



**DISTRICT 7 & 8 PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
May 21, 2015**

PRESENT: Mr. Brenden Sommerhalder, Chair
Ms. Katherine Kitching, Vice Chair
Ms. Sunday Miller
Mr. John Czenze
Mr. Adam Hayter
Mr. Michael Bradfield
Mr. Michael Haddad
Mr. Grant Cooke
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Wayne Mason

REGRETS:

STAFF: Ms. Jillian Maclellan, Planner

OTHERS: Mr. Danny Chedrawe, Westwood Developments
Mr. Dan Goodspeed, Kassner Goodspeed Architects Ltd.

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

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to the District 7 & 8 Planning Advisory Committee are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/D78PAC/150521d78pac-agenda.php>

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. and was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. He introduced planning staff and the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) and described the role of the PAC in hosting the public meeting and reviewing Case 19281

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

2.1 Case 19281 - Application from Westwood Construction to amend the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-law to permit a mixed use development at 2032-2050 Robie Street, Halifax.

Ms. Jillian Maclellan presented Case 19281. She noted that the site of the proposal abutted Case 18966 but that the applications were submitted by different developers. Ms. Maclellan described the site in terms of planning policy, stating that the majority of the site is located in the Peninsula North secondary plan and a small portion in the Quinpool Road Commercial Plan area. She stated that the majority of the site falls under a 35 ft height precinct zoned R3 and a smaller portion of the site is within a 145 ft precinct zoned C2. Ms. Maclellan described the building design as a narrow, 25 storey tower, with 112 residential units, hotel and commercial uses. She stated the building would have a setback of 20 ft on Parker Street and two proposed accesses off Robie Street. Ms. MacLellan described the approval process to date, beginning with the initiation of the process at Region Council on July 10, 2014. She described the Open House that was held for the application and outlined findings from a survey. She noted that the survey would not be the sole source of guidance in feedback. Ms. Maclellan requested further feedback regarding the overall design and the building's relationship to the street and surrounding properties.

Mr. Danny Chedrawe, President, Westwood Developments, highlighted that characteristics of the site were unique to the location. He stated that the site was between two high rise buildings. He highlighted the site's location on Robie Street as a major thoroughfare and public transportation corridor, and its proximity to the Halifax Commons. He described Westwood Developments' previous projects, stating that they demonstrated sensitivity to height and context. Mr. Chedrawe requested feedback on the building's width and height.

Mr. Daniel Goodspeed, Kassner Goodspeed Architects, described the benefits of the proposal in terms of urban densification. He described the site metrics, planning controls and design program of the site. He described the urban context of the site in terms of open spaces and buildings of comparable heights such as the Atlantica Hotel, Armco tower, the Welsford, Macdonald Apartments, Quinpool Tower and the St. Pat's site. Mr. Goodspeed stated that the block had the potential for a miniature urban core. He presented renderings of the building façade. He also presented a shadow study of the proposal, stating that in the spring and fall equinox, the building shadows would not reach the Oval. He indicated that at Winter Solstice, the shadows would stretch across the commons and reach the Oval at 3 p.m. He stated that shadows would be dynamic, as the slimmer building would pass shadows much quicker than a shorter, broader building. He concluded that shadow impacts would be negligible to some overshadowing of the Oval occurring between November 21 and February 3 from 3-5 p.m. in the afternoon.

The Chair opened the floor to public comments and questions. He stated that a second public meeting would occur on the related property so comments should be focused on the case at hand.

Ms. Karla Nicholson, Executive Director Quinpool Road Main Street Association, read a letter on behalf of the Association. She stated that the proposal was being promoted together with the neighbouring Armco tower. She stated that plans are at an early stage and are bound to change. Ms. Nicholson highlighted that a growing problem for the Quinpool Road district is parking capacity for commercial deliveries and access. She stated that commercial deliveries seem to be addressed in the proposal; however, hotel uses and smaller commercial spaces often attract additional patrons that limit parking and create challenges. She requested that more parking be included. Regarding building height, she stated

that the proposal is not limited by HRM Design controls or the Centre Plan and that more discussion needs to occur. Regarding traffic patterns, she recommended that a traffic study be initiated before plans are approved. Ms. Nicholson stated support for the proposal.

Ms. Claire McIntosh questioned if the application was a development agreement or as of right and she confirmed it was the former. Ms. McIntosh stated that one option would be no development. She questioned Mr. Goodspeed's statement regarding tax revenues, stating that revenues were not gifts as part of the development, but that the building would be receiving additional city services such as police, fire, and sewer. She questioned the language of modification being used regarding height, and stated that the height was not going down as described from the former 20 stories to 18, but rather going up from the current 2 storeys. She stated that this proposal sought to take advantage of socially provided greenspaces while not providing any additional landscaping benefits.

Mr. Chedrawe responded that development in the city is not a privilege and agreed that more benefits aside from taxes should be gained as part of the development process.

Mr. David Smith, of Duncan Street, stated that according to the site plans there are 106 parking spaces for 112 number units and 81 hotel units and that there would be 2 units per parking space. He stated that the area already has a lack of on street parking. He stated that the building would worsen the parking situation. He also stated concern for the development process, highlighting the Wellington Street development.

Ms. Janet Stevenson, Lawrence Street, stated that the neighbourhood was remarkably stable. She stated disappointment for comments at the beginning of the meeting and that debate and an engaged public should be encouraged. She highlighted other recent cases and the rationale for densification. She stated that she was unconvinced by inappropriate applications seeking densification. She questioned the rationale of walkability and questioned why parking was encouraged. Ms. Stevenson stated concern for the integrity of planning staff's survey. She questioned why the proposal was being considered when it did not meet staff's standard for height, massing, residential density, landscape open space, parking, neighbourhood compatibility and commercial zoning.

Ms. Kathy Moggridge, Lawrence Street, questioned if the building was an appropriate fit for the neighbourhood. She stated that there was little greenspace on the property and questioned the effect on those walking in the neighbourhood in terms of wind and traffic. She highlighted concerns for access to the building from the garage and traffic on Quinpool Road. Ms. Moggridge questioned how the development would manage someone turning left from Quinpool onto Robie, routed through Monastery Lane. She stated concern for access to the hotel and residences impeding pedestrian and cyclist patterns. She indicated that traffic should also be studied on neighbouring streets to the site.

Ms. Andrea Arbic, Welsford Street, stated that the Quinpool Road was a complete neighbourhood with walkability, lowrise buildings, community infrastructure and green space. She stated that high rises are the exception in community. Given the qualities of the neighbourhood, she questioned what the benefits would be by granting a height increase of six fold. She stated that the benefits would not outweigh the negatives. She stated concern for independent business owners in terms of property values and rents rising due to tax assessments. Ms. Arbic stated that this has been seen on Spring Garden Road. She also highlighted concern over the proposal regarding parking, height, massing, bulk, and residential density. She stated that the neighbourhood was already dense, yet the density on site would rival cities such as Manila and Dubai. She encouraged density to be more spread out on the peninsula.

Mr. Grant Wanzel, Lawrence Street, stated that if approved the building would form a barrage of 5 towers, 12, 14, 16, 25 and 28 stories in height. He stated that formidable wind turbulence would result and risk pedestrian safety and comfort. He questioned if HRM had a standard to assess wind speed for pedestrian safety and comfort. He cited a City of Mississauga study, under which projects proposed would have to undergo a wind tunnel study together and in the context of the area. He stated that the proposal would greatly affect enjoyment of the commons, including the investment in the Oval and the

neighbourhoods north and south of the development. He questioned what the process would be for conducting the studies and if they could be considered together.

Ms. Maclellan responded that a quantitative wind study would be performed on the application, and if possible would be considered in conjunction with the neighbouring property. She stated that at this stage in the process, staff had not yet performed the study. Ms. Maclellan also stated that the wind study would examine existing conditions.

Mr. Steve Parcell, Duncan Street, stated that the Municipal Planning Strategies were the core documents to guide planning processes and laid out the rules to expedite applications and minimize negotiations with private interests. He stated the June 10, 2014 staff initiation report cannot be considered as it did not meet the requirements for height, mass, density, shadowing, and spacing between towers. Mr. Parcell stated that it was now being asked to waive the regulations, while no circumstances have changed to the land use policy. He stated there was no need to dismiss existing plans. He questioned why the city should not abide by the existing documents in lieu of the Centre Plan.

Ms. Maclellan responded that the property owner has a right to make an application, despite other planning processes such as the Centre Plan. She stated that Regional Council holds the decision to initiate the application process.

Ms. Candace Stevenson, Welsford Street, commented that all could agree that the neighbourhood was special. She stated that the 35 foot regulation may be unrealistic, but suggested it was undesirable and irresponsible to not use the existing height precinct rule. She stated that the proposal looked outwardly towards the Commons, yet in the applicant's presentation how the proposal related to the neighbourhood streets was omitted. Ms. Stevenson stated that elected officials and municipal administration have the shared responsibility to exercise due diligence to the right of homeowners and tenants to their privacy, sunlight and fresh air, preservation of sidewalks, streets, and public amenities, and the wellbeing of existing mixed income and mixed tenure neighbourhoods.

Ms. Marlene Coffey, Willow Street, stated that though she was in favour of density, the impact of the 25 storey proposal would be great. She also voiced concern for a precedent being set by the development agreement, as the application was quite large in terms of what it presented and could have effects on the St Pat's site and Ben's Bakery.

Mr. Andrew Murphy, Purcells Cove, questioned the impact of this project on density and the target density on the peninsula. He stated that the proposal and neighbourhood project would create a density 90 times the rest of the peninsula. He stated that density across the peninsula would mean a population of 6.3 million on the peninsula. He stated that 2,400 homes, condominiums and apartments were constructed in all of HRM over the past 10 years according to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). He stated that the plan called for 25% to occur in the core while only 18% was the result, translating to 400 units in that area. Mr. Murphy stated that density at the current rate of absorption would require 20,000 years of development. He stated that spot rezoning would create the largest real estate bubble in Canadian history and that the demand was unneeded. He stated that only 400 people per year needed to be placed on the peninsula. He suggested that the site be considered in terms of the full plan on the peninsula.

Ms. Beverly Miller stated that density was oftentimes a topic over the past years; however, the kind of units has not been a consideration. Ms. Miller stated concern for wind factors and that the city had no criteria for remediating developments due to wind concern. She stated that CMHC has reported Halifax was in danger of being overbuilt. She stated that Turner Drake and Partners Ltd. had found development in Halifax was not demand driven but capital driven. She stated that the highrises in context predate the municipal planning strategy. She stated that there have been few concerns expressed by residents regarding the municipal plans being outdated. Ms. Miller also highlighted the Stantec report and stated concern for the process as being closed to modification.

The Chair clarified that residents can also state what existing height would be appropriate.

Ms. Louise Murray, Parker Street, cited MPS policy for retaining existing residential character. She questioned how a 25 storey hotel and residential tower would be compatible with the neighbourhood. She questioned what would occur with the St. Pat's site. She voiced concern for negative effects in terms of wind, light, and ventilation. Regarding prices, she stated that high end condominiums were being proposed and did not adhere to the sought criteria of diverse, affordable units. She also stated that the Commons was a gift of land to the residents of Halifax to use in perpetuity. She questioned the shadowing effect on the oval. She voiced support for previous comments on green space and wind. She also voiced concern for shadowing effects on Parker Street, stating that it was a constantly used park. She stated that more green space should be created rather than destroyed.

Ms. Peggy Cameron, Friends of Halifax Common, stated that this may not be the venue for stating concerns, where not all members concerned about the Commons may be heard. She stated that in 1994, the city created a master plan for the Halifax Common. She stated that the city has not followed the goals, policies, and intent of the master plan. She stated that only recently has the city allocated monies for the Halifax Common. She voiced frustration for the development. Ms. Cameron commented that the commons go all the way to South Street. She also highlighted that relevant heritage policies in the MPS would not support the document. She stated that the Halifax Commons were granted in 1783 to the public in perpetuity. She highlighted the effect of the shadow on the North Common and highlighted the need for a comprehensive Common landscaping plan that looks at the south, central, and northern common before proceeding on a 25 storey development.

Mr. Patrick Connors, resident of the area, complimented the developer and architect on the proposal. He stated that the city had an opportunity to insert an infill development that would be complementary to existing buildings. He stated that regardless of where this building would be built there would be an outcry for development. He also commented on parking circumstances in Quinpool Road, stating that the developer should not be asked to provide additional commercial parking spaces.

Mr. Stacy Wentzell voiced approval for the building, stating he has been a realtor in Halifax for the past 28 years. He stated that a larger tax base, businesses and services would be created. He stated that the 200 units in the building would be less pressure to service than a lower density layout.

Mr. Bill Campbell, Fife Lane, commented that he was representing Walk n Roll Halifax. He stated that the plan amendment process would provide an opportunity to include initiatives in the active transportation plan such as creating a buffer between pedestrians and cars on street, façade, appropriate scale, and active street frontage. He stated that current policy does not cover the pedestrian realm and that it was an incredibly important public space. He drew attention to the South and Hollis Street development for not connecting the public realm to the development. He stated that this would be an opportunity to advocate for public realm design controls that would come forward as part of the Centre Plan process.

Mr. Alan Ruffman, Ferguson's Cove Road, suggested that the PAC request a wind study be undertaken to set some criteria and that it be done by a 3rd party. Mr. Ruffman also recommended that the PAC not approve the MPS changes until a strong framework of the Centre Plan is in place. He stated that the proposal would do harm to the single family dwellings on Parker Street. He stated that planners ought to start plotting ownership maps. He voiced concern for precedents and stated that a large building would be created at St. Pat's if this proposal went forward.

Mr. Ken Kam, Compton Ave, stated that that traffic is a major concern for young families in the area and this development would increase traffic. Regarding walking, he stated that the wind on Quingate Tower is unbearable in the winter time and that if the proposed building and adjacent properties were built they would create further unfavorable wind conditions. He stated that increasing density to a certain limit may be appropriate but would require further study.

Mr. Larry Meachern, resident of the North End, stated that the height was appropriate for this neighbourhood. He stated that the site was suited for the additional height, adjacent to downtown, the

hospitals and the universities. He encouraged increased consultation with the neighbourhood and voiced support for the developer.

Mr. Pete Lavall, Belle Aire Terrace, voiced concern for the proposal and where it would lead. He questioned the appropriateness of the height and whether it was desirable for Halifax. He stated that subsequent use of this building would create a funnel to the suburbs and sprawl. He commented that buildings that are family friendly would not be higher than 6 storeys.

Mr. Brett Taylor, resident of the South End, questioned if there was a pathway where this proposal would not proceed.

Ms. Maclellan responded that there is the ability for the application to not proceed if the applicant withdrew the application or staff felt there should be no further changes to the planning documents or if Regional council decided the proposed policies were inappropriate.

A member of the audience, resident of Preston Street, questioned the survey, the origin of the data and who the respondents were.

Ms. Maclellan stated that the survey was an online option, with hardcopies and computers available to fill it out at an open house. She stated that a mail out regarding the open house and survey was also sent to those residents in the area. She stated that there were numerous flaws with the survey; however, responses in combination with the public meeting and further comments by the PAC would provide a good base. She indicated that the survey was completed from September to October, 2014.

A member of audience requested clarification on how many hotel rooms there may be in comparison to parking spaces. Ms. Maclellan responded that 112 units were being proposed, and therefore, 80 hotel units and 106 spaces.

Mr. Chedrawe thanked the public for their participation. He indicated that the Municipal Planning Strategy was outdated. He commented that 35 feet is too low. He stated that the rules today are improper and do not reflect the reality on the ground. Regarding the wind study he stated that an extensive study would be performed. He stated that he would not allow high wind impact to occur as a result of the building. He stated that traffic issues would be resolved by the redevelopment of the St. Pat's site. He stated that the building was unique and could not be compared with Wellington St. development. Mr. Chedrawe voiced approval for more negotiations regarding the public benefit aside from tax increase. Regarding parking, he stated that the development would seek to mitigate parking issues rather than add to them. Mr. Chedrawe stated that allowing density on certain sites would protect existing neighbourhoods.

3.0 ADJOURNMENT

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:16 p.m.

Andrew Reid
Legislative Assistant