



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: August 7, 2018
Location: 6th Floor Safety Training Room
Government Center, 888 Washington Blvd. Stamford, CT 06901
Present: Lynn Drobbin Anne Goslin, David Woods, Rebecca Shannonhouse
Absent: Barry Hersh, Elena Kalman

REGULAR MEETING

I. Call to order (Meeting called to order 7:15 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 A. Goslin and seconded by D. Woods and carried unanimously)

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the July 10, 2018 meeting.

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

III. New Business

A. 583 Pacific Street

Participants: William Hennessey and Jason Klein of Carmody Torrance Sandak Hennessey and Mark Goodwin of Beinfield Architecture, representing 583 Pacific Street.

1. J. Klein made an introduction of the project. The owners purchased the building a year ago. As an overview of the site, it is 22,000 sq. ft. and two structures. The original two-story structure dates to about 1916. Mr. Muench built 583 Pacific Street for his business at the time. He also built two other structures on Pacific Street. There is a one-story annex to the 583 Pacific Street building that may have been added later. The annex makes a break in the façade along the street. There have been many tenants, including Pitney Bowes. The site was rezoned to an R-MF in the 1950s.



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2. M. Goodwin presented the proposed new uses. The new owner intends to occupy about 3,000 sq. ft. and the building will be all commercial leased space. An addition is planned where the one-story annex is now. It is designed to match the existing structures along the street. They propose an infill building that fills the street wall. It is set back at the same line as the two-story structure. The proposal is to make a brick building that will blend in. It will have its own character including large metal glass windows and a stair tower at the junction with the old building. There is an order to the piers. The upper story (4th floor) is set back. There will be cast stone on the sills and at the top of the parapet of the third floor. The stair tower is adjacent to the lobby vestibule that is set back between the old and the new building, so they still look like separate buildings.
3. Mark further reviewed the plans. There is parking at the ground level of the new building; it is screened by the façade that includes piers and windows. There is tenant office space on the second floor, third floor, and fourth floor, with a roof top landscape deck.
4. J. Klein said that the project is a 7.3 application. They will need four variances: (1) for added height in the R-MF zone. A fourth floor is planned, and they will build over the ground floor parking area; (2) for the front and rear yard setbacks; (3) for increasing building coverage, but will be decreasing impervious coverage. The coverage will be 56%. They do intend to address goals for the City Master Plan and the South End Study by providing landscaping along the street level sidewalk; and (4) a variance is requested for the parking ratio to be set at one per thousand for commercial use.
5. Jill Smyth of HNP noted that HNP and Renee Kahn have reviewed the project and are supporting it. Jill has a question if there will be screening at the automobile entrance to the parking area as was requested by the City. Jay said they are working that out, but do not support the idea. There is a question if Renee will be hired to review the project as it proceeds. Renee submitted a note saying that she does not agree with some of the façade treatments. But she did not elaborate.
6. Jay went over the Text Changes that are proposed. The language seeks to allow projects in RM-F to file for 7.3 applications by supporting various art and mercantile operations in older historic structures. All generally agreed with the language as proposed.
7. Lynn thinks that the project looks good and is in keeping with the district. She agrees with the set back at the entrance. David made some comments and noted that the Planning Board request for a gate at the parking area is not a good idea. He encourages the design team to reject a roll up "gate". David also said that the cornice line should be precast (confirmed) and the brick is good for the façade. He said that he is not crazy about the tower proportions, but understands the use in separating the old from the new construction.



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A motion was discussed. Jay said the owners are seeking approval of the Text Change as well as support of the 7.3 application. Lynn made a motion that HPAC provide an approval of both the project 7.3 application and the Text Changes as long as the projects will be formally supervised Renee Kahn.

(A motion was made by L. Drobbin and seconded by A. Goslin and carried unanimously.)

B. 36 Atlantic Street

Participants: Ravi Ahuja of AWA Design Group; John Leydon of same law office, and Nagi Osta, owner of 36 Atlantic Street.

1. J. Leydon presented the project. He said that the owner wants to revitalize this older building that was used as a Joseph A. Bank store. They intend to convert it into mixed use, with retail on the ground floor and residential above. The original building is three stories and they want to add a fourth story as well as fill in the back of the building. There are four Special Exceptions that they are requesting of the Zoning Board. It is here before HPAC because the building is within the Downtown Historic District.
2. The variances are: (1) occupy entire site; (2) relief from front and rear setbacks; (3) proposing a larger number of units than allowed; and (4) use the BMR bonus to support the added units. They will use off-site parking at Bell Street garage to support the parking requirements. They further explained that they will use the existing first floor as retail. The basement will have storage and laundry for tenants. There is a new light well for the upper story apartments.
3. Ravi said they have designed the façade in a brick material, made of EIFS. They will strip off the existing EIFS on the façade and want to see if the existing brick is usable. There will be a band at the existing cornice line. The story above will have brick as well. There is added detail at the upper cornice. They propose a metal foam panel for the cornice details.
4. David said that they should not use the “brick” EIFS product; they should use a “real fired brick” on the front façade. It is important because they are in the Downtown. They can change to EIFS on the side alley face to save money. The front face on Atlantic Street is very important and should have a good historic masonry material. They may be able to use “thin brick” but it should be a cast masonry product. David also said that the details at the top should be simplified and suggested taking a look at other brick buildings in the Downtown. The cornice details should be simplified so the building is a simple infill building. Lynn said that it is important to use a different material where there is an addition to an older building. David said you can use a lighter color brick at the upper story also. There was also a point made about turning the corner to the north elevation. David said part of that side façade is visible and should have the same materials as the Atlantic Street face. The owner should use the best materials on the front face and save the less expensive materials for the alley side.



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Lynn made a motion to support the project, as a contributing building in the Downtown Historic District, with comments on design as noted by the Commission. They are: (1) use real fired brick on the front façade, instead of an “EFIS brick” or a pre-formed brick; (2) revise the details on the cornice to simplify the shapes and details, in keeping with One Atlantic Street or other historic brick buildings; (3) the side ally façade can have a different material such as stucco render or EIFS; (4) there should be a contrasting brick or material on the added fourth story; and (5) details and materials from the front façade should extend around to the north elevation, visible portions from Broad Street.

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

C. Saint Basil Church and Seminary Application

Participants: Lynn Drobbin

1. Lynn said that the Zoning application was approved at the last Zoning Board meeting. She wanted to point out that she has asked for a tour of the buildings, as they comprise one of the most significant sites within the City. The entire seminary is within a National Register thematic grouping of ecclesiastical buildings. Lynn will notify everyone if it is available for tour before the next meeting.

IV. Old Business

A. Follow up to HPAC Requests for St. John’s Towers

1. Lynn noted that HPAC sent notes on the Tower A proposal following the last meeting that included a request to tour Tower A, a suggestion that a building survey be completed, and a request that HPAC review the renovations on Towers B and C. Lynn said she has not heard from the new owners.

REBUFFED

B. Lifetime Fitness: Updates and Field Visit Report

1. Lynn noted that the Zoning Board approval of the Text Change was rejected by the Land Use Committee of the Board of Representatives.

C. Atlantic Street Post Office Status, Federal Tax Request

1. Lynn spoke to Bruce Berg from Cappelli’s office. She understands they have hired an architect to make changes to the plans in support of the requests by the State Historic Preservation Office. They will resubmit plans at some point.

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



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D. West Main Street Bridge Status

Participants: Rodney Pratt (District 9), Virgil de la Cruz (District 2), and Bob Lion (District 19) from the Board of Representatives.

1. Lynn introduced some recent reports about the West Main Street Bridge. There is the possibility of a grant funding for \$2 million and there has been a request that the bridge become a vehicular bridge. Jill Smyth attended the Board of Representative's meeting last evening where the project was discussed. There was some concern expressed by Jill that changes to the plan, in order to make the bridge support vehicular traffic, would be subject to SHPO review.
2. There was some general discussion about what was in the prior approval. All generally agreed that the agreement with the State was that the bridge would be restored for pedestrian use and that it would have the capability to support emergency vehicles. There was an engineering study done and there was a proposal to support the road bed on new piers, or masonry below the span.
3. Mr. Pratt introduced the other Board or Representative members. He indicated they would like to restore the bridge to its original use including vehicular traffic. The West side residents had requested vehicular use. Mr. De la Cruz asked if the bridge was demolished could a new one that looks exactly like the original be put in its place. D. Woods said that it is very unlikely that the existing bridge could be reproduced. It would be incredibly expensive. All generally agreed that HPAC's preference is that the bridge is restored to look as it did originally and do it as soon as possible. The prior agreement was a cost compromise so the bridge could be restored sooner and there not be further deterioration. HPAC also supported restricting it to pedestrian use with emergency-vehicle access only.
4. Mr. Pratt said he did not come to the meeting to discuss costs. His concern is that there is a contract which does not stipulate the bridge will be restored. He wanted to know what the position of HPAC is in regard to restoration. They are interested in the historic community view of the bridge to see what can be done. He further noted that the Board of Representatives tabled the discussion of the grant for another month so that the committee can get more information from the community and HPAC.
5. J. Smyth said that the bridge has a long history. There was an agreement for it to be restored by State DOT. There was also a MOA with the DOT; the project was dropped due to lack of funding. The agreement with HNP and with HPAC was that the bridge would be restored. She added there were studies going back to 2000. The City has done many studies of its historic value. There are some 17 of these types of bridges (lenticular structure) remaining in the State. It is listed on the National Register and it has an important historic value to the City. Jill has a concern that HPAC may not be asked by the Board of Representatives to review the project as it proceeds, as the City takes over the project from the State DOT. She added that further discussion of its replacement or restoration will need to be reviewed by both HPAC and CT-SHPO.



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6. Mr. Lyon wanted to know, “what is the best option?” Lynn said it is her understanding that if the bridge is converted to vehicular use, the reconstruction will compromise the historic structure. There might be discussion about widening the bridge for vehicle safety and that could cause issues with its historic status and more delays. The agreement which is in place is supported by HPAC; to make the bridge pedestrian use with emergency vehicle access, and to restore it in a way that keeps its National Register status.
7. The group further discussed various options for the bridge such as keeping the walkways on the side, or making the bridge narrow for pedestrians, or options for vehicles. Utilizing planters to restrict use was discussed as well. Lynn noted that the Board of Representatives should review prior reports by the engineers, Briggs & Clark. All generally agreed that the railings and walkways on the sides should remain as they are a part of the historical character.

It was generally agreed that the group and the Board members present will review the contract closely over the next few weeks. They want to be sure the contract will meet the concerns of the HPAC. Lynn will also send the contents of the file she has.

E. South End Study Status

1. Lynn has forwarded the study. The Commission should review it within the next week or two and make any comments. Comments can be sent to Lynn and directly to David Woods at the City.

V. Adjournment

Anne Goslin adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Drafted by: David Woods - August 15, 2018
Secretary: Stamford, Historic Preservation Advisory Commission

Meetings are normally on the second Tuesday of the month starting at 7:00 p.m. in the 6th Floor Safety Training Room. The next meeting is planned for September 11, 2018.