



**DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
June 11, 2015**

PRESENT: Kourosh Rad, Chair
Steve Murphy, Vice Chair
Rick Buhr
Kevin Conley
Catherine Courtney
Jared Dalziel
Andy Fillmore
Noel Fowler
Louis Lemoine
Malcolm Pinto
Rob LeBlanc

REGRETS: Anna Sampson

STAFF: Richard Harvey, Major Projects Planner
Luc Ouellet, Senior Planner
Paul Sampson, Planner
Dali Saleh, Planner
Sherryl Murphy, Deputy Clerk
Cailin MacDonald, Legislative Support

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to the Committee are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/drc/DesignReviewAgendaJune112015.php>

The meeting was called to order at 4:01 p.m. and adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 12, 2015

MOVED by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Mr. Lemoine that the minutes of March 12, 2015 be approved as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

The Chair recommended that the order of agenda items 7.1 be changed to accommodate the applicants first and followed by the staff presentation.

MOVED by Mr. Buhr, seconded by Mr. LeBlanc that the agenda of June 11, 2015 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES – NONE

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

6.1 Correspondence

An email regarding item 7.1.1, from Mr. Mark Singer, resident Trillium Condominium located at 1445 South Park Street, dated June 10, 2015 was distributed to the Committee. The correspondence was noted as being received.

Regarding item 7.1.1, Mr. Pinto distributed an article, *Snow Loads and the Law – Both can be a Nuisance!*, *The ENGINEER*, for the Committee's consideration. The article was noted as being received.

6.2 Petitions – None

6.3 Presentation – None

7. REPORTS

7.1 STAFF

Items 7.1.2 and 7.1.3 were dealt with at this time as per the amended agenda.

**7.1.2 Preliminary Presentation: Case 19855 – South and Breton
(Application by Geoff Keddy Architects for a two mid-rise mixed-use buildings at 1474 Brenton Street and 1469-73 South Park Street Halifax through the site plan approval process for Downtown Halifax)**

The following was before the Committee:

- The Design Rationale for the South Park Project
- Plans for the South Park Project

The Chair, invited Mr. Nicholas Fudge, Architect, Geoff Keddy & Associates, to give the Preliminary Presentation: Case 19855 – South and Breton to the Committee.

Mr. Fudge started by noting that the project was requesting one variance. His client would like to eliminate the side-yard setback above the streetwall for the two stair cores and elevator shaft in the midrise on South Park Street. He described the site as spanning the block between South Park Street and Breton Street located adjacent to the Trillium and directly across from Victoria Park. As well, he stated that the proposed building will contain a total of 62 residential units with commercial space at grade on South Park Street, which is a designated commercial area.

Mr. Fudge stated some of the proposal's relevant criteria including the maximum height as 39 metres, the minimal setback as 0-1.5 metres and maximum streetwall height as 17 metres on South Park Street and 18.5 metres on Breton Street. He continued that the existing conditions of the two separate lots, or PIDs, along this area of South Park Street which contain multiple residential dwellings are in poor condition and underutilized. The portion of the site abutting Breton Street, or the third PID, is occupied by a residential dwelling that has been converted to commercial space. Mr. Fudge noted that the existing conditions do not correspond to HRM's design guidelines.

Mr. Fudge commented that their proposal consists of an 11-storey midrise building which will reach an overall height of 35.5 metres. He continued to describe the proposed measurements and features of the building. He stated that due to an existing light and air easement on Breton Street for the adjacent building, 5670 Spring Garden Road, the proposed building steps down to four stories on the Breton Street side. He described that a large, open courtyard, approximately 20 feet, separates the South Park street midrise and the Breton Street low-rise allowing for natural daylight and ventilation of the rear facing units and landscaped open space at grade.

Mr. Fudge noted that both buildings are connected at grade through the courtyard and underground via the parking garage. He continued by sharing that the design team chose to have the parking garage entrance accessed from the Breton Street side to maximize commercial storefront space on South Park Street. He noted that there were a total of 62 residential units including 35 one bedroom units and 27 two bedroom units. He continued by stating that on the main level there was approximately 5000 square feet of commercial space at grade.

Mr. Fudge noted some of the materiality proposed for along South Park, as illustrated in the rendering, includes extensive floor to ceiling glazing at ground level which provides a high level of transparency, animating the pedestrian experience and providing for several entrances for the commercial space depending on the tenants. He went on to describe the upper level, which cantilevers above the main entrance to the residential units to provide a canopy and weather protection, encouraging pedestrian activity at grade. He shared that they are proposing that the upper levels of the streetwall be clad in high quality white spandrel panels while the upper portion of the midrise is planned to be clad in Cembrit panels, a high density concrete panel, which will create a unique pattern that corresponds to the interior floor plates, windows and terraces. He continued by describing the terraces wrapped in wood panels that are recessed into the streetwall façade and commented that this design feature breaks up the elevation, creates eyes on the street, and a sense of animation and engagement while framing the view to Victoria Park. In reference to the rendering, Mr. Fudge described the proposed variance. He explained that they would like to eliminate the side-yard setback above the streetwall for the two stair cores and elevator shaft and stated that the required setback above the streetwall of 10 per cent of the width of the lot, approximately five feet, would have a negative impact on many levels due to the narrow nature of the site. He commented that it would have a negative impact on parking below and the residential units above, making them undesirable or too small, as well as the commercial space. Mr. Fudge indicated the the requested variance would not have much of an impact on the new adjacent building to the south due to the generous setback of the Trillium building.

The Chair thanked Mr. Fudge for his presentation, opened the floor for questions and comments as well as briefly introduced new committee member, Mr. LeBlanc.

Mr. Buhr commented that he was curious about units' two to five and their decision not to include windows on the Brenton Street side, and asked whether it followed municipal guidelines. Mr. Fudge responded that he believed it followed municipal guidelines and shared that their vision was to make the most of living spaces given the small size of the unit.

Mr. Lemoine commented that while he understood their rationale for the requested variance, he was concerned about the stairwell and stated that it could be significantly improved by adding windows to the landings which would allow for defensible space to be added to the stairwell as well as bring in natural light. Mr. Fudge responded that they had discussed this option, but had concerns since it is on the property line. They would consider other options to animate the space by perhaps adding a greenwall.

Mr. Fowler asked Mr. Fudge to comment on the materials. Referencing the rendering, Mr. Fudge responded that the idea was to have floor to ceiling glazing with structural silicone and three aluminum storefront doors for the commercial spaces. He continued that there would be white frosted spandrel panels which would be wrapped around the corner and warmed up with wood offsets. He continued that there would be concrete patios with minimal glass railings and aluminum clad windows. Mr. Fudge commented that the vision was to have the base continue up and wrap over the building. He acknowledged that presently it is a blank wall which could be improved. On Brenton Street, he stated that they hope to continue with similar materials as well as incorporate wood and vertical movers which would help to lighten the space.

Mr. Pinto commented on his concerns with snow removal and how it would affect neighbouring residents. He provided Mr. Fudge with a copy of the article, *Snow Loads and the Law – Both can be a Nuisance!*, *The ENGINEER*, which had been distributed earlier. Mr. Fudge and Mr. Pinto briefly discussed the implications with snow removal at the site.

The Chair invited Geoff Keddy, Geoff Keddy & Associates, to join the table and discussion. Mr. Keddy commented on the earlier suggestion to add visual appeal to the blank façade and discussed ideas on how to provide an economical solution through moving the parking lot back.

Mr. LeBlanc noted his concerns about the parking on the lower level by stating that it appeared the 15 foot lane may not be enough space for vehicles to accommodate the turn. He asked whether they included the turning radius. Mr. Fudge replied that he thought it was 18 foot and he would confirm the specifications. They continued to discuss parking accommodation.

Mr. LeBlanc asked whether they had considered handicap accessibility. Mr. Fudge responded that they planned for the parking to be residential. The Committee and presenter continued to discuss possible options to eliminate the stairs.

Mr. Lemoine commented on narrowness of courtyard, he suggested including a glazed canopy overhead to make it a covered atrium. Mr. Fudge responded that in regards to the courtyard they hoped to provide for natural airflow into the nearby units. The Committee continued to discuss options related to the courtyard.

Mr. Buhr asked whether they had considered garbage and servicing to the building. Mr. Fudge responded that they had had discussions however that it was not fully resolved at this time.

Mr. LeBlanc asked whether the building had LEED certification. Mr. Fudge replied that it did not.

Mr. Conley asked for clarification on the rooftop terrace space. Mr. Fudge stated that they did not have a landscaping plan yet, but that it was intended as a communal space.

The Chair asked whether the Committee had any further questions or comments for the presenters and, hearing none, thanked Mr. Fudge and Mr. Keddy for their presentation.

7.1.3 Preliminary Presentation: Case 19856 – Benjamin Wier House
(Application by WMFares Group, for a 6-storey mixed-use addition to the existing heritage building (Benjamin Wier House) at 1459 Hollis Street, Halifax through the site plan approval process for Downtown Halifax)

The following was before the Committee:

- The Design Rationale and Land Use By-law Summary for the Benjamin Wier House Addition
- Rendering and Plans for the Benjamin Wier House addition

Mr. LeBlanc and Mr. Pinto declared a Conflict of Interest and took a seat in the gallery.

The Chair, invited Jacob JeBailey, to present the Preliminary Presentation: Case 19856 – Benjamin Wier House to the Committee.

Mr. JeBailey provided a brief history of the site as well as its historic context as a provincially registered heritage property. He highlighted the character defining elements of Benjamin Wier House and commented on the site's significant heritage value including: the historical locale, the property is located in and amongst historically significant buildings like Government House, St. Matthew's Church and Keith's Brewery; the notable owners and residents of the property; and the original features of the property's front façade.

Mr. JeBailey continued by leading the Committee through the proposal and shared that its design was intended to highlight the contrast between old and new. He stated that the proposal is to remove the existing two-storey rear addition to maximize the full potential of effective and efficient living space in the proposed design. He continued by stating that the floor to floor heights in the addition will align with those of the existing structure.

Mr. JeBailey shared that the original three-storey structure and roofline would be left intact, including all exterior sandstone detailing, windows and wrought iron balconies which are to be exposed in an interior common corridor. He commented that the building takes the shape of the two solid forms characterized by a panel cladding system. As well, a visual threshold which will slightly cantilever over the existing structure to reinforce the design intent of the contrast between old and new is proposed.

Mr. JeBailey described the proposed elevations for the site and the roof setbacks, including the introduction of a horizontal band of glazing above the existing rear roof line. He continued by stating that the proposed six-storey addition consists of 3300 square feet of commercial space on the ground and second levels; approximately 7600 square feet of residential space, two units per floor, excluding the two full-floor penthouses on the 5th and 6th levels; and there will be a 2100 square foot landscaped rooftop.

Mr. JeBailey went on to describe the rationale for the two requested variances. He shared that they were requesting a variance pertaining to mid-rise setbacks, Section 10(4) and rooftop setbacks, Section 8(10).

The Chair thanked Mr. JeBailey for his presentation and opened the floor to questions and comments.

Mr. Buhr commented on the building materials, particularly his concerns with windows and maintenance. Mr. JeBailey responded that since they are proposing to be so close to the property line, they are planning to source alternative solutions for maintenance and washing.

The Chair asked how the existing building would be affected and whether it would remain commercial office. Mr. JeBailey confirmed this to be the case. The Chair requested clarification regarding the removal of windows of the existing structure. Mr. JeBailey responded that the extension will be removed; however the original windows and façade will remain open to the proposed addition's corridor to allow for some natural light penetration.

The Chair commented on his concerns regarding approval of the 10 per cent setback to accommodate the location of the elevator. Mr. JeBailey stated that because it is a very narrow site, the variance was sought to optimize space while conforming to current building code standards.

Mr. Harvey commented to the Committee that both of the presentations given to the Committee are preliminary in nature and therefore variances can still be discussed in greater detail with the support of staff and the criteria as presented in the design manual.

Mr. Fillmore asked whether the Development Agreement should be a consideration. Mr. Harvey responded that the mandate of the Design Review Committee would not include the matter of built-form provided they meet the requirements as outlined in the Development Agreement, although it may be discussed as background or when a variance comes into consideration.

Mr. Buhr asked for clarification on materials, particularly the use of cement board. Mr. JeBailey clarified that one of the proposed materials was cement board panels rather than cement board.

Mr. Conley asked for clarification on parking at the site. Mr. JeBailey responded that there were three vehicular parking spaces available. Mr. Harvey noted that there are no requirements for parking.

Mr. Fowler commented on the cantilevering of the new construction over the existing structure which he described as uncomfortable and suggested this be reconsidered if the square footage is not needed. The Chair echoed Mr. Fowler's comments.

Mr. Fowler asked what the colour of the cladding would be. Mr. JeBailey responded that it had not yet been determined, but that they were considering a period mid-tone grey or chocolate charcoal colour.

The Chair asked whether the Committee had any further questions or comments for the presenter and, hearing none, thanked Mr. JeBailey for his presentation.

Mr. Murphy departed from the meeting at 5:08 p.m.

7.1.1 Staff Presentation – Halifax Downtown Plan 5 Year Review

A presentation entitled 'Proposed Changes to the Downtown Halifax Plan and LUB' was before the Committee

Mr. Luc Ouellet, Senior Planner, presented the 5 Year Review of the Halifax Downtown Plan to the Committee. Mr. Ouellet provided an overview of the current site plan approval process, criteria and the three types of approvals, (i) Exempt; (ii) Non-substantive site plan approval; and (iii) Substantive site plan approval. He shared that as part of the review process staff conducted engagement at the stakeholder level.

Mr. Ouellet went on to describe staff's proposal to refine site plan approval by creating a two-tier system of substantive site plan approval: Level I site plan approval and Level II site plan approval which differentiated between smaller and bigger projects. He further explained that Level I site plan approval would apply to smaller projects, for example new buildings and additions less than 2000 square metres in area, would solely be processed by staff and would no longer require a public engagement process. He also shared that staff estimated that timelines would be reduced from four months to one month and that the right to appeal would be preserved, but likely with a reduced notification area.

Mr. Ouellet outlined their reasons for the two-tier approach. He stated that over the years that site plan approval has been in place, smaller projects found the process to be onerous and he shared that staff are planning to bring a similar process to Downtown Dartmouth, which would increase the workload for the Design Review Committee (DRC).

Mr. Ouellet described the application of Level II site plan approval. He shared that large projects would continue to have full DRC oversight and that they would be refining membership requirements by proposing that the committee be composed solely of design professionals. He once again noted that the right to appeal would be preserved, but likely with a reduced notification area.

Mr. Ouellet highlighted other process improvements including clearer public engagement processes as detailed in the Land-Use Bylaw as well as new language for the pre-application process. He shared that the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) will no longer advise the DRC on site plan approval application. Rather, applications involving heritage resources will be dealt with through two parallel, but independent processes. He explained that by taking this approach they hope to reduce the risk of not meeting statutory timelines.

Mr. Ouellet outlined the municipality's plan for Bonus Zoning, since up until this point it had been problematic. He shared that a study is currently underway to determine exactly when HRM should be applying the bonus and for what exactly. Staff will be developing a list of potential public benefits that better match community needs and mentioned that they may be eliminating or providing more focus as related to "the provision of exemplary sustainable building practices" as a potential public benefit. Mr. Buhr inquired whether public art was part of the list and Mr. Ouellet confirmed that it was included as was affordable housing.

Mr. Ouellet noted that the changes would improve heritage protection by introducing a floor on demolition of registered heritage properties, where a density bonus is being sought. Also, he stated that work is progressing on the second heritage conservation district (Barrington Street South) although it will not be ready for the 5 Year Review, it will be integrated into the Plan and LUB as it becomes available.

Mr. Ouellet outlined that staff planned to improve urban agriculture by clearly articulating its uses in the Land Use Bylaw as well as by incentivizing rooftop agriculture to allow rooftop greenhouses to exceed the overall maximum rooftop coverage and height. He cited successful examples of this approach in other Canadian cities. Also, he cited that the rooftop treatment requirement will be related to rooftops exceeding a height of 50 metres so that developers will have the option of installing a reflective roof treatment on smaller buildings

Mr. Ouellet noted the plan to address wind assessment performance standards by raising the minimum height that triggers a wind assessment from 20 to 22 metres. Also, he noted that waterfront view corridors will be better defined and would take a similar approach to streets, allowing for more flexibility with the uses that can be established on the ground floor. And he noted improvements planned for Schedule W: Waterfront Development.

Lastly, Mr. Ouellet noted that staff is recommending the removal of the Landscaped Open Space requirement in the precincts where it applies and stated that it currently applies to 3 of the 9 precincts in Downtown Halifax.

A copy of the presentation is on file.

The Chair thanked Mr. Ouellet for his presentation and opened the floor to questions and comments.

Mr. Buhr asked whether the proposed changes address when a restaurant is built in a preexisting space and the kitchen exhaust ends up being visible on the side of the building. Mr. Ouellet responded that it would fall under non-substantive and would be reviewed from the streetline.

Mr. LeBlanc commented that projects measuring 2000 square metres in area or less still seemed small. He also commented that the public benefits sounded exciting and asked whether there would be cash incentives to keeping these benefits in the district. Mr. Ouellet responded that at this stage it had not yet been determined and that staff were working with consultants .

Mr. Fillmore commented that the 2000 square metres trigger seemed without nuance and suggested that it be clarified to capture buildings which are significant to the streetscape, for desire for a balance of when a Level I versus a Level II review process would be applied.

Mr. Fillmore commented that the design manual may wish allow for greater flexibility in design for institutional and public buildings to enable them to stand out as special, for example the Halifax Central Library. He also shared his concerns with applying protection to heritage properties outside of conservation districts as it may discourage development and investment opportunity in those areas. And, he shared his comments on the flexibility of use for pedestrian level activities on the waterfront.

Mr. Fillmore departed from the meeting at 5:43 p.m.

Mr. Lemoine commented on green roads and the opportunity for the codes to become more sustainable and suggested that the approach have a well-defined goal.

The Chair asked for clarity around the timeline. Mr. Ouellet responded by stating that staff hoped to conduct engagement sessions this summer and had planned for 10 stakeholder groups. He continued that the internal review process will enable the public engagement process to be more informed. Staff confirmed that they will make former DRC members aware of the engagement process should they wish to attend and share input.

Mr. Conley inquired whether the Heritage Advisory Committee would be attaining more influence and assuming responsibility for the appeal process. Mr. Ouellet responded that the HAC would continue to advise council.

Mr. Lemoine appreciated that Downtown Dartmouth developments would now be part of the review process and commented that he would like to see this process expanded even further, to the entire peninsula. Mr. Ouellet responded that staff also hoped for further expansion of the process. Mr. Daziel commented that he would like to see some language around membership requirements to encourage professionals living in the downtown districts. Mr. Ouellet responded that would be difficult to achieve and may appear bias and shared that they would like to keep it broad.

The Chair asked whether the Committee had any further questions or comments for staff, hearing none, he thanked Mr. Ouellet for his presentation.

7.2 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

7.2.1 Meeting Schedule – Proposed Change to Start Time from 6:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. (Malcolm Pinto)

The Committee briefly discussed changing the time of their meetings from 6:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

MOVED by Mr. Fowler, seconded by Mr. Pinto that the start time of the meeting be changed from 6:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. MOTION PUT AND PASSED

8. ADDED ITEMS – NONE

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – July 9, 2015 beginning at 4:00 p.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Cailin MacDonald
Legislative Support