

DISTRICTS 7 & 8 PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

February 19, 2014

PRESENT:

Ms. Jennifer Powley
Mr. Adam Conter
Mr. Brenden Sommerhalder, Chair
Mr. Michael Bradfield
Ms. Sunday Miller
Councillor Wayne Mason

REGRETS:

Councillor Jennifer Watts
Mr. John Czenze
Ms. Katherine Kitching, Vice Chair
Mr. Michael Haddad

STAFF:

Mr. Jillian MacLellan, Planner, Community and Recreation
Ms. Melissa Eavis, Legislative Support
Ms. Hilary Campbell, Planning Technician

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CALL TO ORDER / OPENING REMARKS / PURPOSE OF MEETING	3
2.	Case 18322: Application by Geoff Keddy and Associates for the lands at the corner of Coburg Road and Seymour Street to amend the Municipal Planning Strategy for Halifax and Land Use By-law for Halifax Peninsula to develop a mixed use building through a development agreement.	3
3.	CLOSING COMMENTS	10
4.	ADJOURNMENT	10

1. CALL TO ORDER / OPENING REMARKS / PURPOSE OF MEETING

Mr. Brendan Sommerhalder called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. in Room 1020 of the Kenneth C. Rowe Management Building at 6100 University Avenue, Halifax.

Mr. Sommerhalder described the Public Information Meeting purpose, process, and rules, and introduced the Planning Advisory Committee members in attendance, and the Planner and Applicant.

2. **Case 18322: Application by Geoff Keddy and Associates for the lands at the corner of Coburg Road and Seymour Street to amend the Municipal Planning Strategy for Halifax and Land Use By-law for Halifax Peninsula to develop a mixed use building through a development agreement.**

A staff report dated November 4, 2013 regarding Case 18322 was distributed at the meeting.

Ms. Jill MacLellan, Planner, Community and Recreation Services, presented Case 18322. She provided an overview of the proposal, the current site and its uses, the current zoning and applicable policies, surrounding uses and densities, and where the application is in the planning process.

Mr. Nick Fudge made a presentation on behalf of the applicant. He described the proposed project and existing site context.

Mr. Sommerhalder opened the floor to questions of clarification.

Mr. Owen Carrigan, a resident of Coburg Road, asked how many one bedroom and multi bedroom apartments are in the proposed building. Mr. Carrigan also asked if the applicant considered the one bedroom to be a family unit.

In response, Mr. John Ghosh, Applicant stated that there were thirty-one bedroom units and five multi-bedroom units. He went on to note that one-bedroom units could support a variety of people at various life stages.

Mr. Fudge added that the rental cost per unit would be between \$1500 and \$2000 per month, which would deter students.

Ms. Dulcie Conrad of Pepperell Street asked where the exit and entrances are located and if there are alternative options. Ms. Conrad also asked what was going to be done with the mature trees currently located on the property.

In response, Ms. MacLellan stated that it is still fairly early in the process and the location of entrances would likely change as the project evolves. Ms. MacLellan also

advised that any street tree removal would need to be approved by the urban forester who has not yet conducted an analysis of the project.

Ms. Judy Wells, of Coburg Road, stated that the entrance to the parking garage on Coburg Road may be dangerous and sought confirmation that this is what is being proposed.

Ms. MacLellan confirmed that the current proposal does have a parking garage entrance on Coburg Road. She went on to state that the applicant has provided a traffic study which is being reviewed by HRM's traffic engineers.

Mr. Mark Veysey, a resident of Howe Hall, asked about the construction activities and their potential damage to the community. He also asked if staff could speak toward the safety of the project; the existing and proposed garbage system and the potential impact on neighborhood traffic; the commercial space use and potential commercial tenants, whether the proposed development constitutes blockbusting and if other developers will continue to develop in this pattern; and how the project is being financed.

In response, Ms. MacLellan stated that HRM's construction by-laws regulate construction activity and will ensure the project is executed safely, which is a standard practice throughout Halifax. Regarding the garbage system, she stated that the requirements would likely be the same as those of any multi-unit dwelling in HRM and pick-up can be negotiated through the Development Agreement process. Ms. MacLellan was unable to speak to the issue of other developers proposing similar projects as this is a site-specific application and it would be difficult to predict how other developers will react. Further that staff does not have knowledge as to how the project is being funded.

Mr. Fudge stated that the intent is to rent the commercial space out as office space. Mr. Ghosn added that the commercial space would improve the streetscape and residential uses would be inappropriate. He went on to address an earlier concern regarding parking and stated that additional commercial space was eliminated from the project so extra parking spaces could be created. In regards to garbage collection, the proposed project would be an improvement to the current situation as it would be contained within the building and not visible from the street.

Ms. Mary Clancey, a resident of Spring Garden Road, asked if there were any regulations limiting how many individuals could live in an apartment.

Mr. Ghosn responded that one to two individuals typically live in a one-bedroom apartment.

Ms. Molly Mulroney of Coburg Road asked for clarification regarding at grade parking and whether this would be for the residential tenants or for the commercial customers. She expressed concern with the lack of parking for proposed commercial space.

Mr. Fudge commented that this was a good point but that a decision had not been made.

Mr. Sebastian Dancin, a resident of one of the units being replaced by the current proposal on Seymour Street, asked how the additional parking would affect the intersection at Coburg Road and Seymour Street, which is already crowded. He also asked how the project would benefit the neighborhood. He commented that a tight knit community already exists and this project would be destructive.

Mr. Fudge responded that the traffic study will be made available on the HRM website and that any parking at grade would be decided by the Planning Department. Mr. Fudge added that single unit dwellings are not appropriate for this site.

Mr. Nathan Rogers, a resident of Connolly Street, asked what percentage of the rooftop is covered by the penthouse and how the applicant confirmed which surrounding properties were being used as student housing.

Mr. Fudge responded that the penthouse takes up less than fifty percent (50%) of the rooftop but he was unsure of the exact percentage. Mr. Fudge stated that the applicant compiled housing data from canvassing the neighborhood and through observation and that these figures may not be completely accurate. Dalhousie University also contributed some data.

Mr. Conner Reed, a resident of Lemarchant Street, asked whether there was an expected target date for the project to begin construction.

Ms. MacLellan responded that a planning application takes approximately one year and if approved, the developer could move forward with the project after that point.

Ms. Mary Clancy, a resident of Spring Garden Road, asked how many digressions from current policy are being requested with this application.

Ms. MacLellan reiterated the details of the current project and stated that requested amendments included height, units permitted, setbacks, parking, amenity space, and changes to permitted uses and location.

Mr. David Gordon, a resident of Waverly, requested clarification around student housing, if this development constitutes gentrification, and if the intention of this development is to change the socio economic status of the neighborhood.

Mr. Fudge clarified that this development is not intended to be student housing.

Mr. Peter March, a business owner in the neighborhood, expressed concern with traffic in the area. Noting his dissatisfaction that the traffic report was not available to the public; adding that it is already a congested and dangerous intersection.

Ms. MacLellan responded that the traffic report will be made available on the case website the following day.

Mr. Sommerhalder opened the floor for comments.

Mr. Mike Kilfoy, a resident of Henry Street, asked how the pricing model compares to that of the student housing in the area.

Mr. Ghosn responded that students generally pay approximately \$500 per bedroom and this development would be approximately three times that price.

Ms. Margo Christy, a resident of Waterloo Street, asked if the unit on the top floor is in addition to the five stories; to which Mr. Fudge confirmed that was correct. Ms. Christy asked if there would be any green space at ground level.

Mr. Fudge stated that there are setbacks along the back of the site adjacent to the Mona Campbell Building and along the south side of the project.

Ms. Beverly Miller, a resident of South Street, cited a Stantec report that stated there is currently enough land supply to support thirty-nine years of growth on the Halifax Peninsula without disturbing existing neighborhoods and this should be taken into consideration. She went on to ask if current vacancy rates are being considered and stated that there are many "for rent" signs throughout the peninsula. She also asked how one-bedroom units increase density.

Ms. MacLellan stated that the Stantec Report should be considered when looking at Municipal Planning Strategy amendments. In response to the question regarding vacancy rates, she stated that staff will consider existing housing in the area but vacancy rates are not specifically considered. She stated that staff will consider the types of units being proposed and whether density would be increased.

Mr. Danny Chedrawe, a resident of Spring Garden Road, stated that he is in favor of the development because it contributes to investment within the community, that the architect is well respected, and the developer and his past projects have a good reputation. He went on to state that he was confident this would be a positive contribution to the community, would improve the streetscape along Coburg Road, and complement the neighboring Mona Campbell Building. He stated that universities contribute to the local economy, though it can be challenging to live in close proximity to these institutions. He also expressed support for one-bedroom units as he felt that two or three bedroom units would attract students. He recommended that the developer remove the garage entrance on Coburg Road and revert that space to commercial use.

Mr. Owen Carrigan, a resident of Coburg Road, expressed gratitude toward the developer who has made positive contributions to Halifax. He went on to state that although the applicant has renovated these units in the past in hopes of attracting a different type of tenant, his efforts have been unsuccessful. He went on to state that

this development will be no different and that it will not attract a different type of tenant. He was concerned for the proposed sixteen balconies that overhang Seymour Street and stated that these are dangerous in such a high traffic residential area. He also noted that the Mona Campbell building although large, simply replaced an existing large building so the change was not substantial. Other large buildings in the area including The Carlyle have significant setbacks. He reiterated his concern regarding the balconies along Seymour Street, and expressed concern regarding the proposed commercial space and questioned the need for additional commercial uses in the neighborhood. He also expressed concern for the types of commercial uses that could be located there and the lack of landscaping in the proposed project.

Mr. Mark Veysey, a resident of Howe Hall, asked how long the project would take to be completed after construction begins. He also asked if there was a response to the correspondence as there appeared to be mixed emotions.

Ms. MacLellan responded that the process for a Municipal Planning Strategy amendment usually takes about a year, although timelines can vary. She also clarified that the correspondence being referred to was from staff's initiation report to Council (November 4, 2013 staff report) and copies are included in the handout.

Mr. Keddy, the project architect, clarified that once construction has begun; it would take approximately ten to twelve months to complete this particular project.

Ms. Mary Clancy, a resident of Spring Garden Road, commented that she was not concerned with the types of tenants in the building but was more concerned with the density of the development and potential traffic issues. She stated that that is already a bad corner and the safety of children and elderly residents should be considered. Further, that it was unfortunate that the traffic study was not made available prior to the meeting. She Ms. Clancy was not in support of the proposal.

Ms. Christy, a resident of Coburg Road, stated that although she understands the financial benefits to the developer, she was not in support of the proposal. Ms. Christy commented that she would have preferred to see a townhouse development and that Halifax does not have the climate, mentality, or infrastructure for walking and cycling. As well, that the tenants of the proposed building would likely be car owners and that that the one-bedroom units will be used as student housing. Ms. Christy suggested that the units would be too small for retirees who require more space, reiterating that townhouses would be more appropriate.

Mr. Sommerhalder reminded members of the public that submissions could be made to the Clerk's Office.

Lindsay, a resident of Bedford, stated that it was unfortunate that students are being stereotyped as undesirable tenants and did not think the building was anti-student.

Mr. Konresh Rai, a resident of Bedford and former Dalhousie student, commented that \$1500 per unit is expensive. He stated that he is in support of the proposed commercial space and that it would help the Dalhousie campus; that the additional residential space on the peninsula made sense, and as per the Stantec report, Halifax Peninsula missed its growth targets. He also stated that the proposed building is architecturally pleasing and would encourage people to live on the peninsula. Further, that parking should not be an issue in this location because of access to public transit and walking and that this building would make the neighborhood more vibrant and the height is appropriate.

Chris, a resident of Edward Street, stated that he was in support of the building and that it was architecturally attractive. He also supports the commercial space proposed and the development would support walking and cycling in the community.

Ms. Jane Merchant, an owner of Coburg Coffee located on Coburg Road, commented on the proposed building's architectural attractiveness. She and her co-owner of Coburg Coffee have a long history in the neighborhood noting that her primary objection was to the commercial component of the building as this would allow an unfair advantage to the tenants of the commercial space. She was concerned that HRM is giving an advantage to a new investor that is not offered to current businesses. She stated that prior to starting a business she had done considerable research and based her location decision on the confidence that no land use by-laws or regulation changes would occur without a broad and thorough review, which this site-specific zoning does not entail. She commented that the proposed building, specifically the commercial component, would be more appropriate for a higher density zone and the thirty-five units proposed with this building does not warrant additional commercial space. She also added that the Neighborhood Commercial designation currently in place does not allow for commercial development that adversely affects the surrounding neighborhood. Further, that the proposal is inconsistent with the intent of the Land Use By-law. She reiterated that allowing commercial space on this property was unfair and would lead to the financial ruin of businesses in the area.

Ms. Beverly Miller, a resident of South Street, stated that existing zoning by-laws and policies have been developed with public input and should only be changed due to necessity. She also noted that there are increased vacancies in the area and that Dalhousie would be opening a new residence in the near future, which may make one-bedroom units unmarketable. She expressed concern with noise being generated during construction and stated that although students occupy the current dwellings on the site; this could change in the future. She commented that the development was not necessary to improve the quality of the neighborhood and the balconies fronting on Seymour Street pose a particular safety concern. She was further concerned with the potential noise generated from the balconies during the evening, the lack of setbacks from the street such as those found at Lemarchant Tower, and the effect of the development on the surrounding low-rise residential neighborhood. She reiterated her opposition to the proposal and stated traffic would also be an issue and that staff should not recommend approval.

Margot, a resident of Waterloo Street, stated that the site does need to be developed and she would prefer to see a development that was setback from the street as the current design detracts from the comfort of the area. She noted that the project would benefit from more green space. As well, that the proposed building complements the Mona Campbell Building but does not fit with the surrounding residential neighborhood. She suggested that a more historical architectural style would be more appropriate while also keeping the benefit of balcony space. She commented that residents of the South End feel bombarded with these types of applications and suggested that residential neighborhoods do not need more density.

Mr. Nathan Rodgers, a resident of Connolly Street, stated that the proposed development is generally a good project with a lot of merit. He supported the previous comment that the Coburg Street garage entrance should be removed and transitioned back to commercial space as traffic would be an issue. He expressed concern for the offset intersection at Vernon and Seymour Street, suggesting alternatives should be considered. He also suggested that HRM adopt an area wide by-law amendment to limit penthouse areas to less than ten percent (10%) of the total roof. Further, that the Needs Convenience Store currently located on the property should be invited to stay on as a tenant

Ms. Christine Townsend, a resident of Argyle Street, stated that she was in support of the development and that this was exactly the type of residence she and her partner would like to live in and would be beneficial to the peninsula. She also stated that the height was appropriate especially considering the location on a corner lot. She supported the lack of setbacks which improves walkability. Also, that the mixed use aspect was important and all developments should have this aspect. She noted support for increasing density which is a goal of the Regional Plan and growth targets.

Mr. Peter Marsh, a resident of Jubilee Road, commented that the standard for development in Halifax should be very high. He noted that HRM should pay particular attention to how other cities integrate universities into the city fabric without destroying neighborhoods. He suggested that creating a contrast between the university and surrounding neighborhood would allow the Victorian character of the area to be protected. He concluded that it was objectionable to construct a building that is only acceptable as the standard should be much higher. He reiterated his concern for the traffic issues the current proposal presents.

In response, Mr. Ghosn commented the final project will be acceptable to residents of the neighborhood and that he did not want to propose a project that would make the community uncomfortable. He clarified that the target tenants would not be disruptive to the community and that traffic would likely be improved with this development, as it would decrease the number of individuals moving through the site. Further, that parking would be increased which would improve the parking in the area.

3. CLOSING COMMENTS

Councilor Mason stated that public input is valued and he thanked the Chair of the meeting for his hard work.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Melissa Eavis
Legislative Support