

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

March 13, 2014

PRESENT: Ramzi Kavar, Chair
Kourosh Rad, Vice-Chair
Louis Lemoine
Noel Fowler
Steve Murphy
Mary Black
Roy McBride
Sue Sirrs
Kevin Conley
Anne Sinclair

REGRETS: Cesar Saleh
Andy Fillmore

STAFF: Dali Salih, Planner
Jillian MacLellan, Planner
Paul Sampson, Planner
Sherryl Murphy, Deputy Clerk
Jane Crosby, Legislative Support

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1. CALL TO ORDER –

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – January 9, 2014 and Special Joint Meeting January 29, 2014

MOVED by Ms. Black, seconded by Mr. Rad, that the minutes of January 9, 2014 be approved as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Mr. McBride, that the Special Joint Meeting minutes of January 29, be approved as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Mr. Fowler arrived at 6:05pm.

3.1 Special Meeting – March 20, 2014 – Amendment to the Halifax Downtown Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw – Nova Centre

The Chair indicated that this item has been added for consideration of a proposed special meeting currently scheduled for March 20, 2014. Mr. Lemoine asked for clarification on the purpose of the meeting and why it is required. The Chair explained that this meeting is with regards to amendments to the Downtown Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use Bylaw for the Nova Centre. Ms. Murphy added that the Design Review Committee had a preliminary presentation on the Nova Centre in October 2013. She indicated that this special meeting is the recommendation from the Design Review Committee which will be forwarded to Regional Council. Mr. Lemoine asked for clarification on the reasoning for MPS and LUB amendments coming before the Design Review Committee. Ms. Murphy responded that it is because a potential amendment to the Downtown Halifax Plans is being considered. Ms. Murphy indicated that the Design Review Committee's recommendation would be forwarded to Council. If Council agrees to consider the amendment they would set a date for a Public Hearing. She added that Council is seeking the Committee's recommendation, as prescribed by the Committee's Terms of Reference.

**MOVED by Mr. Rad, seconded by Ms. Black that a Special meeting of the Design Review Committee to consider amendments to the Halifax Downtown Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw relating to the Nova Centre be scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, 2014 beginning at 6:00 p.m.
MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES: None

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS

5.1 Pre-Application Presentation: Case 18800 – 5466 Spring Garden Road (Deferred from February 13, 2014 meeting)

The Chair indicated that, due to timing, this item had to be deferred from the previous meeting and apologized to the proponent.

Ms. Dali Salih, Planner, introduced the presentation by TEAL Architects on behalf of Westwood Developments. She indicated that she would act as a resource should the Committee have any questions on the Land Use By-laws. Ms. Salih then introduced Mr. Tom Emodi, Architect with TEAL Architects, and Mr. Danny Chedrawe from Westwood Developments.

Mr. Emodi introduced the application and indicated that this site is formerly known as the Royal Bank Building, and noted that it is historically important, but not designated. He indicated that the applicant wanted to give the site a new edge due to its proximity to the new Halifax Library. He added that this site is also a busy pedestrian intersection. He presented a rendering of the development and described some of the characteristics of development including:

- A high quality curtain wall system at the entrances and new glazed sections that is mindful of the pedestrian experience
- Canopies for the entrance doors
- A consistent, well designed signage system that would reduce clutter that is currently present on the building.
- An extension to the back of the building that would be approximately 30 feet.
- Installation of a rooftop patio

Mr. Emodi also indicated that the materials used for the development would be consistent with the existing building. He presented the site plan of the building and indicated the area of the building that would be extended. He noted that this area of the site is currently a parking lot and an area for dumpsters. He presented a rendering and described the plans for the extension, indicating that the changes would enhance the pedestrian experience.

Mr. Emodi then presented a rendering of the site at night which highlighted the signage band. Various elevations were presented and described. He added that there would be no addition to the height of the building and they do not anticipate any impact on traffic or on wind conditions. He noted that Westwood Developments would be adding bicycle parking. Mr. Emodi concluded his presentation noting he was available for questions.

The Chair thanked Mr. Emodi and invited questions and discussion from the Committee. Mr. Lemoine asked if there was an opportunity to add more height. Mr. Emodi responded that there is an opportunity for more; however the sprinkler system would have to cover the whole building which would not be economically feasible. Mr. Lemoine indicated that he is surprised that there would not be an attempt to create additional density. Mr. Chedrawe responded that they would like to add more density, however the neighbouring building is wood framed and accommodating the snow loads of an increased height would require a financial investment in the neighbouring roof.

Ms. Sirrs made reference to drawing A107 and asked about the rooftop terrace. She observed there is a large portion of the terrace area that is hardscape. She encouraged an increase in the plant material, noting that this roof would be viewed from the new library. Mr. Emodi responded that the intent is to use the roof top patio for functions. Therefore, they wanted to make it durable and ensure it meets code. Mr. Emodi added that there are also some concerns with structure load.

Ms. Sinclair asked about the materiality of the site. Mr. Emodi indicated that they would use high quality, properly insulated, materials that would match the texture of the existing material. He added that stonework would be extended in certain locations. Ms. Sinclair asked about the cladding of the penthouse. Mr. Emodi indicated that it was the same material used on the upper portion of the façade. Mr. Fowler asked about the roofline shown on the North Elevation. Mr. Emodi indicated that this would be a skylight with a large open area underneath.

Mr. Conley asked about the site's proximity to the library and would like the applicant to elaborate on how the development compliments the library. Mr. Emodi responded that the building isn't changing too much, but it is essentially being cleaned-up. He added that by keeping the signage modest and elegant it would give the building much more stature. Mr. Conley asked about the utility poles and whether they would be bringing in the electrical underground. Mr. Chadra responded that they would be removing the pole but they are waiting for construction to begin on the site as they need to replace the transformer. Mr. Lemoine asked if a minimalist canopy would be beneficial on the lower portion of the building. Mr. Emodi responded that they had explored a canopy but it wouldn't be one that would provide much shelter.

Ms. Sinclair asked about the fire shutters and whether they would be necessary. Mr. Emodi confirmed that they would be present on the south elevation. She then asked about the main floor plan and an upwards slope that is noted on the drawing. Mr.

Emodi added that this is for accessibility. Ms. Sinclair responded that a landing would be necessary. She advised that the Mr. Emodi refer to the building code.

The Chair asked if any variances are being requested. Mr. Emodi responded that they had originally thought that variances would be required, but they have since been advised that no variances are necessary. Mr. Rad commented that he feels the design is well executed. The Chair thanked the applicant and indicated that the Committee looks forward to their application.

6. CORRESPONDENCE/PETITIONS/DELEGATIONS - None

7. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

7.1 Pre-Application Presentation: 5268 and 5362 Sackville Street

Ms. Jillian MacLellan, Planner, introduced herself and indicated the Mr. Paul Skerry, Architect from Paul Skerry Associates Limited would be presenting. She briefly introduced the variances that would be requested and the post bonus height that is being proposed.

Mr. Skerry introduced himself to the Committee and noted that this development has already been presented to the Committee. The location of the project was described, including the existing site. Renderings of the proposed development were presented to the Committee and Mr. Skerry described some of the features and the materiality. He indicated that they are looking to keep the front façade of the building and noted that high quality and articulated materials on the street face of the new construction would be incorporated with the existing red brick and granite. He noted that they will retain much of the material of the older buildings.

Mr. Skerry described some of the challenges of the design and indicated that making the building accessible has been one of them. He explained that the floor level in the new portion of the building would differ from the old portion. He added that another challenge has been that the site's footprint is not very big. Mr. Skerry made note of the upper portion of the building which has been redesigned to be more of a cornice. A roof garden has been added. He advised that the building would house 39 residential units with commercial space on the ground floor. Mr. Skerry concluded his presentation and asked for questions and comments from the Committee.

Ms. Sinclair asked about the lighting on one of the facades. Mr. Skerry noted the location of the lighting, indicating that it would make an architectural statement at night. He also made a note of the transparent canopy along the building, which is a design element that came out of the last presentation to the Committee. The Chair made reference to drawing A3.1 and asked about the slope located on the bottom right hand corner of the plan. Mr. Skerry explained that it is a fire exit and the slope is required because it is below the street level. Ms. Sirrs made reference to the building's

rendering and asked for some clarification on the metal panels that are being used. She noted that the ones on the front of the building appear to be white and asked if this was an accurate representation. Mr. Skerry confirmed that the rendering is correct. Ms. Sirrs then made reference to the variance request as written in the documentation provide by the Architect. She asked for clarification on the statement and requested that the Architect confirm the numbers presented.

Mr. Lemoine asked for the rationale behind the height of the building. Mr. Skerry explained that they are allowed a post bonus height. He noted they are trying to get the building as high as possible for maximum density. A discussion ensued on the benefit and calculation of post bonus height. Staff and Mr. Skerry clarified that they would receive approximately two extra storeys from post bonus height.

Mr. Rad asked about the retail level of the development and asked if it could be used for office space. Mr. Skerry clarified that it would be for retail use only, adding that office space would not animate the area.

The Chair concluded the discussion and thanked Mr. Skerry for his presentation.

7.2 Pre-Application Presentation – 1538 Hollis Street

Mr. Paul Sampson, Planner introduced the application by Southwest Properties Limited and indicated that the set of drawings for this application would be forwarded to the Committee members after the meeting. He introduced Mr. Eric Burchill and Mr. Jim Spatz with Southwest Properties Ltd.

Mr. Spatz introduced the Committee to the background of the project and noted that the density at this site would be ten percent less than the allowable maximum. He noted their commitment to the project and indicated that demolition on the site has already begun. Mr. Spatz turned the presentation over to Mr. Eric Burchill.

Mr. Burchill introduced the site specific characteristics of the project and noted that their proposed approach achieves the objectives of the MPS and LUB. He reviewed the architectural approach taken and presented various renderings of the prescribed built form versus the proposed built form. He explained that they are looking to sculpt the density in a more pleasing architectural form. Mr. Burchill described the rationale for the variance requests including:

- The building is one of architectural merits that meets all the objectives
- Amenity rich public spaces
- Animated streetscapes
- Pedestrian site circulation thru-block connection
- The proposed development is 10% less than the allowable density

He added that the variances would produce a better outcome. He concluded his presentation and invited questions from the Committee. Mr. Fowler asked about the materiality of the building and Mr. Burchill indicated that the main sections of the tower would be curtain wall. He then described some of the options for the lighter areas of the building such as precast.

Mr. Lemoine indicated that he would like to have a better understanding of the material being proposed. He noted that drawings of this scale are not detailed enough. Mr. Burchill apologized and noted that Committee members would receive more detailed drawings after the meeting. The Chair asked if the drawing were still available online from the previous meeting. Mr. Sampson indicated that they would still be available however the drawings have been updated since that time. The Chair then asked if the requested variance is approved, would it set a precedent for other projects. Mr. Sampson explained that this site is fairly unique. He added that he doesn't believe it would set a precedent because every application has different circumstances. The staff report would detail the variances requested.

Ms. Sirrs suggested that the Committee move through the variances and discuss them. She indicated that with regards to the variance for the penthouse, she prefers the proposed approach. Mr. Fowler agreed with Ms. Sirrs. The Chair asked if the architectural feature on the north side of the building has a function. Mr. Burchill confirmed that it is simply a feature of the design; however they did explore making it a useful space. Mr. Sampson indicated that the variance includes all of the roof top elements. The Chair asked if the architectural element could stand on its own. Mr. Sampson responded that it could.

Ms. Sirrs addressed the variance regarding the design approach to the tower. She indicated that this variance substantially changes the aesthetic of the development. She then addressed the building footprint and noted that the proposed footprint is much different from what is allowed under the MPS. Ms. Sirrs asked about the green roof requirements and how the developer will be meeting them. Mr. Burchill explained that it has been a challenge and indicated that a more detailed drawing would be provided in the drawing set. He noted that the roof would not be publicly accessible.

Ms. Sinclair expressed that the variances being asked for are in good intent. She added that they show a high level of design skill and it is a holistic use of the urban space. She then asked about the wall near the parking entrance and whether it constitutes a blank wall. Mr. Burchill indicated that there will be an opening there to the public open space. Ms. Sinclair asked about the public pedestrian open space and whether they had looked at universal design principles for that space. Mr. Burchill indicated that because of the grade levels they had run into some difficulty; however one side of it would be accessible.

The Chair concluded the discussion and thanked Mr. Spatz and Mr. Burchill for their presentation.

- 8. ADDED ITEMS - None**
- 9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Thursday, April 10, 2013**
- 10. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.

Jane Crosby
Legislative Support