

**MINUTES  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
ONE JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**6:30 p.m.**

**January 09, 2019**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Vincent Lombardi; Vice Chairman Jon Wyckoff; City Council Representative Doug Roberts; Reagan Ruedig, Martin Ryan, Dan Rawling; and Alternate Cyrus Beer

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** N/A

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

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Chairman Lombardi called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to **postpone** the 62 Daniel Street Work Session/Public Hearing to the February 6, 2019 meeting.*

**I. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS**

**1. 129 Market Street**

Mr. Cracknell stated that the request was to clarify doors that were shown on the wrong page of the original petition. He said the only change was Sheet B Proposed. Mr. Rawling said he felt that the clear light door should be divided lights instead to match the texture and character of the street. Mr. Cracknell pointed out that the block of warehouses was a hodgepodge of different window sizes and orientation. The applicant Joy Curth was present to speak to the request and said she wanted the logo to distinguish the business door from the residential door.

**2. 501 Islington Street**

Mr. Cracknell noted that the project designer submitted new color photos showing the deck and railing system. The designer Doug Green was present and said the configuration of the penthouses and rooftop deck and railing had not changed, but that the owner had decided on Azek panels instead of the previously-proposed stucco-clad because it was easier to do and would lighten the color of the penthouses. He said they also proposed a pressure-treated railing that was set back on the building so that it wouldn't be a character-defining piece of the building. Vice-Chair Wyckoff asked who made the decision to do so. Mr. Green said the building owner and the contractor made the decision. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the penthouse on Islington Street would stick out terribly. Mr. Green said the color was originally going to be brown to match the building but that the Commission had requested a lighter tone. Mr. Rawling said that a more medium color tone would blend in better than white, and he was concerned about the material

change, asking whether the pressure-treated wood would be stained or painted. Mr. Green said he didn't think it would be stained because it wouldn't be noticed from any vantage point. Mr. Rawling pointed out that there was some railing up against the edges that should have a finish and be toned down from white.

*It was moved, seconded, and approved by unanimous vote (7-0) to **vote separately** on Administrative Approval Item 2.*

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to **approve** Item 2, with the following stipulation:*

1. The penthouses shall be field painted to match the base color of the building.

*Mr. Rawling seconded.*

Vice-Chair Wyckoff advised the applicant to do their due diligence and stain the pressure-treated wood so that it wouldn't split in a few years.

*The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

### **3. 15-33 Pleasant Street**

The request was to replace three doors, a Victorian and a pair of aluminum doors. Ms. Ruedig said she was sad to see the Victorian door go and wished that it could be replicated in the same design. She asked if the hardware from the Victorian door could be installed on the replacement door. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said the Victorian door had a thumb latch.

The applicant's representative, bank trustee Joe Almeida, was present to speak to the request. He explained that the Victorian door had to be replaced because it had reached the end of its life. He said the replacement door would not appear to be a public entrance. He said the applicant wanted to add divided lights to match the rest of the bank and that the hardware would be a traditional thumb latch similar to what was already there. He said the Victorian's door surround and frame would be restored. He said the paired doors would be solid wood with a clear-coated gloss and the same dimensions and style as existing, with the aluminum frame painted to match the wood color and with the existing hardware remaining. Mr. Cracknell recommended a stipulation that a traditional thumb latch be used on the 33 Pleasant Street door.

*Vice-Chair Wyckoff moved to approve Administrative Approval Items 1 and 3, with the following stipulation on Item 3:*

1. A traditional thumb latch shall be used on the door of 33 Pleasant Street.

*Ms. Ruedig seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

## **II. PUBLIC HEARINGS (NEW BUSINESS)**

1. *Work Session/Public Hearing* requested by **City of Portsmouth, prospective owner, and Redgate/Kane, potential lessee**, for property located at **62 Daniel Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow renovations to the existing buildings and the construction of new mixed-use buildings as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 106 as Lot 8 and lies within the Character District 4 (CD 4), Character District 5 (CD 5), Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts.

## DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to **postpone** the item to the February 3, 2019 meeting.*

## III. WORK SESSIONS (NEW BUSINESS)

A. *Work Session* requested by **RJF-Maplewood, LLC, owner, and RW Norfolk Holdings, LLC, applicant**, for property located at **111 Maplewood Avenue**, wherein permission was requested to allow a new free standing structure (construct a 4 – 4 ½ story mixed-use building) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 124 as Lot 8 and lies within the Character District 5 (CD 5), Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts.

## WORK SESSION

The project architect Lisa DeStefano was present and introduced the property representative Michael Kane and the two CBT architects Haril Pandya and Stefan Vogelmann. Ms. DeStefano said they had a new proposal for an office building with commercial space on the first floor.

Mr. Pandya stated that the site would be recognized as a Gateway site. He showed context photos of downtown Portsmouth and the Maplewood Avenue area. He said they planned to make the road one way to mitigate traffic. He presented four options for the building's orientation:

- Plan A would create a strong corner that would have emphasis as a Gateway site;
- Plan B would have more relief at the corner, allowing for more green space and gathering spots and also an opportunity to add art;
- Plan C recognized that Raines Avenue could have a more urban wall or street front; and
- Plan D created more of a wall on Vaughan Street.

Mr. Pandya discussed the various massing interpretations, shapes and openings; the change in traffic; creation of a relationship with 3S Artspace across the street; parking and grading; and pushing the building back. He said they were starting to refine Option 1, which gave an opportunity for art, park space, surface spots, and 3-1/2 floors with some setbacks on the upper floors. He said Option 2 would have more of a Raines Avenue wall with a small extension on Maplewood Avenue and would complete the corner and have a park further along Maplewood Avenue. He said Option 3 was similar and had a 4-1/2 story building if the open space benefit was included. He said it would have a smaller footprint but would be taller and include a park and parking surface. Mr. Cracknell explained why Option 3 was actually a 5-story building and said that community space was required to be 20% to get that extra story. He said that there might be parking issues due to the location. City Council Representative Roberts agreed, noting

that the new options were more pleasing and softened the corner, but he said the parking disturbed him because he didn't want to see a park followed by parking.

Mr. Rawling said the urban pattern of Maplewood Avenue had to be reinforced and that the project should make massing gestures toward the 2- and 3-story buildings in the area and historic houses across the street. He said the study for the area called for lower-scale buildings along the waterfront stepping up. He said that Vaughan and Green Streets would have the highest buildings, stepping down at Maplewood Avenue. He said he struggled with the merits of reinforcing the Raines Avenue elevation because it would dominate, and he felt that the Vaughan Street and Maplewood Avenue elevations were more of a pattern and that the site would be opened up for parks and green space if the Raines Avenue elevation were cut back. He said that any green space would be better on the quieter part of the street. He encouraged breaking up the building into different volumes and massing. He said his first reaction to the massing concept was that the building was a suburban wall office building, which was something that was starting to dominate that section of town, with all the flat-top buildings built to their height limits.

Mr. Pandya said they were thinking of doing a 3-bay rhythm and firewall pattern and that they would strive to break up the façades. Vice-Chair Wyckoff said he felt the opposite of Mr. Rawling in that he was more pleased with setting the building back on Raines Avenue and leaving the green space in the front. He said he was also pleased with the 3-1/2 story massing. He said Portsmouth had received a lot of pushback about all the buildings having the same bays and rhythm, and he thought the project's location would be the place to do something different.

Ms. Ruedig said she liked Option 1. She said she agreed with Mr. Rawling about the project reflecting the historic remaining buildings but felt that the project wouldn't build 2-1/2 story massing along that street, so it would be a much better urban design proposal that gave those buildings space and was respectful. She said it was a tough area of town that didn't have a lot of context to fit something into and was also a huge opportunity for an interesting building that was different from the big box buildings with flat tops. She said she appreciated the building being pushed up to Raines Avenue and Vaughan Street, where more tangible pedestrian-friendly elements were needed, and that she fully supported the siting for a contemporary building.

Mr. Ryan said he agreed with Mr. Rawling that Maplewood Avenue was a major path and Vaughan Street and Raines Avenue were secondary paths. He said he didn't want a 'back-of-the-building' anywhere. He encouraged that the path be reinforced on every side if possible. He suggested that parking could be more internal. As far as height, he said the building nodded toward the older architecture across the street but it stepped up because it was transitioning between the small residences and the new architecture, new site, new part of town, and the hotel behind it. He said that, in terms of getting stuck in the formula seen in town, the building could have more transparency, maybe more glass. He said if the building was historically massed within the historic references, it could still be a sensitive building with modern materials and details. He said he'd hate to see a large open space be the first thing seen from someone coming into town on Maplewood Avenue and thought it would seem like an office park.

Chairman Lombardi said that people came to Portsmouth to look at architecture. He said it was a tough corner because it was at an acute angle, and he felt that a little open space would be a

benefit. He recommended that the project reflect the 9-ft change of grade into their architecture. He said variation was necessary because the historic town had different heights and variations of buildings. He said history was dynamic and a flow and that he wanted to see something good. City Council Representative Roberts said he liked modern architecture but felt that it had to fit in with the context. He noted that the Jackson House, which was the oldest building in New Hampshire, was very close to the project, as well as buildings at the North Mill Pond, and he suggested that the project thoughtfully balance the modernism with the area's context. Mr. Kane said they weren't considering a big park but were motivated by creating a step from buildings on the other side of Maplewood Avenue. He said the corner was an odd one that needed some space. Mr. Rawling said he was an advocate of connectivity with the green spaces, which he felt was a major piece of making the project work. He said he'd like to see a contemporary building, but not without the proper massing and urban form, scaling, colors, and materials.

Mr. Beer said he thought the earlier renditions of the building showing it brought out to the corner made it look too stark and that he preferred that the buildings be pulled back, like in Option 1. He suggested breaking the mass into two buildings, with one on Vaughan Street and the other on Raines Avenue, to give it some interest. It was further discussed. Ms. Ruedig said she fully supported having an art connection in that space, either with 3S Artspace or bringing artists into the space. The corner was also further discussed.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Bruce Ocko of 233 Vaughan Street said that looking at the back of the building would be a concern to him as a homeowner.

#### **DECISION OF THE COMMISSION**

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to **continue** the work session to the February 3, 2019 meeting.*

#### **IV. ADJOURNMENT**

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to **adjourn** the meeting at 8:15 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
HDC Recording Secretary