

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: February 8, 2017 PLACE: Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:05 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Meeting

PRESENT: John Hawes, Chair, Fergal Brennock, Jeff Brown, Janet Buck, Gary Shaw
Steve Magoon, Director/Assistant Town Manager, Gideon Schreiber, Senior
Planner, Andrea Adams, Senior Planner

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Chairman Hawes deferred action on the draft Minutes of January 11, 2017.

CASES PENDING

101-103 Morse Street - SPR - ZBA-2017-02

Jeff Brown motioned to continue 101-103 Morse Street to the Planning Board's meeting on March 8, 2017.

Fergal Brennock seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0 In favor.

CONTINUED CASES

330-350 Pleasant Street; SP/SPR – PB-2016-06

Attorney Terrance Morris, the Petitioner felt very strongly about the interconnect of the two buildings. Gamble Associates had conducted an updated review and stated that the bridge "framed the view" to the Charles River.

Doug Annino, project architect, presented the project design using a series of plans and drawings mounted on foam core. Changes to the disabled-accessible parking are shown. On the corridor lengths they had been broken up with rest stops, seating areas, widening, and glassed areas to allow natural light in. Niches had been created in the walls outside certain units. Treatments to the interconnecting bridge have been addressed and sketches have been provided with and without the bridge. The sign brackets had been shortened, so that the bottom was sitting at 11 feet.

Steve Magoon, Gamble Associates had conducted a second design review. Seven items have been highlighted. Those items, including the pedestrian bridge, breaking up the length of interior corridors, widen steps to the Charles River Path, and ensure that the brick on the lower portion of the façade should be solid brick. Gamble Associates also suggested the area coded for a bike shop be moved to the first floor, and that a management plan should be created to maintain the planters. David Gamble also attached drawings to his written comments, which the Planning Board also had copies of.

Andrea Adams, issues raised in the prior Board hearing in January have been addressed. Comments have been received by Councilor Dushku regarding the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan. The proposed condition in the staff report that requires conformance with the Watertown Zoning Ordinance. Councilor Dushku's comments are largely taken from a set of regulations and a draft Ordinance still under discussion by a Council Subcommittee. The draft condition as written would allow the Departmental staff to implement the types of items that Councilor Dushku was seeking to be included in any draft decision. Councilor Dushku's comments were sent electronically to the Board prior to the hearing.

Garry Shaw, can the Petitioner respond to the comments in Gamble Associates second design review. Would the Petitioner be amenable to incorporating the provisions of a Council adopted Ordinance or Regulations?

Doug Annino responded, on the pedestrian bridge, the Petitioner wants to keep it in the project, but the final say is up to the Board. Interior corridors have been changed. Steps to the Charles River Walkway have been widened. Brick on the façade will be true masonry. The bike shop is a placeholder. Would like to have one, but can't guarantee one. Visibility of a bike shop is paramount. The planters will be maintained by the Petitioner who will work with the Department and Tree Warden on street trees.

Steve Magoon, where trees are planted is hardscape, the Department and Tree Warden has required structural soils to help maintain the health of those street trees.

Doug Annino, the design of the restaurant would work with the correct user. If the restaurant operator wanted to change the configuration, thereby changing the parking that would be something to discuss with the Board.

Attorney Morris, the Petitioner would be amenable to following the language of the TDM Ordinance and Regulations. The condition as proposed would give the Department much discretion.

Jeff Brown, there are two schemes: One with and one without. There are three elevators in the building but still 235 feet of travel. I cannot vote for a project with such a long, monotonous corridor. The project had partially responded to Mr. Gamble's comments. There has to be another way to address this.

Fergal Brennock, questioned façade breaks, including the balconies, and the floor plate/façade plane? The building façade is very uni-planar. These are suggestions, not requirements. The steps to the Charles River Walkway should have a groove or grooves included in them, so that the wheel of the bicycle can be kept upright while the rider walks up the stairs.

Doug Annino, the balconies are recessed at least 4 feet into the façade. It would be slab on deck and then wood frame above. The Petitioner had worked to reduce articulation based on comments by Gamble Associates. The idea of the bicycle groove in the stairs is a good one, and would be included in the design.

John Hawes, the Petitioner has made an effort about daylighting the interior bedrooms. Is the proposed new atrium permissible relative to fire code and fire stopping? In the Unit 208, the bedroom window now faces onto another units deck space. There are 26 units that had second bedrooms with no windows. My colleagues that are also architects are amazed that such units could be successfully marketed. Both David Gamble's and Jeff Brown's comments about the length of the corridors should be taken to heart. This issue was not new to the Board, in that the Board had spent time on this issue on The Gables project.

Janet Buck, I agree with Chairman Hawes. Discussed the issue of rooms without windows with colleagues, and they also expressed concerns. I have done multi-family housing, and setups such as what was planned were not allowed. I suggest a large part of the project will be taken up by storage space along an exterior wall. I suggest switching one of the units into the area of the storage space, or pull the stair in-between the two units, therefore not having the corridor end in a fire door.

Steve Magoon, the Board is well within its purview to deal with these issues, as this project was not a single or two family dwelling. The Board can discuss these issues, but I suggest it is also

important for the Board not to design a project. The Board had not done this, and the conversation was appropriate.

John Hawes, there are questions about the restaurant, the rooms with no windows, and the corridor lengths indicated that project was perhaps too dense. The TDM Plan is important, too, and the Petitioner's last concept of November was not very specific. The proposed Ordinance is also not very specific.

Steve Magoon, there are two documents: The Ordinance and the Regulations. The Regulations are very specific, but neither had yet been adopted by the Council. The Petitioner could agree to comply with whatever is adopted by the Council.

Gary Shaw, Attorney Morris had agreed to comply with the Council-adopted documents.

John Hawes, the TDM Plans were produced by Athenahealth and the Arsenal Yards. The proposed condition is not specific on monitoring, or some other items, such as a contribution to help supplement MBTA service.

Steve Magoon, the draft Regulations divide projects required to create TDM Plans into two categories: Basic and Comprehensive. The proposed project would be classified as a Comprehensive project. There would be requirements for goals, measures, and monitoring. It is my understanding that the Board had been provided with both the draft Ordinance and Regulations. The suggested conditions as drafted still give the Board and the Department the ability to implement a TDM Plan.

Fergal Brennock, how many rooms did not have daylight as of the January Board meeting, and as of tonight's meeting?

Doug Annino, the number had decreased from 26 to approximately 9 rooms.

Fergal Brennock, the study, which might be suitable as a second bedroom, may not be used all the time. This issue has been adequately addressed. The amendments made by the Architect are adequate to reduce the apparent length of the corridor. To deal with the overall length of the corridor, there may be other solutions, such as moving an elevator.

John Hawes, I suggest moving one of the elevators, that would also decrease the length of travel in the parking garage.

Gary Shaw, there are only 8 rooms without direct light. Are any of these affordable units?

Doug Annino, I can look at this idea. A façade cannot be a certain length without a significant change. All of the affordable units are not affected by the design changes.

John Hawes, designated accessible units have to be designated. The Petitioner made efforts on various points, but I am concerned that the TDM Plan needs more work, as well as issues raised by Member Brown need to be addressed. Would the Board like to continue the case to the April meeting?

Doug Annino, the struggle early on was the number of stories versus space and permitting issues. Once the project was more than three stories, it would be subject to different permitting requirements.

Attorney Morris, the only Special Permit request was for a change in Floor Area Ratio (FAR). Three stories were allowed By Right in the Pleasant Street Corridor District.

Steve Magoon, the Petitioner had not filed for anything more than a Special Permit for FAR, and a change to more than 3 stories would require another filing by the Petitioner.

Attorney Morris, these proceedings were troubling. We had the strong impression that if certain things were done, the project could achieve an approval. I wish that Jeff Brown expressed his strong opposition to the corridor earlier. The Petitioner has conducted market studies that indicated the design would work.

John Hawes, the Petitioner has not shown up at the public meetings and hearings.

Attorney Morris, the petitioner is extremely involved, and gets regular updates from his project team.

Steve Magoon, the Petitioner takes such discussion very strongly, and very personally. I suggest the absence of the Petitioner at the hearing is not an indication of his commitment to this project.

Councilor Ken Woodland, District D, I thank the Board for its careful attention to details. I share the Board's concerns of making the project comply with the draft TDM Ordinance or Regulations. This is the first meeting I have been to in the Pleasant Street Corridor District (PSCD) where residents have not expressed strong concerns about massing, the impact on the Charles River, the height of the project, etc. I suggest that this indicates progress in adjusting the PSCD Zoning. This project meets the original intent of the Pleasant Street Corridor Study, it is only three stories, and is mixed use. The Petitioner should be acknowledged for this. I acknowledge the traffic concerns, but suggest that these could be addressed.

Councilor Lisa Feltner, District B, I appreciate the Planning Board's concerns and careful review of the project. In comparison, The Gables, even with the notched wall, is still imposing. I express excitement for the proposed restaurant, and urge the Petitioner to include a bike shop in the project.

Michelle Cokonougher, the proposed long corridor in the West Building is not appealing to me. The TDM regulations have not yet been adopted, but I recommend that the Planning Board condition the project to follow the Council-adopted TDM regulations.

Brian Wyncoop, 46 Rosedale Road, I met with Senior Planner Andrea Adams and Town Engineer Matthew Shuman to discuss my concerns about the coordination with Newton, and the installation of illuminated STOP signs. I suggest that the Petitioner should be amenable to making project changes, and to provide the market studies that had been conducted, as a way to bolster his contention that the residential units were rentable.

Janet Buck, there are ways to address the corridor length, including changing the location of the elevator, adding an elevator, and changing the configuration of the last two units in the West Building relative to the exit stairs.

John Hawes, the Petitioner has submitted a TDM plan, is he amenable to the recommendations outlined from Councilor at Large Dushku. I am hesitant given that the TDM Ordinance and Regulations referred to by Councilor Dushku were not adopted yet.

Andrea Adams, distributed an alternative condition for the TDM Plan which was accepted by the Planning Board in place of condition on TDM Plan in the staff report.

Fergal Brennock, the Petitioner has addressed many of the units that needed "daylighting," and that second bedrooms (which many now were) were not necessarily used all the time. I suggest things could be done to reduce corridor length, or reduce the perception of the length.

John Hawes, reiterated an idea of Janet Buck, to move the elevator to the mid-block. I suggest that there are two issues: Efforts to break up the corridor length, and the TDM requirements.

Mr. Wyncoop, the Board should reconsider the condition relative to the illuminated STOP signs. Crash data indicate that the intersection is a low-volume crash location since 2012 when traditional STOP signs had been installed.

Steve Magoon, I suggest that the conditions could be amended to allow the DCDP and DPW to re-allocate the funding for the solar-powered illuminated STOP signs elsewhere and the Board incorporated this into the project conditions.

The Board found that the pedestrian interconnect bridge should be retained, but stronger efforts should be made to break up the length of the corridor in the West Building.

Jeff Brown motioned to approve the petition for Special Permit with Site Plan Review based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance §9.05 and §1.00 with an FAR of 1.23 subject to conditions set forth in the staff report.

Fergal Brennock seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

John Hawes acknowledged Fergal Brennock's long service to the Planning Board, noting in particular that he was an engineer, and his insights over the years had proven valuable to the Board's discussion.

Fergal Brennock motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 PM.

Jeff Brown seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0 In favor.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:45 PM

MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 2/8/17 which is available in the DCDP office.
