

Somersworth Historic District Commission

November 22, 2022

Members Present; Mrs. Barry, Mr. Brooks, Mr. Gerding, Mr. Metivier, Mr. Poulin, Ms. Shoen.

City Staff Present; Mrs. Mears.

Members Absent; Mr. Monahan, Mr. Young.

Mrs. Barry called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

APPROVAL OF PAST MINUTES

Mr. Metivier made the motion to accept the minutes as presented.

Ms. Shoen seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

PROJECTS OF MINIMAL IMPACT

Mrs. Mears reported;

113 High St was approved to install a heat pump.

26 Linden St was approved to remove a large tree in failing condition.

79 Noble St was approved to install a mini-split.

PUBLIC COMMENTS There were none.

OLD BUSINESS

There were none.

NEW BUSINESS

A) Phillip Lessard, 139 High St. HDC #30-2022

Mrs. Mears noted the proposal requested replacing the rear entry door.

Mr. Remillard provided a brief summary of the project.

Mr. Metivier asked about the panel and window arrangement of the replacement door and if a storm door would be installed.

Mr. Gerding asked if the leaking mentioned in the application.

Mr. Brooks asked if the door opening was being altered or enlarged.

Mr. Lessard noted the size was not being altered but both side trim boards would be replaced and the door would be a nine light with two panels with no storm door.

Mr. Poulin made a motion to accept as presented.

Mr. Gerding seconded the motion.

The motion passed 6-0.

B) 85 Elm St Somersworth LLC, 85 Elm St. HDC #31-2022

Mrs. Mears provided a summary of the proposed project.

The applicants presented a power point of the proposed project displaying the setting and area of the proposal and also revisited the initial plans with the various versions as the project progressed to the current proposal.

Sheridan Lloyd provided dimensions of various neighboring buildings and spoke in favor of preserving the existing historic buildings.

Jennifer Soldati spoke about Somersworth's history and included comparing several aspects to Portsmouth's historical history.

Susan Hudson offered the opinion that using existing industrial structure's that are typically large should not be used to justify the building of an excessively large residential structure.

Matthew DiNola noted he is certainly the most impacted abutter and spoke in favor of the project.

David Witham reviewed several of the HDC's Purpose as outlined in the Somersworth's Zoning Ordinances and urged the HDC to use a wider-angle lens when considering the proposed project. The proposal has certainly generated a lot of discussion around the city and believes the HDC has no easy decision considering the overall situation.

Nathaniel Spence spoke about the scale of the proposed building being larger than most of the surrounding building and especially overpowers the scale of the church that should stand tall and proud over others.

Paul Goodwin spoke to the history of Somersworth and the redevelopment of the downtown. He also spoke in favor of the proposed project as opposed to the preservation of a few poorly maintained structures and outlined several benefits of this proposal as he views the project.

Mrs. Barry outlined the project involves several elements that must be voted on and asked that we start with a roll call vote to verify the completeness of the application.

The vote was unanimous, 6-0.

Mr. Brooks asked that we discuss and vote on the proposed project prior to voting on the demolition of existing buildings.

Mr. Brooks spoke about the overall mass and scale and his previous critical comments related to them. The presentation and some of the public comments have reduced his concern of that aspect. The mix of siding textures is out of place compared to the traditional appearance of mill buildings and urged a more uniform appearance for the exterior.

Mr. Gerding noted that the brick color that includes browns was out of place and suggested more of a uniform red coloring.

Mr. Metivier agreed with Mr. Gerding concerning the reds opposed to browns and suggested a water struck brick that would be less porous and more typically used in the construction of mill buildings.

Mr. Poulin asked about the sidewalk along Elm St.

The applicants noted that the Planning Board would discuss that topic.

Mr. Poulin also spoke about the fact that too many land owners neglect buildings and too often do not invest money in their buildings.

Mrs. Shoen commented on the overall scale and mass being too large. The larger mill buildings are all typically along the river across the railroad tracks and this building is overpowering in it's residential setting.

Mrs. Barry spoke about the eclectic nature of our Historic District, so there is no standardized pattern. This causes us to compare this proposal to many different architectural styles and provides no clear direction to follow.

Mr. Gerding suggested adding a granite block appearance to the cement wall sections that fill some of the arches on the first level.

The applicant noted that was possible to construct using a stamped concrete product.

Mr. Metivier agreed with the stamped concrete sections and also asked about the air ventilation plans for the first floor parking garage.

The applicant noted parking garage would include vents that would be placed flush with the ground on the courtyard side of the building.

Mr. Metivier also noted the vast amount of the granite on the property and urged the applicant use it wherever possible.

Mr. Brooks asked if the white panels placed in line with the windows could be removed and use clapboard to fill that area instead.

There was a brief discussion about amendments to the project and the board agreed that amendments would be voted on individually with a roll call vote prior to the vote for final approval.

Mr. Metivier noted that he would not favor the board and baton siding being used.

The applicant described some options and variations concerning the board and baton sections.

Mr. Metivier made a motion to change the brick to a water-struck red brick with a second by Mr. Brooks. The motion passed unanimously 6-0.

Mr. Brooks made a motion to extend brick areas up to the roof line. There was no second.

Motion failed

Mr. Metivier made a motion to change the board and baton to clap board with a second by Ms. Shoen.

Ms. Shoen, Mr. Brooks, Mr. Metivier voted Yes.

Mr. Poulin, Mrs. Barry, Mr. Gerding voted No.

Vote was a tie, 3-3. Without a majority vote, the motion did not pass.

Mr. Gerding made a motion to add a stamped concrete appearance to mimic granite block on the smooth concrete sections, seconded by Ms. Shoen.

Mr. Gerding, Mr. Metivier, Mrs. Barry, Mr. Brooks, Ms. Shoen voted Yes.

Mr. Poulin voted No.

Motion passed 5-1.

Mr. Gerding made a motion to approve the project with approved amendments, seconded by Mr. Metivier.

Mr. Poulin, Mrs. Barry, Mr. Metivier, Mr. Gerding voted Yes.

Ms. Shoen, Mr. Brooks voted No.

Motion passed 4-2.

Mr. Metivier provided some details about the poor condition of the building at 20 Green St known as Profile Garage.

Mr. Brooks agreed with poor condition of the building and noted that his no vote for the overall project was based primarily on the excessive size and massing not specifically against the development of the property.

Mrs. Barry also noted that these buildings have been neglected and are the victim of demolition by neglect. When the HDC revised our standards for review the City Council removed our demolition by neglect section preventing us from enforcing that aspect.

Mr. Metivier asked what the foundation was constructed of.

The applicant noted that brick, granite, and cement were all present.

Mr. Metivier urged the applicant to save as much granite as possible.

Mr. Metivier made the motion to approve the demolition of both structures on the property, Mr. Brooks seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously 6-0.

Mr. Metivier noted that the servant's quarters building, as unique and amazing as it looks, found its condition is actually near condemnable. Numerous beams are rotted and the sill on the left side wall has shifted away from the floor joists. He also noted a similar styled building in a neighboring community is actually being reconstructed from the roofline down. He asked if the applicant had investigated the feasibility of doing a similar reconstruction.

The applicant described more details about the rot found around the eaves and roof structure of the building.

Mr. Brooks agreed that the building does look amazing but the rot that exists is substantial and beyond the point of saving the building.

Mr. Poulin agreed that the building in very poor condition and likely held together only by paint.

Mrs. Barry noted outlined the poor condition that she observed during the site walk. Even if the building was reconstructed, so much of it would be new construction that it would have very little if any of the original structure remaining.

Mr. Metivier noted that a month ago, not saving the building would have been a deal killer for the overall project and would not have supported its demolition and would have insisted that it be moved or saved in some way. After the site walk and seeing the poor condition will now approve the building to be demolished.

Mr. Brooks agreed with Mr. Metivier's comments and then made a motion to approve the demolition of the servant's quarters building and the six-bay garage located at 85 Elm St.

Mrs. Barry asked to provide an amendment to the motion, requiring the applicant to create a detailed architectural drawing of the building's exterior and original location to be displayed in the lobby of the new building with another copy provided to the Summersworth Historic Museum.

Ms. Shoen requested that the Historical Museum have access to the property and secure any items that may be of significance for them Museum.

Mr. Brooks accepted the amendments as discussed.

Ms. Shoen seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously 6-0.

WORKSHOP BUSINESS

Mr. Brooks noted that the rules of procedure subcommittee had discussed scheduling a meeting for early December to continue their work, but the actual date has not been finalized.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MISC

Mr. Metivier asked if there was any update concerning the block retaining wall of 10 Winter St.
Mr. Metivier also noted that there are six vacant lots on the hill that are likely to be developed soon.
Mr. Poulin noted that the owner of one of those lots currently lives on Prospect St and wanted to remain in the area.
Mr. Poulin mentioned that the Christmas Parade is scheduled for Dec 3rd and the Summersworth Historical Museum is the Grand Marshall.

Mr. Metivier made the motion to adjourn.
Ms. Shoen seconded the motion.
Motion passed 6-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:37pm.

Submitted by
Richard Brooks, HDC Secretary