



**DISTRICTS 7 & 8 PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
December 3, 2015**

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

REGRETS: Ms. Sarah MacDonald
Mr. Joe Metlege

STAFF: Ms. Jillian MacLellan, Planner
Mr. Andrew Reid, Legislative Assistant

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 PAC are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/D78PAC/151203d78pac-agenda.php>

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m., and adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Goldberg Computer Science Building (CIBC Auditorium), 6050 University Avenue, Halifax, NS

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

2.1 Case 19858 - Application by W.M. Fares Group, for the lands of 6345 Coburg Road, to amend the Municipal Planning Strategy for Halifax and Land Use By-law for Halifax Peninsula to develop a multiple-unit residential building through a development agreement.

Ms. Jillian MacLellan, Planner, presented Case 19858. She described the site context as located within the Halifax Peninsula area, its designation medium density residential and the zoning as R-2. She stated that the site was most recently used as a student residence and for chaplain services. She highlighted a number of design guidelines proposed by the applicant during the time of initiation, which included a 4-5 storey building stepping down to 3 stories on Larch Street and appropriate setbacks from neighbouring properties. Ms. MacLellan described the proposed building as a 6 storey building, 62 ft in height, with enclosed parking on the first level. She clarified that the height precinct of the site was 35 ft. She noted that the vehicular and residential access was proposed off Coburg Road, and there would be a 10 ft setback from the neighbouring multiunit dwelling to the east. She also noted that the proposed building would step down to 3 storeys north to Larch Street and transition with a 15 ft setback. She requested feedback regarding the proposed use, the overall design, the proposed height, and relation of the proposal to neighbouring properties, what features might be retained on the property, what may be more appropriate in place of the proposal, and what qualities and characteristics of the area staff should be aware of. Ms. MacLellan described the planning application process, noting that the purpose of the meeting was for information sharing and that no decisions had yet been made.

Mr. Jacob JeBailey, Architect, WM Fares, described the proposal. He noted the 89.5% site coverage, 19 below grade parking stalls, 28 residential units, the proposed building's pitched roof, and 15 foot setback towards Larch Street. He highlighted significant grade changes with the site. Mr. JeBailey described the proposed building's mixture of units. He also described the materials of the proposed building as high quality glass, cedar shake cladding, wood cladding for the taller portion, and composite panels for the 3 storey level and light grey brick.

The Chair outlined ground rules for speaking. He opened the floor to comments from the public.

Ms. Cathy Coady, resident of the South End, stated concern that there were many single family dwellings in proximity to the proposed development. She requested the current appearance of the property be maintained. She stated concern for the lot coverage in terms of eliminating greenspace and the intrusion of balconies and the combined effect on abutting neighbours. She questioned why the proposal was being considered where the municipality had refused smaller applications in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Blair Miller, resident of the South End, stated that the presentations highlighted large multiunit buildings but did not pay attention to the existing fabric of single family units. He echoed the previous speaker's comments regarding the eligibility of the application in view of smaller additions or accessory uses being refused in the area. He requested that the neighbourhood be brought back into a single family fabric habitable for families. Mr. Miller requested that a dwelling be built that complemented single unit dwellings.

Regarding the eligibility of the proposal, Ms. MacLellan responded that the applicant's rationale for development was its location between properties of a high density residential zone. She also stated that the property's previous ownership was the Catholic Archdiocese and that the applicant was interested in

exploring a use beyond the R-2 zone. She stated that this was the context in which the application was initiated by Regional Council and the meeting was to gather feedback on whether it would be acceptable to change the use of the zone.

Mr. Bruce Tinkham, resident of Larch St, questioned the ownership of the property; would the ownership be subject to the approval of the application; was the Municipality aware of traffic concerns in terms of speeding and would this be considered; was the same zoning or designation set in place during the time of the other multiunit buildings mentioned; would the proposal provide rentals or condominiums; and, would parking provisions be consistent with other parking needs in the area and with Municipal policy. He echoed the previous speakers' concerns regarding the increase in density. He also questioned the target date of development and he questioned if the condominium to the east could be purchased by the applicant to increase the size of the development. Mr. Tinkham also stated concern for the possible use of the proposal as executive suite short term rentals.

Ms. MacLellan responded that there was new ownership on the property. She stated that a traffic impact statement was provided as part of the application and would be considered closely and that staff would consider traffic mitigation. Ms. MacLellan stated that the multiunit buildings were constructed before the current zoning regulations and secondary plan came into effect. She stated that the parking requirements were slightly less than what the Land Use Bylaw requires and staff was currently examining how requirements could be revised. Ms. MacLellan responded regarding the target date that a planning strategy amendment usually required one year. Ms. MacLellan highlighted that condominium versus rental options could not be regulated in the Bylaw. Regarding use of the rentals, Ms. MacLellan clarified that the proposal was not confirmed to be used as executive suites.

Mr. Cesar Saleh responded that WM Fares does not own the property but are acting on behalf of the applicant. He stated there was no intention to accumulate nearby properties and only those indicated in the presentation would be considered by Council. Regarding density, Mr. Saleh stated that it would be 63 people from 28 units. Regarding rentals versus condominiums he stated that they could not be determined at this time. He stated that if approved in the summer of 2016, construction would begin shortly thereafter, with a usual duration of 14 months. Mr. JeBailey highlighted that the building would be of high quality and this would determine the target audience.

Mr. Christian Curran, resident of the South End, stated there was no strategic plan for the neighbourhood and many of the concerns were much larger than the site. He echoed concerns regarding traffic. He stated that there were many properties along Jubilee Street which could accommodate a property of this size and he stated concern for the setting of precedent and the lack of vision over the development of the corridors. He stated that the appeal of the neighbourhood was retention of the single unit fabric. He highlighted that the rationale for higher density on the peninsula was not sufficient for this application. He stated concern against planning on a case by case basis.

Ms. MacLellan responded that the Regional Centre plan was currently being worked on; however, site specific amendments were being permitted in the meantime. Regarding precedent, she stated that each applicant requesting a plan amendment would need to demonstrate that circumstances had changed since the Municipal Planning Strategy came into effect and that this would be subject to staff's analysis.

Mr. Steve Dolan, of Larch Street, noted changes to the neighbourhood over the past 15 years. He stated concern that the application did not fit the current bylaw in place and voiced opposition to its approval. Mr. Dolan noted concerns for traffic on Coburg Road and questioned if there were any larger traffic plans for Coburg Road. Mr. Dolan stated concern for current shortcutting on Larch Street as a consequence of development. He requested the square footage per unit be listed. He questioned the square footage of the current building on the site. Mr. Dolan stated concern that there was no comparison between the current use and proposed. He stated concern for the rental market in terms of the increase in vacancy rates. He also stated concern that the current property owners were not present.

Regarding traffic, Ms. MacLellan stated she was not aware of any current plans for traffic improvements. She also confirmed that a vacancy rates assessment was not currently held by the Municipality for the area.

Mr. JeBailey responded that the unit size varies from 800 sq ft. to 11,000 sq.ft. He noted an error in the presentation, stating that the lot coverage was 65% and not 89%. Ms. MacLellan added that the definition of coverage was anything above ground.

Mr. John Carmichael, resident of the South End, stated that the footprint was too large for the site. He requested that the greenspace on corner of the site remain. He questioned if a smaller building had been proposed for the site or was there a possibility. Ms. MacLellan responded that this was the only proposal received to date.

Mr. Neil Ritchie, of the South End, stated concern for loss of the greenspace on the site. He also stated concern for the overall density in the neighbourhood resulting in noise and disturbance. He highlighted the length of time change has been promised to the district via the Centre Plan. He stated concern that there was an absence of an overall plan to govern the neighbourhood.

Mr. Bill Oland, resident of Larch Street, echoed the previous speakers' concerns. He also stated concern for the degradation of property on the peninsula, stating that a change in the norm for property upkeep has resulted in the loss in quality of life for those in the area. He stated that landlords were not held to the same standard as private property owners. He also stated concern for transportation corridors such as Coburg Road and Chebucto Road because of the narrowness of the roads. Mr. Oland stated if pedestrian flow could not be improved, the situation would worsen. He stated that the parking entrance on Coburg Road may be a dangerous location, as it would cause vehicles to slow down and make a turn into a sloped entrance.

Ms. Maida Murray, resident of South End, stated concern for the traffic conditions on Coburg Road and that the proposal would affect transit service due to traffic entering the proposed development, the resulting in a loss of greenspace, and the limited setback. She also stated concern for a precedent being set resulting in disruption of neighbourhoods' character.

Mr. Ross Haynes, resident of the South End, stated concern for traffic problems. He stated that the building form was inappropriate for the area. Mr. Hanes stated concern for the possibility that the applicant would conduct short term leases. He suggested that the proposal be turned down as it was incompatible with the residential community. Mr. Hanes stated concern for degradation resulting in destruction and construction of buildings not consistent with the neighbourhood. He stated that more owner-occupied dwellings conforming to the existing bylaw were desired for the area.

Ms. Coady questioned if an environmental impact study had been created for the site. She voiced concern for potential wind tunnels, shadows, and waste collection. Ms. MacLellan responded that a wind or shadow study had not been considered for the proposal as this was not requested below buildings of a 10 storey range.

Mr. Curran stated that parking garage should be on Coburg Road as currently proposed and not Larch Street. In terms of design, he voiced approval for different kinds of materials but stated opposition to the peaked roof. He questioned if there was an alternative to create a barrier from the neighbourhood to the north.

Ms. Catherine Haynes, of the South End, noted regarding the meeting process that comments on the design were incongruous as the overall acceptability of the proposal was under question. Ms. Hanes stated that the discussion should be around whether all multiple unit dwellings were appropriate for the area.

Ms. MacLellan responded that since initiation, staff would be looking for feedback on the appropriateness of the proposal. She encouraged further comments to be forwarded to her.

Mr. Dolan cited examples of retrofitted properties on Coburg used as professional buildings in terms of their quality. He stated these developments were made possible though they had fewer units. He questioned the sensibility of allowing the proposal to proceed.

Mr. Tinkham suggested that the possibility the proposal would be for short term rentals was of extreme significance. He suggested that any property approved on the site should be of high quality and for long term use.

Mr. David Gardner, resident of the area, stated concern for the proximity of the proposal to the abutting condominium. He questioned the current setback. He stated concern for the lack of greenspace fronting Coburg Road. Mr. Gardner commented that the design did not look like other dwellings in the neighbourhood. He noted the combination of different materials was without precedent in the area.

Ms. MacLellan responded that the applicant was proposing a 10 ft setback from the abutting condominium to the east, but the balconies extended into this setback. She stated that the Land Use Bylaw requirements for an R3 zone would be a minimum setback of 10 feet, subject to angle controls. She stated underground uses such as garages were not restricted through the Bylaw.

Mr. Haynes stated concern for the proposal blocking light from the abutting condominium. He commented that short term rentals or rentals of any kind were not desired in the neighbourhood.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Andrew Reid
Legislative Assistant