



Town of Chelmsford Historic District Commission

Minutes of Meeting of February 3, 2020

Ms. Lovering called the meeting of the Historic District Commission (HDC) to order at 7:00 P.M. at the Town Offices, 50 Billerica Road. Present were Brenda Lovering, Cynthia Acheson, Jack Handley, Deb Taverna, Patrick Wood, Janet Askenburg and Debra Belden.

Public Input – Ms. Belden advised that Peggy Dunn had passed and asked for a moment of silence in her memory. Ms. Dunn contributed greatly to Chelmsford throughout the years.

Scheduled Business

1A North Road - Kathleen Canavan from Public Facilities requested an exterior floodlight on the back of the Chelmsford Center for the Arts. The light would be above the back door with a photo-cell and a beam spread of 25 feet. The light would be white in white housing. A suggestion was made that the light be put on a timer. Ms. Canavan will investigate the timer. Motion was moved by Mr. Wood and seconded by Ms. Acheson to approve the proposed lighting with a timer, if possible. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Hearing 41-44 Central Square - Ms. Acheson moved that the public hearing for 41-44 Central Square be opened at 7:15 P.M. Ms. Taverna seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Ms. Lovering explained that Mr. Handley and Ms. Askenburg were recusing themselves from all discussion and votes regarding this matter. Katie Enright, Fred Faust, Ali Zosherafatain, Melissa Robbins and Kaja Savasta attended the hearing to present the proposed project. Ms. Savasta advised that the proposed façade closely resembles the c.1900 façade. Entry will be at the side of the building with a handicap ramp. The addition will remain with large windows as on the front façade. Some mechanics will be on the roof of the addition and will be screened from public view. The front steps will be granite and the planters retained. The front door will be wood with glass inserts and painted to match the front façade. Roof shingles will be dark gray. Corner boards, corbels, gable window and sideboards will be white. There will be a separate entry in the rear for the proposed apartments. Bob LaPorte, Parkerville Rd., asked about lighting and was advised that lighting would be discussed in the future. Ms. Lovering explained that this hearing was to determine the appropriateness of the proposed development. Dr. Alan Kent, High St., asked if there would be fire escapes and was advised there are none. There will be two egresses from each floor (stairs). Mr. LaPorte asked about mechanics on the roof and was advised all mechanics on the roof would be screened. Paul Doherty, Kenwood St., asked if the apartments would have central air and was advised that they would. Jim Moriarty, Cushing Place, feels the proposed development will be an asset to the Center. Annita Tanini, Columbus Ave., asked if the apartments would be owned or rentals and was advised rental (hopefully for some employees of the new restaurant). Monica Kent, High St., asked about parking for a 100 seat restaurant and was advised that Chelmsford Bylaws would be met for the parking. Doug Hausler, Brentwood Rd., complimented the design team.

He feels the development retains the spirit of the district and an eye-sore will become a great asset to the Center. The public hearing was closed on a motion from Ms. Acheson with a second from Ms. Belden. This passed unanimously with Mr. Handley and Ms. Askenburg recusing themselves.

Ms. Acheson asked about solid screening for mechanics and Ms. Savasta replied that screening could match the panels on the front façade of the building. Several ideas were discussed. When the development team returns for signage, lighting, and parking, the design for the screening will be done. Ms. Acheson moved and Ms. Belden seconded that the proposal be approved as presented to be completed no later than January 2022. Motion was passed unanimously. Ms. Lovering asked that an update be provided to the commission every 2-3 months during the project. Ms. Acheson moved and Ms. Taverna seconded that the meeting be suspended. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Hearing – 1 Billerica Road – Ms. Acheson moved to open the public hearing at 8:00 P.M. Ms. Belden seconded and motion passed. Mr. Handley and Ms. Askenburg recused themselves from all discussions and motions.

Katie Enright, Eric Katz, Alec Katz, Jay Finnegan and Melissa Robbins represented the development team for this project. Ms. Enright advised that 1/3 of the proposed building is outside the district and the building was designed so that very little would be seen from the public ways. The building is in a flood plain and parking will be on the first floor. Mr. Eric Katz reviewed the design changes that were made while working with the Historic District Commission. The changes include wider corner boards, corbels, screening, vertical balusters on balconies, mullions in both window sashes, shutters, clapboards, etc. A balloon was raised to peak elevation. Although the wind blew the balloons, a photographer was able to take pictures from several locations before the last balloon popped. Ms. Enwright stated that this is one project with the Fiske House and 41-44 Central Square. The proposed development at 41-44 Central Square cannot be completed without the updates to the entire 3 ½ acre site. The development will include a brick walk and pocket park. The roof materials, clapboards, etc. are similar to the Odd Fellows building. There will be no waivers for parking and a traffic study will be done. The Fiske House will become ADA accessible. Mr. Evan Belansky, Community Development, asked how the district commission gave input. Ms. Lovering replied by letter dated October 2019 and verbally in meetings. Jim Moriarty, Cushing Place, advised he was happy at Cushing Place and feels this development will be an asset to the town. Barbara Whitney, Cushing Place, loves that the Center is becoming more walkable. John Harrington, property abutter, is thrilled to see something in this location and all three pieces of the development are needed. Deidre Connolly, Billerica Rd., is worried about a five-story building in the Center and that more properties may be developed. Carol Galausey, Cushing Place, loves her new home and feels this will be an asset to the Center. Donna Ready, Cushing Place, thinks the proposed development fits the Chelmsford Master Plan and that the Wilson Block was probably considered too tall when it was built. The development will be good-looking and enhance the area. Mr. Belansky asked that the commission members indicate where they stand before the hearing closed. Tom Fall, Technology Dr., asked about the square footage of the building – 1400-1800 sq. ft in units, total square footage is 15,222 sq. ft. per floor, 63.5 feet tall to peak of building which meets zoning. Mike Rigney, Billerica Rd., is concerned about five

stories. He was advised that the building could be built entirely out of the district by positioning it differently on the site by Ms. Robbins. Mr. Belansky asked if any way to lower height of building and keep four floors of condos – the answer was no. Bob LaPorte, Parkerville Rd., stated that the view corridor would be limited to the driveway in Central Square and that although it is a large building, he does not feel the impact is that great. Doug Hausler, Brentwood Rd., asked to hear each commission member's concerns. Mike Rigney, Billerica Rd., asked is a compromise could be made on the height of the building. Ms. Acheson advised she has mentioned her concerns about the height multiple times. Ed Buckley, Buckman Dr., asked about parking spaces and was advised there would be 2 spaces per unit with 33 under the building. There is no 55 and older restriction. The height concerns were answered by Ms. Enright in that the site is ten feet below street level so height from street would be 53.5 ft. The Wilson Block is 47.5 ft. as a comparison. Sandy Johnson, Technology Dr., is concerned about the mass and height of the building. Jim Moriarty, Cushing Place, feels the building will not be that noticeable as Gristmill is not that visible from the Center. Rhodes Johnson, Grandview, feels the community wants this building. Mr. Faust stated that the infrastructure is needed to make all three pieces of this development work. A straw poll was taken of the commission members: Ms. Taverna stated that with the changes made by the development and looking at the entire project, she could vote to approve. Ms. Belden, stated it was not helpful to threaten to move the building out of the district, thanked the developer for incorporating the requested changes, indicated she feels the building is really big, but she could agree with Ms. Taverna. Ms. Lovering feels the building will be seen much more than thought, especially after the changes are made to the Fiske House part of the development. She read from our guidelines and feels it will be too visible from public ways. Mr. Belansky stated that the HDC jurisdiction is from ways so maybe photo simulations could be done to get a feel for the size and that this cannot be separate from Odd Fellows – the town has wanted something to happen for ten years and if this piece of the development is not approved, the Odd Fellows and Fiske House will continue to deteriorate. Ms. Lovering asked if developer would consider changing height or size. Mr. Katz replied that the building would become longer if height reduced. Mr. Faust advised that with the costs of sewer, easements, etc. that the development must be done at one time, not separately. Ms. Acheson asked who owns the property on June 30, 2020 – Mr. Faust answered the developers will own only if plans and permits are approved – they will not close on the property without these. Donna Ready, Cushing Place, stated that this is a huge improvement to the Center and it is in the best interests of the town. Doug Hausler, Brentwood Rd., stated that it took eight years, but came up with a beautiful proposed building. He feels the commission member are representatives of the community and feels that the comments have been overwhelmingly in support of the proposal. If the proposed building is not approved, both the Fiske House and Odd Fellows could be in jeopardy. Bob LaPorte, Parkerville Rd., mentioned that a photo simulation might help in judging the elevation of the building. A straw poll was taken: Ms. Taverna, Ms. Belden, and Mr. Wood were favorable, Ms. Acheson was opposed, and Ms. Lovering abstained. Ms. Taverna moved to close the public hearing and Mr. Wood seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Ms. Taverna moved to reopen the district meeting and Ms. Belden seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Ms. Lovering thanked the developers for their courtesy throughout this process. Ms. Taverna moved to approve the development as presented, Ms. Belden seconded. Motion pass 3-2 (Ms. Taverna, Ms. Belden, Mr. Wood in favor/Ms. Acheson and Ms. Lovering opposed). Ms. Belden will do the Certificate of Appropriateness and have the members sign.

New Business – None

Unfinished Business

Center Village Master Plan Implementation Committee - The Committee is looking at municipal parking. The Center for the Arts does have parking. The town is also at full sewer capacity. Sue Carter has offered to walk through Bartlett Woodlot to show how swampy it is. There have been some discussions about bridges. More brick sidewalks are planned for the Center. The committee is hoping for more festivals or block parties in the Center.

Correspondence and Telephone Calls – None.

Meeting Minute Approval – Minutes for January 2020 were approved. Approval moved by Ms. Belden and seconded by Mr. Handley – approved unanimously.

Next meeting is scheduled for March 2 2020.

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 P.M.