



**DISTRICTS 7 & 8 PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
June 22, 2015**

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

REGRETS: Mr. John Czenze

STAFF: Mr. Andrew Reid, Legislative Assistant
Mr. Miles Agar, Planner

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

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to the Districts 7 & 8 Planning Advisory Committee are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/Commcoun/west/150622d78pac-agenda.php>

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. and the Committee adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

- **Community Announcements**

Councillor Watts announced that consultation on the former St. Pat's High school would begin during the summer. She also stated that the Open Space Plan consultation would be closing at the end of June.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 27 and May 21, 2015

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Ms. Miller that the minutes of April 27 and May 21, 2015 be approved as circulated.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

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

Additions

- 8.1 Memorandum from the Legislative Assistant dated May 5, 2015 re: Committee's Involvement in the Centre Plan
- 8.2 Memorandum from the Legislative Assistant dated May 5, 2015 re: Annual Report
- 8.3 Memorandum and Minutes Procedure
- 8.4 Terms of Reference Review
- 8.5 Public Meeting Logistics
- 8.6 PAC Information Sharing

MOVED by Ms. Kitching, seconded by Councillor Mason that the agenda 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 – NONE

7. REPORTS

7.1 STAFF

- 7.1.1 Case 19862: Application by Michael Napier Architecture, on behalf of Samir Metlej, to amend the Halifax Peninsula Land Use By-law to apply Schedule "Q" and allow, by development agreement, a seven-storey residential building containing ground floor commercial on four parcels located at 5555, 5549 and 5543 Almon Street, Halifax.**

The following was before the Districts 7 & 8 Planning Advisory Committee:

- *A staff memorandum dated June 12, 2015*

Mr. Miles Agar, Planner, presented Case 19862 as described in the staff memorandum dated June 12, 2015.

The Chair opened the floor to any questions of clarifications.

Ms. Kitching inquired what the incentive was for the application to apply through the Schedule Q process rather than through the C-2 designation. Mr. Agar responded that the C-2 zone allows for commercial and mixed use commercial residential buildings and has the potential for large buildings because of the lack of height and density controls. Nevertheless, he stated that residential buildings are required to adhere to R-3 zoning regulations, which would include angle controls.

Mr. Hayter questioned if there had been an initiation report, the rationale for why the traffic impact study was not included in the staff memorandum, and if the Committee would review technical information pertaining to Halifax Water. He highlighted that the traffic study was provided at the public information meeting and he found it to be helpful. Mr. Agar responded that an initiation report was not necessary for this case. He stated that the traffic study was not included because planning policy according to Schedule Q does not stipulate traffic impact policies. He commented that the traffic impact statement had examined the project in terms of nearby construction sites. Mr. Agar highlighted that the consulting engineer's feedback found that there was minimal impact; however, findings would be reviewed by HRM engineers. Regarding Halifax Water information, he stated that it was a technical study. Mr. Agar highlighted that planning staff had not yet formed an overall opinion and the detailed review among internal departments such as Halifax Water was not yet complete.

Councillor Watts questioned if there would be an enlarged sidewalk area on Isleville Street, noting the representation of a wide sidewalk in the rendering. She highlighted how this feature had been attractive to residents. Ms. Kitching asked for a comparison of sidewalk width between the current condition and the proposed sidewalk along Isleville and Almon Streets. Mr. Agar stated that the building was hard to the property line, except for an indentation on the corner of Almon and Isleville and that the sidewalk was part of the right of way and would not be regulated by the development agreement. Mr. Napier commented that it may appear wider as the grass verge was drawn larger in the rendering.

Ms. Miller inquired regarding the heights of nearby developments. She also questioned the use of the second storey above the corner commercial use. Mr. Agar pointed out a property under construction across the street was 7 stories in addition to numerous 4 storey buildings in the area. He responded that there would be a community amenity room above the corner commercial space and a landscaped space on the third floor.

Ms. Kitching asked to clarify if there were trees currently on the verge on Almon Street. Mr. Agar responded that the trees and sidewalk rendering will be removed when the proposal moves forward as it was beyond the property line and part of the right-of-way. Ms. Kitching highlighted how narrow the street was on Almon St.

Mr. Bradfield commented that a number of the renderings showed telephone poles and wiring. He questioned if the utilities could be run underground in consideration of aesthetics and winter storms. Mr. Agar responded that there were policies in place in the downtown for undergrounding wiring; however, none of these applied to the current consideration of the site.

Mr. Hayter questioned what the intent of the rooftop space would be and if the Committee could formulate recommendations for that area. Mr. Agar responded that policy contemplated high quality open space and leisure areas. He suggested that the Committee could comment on the design and layout of the amenity space.

Mr. Bradfield commented on a discussion at the public information meeting regarding HRM by Design legislation around setbacks. He questioned why a wider sidewalk was not possible. Mr. Agar responded that HRM by Design encourages buildings to be close to the street and create an animated street wall; however, there is ability in the downtown to create additional setbacks. The Chair requested clarification if

it would be possible for the Committee to recommend the building be built further back from the property line. Mr. Agar stated that that recommendation would be within the mandate of the Committee.

The Chair stated that the Committee may now provide comments on the proposal.

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Mr. Hayter that the Districts 7 & 8 Planning Advisory Committee has reviewed the application by Michael Napier Architecture, on behalf of Samir Metlej, and recommends approval of the application as contained in the staff memorandum package dated June 12, 2015.

The Committee engaged in discussion on the proposal's design.

Ms. Miller commented that the design could be improved. She questioned the colouring scheme and layout and whether it could be made more visually appealing and less institutional. She commented on the block windows and questioned if they would open for ventilation. Mr. Bradfield also disapproved of the design. He stated the building could benefit from more uniformity.

Councillor Mason stated support for the design and its asymmetry. He indicated concern for the amount of black used on the exterior. He stated support for widening the Almon Street side, and enlarging the Isleville side. Councillor Mason stated support for the street-level interface but indicated concern for wheel chair accessibility on the stairway entry at Almon Street.

Mr. Cooke stated that most people at the public information meeting liked the design. He stated that the project could benefit from a larger setback. He questioned if the sidewalk on Almon Street was replaced would there be sufficient right of way width to create a larger sidewalk and verge.

Councillor Watts commented that residents in the area approved of the design of the building. She stated that an improved entryway on Almon Street may require a greater setback, but was uncertain about its current representation in the drawing and whether vegetation extended the length of Almon Street. She also indicated support for a larger plaza area on Isleville Street. Mr. Agar responded that there would be a concrete raised planter bed on Almon Street and the entrance would step in from the property line. Councillor Watts requested that the landscaping on Almon Street go all the way to the east side of the property.

Mr. Hayter stated that the design was contemporary and modern. He stated that he did not see any materials in the proposal reflective of the nearby area. He echoed the concerns of other members for the width of the sidewalk on Almon Street. Mr. Hayter stated appreciation for the mix of window to wall from an energy standpoint. He recommended that edible vegetation be investigated for the rooftop area. He indicated concern for the second storey terrace and questioned if there would be access to sun. Mr. Agar confirmed that ensuring high quality design at street level as well as high quality exterior construction materials would be in the purview of the Committee's recommendations.

The Committee voiced concern for the choice of black for the ground floor block.

Ms. Kitching questioned if the top storey could be setback slightly to create greater uniformity. She stated she would appreciate a community charrette on colours, and was concerned for the current palette.

The Committee engaged in discussion on the proposal's setbacks.

The Committee stated support for a setback with landscaping extended along Almon Street with a recessed, landscaped area. Ms. Kitching questioned if the corner of Almon and Isleville could be curved to create additional pedestrian space. She highlighted the difference between streetscaping in the North End and downtown Halifax.

Councillor Mason stated it would be beyond purview for the Committee to advocate regarding the sidewalk; however, he indicated that at some point the issue should be addressed by narrowing the street

and making the sidewalk wider. He stated that the Councillors could take this issue to the appropriate staff.

Mr. Bradfield questioned if wind shear was a function of the height of the building and where more wind would be funneled down the street as a result of the proposal. Councillor Watts commented that the undulating design may reduce wind impacts. Mr. Agar confirmed that the design would mitigate the wind, and a report was included on wind impact as Attachment E in the memorandum dated June 12, 2015.

The Committee engaged in discussion on parking.

Councillor Watts commented on parking and family type units. She stated that visitors and eventually service people such as caregivers would need to find parking in the area. She stated concern for the lack of parking in the area and a lack of parking being provided in other developments. She requested that staff examine this situation further as parking stalls are not being created one to one with units.

Councillor Watts highlighted language in the Halifax Peninsula South End Secondary Plan referring to family appropriate type units and encouraging retention of family type housing. She highlighted provisions for soft and hard surface open space, adequate open space, and minimal square footage. She commented that a prescription for density should be looked at within every development agreement. She requested that a density figure be included as part of the proposal and that the Committee comment on unit size in terms of what the community desires the neighborhood to be, ideally a mixture of ages.

Mr. Cooke stated that parking was a consistent concern at public meetings, but that the issue might be considered on a district level, as opposed to development by development. Mr. Hayter suggested that electric charging stations be allocated within the units, as well as spaces for bicycles. Ms. Miller commented that parking spots for caregivers should be close to an accessible location such as an elevator. The Committee agreed that short term visitors such as caregivers served different purposes than accessible parking stalls mandated by building code.

Mr. Agar confirmed that the underground parking entrance was at grade, and then dropped down to a storey and a half underground. He also confirmed that the residents' entrance was also at grade on Isleville Street.

Mr. Cooke stated that opportunity for family type units should be provided and HRM should encourage the idea that families can be satisfied in an apartment. Ms. Miller questioned how many 3 bedroom units should be provided, as families tended to appreciate proximity to other families. Councillor Mason suggested that this discussion could be a Centre Plan Issue. He stated that in Vancouver, fostering families in the urban downtown required a rule of 20% of units being 2 bedrooms. New Westminster requires 10% be 3 bedrooms and 20% be 2 bedrooms and this may be the most aggressive rule in the country.

Mr. Hayter stated approval for the proposed unit mixture as it was. Mr. Bradfield commented that family units should have accessible open space and questioned if this proposal provided enough open space areas, particularly areas highly visible.

Ms. Kitching commented on the commercial space and if commercial units would be built flexibly for other uses if need be. She questioned if there was a need for new space in the area. Mr. Agar suggested that some Schedule Q proposals have included ground floor commercial while others have not. He stated that commercial uses were desired in the area, exist on Almon Street and were fair to consider in this proposal.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Mason to amend the motion to include the following consideration:

- **That the setback on Isleville Street be 30 inches or greater to create a pedestrian plaza space.**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Ms. Kitching, seconded by Ms. Miller to amend the motion to include the following consideration:

- That a modest setback and/or landscaping at grade be implemented to improve the pedestrian experience along Almon Street.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Mr. Hayter, seconded by Mr. Bradfield to amend the motion to include the following consideration:

- That consideration be given to constructing the amenity space corner with lighter colours and building materials more reflective of the surrounding community.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Mr. Hayter, seconded by Mr. Cooke to amend the motion to include the following consideration:

- That consideration be given to edible foods on the rooftop terraces and that access to the rooftop terrace by all residents is maintained.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Mason to amend the motion to include the following consideration:

- That consideration be given to increasing parking spaces and parking designation be given for visitors and service-givers.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Mason to amend the motion to include the following consideration:

- That the development agreement clarifies density and unit size and that consideration be given to 3 bedroom unit configuration.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Ms. Kitching, seconded by Mr. Hayter to amend the motion to include the following consideration:

- That any alterations to the above recommendations be considered as substantive.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The amended motion now reads:

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Mr. Hayter that the Districts 7 & 8 Planning Advisory Committee has reviewed the application by Michael Napier Architecture, on behalf of Samir Metlej, and recommends approval of the application as contained in the staff memorandum package dated June 12, 2015 with consideration to the following matters:

- That the setback on Isleville Street be 30 inches or greater to create a pedestrian plaza space.
- That a modest setback and/or landscaping at grade be implemented to improve the pedestrian experience along Almon Street.

- That consideration be given to constructing the amenity space corner with lighter colours and building materials more reflective of the surrounding community.
- That consideration be given to edible foods on the rooftop terraces and that access to the rooftop terrace by all residents is maintained.
- That consideration be given to increasing parking spaces and parking designation be given for visitors and service-givers.
- That the development agreement clarifies density and unit size and that consideration be given to 3 bedroom unit configuration.
- That any alterations to the above recommendations be considered as substantive.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

8. ADDED ITEMS

Items 8.1 to 8.6 were deferred to the date of the next meeting.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – July 27, 2015

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Andrew Reid
Legislative Assistant