

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

EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

6:30 p.m.

February 05, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Vincent Lombardi; Members Reagan Ruedig, Martin Ryan, and Cyrus Beer; City Council Representative Paige Trace; Alternates Heinz Sauk-Schubert and Margot Doering

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Dan Rawling and Vice-Chairman Jon Wyckoff

ALSO PRESENT: Nick Cracknell, Principal Planner, Planning Department

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Chairman Lombardi introduced the new City Council Representative Paige Trace. He stated that both Alternates Ms. Doering and Mr. Sauk-Schubert would vote on all petitions.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. January 08, 2020

*The January 8, 2020 minutes were **approved** as presented.*

II. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS

1. 10 Middle Street

Ms. Ruedig recused herself from the vote. The requested was to replace a rear single door with a double door on the back of the Discover Portsmouth building.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously (6-0) to **approve** Administrative Approval #1.*

2. 75 Court Street

The request was for a skylight replacement.

3. 57 Salter Street

The request was for small changes to the building, including re-sizing a window, adding small roof appurtenances, and installing mechanical vents.

4. 55 Lafayette Street

The applicant submitted trim details and a soffit design drawing in response to stipulations for his previously-approved project.

5. 180 Islington Street

The request was to add a 6-ft cedar fence to the property

6. 306 Marcy Street, Unit 2

The request was to mount a small dryer vent box on a fence. In response to the Commission's question, the project designer Jennifer Ramsey said the utility company requested that the vent box be mounted on the front facade and would be serviced by them.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously (7-0) to **approve** Administrative Approval Items 2 through 6.*

7. 410-430 Islington Street

The request was to modify a previously-approved design to show HVAC vent locations and to modify the fence. The design architect Sara Howard was present and said the cedar fence would stop at the two neighbors' fences so that there was no double fencing. In response to the Commission's questions, Ms. Howard said the two fences parallel to each other would leave very little space but that it was a maintenance issue; and that the wide trim detail above the window on 410 Islington Street remained but was painted and not noticeable.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously (7-0) to **approve** Administrative Approval Item 7, with the following **stipulation**:*

- 1. With fence modifications as presented.*

8. 299 Vaughan Street

Mr. Cracknell said there were some design changes that occurred after the original approval and some inconsistencies between renderings and elevations. He said the changes included trim modifications, adding sconce lighting, omitting the stone veneer, and reducing the storefront. He said they were all minor deviations.

The applicant Eben Tormey was present and addressed the changes, adding that the rooftop bar was consistent with the other details and that the finished stone veneer aligned with the top of the storefront and adjacent storefronts. Ms. Doering said the mechanicals above the screening fence could be seen from the road. Mr. Tormey said there were a few rooftop condensers above the bar area that were part of the original plan and reviewed by the City's Land Use Compliance agent.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote (7-0) to **approve** the item.*

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS (OLD BUSINESS)

A. Petition of **PNF Trust of 2013, Peter N. Floros Trustee, owner**, for property located at **266-278 State Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (278 State Street) and new construction to an existing structure (4-5 story addition at 266 & 270 State Street) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 107 as Lots 78, 79, and 80 and Lies within the Character District 4 (CD 4), Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts. *(This item was continued at the January 08, 2020 meeting to the February 05, 2020 meeting.)*

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

The architect Michael Keane was present on behalf of the applicant and said that several changes were made based on the Commission's previous comments, including: 1) the corner entrance and State Streets was replaced with an 18-inch painted wood column; 2) the storefront-level PVC material was replaced with a composite material to replicate wood; 3) the size of the dormer windows was increased in width and height; 4) the main body of the building was changed to a darker red color to match the brick better, and the dormers and trim colors were changed from white to cream; and 5) the door at 84 Pleasant Street was made into an entrance to the residential apartments, but could be moved into the alleyway as the building further developed.

Mr. Keane also presented another option (Option B) that he said was closer to the originally-proposed design that had a simplified dormer arrangement and a simpler bay, a different window placement, eliminated pilasters, and a gutter and downspout arrangement.

The Commissioners indicated that they preferred Option B. Mr. Beer said he liked the penthouse design better because it was recessed and more in keeping with the neighborhood. He liked the dormers and thought the corner was a big improvement. Mr. Sauk-Schubert said he also preferred Option B and noted that the only structures that approached Option A were the Porter Street Townhouses and said he preferred not to set a further precedent for that particular façade articulation. Mr. Ryan said he didn't think Option A would have worn well over time and that he hadn't been comfortable with the combination of the Pleasant and State Street looks. Ms. Ruedig agreed and said Option B's simplicity was much more appropriate for the location, and the wider windows made them look bigger and less cheap than Option A's windows. City Council Representative Trace said she had followed the project as a resident and was thrilled that the design had reverted to Option B because the façade on Option A had no precedent. Chairman Lombardi agreed with all the comments and thought Option B was a much better design that kept the integrity of the District and was compatible with its surroundings. Mr. Sauk-Schubert said the alleyway entry to the Times Building was distracting to what should happen on the façade. Mr. Keane said it made more sense to preserve the commercial use of the State Street site but that they would try to make a nicer and more identifiable entrance facing Pleasant Street.

Ms. Ruedig said she would like to see a detail of the Times Building's entrance door within the arch because it was hard to tell from the two-dimensional drawings. Mr. Keane said they brought the arch transom back out to the façade of the building and then recessed the entrance from the mid band down. Ms. Ruedig said it was important to make the metal canopy as minimal as possible so that one saw the arched brick and wasn't distracted by a big chunk of metal sticking out. Mr. Keane noted that there would be some housekeeping issues if they went with Option B.

Mr. Keane showed material samples to the Commission, including the Boral for the composite wood, the Pella window, a shingle, and some bricks.

Chairman Lombardi opened the public hearing.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR, AGAINST THE PETITION

Barbary Jenny said she and her husband owned 81 Pleasant Street and supported the project. She said it looked great and would open up the corner for pedestrians.

David Witham said he preferred Option B and wasn't concerned with defining another entrance for the residential units because historically the building's upper floors would have storage and warehouses. He thought the thin corner post should support the structure more. Mr. Keane said it was an 18-inch column but looked like it was less on the diagram and that he would verify it.

No one else rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public hearing.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

Mr. Beer moved to grant the Certificate of Approval for the petition, with the stipulation that Option B would be used instead of Option A.

Mr. Cracknell requested two more stipulations: that a storefront mock-up be provided, and that elevation details be submitted as an Administrative Approval Item, resulting in the final motion:

*Mr. Beer moved to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for the petition, with the following stipulations:*

- 1. Option "B" (Mansard Roof) shall be used.*
- 2. A mock-up of the storefront shall be provided prior to construction.*
- 3. Final details/elevations shall be submitted for Administrative Approval.*

*The motion **passed** unanimously, 7-0.*

IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS (NEW BUSINESS)

1. Petition of **Topnotch Properties, LLC and JJCM Realty, LLC, owners**, for property located at **232 Court Street**, wherein permission was requested to allow exterior renovations to an existing structure (add two new dormers and windows to existing roof) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said property is shown on Assessor Map 116 as Lot 32 and lies within the Character District 4-L1, (CD 4-L1) and Historic Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

The applicant Gary Beaulieu was present to speak to the petition. He explained that he wanted to add two dormers and windows for more head space and light and better street appeal. Mr. Cracknell said there were two units in the building, one of which was occupied by residential use on the third floor, and that it made sense to put the dormers in the proposed location because there was a lot of space up there. Mr. Beaulieu said the windows were awning ones.

Ms. Ruedig said the dormer looked out of place because there were too many windows crammed into the opening that forced the muntin spacing to be too narrow. She suggested either resizing it or using two windows that might be slightly wider so that the spacing better matched the windows below. Mr. Ryan said the cheek walls of the dormer would land on timbers and would be part of the structural spacing. Mr. Beer said he didn't want to see any siding with the dormer. Mr. Sauk-Schubert said he preferred three windows instead of two. It was decided that there would be three windows with the appropriate sashes, and no siding.

SPEAKING TO, FOR, OR, AGAINST THE PETITION

No one rose to speak, and Chairman Lombardi closed the public hearing.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

*Ms. Ruedig moved to **grant** the Certificate of Approval for the petition, with the following stipulation:*

- 1. The 6-light awning windows shall match the dimensions of the second-floor sashes and only window casing shall be added to the face of the dormer.*

Mr. Ryan seconded.

Ms. Ruedig said the project would conserve and enhance property values and make the property more usable, and it would relate to the historic and architectural value of the existing structure.

*The motion **passed** unanimously, 7-0.*

V. WORK SESSIONS (NEW BUSINESS)

1. Work Session requested by **Vaughan Street Hotel, LLC and Stone Creek realty, LLC, owners**, for properties located at **299 Vaughan Street and 53 Green Street**, wherein permission is requested to allow the partial demolition of an existing structure and the construction of a new free-standing commercial structure (5-story Hotel) as per plans on file in the Planning Department. Said properties are shown on Assessor Map 124 as Lot 10 and Assessor Map 119 as Lot 2 and lies within the Character District 5 (CD 5), Downtown Overlay, and Historic Districts.

SPEAKING TO THE PETITION

Carla Goodknight of CJ Architects and Jeff Johnston of Cathartes were present to speak to the petition. Mr. Johnston said the project was an 80-room boutique hotel that would be added to an existing parcel. Ms. Goodknight reviewed the petition, noting that the project would improve some surrounding areas. She showed photos of site views and buildings in the north end that illustrated the diversity of architecture in the area. She reviewed the massing study.

Questions asked by the Commission included how someone would get to the AC hotel from the other hotel, what the green space behind the park would look like with generators on the back side of the AC hotel, and where the entrances would be. The massing was discussed. Ms. Doering said the building looked like another rectangular box that didn't add much to the neighborhood. Ms. Ruedig said the buildings looked very large and that she'd prefer to see the boutique hotel smaller because it was placed next to a very large building and would seem even larger. She suggested stepping it down like the AC hotel and having more articulation. She asked if the 60-ft height was the result of community space being offered, and Mr. Johnston agreed. Mr. Cracknell said the AC hotel was in a 70-ft zoning district and that the property was likely at 60 feet for the maximum height. Chairman Lombardi said the cantilevered space was awkward. Ms. Goodknight said there would be more articulation.

Ms. Doering said the rectangular buildings needed to contribute to the diversity of other buildings in the north end. The Commission discussed ways to break up the building mass. Mr. Ryan said the massing was fine but thought there should be more distinction from the AC hotel. He suggested that the Commission focus on the massing and not the details, noting that the massing would start boxy-looking but would get into concepts later on. Mr. Beer said the pedestrian traffic was relevant to the massing, and he suggested that the overhang be brought back by shrinking the footprint. It was further discussed. The greenway space near the building was discussed. Mr. Ryan said it would be stronger as a space than a little path. Chairman Lombardi said he was fine with the mass but wished it was a different shape other than a box.

There was no public comment.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission said they would do a site walk before the next work session.

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to **continue** the work session to a future meeting.*

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
HDC Recording Secretary