

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
ONE JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

7:00 p.m.

March 2, 2011

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Sandra Dika; Vice Chairman Richard Katz; Members John Wyckoff, Tracy Kozak, Planning Department Representative William Gladhill; Alternate George Melchior

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Member Elena (Maltese) Whittaker; City Council Representative Anthony Coviello; Alternate Joseph Almeida

ALSO PRESENT: Roger Clum, Assistant Building Inspector

I. OLD BUSINESS

A. Approval of minutes – February 9, 2011

Mr. Gladhill pointed out that he attended the February 9 meeting but his name was omitted from the minutes. It was then moved, seconded, and passed unanimously (6-0) to approve the minutes as amended.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Petition of **1827 Sheafe House Condominium Association, owner**, for property located at **159 State Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior changes to an existing structure (replace exterior lighting) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 107 as Lot 46-3 and lies within the Central Business B and Historic Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Ms. Jenny Fredette, treasurer of the condominium association was present to speak to the application. She stated that they would like to replace their exterior lighting with a more period correct lighting. She pointed out that photos of the proposed lighting were submitted for their review.

Chairman Dika asked if there were any questions for the applicant. Hearing none, she asked if anyone from the public wished to speak to, for, or against the application. Seeing no one rise she declared the public hearing closed and awaited a motion.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Ms. Kozak made a motion to grant a Certificate of Approval for the application as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Melchior. Chairman Dika asked for discussion.

Ms. Kozak stated that the request was a very simple, straightforward and minimal substitution. The light fixtures were in keeping with the building.

Hearing no other discussion, Chairman Dika called for the vote. The motion to grant a Certificate of Approval for the application as presented passed by a unanimous (6-0) vote.

2. Petition of **233 Vaughan Street, LLC, owner**, for property located at **233 Vaughan Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow amendments to a previously approved design (misc. changes) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 124 as Lot 14 and lies within Central Business A and Historic Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Ms. Carla Goodknight of CJ Architects was present to speak to the application. She provided an overview of the project that has led them to this point. She said that there was a change with the project when they converted the use of the third floor from office space to three residential units. There are two residential units on the fourth floor. These recent changes set into motion a series of changes. One was that an ADA elevator to the roof was now required. Ms. Goodknight explained that they sought relief from the Board of Adjustment, but it was denied. As a result, they had to make modifications to the building.

At this point in the presentation, Ms. Goodknight guided the Commission through the submitted packet. She pointed out that they reduced the floor heights by 8 inches on the first floor and 4 inches on the fourth floor in order to lower the roof top slab by a foot. She also pointed out that the windows needed to be re-proportioned as a result. Ms. Goodknight added that a structural column would need to be moved four feet to the right.

Mr. Wyckoff asked where the elevator override was located on the approved elevation. Ms. Goodknight said it was located in the tower but the tower shape and size exceeded the 10 foot roof top appurtenance allowance.

Chairman Dika asked Ms. Goodknight if she knew they would have to go to the Board of Adjustment for the height issue when she came before the Commission. Ms. Goodknight said that originally the building did not need a variance because they had private elevators going to the roof. With the change to the ADA elevator, the overrun exceeded what was originally allowed so they needed the variance. She pointed out that the HDC and BOA meetings were one right after the other so in order to keep the project moving, they sought HDC approval prior to the BOA approval.

Mr. Wyckoff asked how much out of compliance was the tower, as approved with the proposed lowering of the floors. Ms. Goodknight said that there were several issues with the tower. One problem was that the peaked roof put them over the height allowance. She explained that they could build the tower as approved but they would have to put a flat roof on it. She added that they were not able to get approval for any interior space on the roof that does not contain mechanical equipment.

Chairman Dika commented that this application went back almost two years and one of the elements that was really liked by the Commission at the time was the tower. And now at the end of the process to have such a substantial modification made to it was shocking. Ms. Goodknight explained that the Board of Adjustment thought that the covered space on the roof was excessive and needed to be scaled back substantially.

Mr. Gladhill asked if the proposed building this evening fit all of the zoning requirements. Ms. Goodknight replied yes.

Mr. Melchior stated that it was certainly disappointing that a major architectural feature was lost but the Commission's purview was to decide if the design was appropriate to the district.

Vice Chairman Katz said that he did not think the revision affected the aspect of the environs in a negative way. He pointed out that the Commission needs to remember its mandate. He did not feel the revision was inappropriate.

Ms. Goodknight finished explaining the proposed revisions of the project. She pointed out that the renderings were adjusted to reflect the changes.

Ms. Kozak asked about the centering of the new tower appurtenance. Ms. Goodknight said that she was trying to create a small half circle of covered open space.

Chairman Dika asked if there were any more questions for the applicant. Hearing none, she asked if anyone from the public wished to speak to, for, or against the application. Seeing no one rise she declared the public hearing closed and awaited a motion.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Mr. Melchior made a motion to grant a Certificate of Approval for the application as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Katz. Chairman Dika asked for discussion.

Mr. Melchior said that while the design was a bit disappointing to some Commissioners, it was still appropriate for the historic district. Its character was still reflected in the surrounding context.

Chairman Dika stated that she could not support the application. She pointed out that they spent a considerable amount of time on the application tweaking the design. To take such a major change in just one session without a chance to think about it was much too difficult for her.

Vice Chairman Katz agreed that they spent a lot of time on the project but that was what the Commission does and that was what they were here for. He did not think that Ms. Goodknight entered into this presentation with a lot of enthusiasm because these changes were a result of factors that she had no control over. He pointed out the Commission was not here to provide outstanding architecture but to determine if the design was appropriate to the neighborhood. Vice Chairman Katz said that there was nothing here that was not appropriate.

Ms. Kozak echoed Vice Chairman Katz’s comments. She thought that some might be glad to see the glass tower go because there were no glass towers two hundred years ago. She said that the tower did help to define the front door of a building that had no front. Now the front door is lost but the canopy still remains at the second floor. She also thought that the planters and raised walkways also helped to define the front as well and she felt enough of the elements had remained so that people would be able to find their way around the building. She said she would support the application.

Mr. Wyckoff stated that he agreed with Chairman Dika and would not support the application. He said that this was the northern tier and currently, there was nothing to compare the proposed building to. He commented that the Commission was establishing a precedence where applicants can come back after approval and make changes that hold the Commission to the fire. He cited the Residence Inn which now had glaring grates under each window which was not part of the original approval. Mr. Wyckoff pointed out that these changes were driven by a change of use so he suggested that maybe the change of use was not appropriate. He was not comfortable with the reasons for the change and the design. He thought the override with the round canopy around it was awkward.

Mr. Melchior said that there was a context in that part of the historic district – the Sheraton and the salt piles to name a couple. He also felt the Commission had a duty to economic viability.

Chairman Dika clarified that part of her concern was that there was no work session requested with such a dramatic change. She said that that had a lot to do with her vote.

Hearing no other discussion, Chairman Dika called for the vote. The motion to grant a Certificate of Approval for the application as presented passed by a 4-2 vote with Chairman Dika and Mr. Wyckoff voting in opposition.

III. WORK SESSIONS

- A. Work Session requested by **30 Maplewood, LLC, owner**, for property located at **30 Maplewood Avenue**, wherein permission was requested to allow a new free standing structure (construct a 4 and 5 story mixed use building). Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 125 as Lot 2 and lies within Central Business B, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts.

- Ms. Jennifer Ramsey of Somma Studios was present to speak to the application. She explained that their plans had changed and they were now proposing a one story addition to the rear of the structure and not the 4 and 5 story mixed use building. She explained that one of the predominant tenants needed additional space so they were proposing this addition.
- The size of the proposed addition would be 18'10" x 91' long. Ms. Ramsey showed the Commission two schemes. Scheme A would be brick and Scheme B would have a brick base with a board and batten siding.
- There was detailed discussion on the barn door on the addition.
- Ms. Kozak asked Ms. Ramsey which scheme she preferred. Ms. Ramsey said that she preferred scheme B.
- Mr. Wyckoff stated that the scheme B had a cosmopolitan look to it. He felt it looked too suburban. He asked if they would be using an Azek material. Ms. Ramsey said they would be using cypress or another type of wood. Vice Chairman Katz said that it would be important that it did not look like a cheap way out. Mr. Wyckoff asked Mr. Clum if using a wood siding in the Central Business B zone would be a problem. Mr. Clum replied no. Mr. Gladhill pointed out that the wood was on the Bridge Street side where there were a lot of wood structures. The Maplewood Avenue side was mostly brick structures.
- Ms. Kozak asked how the transition between the brick base and the wood siding would be treated. Ms. Ramsey said the sills would be either a cast stone or brick. She would take a look at what the current sill details are on the building. She said that she would prefer the cast stone cap detail.
- Ms. Kozak said that she did not mind the wood on the back of the building. She preferred the broken up railing of scheme A. She thought it defined the entry. Ms. Ramsey said that this entrance would lead into the main area of the building. Ms. Kozak said that in that case, the raised parapet made sense.

IV. ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

1. Discussion of repair vs. replacement of windows

Mr. John Schnitzler, a restoration carpenter at Strawberry Banke was present to speak to the Commission regarding repairing windows versus replacing windows. Highlights from the discussion follows:

- Mr. Schnitzler stated that a person's first inclination is to replace the windows but he pointed out that just about anything can be saved. There are times; however, where it is just too expensive or not worth it.
- Mr. Schnitzler said that it takes him 8 hours to restore a top and bottom sash. He also explained that storm windows and screens could be built to accommodate restored windows. Mr. Wyckoff pointed out this was an excellent system for windows that did not need to be opened. Glass storms would not be easy for some to remove and full screens and inserted screens were unattractive. He said that he could see the restoration of windows on a building like the Langdon House.

- Chairman Dika pointed out that the seals on replacement windows sometimes break within 10-15 years. Mr. Wyckoff added that the putty on restored windows crack and falls out. Mr. Schnitzler commented that historic windows do have maintenance issues.
- Chairman Dika stated that there are now issues with lead paint. A contractor must be licensed to work with it.
- Ms. Kozak stated that the prime buildings on major streets should try to preserve their historic windows.
- Mr. Melchior commented that the shipyard repairs all of their windows. They do not replace any and they have not seen any real difference in the energy efficiency.
- Chairman Dika pointed out that there was not a lot of cost savings with regards to repairing vs. replacing windows. Mr. Schnitzler reminded the Commission that every sash is different and every house will be different.
- Mr. Wyckoff felt it was important to keep the original sash on historic buildings. He did feel that the triple track storm windows over single pane windows was unattractive and so removing those and adding replacement windows was a good tradeoff.
- Mr. Schnitzler commented that Brosco makes a good single glazed true divided light window.
- Vice Chairman Katz thought that the issue of windows was situational. He did not see the harm in replacing one over one windows in any situation.
- The discussion turned to asphalt shingle roofs versus shake roofs. Mr. Schnitzler said that shakes were expensive and the quality of the shakes varied.
- Mr. Schnitzler stated that it was important to keep trying to educate homeowners on the historic value of what they have.

In other business, Chairman Dika stated that she asked the City to look into RSA 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive. She was hoping that there was something to help young couples with major renovations in the South End as well as other neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the incentive only applied to the downtown area. Ms. Kozak said that if it was a significant house, the homeowner could apply to some of the State historic preservation groups to get grants to help with the renovations but there was not much available for the standard house.

V. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:40 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Good
HDC Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Historic District Commission meeting on April 6, 2011.