

MAYOR
Caroline Simmons



DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
Matthew Quiñones

Land Use Bureau Chief
Ralph Blessing

HPAC Chair
David W. Woods, AIA

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: April 5, 2022

Location: Via Zoom

Present: David Woods, Rebecca Shannonhouse, Dee Davis Oberwetter, Elena Kalman, Barry Hersh and Claire Fishman (Alternate).

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by HPAC Chair, D. Woods.

II. Approval of Minutes for March 1, 2022.

A motion was made by B. Hersh to accept the minutes, seconded by D. Davis, and the vote was carried unanimously.

III. New Business

A. Preliminary Review: 200 Henry Street.

Presenters: Raymond Mazzeo & David Pinto, Redniss & Mead; Mor Regensburger, Gaia Real Estate and Jim Sackett, CPG Architects.

D. Woods explained that this is a preliminary review for R. Mazzeo to receive input from HPAC. There will be no vote taken, nor will comments from the public be solicited.

The project is being presented as a "Critical Reconstruction." D. Woods read from the Zoning Regulations to provide the definition of Critical Reconstruction.

R. Mazzeo said he will go to the Zoning Board on Monday to get their input. If everyone is strongly opposed, they will most likely look for a different remedy for the building.

Yale & Towne is just over 20 acres. It has been broken into multiple ownerships. Gaia Real Estate owns four (4) of the residential units within the area. Most recent Zoning for 1,170 units was approved; 1,140 were built. R. Mazzeo needs to find out if the 30 remaining units are still approved. There are up to 11 owners of the property now. 200 Henry Street was constructed from 1910 to 1920.

Gaia Real Estate took ownership in 2016. In 2018, they started to notice structural issues within the building - doors, windows not closing properly. Pieces of the building were misaligned.



**CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION**

Page 2

They had an inspection by a structural engineer, and they determined the building was settling. The building was also noted to be tilting toward to the north. In March of 2021, they started to vacate tenants in areas of concern. They then noticed the effects of settling had spread beyond the vacated portion of the building and were growing throughout the footprint of the building.

M. Regensburger said the south façade was also found to be tilting toward the north. She said they hope the foundation and remediation work will be local repair work, and they engaged the relevant consultants and put together the drawings in June of 2021.

While they were waiting for the construction permit, they discovered some ongoing movement. Technical and structural engineers were consulted. They raised concern about doing construction in a building that is experiencing ongoing movement. The movement is also affecting the east and west construction zone.

They recommended extending the scope of work to almost half of the building. Due to the ongoing movement, the structural engineer recommended temporary shoring to make sure the construction area is safe for workers. Buildings #1 and #2 are already completely vacant.

Once temporary protection was installed, the ongoing movement was still happening. Questions then came up about what will happen when heavy machinery and vibration on the site lead to additional settlement of the building. The original plan was then put on hold.

The technical engineer is also very concerned about the western side of the building (Building #3). Two-thirds of the building is not safe to occupy, while the other third is active. They made a decision to also vacate Building #3. It will be completely vacated by the beginning of May.

Even though there is no settlement currently seen on the western side of the building, it is the same soil, so there is concern there could be movement in the future. A full demolition of the building is a real option for them right now.

They had a preliminary meeting with the planning staff to determine options. They pointed R. Mazzeo's group to Critical Reconstruction. It seems to allow for the request of the same types of bonuses that are offered under Section 7.3. Rather than take this building down and do something modern, is it worth the bonus to create something that reflects the prior building?

Jim Sackett, of CPG, spoke about pursuing the "new old building." He showed multiple projects they had worked on in Connecticut and elsewhere as "inspirational images." The intent is to have a (roof) penthouse with private terraces. In addition to getting more yield out of the building, the intent is to "grow" the building by 32 feet to the west to gain another 14 units. R. Mazzeo said at this early stage, they are open to questions/comments, etc.

D. Woods asked whether they explored the possibility of retaining Building #3 and merely replacing the section that has been deemed unsafe.



**CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION**

Page 3

M. Regensburger said they looked into that possibility. They were also considering repairing/replacing Buildings #1 and #2 and keeping Building #3 in place. But after further discussions with the technical engineer, they determined that Building #3 is sitting on timber piles that are not in good condition. They cannot guarantee there will not be further issues with the timber piles in Building #3.

The structural engineer raised concerns about connecting a newly developed building with concrete piles to a 100-year-old building sitting on old timber piles. A major amount of Building #3 would have to be retrofitted.

The original building had 225 units. They are looking at somewhere around 300 units. M. Regensburger said insurance did not cover this type of ongoing movement and it is not an insurable event...only an abrupt event such as an earthquake would be insurable.

HPAC members asked questions. Following further discussion, there was a general consensus among Commission members that they are not in favor of this application as a "Critical Reconstruction." Most Commission members believe it does not meet the standard for Section 7.3 applications ("may have been historically extant"). E. Kalman said the design appears to be a "modified factory fashion appearance," and D. Woods agreed. The building as proposed does not relate to the original architecture in any way. It is a modern "factory look-alike" that lacks the character of the original.

A few Commission members suggested they can replicate what is there now, as that is quite nice and historically interesting. The Commission also proposed that they may be able to put the additional (bonus) units above the 6th floor (existing height) and set them back from the "historic" façade.

D. Woods said that is not a truly great solution, but it is one that may meet the standard of a "Critical Reconstruction" if the first six (6) stories are replicated and match the original.

The Commission also questioned whether the owners have fully explored an option to structurally reinforce the original structure. The Zoning Board may want to get clarification of the real extent of the structural issues.

IV. Old Business

A. C.J. Starr Barn.

Preservation Connecticut Award of Merit.

Presenter: Joe Banks, Perkins Eastman.

This presentation is being postponed and will be rescheduled for a later meeting.



**CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION**

Page 4

B. Historic Preservation Capital Grant Program.

Presenter: Dee Davis, Commissioner.

The NRZ and people of the South End worked extremely hard on this. There were 11 applications, and all were approved. Each of recipients are being contacted, and all the funds went to the South End.

C. Historic Brochure Progress.

Presenter: Rebecca Shannonhouse, Commissioner.

The non-matching grant was agreed upon. The application will not be submitted by June since the South End's Study Report is being delayed. R. Shannonhouse spoke to Sue Halpern, who will let us know when their report is completed so that HPAC can move ahead with the application.

D. Demolition Permit Applications.

Nothing important to report here.

E. Miscellaneous Projects.

TBD

V. Adjournment

D. Davis made a motion to adjourn the meeting; it was seconded by E. Kalman, and the vote was carried unanimously.

D. Woods adjourned the meeting at 9:24 p.m. (There was no further discussion.)

Written by: Rebecca Shannonhouse, Secretary, Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
April 25, 2022.

Meetings are normally held on the first Tuesday of the month starting at 7:00 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for May 3, 2022 via Zoom.