the whole list of uses on the site under that application - as long as they apply for the Special Exception. Anne pointed out the Secretary of the Interior Standards. Rachel said they got a building permit and have completed much of the exterior construction. Anne noted HPAC has not been consulted on the restoration. David pointed out that the Section 7.3 allows for special review of the construction that is usually done by Renee Kahn. He also pointed out that this has not been coordinated by the city and HPAC was not been asked to do that review. It was noted that the city should have notified HPAC that review was needed.
5. Rachael said the Purchase Agreement has not been completed, so technically the City still owns the building. The application process has been unusual. BLT will not own the building until they complete the applications that they are seeking now. Barry asked if there were any persons involved that have a historic preservation background. Rachel noted Civil One has been acting as the representative including the engineering. Anne pointed out HPAC does not know what the windows are made of. Elena did say the windows that were installed do look somewhat industrial and may be OK. Rachael said she understands that the process has not been perfect. The issue may be that the City issued a building permit without consulting HPAC.
6. Barry said he previously spoke in support of the project before the Board of Representatives. The goal was to keep the building. There was a question if they would apply for historic tax credits. BLT has not done that. He added he has concern that HPAC or a historic preservation professional was not been consulted for the restoration that has taken place. He also said the work looks fairly good. It looks like the brick has been restored.



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7. Rebecca asked how many square feet are in the building. Rachael said it is 2,400 on the bottom and 2,430 on the top. The total is 4,830. They provided parking for residential (4), police (2) and Handicap (2), with a total of 37 cars. Rebecca also asked if there is anything that can be done to encourage foot and bicycle traffic. They want to have a small patio for the ground floor café option. There is a small park across the street. Elena asked if they intend to have second story residential. Rachael said no. They are seeking office and community retail use as per the Zoning application. Rachael said they expect the police to use the satellite office. The substation is a 10 year obligation.
8. Barry said BLT owes the City two placards for previous projects that have not been fulfilled. Barry asked if a plaque can be provided on this building. Rachel said she will review that with the office.
9. Elena asked what they will get out of the Section 7.3 application. Rachael said it is just the “use” options for leasing the building in the NX-D district. They do not intend to add to the building. If they did it would be a separate application.
10. Rebecca added she has some concern that they were able to go through the rehabilitation without having to go through the normal review process. All generally agreed. It was noted that the Section 7.3 application is being applied for now, and they do not own the building as of yet. They must complete these applications to complete the sale. There continues to be a question about how they could start construction and get a building permit and still not complete the sale with the City.

Resolution

1. A resolution was discussed that HPAC should support the three sections of the application: (a) the Map Change request; (b) the Text Change request for the NX-D District, and (c) the Final Site Plan and Special Exception application for the property. All indicated support for the current applications.
2. HPAC expresses support for the renovations to the building and will continue to advocate for the historic preservation easement in the sale agreement.
3. HPAC would like to express their concern for how the Section 7.3 application has been handled so far by the owner (BLT) and the City. There is concern that the improvements have been made without a city representative review, such as Renee Kahn, or by HPAC as per the historic standards. HPAC will make an effort to review the procedures with the city. It was also noted that 7.3 applications need to be reviewed before they are under construction.
4. HPAC would like to review any future changes to the façade as per Section 7.3 requirements.
5. HPAC requests the owner provide a professionally prepared plaque, designating the historic status of the building. The plaque should be placed on the front façade.
6. HPAC requests review of tenant signage, as spaces are leased, following the historic character of the building.



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7. (As a side note, an issue was raised about two interpretive plaques that BLT was required to provide near the Yale and Town building, in recognition of the South End Historic character, as per a previous agreement. Mr. Ferrone of BLT said the plaques were provided. There was a question if they were completed and installed. The Commission will need to review the issue further)

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

IV. Old Business

A. Cultural Inventory

Anne said she was invited to a meeting on the July 16, 2019 to review how the cultural inventory will be done. She asked if others want to attend.

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

B. Incentives

Rebecca noted Harry Day is still looking at the possible statutes that may cover incentives. David said he has heard about another incentive program that may be promoted by the State in certain districts. He will search to find more information.

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

V. Adjournment

A. Goslin adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m. (There was no further discussion)

Drafted by David W. Woods AIA, Secretary, 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 tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, August 6, 2019. Anne will review the agenda and possibly request to cancel the August meeting.