

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

**EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**6:30 p.m.**

**November 19, 2014  
reconvened from November 5 & 12 1, 2014**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Joseph Almeida; Vice Chairman Tracy Kozak; Members John Wyckoff, Dan Rawling; Planning Board Representative William Gladhill; Alternates Reagan Ruedig and Vincent Lombardi

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** George Melchior; City Council Representative Esther Kennedy

**ALSO PRESENT:** Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner

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*The Board's action in these matters has been deemed to be quasi-judicial in nature.  
If any person believes any member of the Board has a conflict of interest,  
that issue should be raised at this point or it will be deemed waived.*

**I. OLD BUSINESS (WORK SESSION)**

1. Work Session requested by **Timothy and Alexandra Lieto, owners**, for property located at **454 Marcy Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow new construction to an existing structure (construct second story addition, window relocations on first floor of north, south, and west facades) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 101 as Lot 77 and lies within the General Residence B and Historic Districts. *(This item was postponed at the November 12, 2014 meeting to the November 19, 2014 meeting.)*

The owner Mr. Tim Lieto and Mr. Chris Martin were present. Mr. Lieto said that he had lived in the house for three years and needed space for his expanding family. Mr. Martin said they wanted to maintain the historic authenticity of the 1791 house and therefore would retain as many existing rooflines and window locations as possible. Chairman Almeida asked whether they had any historic information on the home. Mr. Martin said that some information alluded to the fact that the house was related to the Cotton family, but to his knowledge there were no records. Chairman Almeida thought it was worthwhile to know exactly why the house was marked with the Cotton name and its significance.

Ms. Ruedig had a difficult time accepting the second story because the house looked like an original Cape, and a 1-1/2-story home in that area was significant. Putting a second story would change the integrity of the house. If it was discovered that there was little significance to the house, then perhaps she would feel differently. Mr. Martin asked her what she was looking for, and Ms. Ruedig said architectural integrity and subsequent owners of the house as well as the original owner because there were not many houses of that vintage. Mr. Martin asked if it would

be relevant if there were previous renovations, and Ms. Ruedig agreed that it would. Mr. Wyckoff agreed with Ms. Ruedig and said the Cape's style was known as a three-quarters cape, so there would be two windows on one side of the door and one window on the other. The front door would face the south, and there would be a lot of framing and historic beams that would work with the window treatment and alignment. He thought it was blasphemy that the applicant wanted to move the windows and eliminate the front door. They also wanted double windows on the first floor. Assuming the grid pattern had 9/6 windows on the first floor, the second addition would have 6/6 windows. He said they would have an egress problem from the upstairs bedrooms and the 6/6 if double hung would be too small. Mr. Wyckoff further discussed the availability of an Andersen casement egress window but said it would be difficult to get permission to put it on a second floor. He did not think the submitted plan was ready. Mr. Martin told him they would do more research on the additions made to the house, but he felt that the styles Mr. Wyckoff referred to were add-ons. Mr. Wyckoff disagreed and said it was likely that there was paneling on the inside of the house indicating that the left hand side was previously one big room and there would be a center chimney where the bathroom was.

Mr. Rawling agreed with a lot of the comments but struggled with the fact that there was little of anything recognizable in the historic house. The form of the house, the gable, and the porch on the front had nothing to do with the historic forms. He said the owner would be better off raising the house and putting a floor beneath it. Vice-Chair Kozak noted that a few houses in the neighborhood had been raised and the character of the homes were maintained. The Cape was a different style, however, so she thought it would be an abrupt change that would not preserve the character. It could be raised a half-story and the second floor attic could be used as combined space. She agreed with Ms. Ruedig about getting more information on the history of the house for options, but they needed to keep more of what existed. Mr. Lombardi agreed that it would be a drastic change to the house and hard to accept. Vice-Chair Kozak suggested adding a lot in the back that was not seen from the street, but Mr. Lombardi said there wasn't enough space.

Chairman Almeida felt that as long as the addition did not erase what presently existed, a way to add on would always be recognized. The house was special because it was so different from everything around it, and the applicant's plan took away the uniqueness of the house. He liked the idea of raising the house, but the south elevation suggested that the Cape was special, and to erase the Cape portion would be a terrible idea. He agreed with the Board's previous comments. Mr. Gladhill said he also agreed with everything said. There were not a lot of Capes left in the area and they needed some semblance of it.

*The Commission voted to continue the work session at the January 7, 2014 meeting.*

## **II. WORK SESSIONS (CONTINUED)**

D. Work Session requested by **Dale W. and Sharyn W. Smith, owners,** and **Green and Company, applicant,** for property located at **275 Islington Street,** wherein permission was requested to allow demolition of existing structures (demolish existing buildings, construct two multi-family structures) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 144 as Lot 8 and lies within Central Business B and Historic Districts. *(This item was postponed at the October 8, 2014 meeting to the November 19, 2014 meeting.)*

Attorney Bernie Pelech, Ms. Wendy Welton, and Mr. Dick Shea were present to speak to the petition. Ms. Welton said she hoped it would be the last stand-alone session and that her goal that evening was to explain anything that was unclear so that they could next meet for a work session/public hearing. She said there were no significant changes to the building shapes and volumes since the last work session, and she showed several photos depicting a variety of view of mid-Victorian houses as well as her project and Goodwin Park. She said they had not deviated from the three separate buildings to address the desire for it to be elevated because she felt that buildings that were repetitious were not as elegant.

Mr. Shea went through the packet. Sheet A2 showed the site plan and different views of the project and how they tried to fit the New Englander in the neighborhood. Drawing A3 depicted the scale and details of the New Englander's trim. He said they would make it look like new, but a big change was the angled bay with clapboards to upgrade the building. They picked up the roof pitches, did double hung windows, flat casing and historic sills and went with cementitious board. He asked the Commission if they preferred the smooth side or the texture side out. Mr. Wyckoff asked if the claps were old. Mr. Shea said the cuts were not very accurate, so he didn't think they were original and had probably altered over the years. They would remove a storm door, rebuild the steps, and replace the windows and frames with SDL for a cleaner look. They would also remove the chimney and rebuild it in kind with a metal cap. It would be a box with real brick on the outside and would be step flashed to look like a real chimney. He showed a sample of the brick. The new addition would have a 12/12 roof pitch, angled bay, flat panels, 6" corner boards, frieze boards, and extended rakes. One central entrance would have two unit 4-panel fiberglass doors that they would paint to make it look like wood. He showed the Commission two window samples. Decking on the front porch and steps would be real mahogany. Chairman Almeida asked if the PVC would be painted, and Mr. Shea said they could discuss it. The siding was pre-finished and pre-colored. One of the samples had PVC with no paint, and the other one had paint, and he said the Commission could indicate their preference. The shingles were asphalt and the front ones would be a slate-type shingle. Parking was under the units. The garage doors would be flush and a dark color. Chairman Almeida verified that the side texture represented the actual texture.

Mr. Shea said that the posts supporting the deck would be trimmed in PVC material and wood frame and covered with AZEK. Mr. Wyckoff asked if he was comfortable with columns having brick bases that were actually fake brick on plywood. Ms. Welton said they had not determined whether there would be brick at the base. Mr. Shea said they were proposing metal railings with PVC supporting posts and a small roof overhang. Sliders and windows would lead to the center units. Mr. Lombardi asked if the porch area was divided. Mr. Shea said it was and that the railing went across. They tried to maintain the shape of the New Englander on the last unit. The unit in front of it had a garage with a bedroom above, and rooftop units would be hidden behind the railing system matching the rails on the first floor. Ms. Welton said they would add two windows due to the existing stair. Mr. Rawling further discussed the railing. Ms. Welton said they met with the Code Officer and would try to have the private spaces classified under IRC. Mr. Rawling questioned the detail of the porch roof and discussed the apertures, the column shaft, and the pediment over the front door extending out too far.

Chairman Almeida felt that, considering that at one time they were arguing about the complete removal of the New Englander, he could accept the removal of the chimney. He requested that the applicant submit convincing detail. He thought that the door texture was exaggerated. He agreed with the comments about the flat panel and thought that all the surfaces should be painted to make it authentic. Bare PVC was not appealing. He asked the applicant to research the transformer on the site and insisted that the engineering be done in advance of the approval, including gas meters, generators, and so on.

Mr. Shea continued with Sheet A4 and showed the angled bay, saying that the overlay would be boards ½" thick so that the recess was slight. Mr. Wyckoff felt that it was a large expanse of white and suggested bringing in another color. Mr. Shea asked about clapboards, and Mr. Wyckoff said it could work on the older one. Mr. Rawling discussed the relief and the shadow lines. Mr. Shea showed the door details and noted the pediment on the entry detail and the capital on the columns. Mr. Rawling asked what they were looking at because it looked like the corner building porch column. Ms. Welton said the inset porch was stepped back from the face of it because they had a bad collision of the pediment, so there was a double column. Mr. Rawling asked if the column was set over in the front elevation. Mr. Shea said it should line up and they would adjust the drawing. Vice-Chair Kozak asked how far the pediment projected out, and Mr. Shea told her 4-5 inches. She asked if the flat panel in the middle was set back because she didn't want it to be too flat. Ms. Welton said they would do a projection. On Sheet A5, Chairman Almeida thought the bay detail looked like it had separate sills and that it should have a continuous, heavier sill, which would apply to all the bays. He thought it was much too thin if it was drawn the proper scale. Mr. Shea said they would be 2" and that they were not drawn correctly. Chairman Almeida asked them to ensure that they would have hand cuts of the mahogany steps. Mr. Shea said they would picture frame them. Chairman Almeida asked about gutters. Mr. Shea said they had not planned on gutters on that particular building but would discuss it for the next building.

Sheets A5 and A6 showed the hip roof with 2 units, the large formal entrance, the portico-covered steps, columns, and pilasters against the back wall. The double door would be fiberglass and painted. Two boxed bays had recessed flat panels. All windows would be the same style as before but with different dimensions. He discussed siding, corner boards, mud sills, and aluminum gutters and downspouts on one building. A PVC band broke up the second and third building. Metal railings were on the front of the building. He discussed windows and bay eave details and said the entry detail was still being developed. Ms. Welton said they hoped to eliminate the private stoop. Mr. Wyckoff didn't think they needed balusters onto the sidewalk and that just the rail was sufficient. Vice-Chair Kozak asked about transom windows, and Ms. Welton said they would be done by the same manufacturer. Mr. Shea said the ceiling finish would be a flat panel system with strips. Mr. Wyckoff asked if they would use PVC bead boards, and Mr. Shea said they wanted a simpler look. Mr. Rawling said the building was a focal one and thought the sills needed to be raised. Ms. Welton said it was misrepresented in the drawing and that the bottom of the mud sill should have been the bottom of the wood. Mr. Shea said that 18" of foundation should be shown on all the buildings.

Mr. Rawling thought the 2/1 window pattern needed to be changed and also thought some breaks should be made in the 2/2 window patterns, especially the windows over the front entry. Ms.

Welton said they could separate the windows but would have logistical problems. The doors and the windows were discussed more. Mr. Rawling had similar comments about the panel detail on the bay and suggested a rounded shape for the portico. He asked about the trim detail over the windows. Mr. Shea said they were thinking of making the windows more important. Ms. Welton said they would study options for a more unique type of window. Mr. Rawling also thought the porches had similar details and discussed dimensions. Chairman Almeida thought the band might cause a problem because it didn't stick out as far as the face of the detail and was interrupted by the corner board. He preferred that it go away and had same comment about the bays. Mr. Wyckoff said he would like to see more important corner boards. Chairman Almeida noted the drip line on the steps and said if they guttered the entrance, it would look like it was sticking out 2 feet all the way around. Ms. Welton said they had worked out a detail on the mansard and if they needed to gutter it, it would be within that dimension. Mr. Rawling discussed a molding detail. Chairman Almeida thought they should introduce internal screens.

Mr. Shea asked for a consensus on the underside of the entryway. Mr. Wyckoff thought it needed bead board because the trim level was flat and could use more detail. He also suggested a small crown on the top of the columns because they were plain. Mr. Rawling thought the bead board might be 'cottagey'. Mr. Wyckoff said if the ceiling was divided up, it would work.

Sheet A7 showed the 18" of foundation on two units. Mr. Shea said they tried to make the gable end more important than previously by bringing the height up from the side area and thickening out the columns to 2 feet. The style was quasi-Greek with a small porch on the front and square columns, but they could consider round columns. They had changed the third-floor windows to break it up with three double hungs. There was a hip roof dormer and metal railings. Mr. Wyckoff asked if it was vertical siding, and Mr. Shea said it was. Mr. Wyckoff thought it was a chance to get away from clapboards and have a smooth finish. Mr. Shea said they would have a smooth finish. Mr. Wyckoff asked why it was 6/1 and not 6/6. Ms. Welton said it was because they faced the park and tried to address its historic nature. Mr. Wyckoff thought the windows would look too blank without grills.

Mr. Rawling discussed the flush board treatment on the Greek Revival, the clapboards and the pilasters and thought it would be nice to distinguish the Greek Revival. Ms. Welton thought the shutters cheapened it a bit, but Mr. Rawling said there was a lot of room for the shutters. Mr. Wyckoff suggested that a third-floor window with a large head over the top casing would accentuate the Greek Revival on the front. Chairman Almeida discussed the venting and a base for the pilasters. Ms. Ruedig thought the center building was not grand or proud enough. She thought the building should be focal. Ms. Ruedig thought the secondary entrance was too 'farmhouse' looking. Chairman Almeida agreed and also noted that the roof changed. Mr. Shea said they could make the roof flat. Chairman Almeida thought that stone steps were more appropriate on the building, and Ms. Welton said they would look into it. Ms. Welton said they looked at the granite steps on Islington Street and when railings were added, it started to be a mix. That was the reason they went with classy wood-frame steps so that the railings went with the steps.

Sheet A9 showed the mansard with three units. Mr. Shea said they felt it was the central building because it was centered on the park entrance across the street. He discussed the detail corner board with a simplified trim and contemporary flair and the water table. The windows

were the same with side lights on the front entrance and transoms above the doors. Woodwork was flat panel. The right-hand unit had a recessed entrance. There would be larger sliders on the back and the two middle ones would open up. He showed a sample of the roof shingles. One asphalt shingle looked like slate and would be seen on the gambrel, mansards, and maybe the Greek Revival. Chairman Almeida thought it didn't look like slate, and Mr. Gladhill suggested faux slate. Mr. Shea asked if they would like residential shingles, and Chairman Almeida agreed. Ms. Welton said they would explore it. Chairman Almeida thought the building was their flagship and that faux slate would be more appropriate. Mr. Rawling was concerned about the flatness of the detail, the arched element, panels, band molding, and the fact that the building sat too low on the ground. Mr. Shea said there should be a piece of band. Mr. Rawling found the 2/1 windows suitable for the right-hand side of the building but felt that the center part should be more embellished. Sheet A10 showed more details on the mansard. Mr. Shea said they would incorporate the gutter into the trim and all the other details similar to the other houses. They would work on the institution-style railing. Mr. Wyckoff they had done a good job of giving each building its own style but he wouldn't want to see the railings and stairs all the same. Chairman Almeida noted the relationship of the mansard to the roof style and thought that if the roof went beyond the wall, it would look like a mushroom because of a large overhang. Mr. Shea said the roofline could be pulled in a bit.

The gambrel was shown on Sheet A11. It had a recessed front door on the right with an arc, 6/1 windows, and square columns. The flat stock in the front of the gambrel took the farm look away. The doors had sidelights, the back elevations were the same, and the electric panels on the right side would be treed out with evergreens. Mr. Shea asked whether the roof needed faux shingles. Ms. Welton said she wouldn't put faux slate because it was a secondary street with humble structures. Chairman Almeida said there were a lot of drip lines and recommended that they study it better. If there were a gutter blend, he asked that they make it available for the next meeting. Vice-Chair Kozak thought that every building had the same proportion of windows and suggested that they make them a bit wider. Ms. Welton said they ended up with that proportion because we looked for historical.

Mr. Shea showed the door handle, doorbell and light fixture styles on Sheet A13 and asked the Commission if they liked hanging lights. Mr. Rawling thought the hanging light was a good idea but thought the column details should vary a bit. Chairman Almeida discussed the wrapping material and said that details would suggest a higher level rather than just two boards. He thought the trim should go all the way around the building and that no edge should be seen. Mr. Wyckoff said to be careful about requesting mitering of PVC trim because it didn't work. Chairman Almeida said he wanted to bring it out just as a detail.

Ms. Ruedig said she wasn't comfortable with just a collection of historic buildings all brought together. She appreciated the attempt to simplify but felt that it was not enough detail. The three buildings were reminiscent of a historic style, but they were trying too hard. She also noted a lot of plastic and didn't think the quality was high enough. Plastic aged differently, and other buildings on Islington Street were wood and had nice details. She thought there were a lot of good intentions, but the project wasn't quite there yet. There was not enough of a contemporary design, and at the very least, it should be wood.



**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Ted Ballard of 304 Islington Street said that he lived directly across the street from 275 and asked the Commission to keep Goodwin Park in mind because it was important that the project complemented the park. He felt that the City owed something to that site. He liked the design of the project but thought the massing was too big.

Mr. Rick Becksted of 1395 Islington Street said he had watched the project go from two 4-story modern buildings and that people spoke highly of the new design. Regarding the comments about plastic, he thought it would be suitable that real wood be done on the front and AZEK on the sides on the south. He felt that the developer had gone above and beyond more than any other project he had seen in a while, and he appreciated that they had morphed the New Englander into the project, making it a beautiful design. He thought the chimney could duplicate a real one by putting real brick.

Ms. Mary McDermott of 40 Rockingham Street said she was an abutter and thought the project had come a long way and fit into the neighborhood, but she just wanted it to begin and not drag out for more months. The fact that a lot of neighbors showed up that evening said a lot.

*Mr. Shea told the Commission that they would go through a design review and meet with the Zoning Board, and then return as soon as possible.*

E. Work Session requested by **7 Islington Street, LLC, owner**, for property located at **40 Bridge Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow demolition of an existing structure (demolish building) and allow a new free standing structure (construct three story mixed use building with below grade parking) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 126 as Lot 52 and lies within the CD4, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts. *(This item was continued to the November 19, 2014 meeting.)*

The architect Mr. Steve McHenry and his associate Mr. Brandon Holben were present to speak to the petition. Mr. McHenry stated that their goal was to agree on the massing so that they could forward with other aspects. He went through the package, highlighting the description, view and city map context first. He then showed a summary of the 4-step process to indicate how they were being consistent with the new Character-Based Zoning and changes to be compliant. He showed the 375-foot radius around the building and the twelve significant buildings surrounding the site, highlighting the diversity of the neighborhood context.

Mr. McHenry also showed the history of the massing options that had been proposed and said they would focus on Option 9, showing a context view of the variety of building types and not just the direct abutters. Option 9 was similar to Option 8 but had an element showing that the Buckminster House had a cupola taller than any point of their building. He showed important viewpoints from different sites and pointed out one view of the façade from the parking lot across the street, which showed how the building cascades down the street and changed vertically and horizontally as it pulled back from the abutters. One view showed the intricate rhythm of the building modules, highlighting different materials and color, the front and back recesses, and how it fit into the overall scale and massing of the neighborhood. Mr. McHenry

addressed how the new option differed from the ones presented at the previous work sessions. He felt it was better because they lowered the mansard roof, reduced the attic level and lower wing at the top to soften its impact on the abutter, changed the color and material, reduced the volume of the south elevation, and improved the rhythm.

Mr. Gladhill thought that the building should be two buildings to allow light to go through. Mr. Lombardi said he was still concerned about the overall massing and noted that about 75% of the structures were eliminated in considering the massing. There were more than two abutting buildings, including some on Tanner Street that were also dwarfed by the structure. He thought some progress had been made and didn't know if it was feasible to make it two buildings. He felt it was a huge building in context with the surrounding ones. Vice-Chair Kozak said she liked the direction that the project was going in and liked the simple, traditional forms, but it seemed jumbled. The massing was fine, but she suggested shifting the building over to the right. She thought it called for more than a 2-story working man's house and should be more prominent than some of the buildings on Tanner Street. Ms. Ruedig agreed that they were going in the right direction and thought that the breaking up of the facades was reflective of the neighboring size and massing.

Mr. Wyckoff said he felt better about the project due to the reduction of the fourth-floor monitors. Mr. Rawling talked about the setbacks. Chairman Almeida said he appreciated that the front elements on Bridge Street didn't overwhelm the Buckminster House. He didn't see anything wrong in reducing the size of the massing next to the Buckminster House. He agreed with Vice-Chair Kozak that they could slide the entire mass over to the right and generate some interest in the volumes. He felt the building was truly a piece of 2014 architecture and didn't pretend to be like the Buckminster House or anything else around it, which he thought was appropriate. He also appreciated that the top of it didn't go over the Buckminster House. Mr. Rawling thought that the differentiation of the right and left sides was important.

Mr. McHenry brought up the issue of splitting the building in two and said that it would add tremendous cost to do so and still achieve the parking under the building. He believed that by splitting the building up with the monitors, they had achieved that effect as much as possible. Because context was such a hot issue, they fell back on their own training and the guidance of the sustainability of neighborhoods that were part of the green building design and Character-Based Zoning to build sustainable neighborhoods. He had prepared reference lists and a checklist of what made good neighbors as well as material to create a Leed certification. He said he would show how the design responded to those elements at the next work session. He also passed out his reference material to the Commission.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. William Brassil, President of the 7 Islington Street Condominium Association, stated that he was not against the lot being developed because it was an eyesore. He was jealous of the previous presentation, where the people in the neighborhood were able to add their input to the project and their building represented the era and didn't stick out like a sore thumb like Mr. McHenry's building. He said the line that the Commission should be looking at was not the cupola but the roofline of all the houses in that block, which were the same level of the



Buckminster House. He felt that the project stood head and shoulders above all the houses in that block, and the only things that had bearing were the houses between Bridge, Hanover, Tanner and Islington Streets. He respectfully disagreed with Mr. McHenry and even with Chairman Almeida, who said it was okay. It was not okay.

Mr. Rick Becksted of 1395 Islington Street said he attended the previous meeting and thought he was hearing more about lopping off, but the building was still four stories. He did a map showing 45', 2-1/2-3 story buildings on Bridge Street. Mr. Cracknell had told him it was different. There was nothing about a short 4<sup>th</sup>-story building. (Mr. Cracknell said a half-story was allowed and a short story was not a half-story). Mr. Becksted argued that it was a 4-story building. He said the building looked overwhelming and desecrated the Buckminster House. It did not glorify the older neighborhood sections and towered over the back street. He had issues with how the residents would get into the parking garage because the building behind it had been bought, and he asked where the tenants would park. He still wanted to see what the Planning Board and the BOA would say. He still saw the same building, with no real change. He liked the suggestion that it be split up into two buildings.

Ms. Donna Guilbert of 15 Thornton Street said that it was so obvious to her that the building was too tall and disproportionate. She thought it was a nice design but needed to be shorter.

No one else rose to speak, so Chairman Almeida closed the public comment

Mr. Lombardi thought the division of the building was too similar and gave the appearance of two buildings that were the same. Aside from a little less roof, he would like to see some dissimilarity between the two sides. Ms. Ruedig disagreed, saying that she wanted to move away from multiple facades. Mr. Rawling thought that increasing the expression of the gable roof would be helpful and could also be used to eliminate the open rail deck facing Bridge Street. Mr. Wyckoff thought the problem could be the massing of the fourth floor being too similar. He said the public was right because he added up the square footage and found that the fourth floor was over 50% of the floor space of the other floors and was not a half-floor. He felt that if the massing were not so tall on the Buckminster House side and something was done about the dormers on the gambrel roof, it might be okay. He was happier with the ground floor and retail space but felt that the building still needed a lot of work.

Mr. McHenry illustrated how they had chopped off the roofline on the fourth level and gotten rid of 700 square feet of floor. Mr. Gladhill asked how much height was dropped, and Mr. Wyckoff told him that the two skylights that were on the extreme right were no longer there, so that section of the fourth floor was reduced.

Chairman Almeida thought it helped the green house next door and thought there could be a way to help the Buckminster House. Mr. Wyckoff asked about the parking issue, and Mr. McHenry said they would go through the site review process.

*The Commission voted to continue review of the application at the December 10, 2014 meeting.*

F. Work Session requested by **HarborCorp LLC, owner**, for property located **Deer Street, Russell Street, and Maplewood Avenue** wherein permission was requested to allow a new free

standing structure (construct mixed use building containing hotel, conference center, condominiums, supermarket, and parking) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 125 as Lot 21, Assessor Plan 118 as Lot 28 and Assessor Plan 124 as Lot 12 and lies within the Central Business B, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts. *(This item was postponed at the October 8, 2014 meeting to the November 19, 2014 meeting.)*

The architect Ms. Carla Goodknight, Attorney Susan Duprey, and Mr. Chris Thompson were present to speak to the application. Mr. Thompson said they were at Step 3 of the 4-Step process and doing the façade treatment. He addressed the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process and discussed the rationale for it, saying they required a CUP for certain portions of the building to step up from 45 feet. He also wanted to extract some mass from the building, create new openings, and create significant public space. He addressed the quality of materials, the viewpoints, the energy, the gathering places, and other benefits that the project would bring. He emphasized the pedestrian flow and the sense of place. The public parking would have a more positive effect than the Hanover Street Garage. He also talked about archeology funding to memorialize the history of Portsmouth via art projects on the building.

Ms. Goodknight gave a brief overview showing existing and proposed conditions and emphasized public gathering space, pedestrian access, and the responsive building scale. The project would be a transitional site between Downtown Portsmouth and the north end. Their goal was to activate the north end and draw people to their building. They had tried to break the building into a variety of volumes. She pointed out the retail stores on the first floor, the condominiums on the second floor, the wrapping of the garage, the break in the building that pulled one into Vaughan Street, and the visual and pedestrian connection to Portwalk.

Mr. Lombardi asked about the roof behind the green area. Ms. Goodknight said it was a mechanical penthouse and the gray expanse was the parking. She showed a diagram of the scale and a close-up view of the quality of materials, operable windows, metal railings, varied window elements, brick details, granite banding, metals grills and accents, and openings where the garage would be exposed. She showed the volumes and transitions, the pedestrian bridge, and the hotel details. Mr. Lombardi asked if there was anything in the plaza at the end of the building to keep people there. Ms. Goodknight said they were open to it. Mr. Thompson thought they could make it a memorial space. Ms. Ruedig recommended putting something active there so that people actually had something to do. Mr. Gladhill asked what kind of memorial they were considering. Mr. Thompson wasn't sure and spoke about a bike rental space or public art. Mr. Gladhill said there was a lot in the history of the north end to consider memorializing.

Ms. Goodknight showed the garage side detail with the brick and granite banding, saying there was an option to open up some areas. Road service was discussed. Mr. Wyckoff asked if the corner of Vaughan Street and Maplewood Avenue would be improved. Ms. Goodknight said the property was City-owned and was slated to have a sidewalk.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Keith (last name inaudible) of 111 Bow Street thought it was an overwhelming and massive building that should be divided into three separate buildings. The tunnels, the green space, and sidewalks did nothing to reduce the massiveness. He said that illustrations of the surrounding buildings that were shown at the recent Charette made the project look like a solid wall. He said the lower end of the parking lot was 20 feet lower than the upper end, making the upper end look 60-70 feet high, and 45 feet did nothing to reduce the mass.

Mr. Rick Becksted of 1390 Islington Street said he attended the Charette and the project was a big concern. It looked like the back of a building and like sections. The brick was almost overpowering because it was all over the building, with nothing to break it up. He compared it to Home Depot brick wall sections that easily came apart. It bothered him that the Vaughan Street connection would not happen due to the railroad and slope of the road, and he knew the project team had worked hard to make things pedestrian friendly. The fact that he could see through the building was a plus, but there was a long way to go. He thought the center looked like the Hanover Street Garage, all brick. He said there had to be a better way.

Mr. Jon Guilbert of 15 Thornton Street said he was concerned about the back of the building because the slope would make it necessary to build it higher and there were no entrances on that side. The access roadway would be too small and needed a sidewalk to make it pedestrian friendly. He was concerned about the parking lot at the Maplewood Avenue end of the building and suggested it be located at the other end. He also didn't think that 540 parking spaces were enough because 160 spaces would be lost already due to building on an old parking lot. He asked if there were plans for excess parking. (Chairman Almeida said that TAC and the Planning Department would address it). He thought trucks coming in for Whole Foods would crowd the area and thought the building mass looked continuous from the elevations. He expressed a desire to see a 3D model of the building in context to understand exactly how big it would be.

Ms. Donna Guilbert of 15 Thornton Street was very concerned about the amount of traffic that would be generated and worried about her neighborhood north of Mill Pond. She was afraid it would become 'ghettoized' by the immense traffic flow, the railway crossing, the four-way road junction and would be a nightmare.

Lily (last name inaudible) of 218 Rockland Street thought the end of the building at Russell and Green Streets could be taller because it dwarfed the 44-foot section across. The mass could be shifted to get equal volume. She also questioned the need for a fence by the railroad tracks.

Mr. Drew Schulthess of 14 Central Avenue thought the plans were strong overall and that the project would provide great benefits that would outweigh the negative aspects. He liked seeing some traffic and having Portsmouth visited and loved the activation idea on the end of the building as well as the bike rail suggestion. He didn't think there was a need for a pedestrian cut-through over a train track and wanted a better sidewalk on Maplewood Avenue.

Mr. Jerry Zelin of 70 Kensington Road said Ben Franklin would come up with two columns of pros and cons and would weigh the tradeoffs. He thought there had been lots of improvements in the plans but felt it was still a huge building and that they had to do it right or else it would be a very visible mistake. The footprint was 50% larger than Portwalk 3 and streamed out like a wall,

which was the length of an aircraft carrier. He said the Herald had lauded the 50% reduction in volume, but it was actually a 14% reduction. There were no plans or dimensions, but he sensed they were seeing an increase in volume on three huge lots. He felt they should strive for 2-3 buildings with linkages between them rather than one huge continuous building. He said it was hard to judge how big the project actually was without a 3D model. They needed floor plans to figure out how much parking was practical. He was very concerned about parking and said he had come up with parking needs of 1,000 spaces where only 540 spaces would be available. He thought Whole Foods should have satellite parking. He also thought the State could propose a casino if Whole Foods failed and suggested that a restrictive covenant be placed on the property.

Mr. Jeff Kissel said he was at the Charette and the mass was not a concern to a lot of the community who had attended the Charette. He thought it was a fantastic project.

Ms. Barbara DeStefano of 99 Hanover Street said she loved the building the way it was and thought it should be one building because the form and function didn't allow it to be three separate buildings. She thought it needed a wide sidewalk and a more exciting exterior, but there was plenty of green and pedestrian space. She suggested something more colorful than all brick. She liked that the tall end looked like a ship, which was appropriate for Portsmouth.

Mr. Paul Mannle of 1490 Islington Street asked if the rendering was different from what was previously seen with the 50% reduction. Ms. Goodknight said it was less than what they previously showed. Mr. Mannle said it was hard to determine due to the lack of dimensions, and it looked like a huge athletic sock on the corner of Deer Street. He was concerned about how the pedestrian experience died out at Maplewood Avenue and didn't understand the objection to moving the 50-ft plaza at the north end to Maplewood Avenue so that the pedestrian experience could continue down. He suggested putting the garage in the middle and making Maplewood Avenue the focus and also making the garage five stories. He also suggested shifting different parts of the building to make it look better.

Mr. Paul Young of 33 Deer Street said he attended the Charette with 80-100 others and was surprised about the consensus for the mass and density heading down Maplewood Avenue and said there were a lot of positive feelings about the project.

Mr. Rick Becksted of 1390 Islington Street commented that the project did not get looked at until later on in the Charette meetings, so that's why there wasn't a lot of input about it.

Ms. Donna Gilbert of 15 Fulton Street said people at the Charette had no idea of the project's implications.

No one else rose to speak, so Chairman Almeida closed the public comment.

Ms. Goodknight asked Mr. Cracknell to speak about his amendment. Mr. Cracknell said it was not to exceed the requirement of 60 feet along the street. Ms. Ruedig commented about the lack of activated doors along Maplewood Avenue, which Chairman Almeida agreed with. He asked for more graphics about what was behind the wall above the Whole Foods sign and said the more the Commission knew, the better it would be.

Mr. Wyckoff said it wasn't clear where the door was at the rounded part on Maplewood Avenue and that it should be more proud or have a sign element indicating it was the door to the retail. Ms. Ruedig thought the rounded section was very small and awkward-looking. Mr. Wyckoff said he liked it and thought it was interesting because it smoothed off the intersection with Maplewood Avenue. He was more concerned with the back of the building on Vaughan Street. Vice-Chair Kozak thought the view down Portwalk needed a strong terminus and didn't seem special enough. She talked about the view from Portwalk not aligning. She thought the developer was trying to do too many things and should do just one thing really well. The cut-through view wasn't on axis either. The plaza faced nothing and she feared it would be dead because there was nothing there. She suggested putting it on the Maplewood Avenue corner. She agreed that there was too much brick. Ms. Ruedig suggested using different styles of brick and being more daring to lighten up the building.

Chairman Almeida said he liked the direction the project was going in and saw improvements but still questioned certain issues, like the cut-through near Maplewood Avenue and its alignment, saying it would be used more than the one near the railroad. He was also concerned about the back side of the building and felt they had to create more squares like Market Square. He thought the brick should be reduced. He asked for more detail on chillers and transformers and agreed with the need for more doors. He asked that the tower element and the blank features on the wall be addressed. He thought the mass would be helped by the brick material not going all the way down. If the fourth level corner was stepped back, it would make a difference. He also agreed with the concern of three separate buildings developing and suggested separating them and making connections. He worried about what the back of the building would do to the neighborhood. Mr. Lombardi asked the applicant that they pay attention to the north side of the building because of its visibility and that they change the parking in some way because it was similar to the Hanover Street Garage. He thought the brick coming down to brick sidewalks could have a granite base instead to give it a visual break.

Mr. Rawling said he appreciated all the work put into the project. He discussed a building with articulate skylines instead of a tall dark building and said he applauded the activation of Maplewood Avenue. He agreed with all the door comments and was troubled with the stair tower to the garage. He appreciated the fenestration patterns. One tower element could use a roof on it. He thought the upper level didn't mesh with the rest of the building but liked the scale and texture on the lower level even though there was a lack of doors in that area. The plaza on Russell Street did nothing for him because there was nothing going on, just a big sidewalk with tables on it. He discussed the garage elevations and railings. Ms. Ruedig said she didn't mind flat roofs but thought the bridge between the two hotels should be a showpiece so that people would notice it. Ms. Goodknight showed the 3D model that showed more of a separation of the building.

*Mr. Wyckoff moved to **continue** the work session to the December 10, 2014 meeting. Ms. Ruedig seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

G. Work Session requested by **30 Maplewood, LLC, owner**, for property located at **30 Maplewood Avenue (46-64 Maplewood Avenue)**, where permission is requested to allow a new free standing structure (construct mixed use, 2 to 5 story structure) as per plans on file in

Request To Postpone

the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Plan 125 as Lot 2 and lies within the Central Business B, Historic, and Downtown Overlay Districts. *(This applicant has requested to postpone to the December 3, 2014 meeting.)*

*The Commission voted to postpone review of the application to the December 10, 2014 meeting.*

### **III. ADJOURNMENT**

*At 12:10 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and **passed** unanimously to **adjourn** the meeting.*

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
HDC Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Historic District Commission meeting on Dec. 10, 2014.