Planning Board Public Hearing Minutes
Site Plan Review (Section 10) Modification
Library Commons (#108A) – Way Finders, Inc.
193-203 Chestnut St., 117 Essex St., and Parcels 005-02-005 and 005-02-008
(meeting is being recorded)

On Tuesday, February 26, 2019, the Holyoke Planning Board held a Public Hearing regarding the above referenced Site Plan Review for the property located at 193-203 Chestnut St., 117 Essex St., and Parcels 005-02-005 and 005-02-008. The hearings were held in the 4th Floor Conference Room, City Hall Annex, 20 Korean Veterans Plaza, Holyoke, Massachusetts at 5:30 p.m.

Attendance:
Planning Board
Eileen Regan ................. Chairman
John Kelley ................. Vice-Chairman
Mimi Panitch ............... Secretary
Gustavo Acosta ............. Member

Planning Staff
Jeffrey Burkott .............. Principal Planner
Curtis Wiemann ............. Planner I

Others Present
Peter Serafino .............. Way Finders
David Reyes ................. 193 Elm Street
Marc Sternick .............. Dietz & Company

EILEEN REGAN, at 5:34 p.m., called for a motion to open the Public Hearing. A motion was made by MIMI PANITCH and seconded by GUSTAVO ACOSTA. The motion carried 4-0.

PETER SERAFINO provided the history of the project noting that a 1-year time extension had been granted in 2018 as substantial construction had not occurred. He explained that the current request was to modify the plans to include the demolition of 117 Essex Street as it was too costly to repair and the reduction in the scope of the project from 47 apartments to 38. A list of revisions was submitted dated 1/22/18. Construction was anticipated to begin within the middle of the 2019.

MARC STERNICK compared the approved plan to the amended plan noting the changes were relative to removal of plantings, extension of the sidewalk, and the reduction of apartment units as a result of the demolition.

MIMI PANITCH question if the demolition of 117 Essex Street affected receiving historic tax credits. MARC STERNICK responded, yes, noting that only 210 Elm Street qualifies for historic tax credits.

MARC STERNICK explained the changes included an additional fire hydrant, a new water main across Chestnut Street, the playscape substituted with a grassy area, the removal of the Barlow and associated planting beds, and realignment of all utilities.

MIMI PANITCH questioned if the natural gas moratorium affects their project. MARC STERNICK responded yes noting that underground propane tanks will have to be installed, which are currently not illustrated on the plans. until. PETER SERAFINO added that the proposed tank equipment will allow the tank to be fueled with either propane of natural gas. JEFFREY BURKOTT noted that Fire Department approval will be required as well as the location added to the plans.

MARC STERNICK continued reviewing the changes noting the minor revisions to the grading and drainage. Stormwater calculation were currently being updated; amended plans will be submitted to the Stormwater Authority.

EILEEN REGAN asked why the previously approved landscaping has been removed. MARC STERNICK replied due to cost constraints noting that the 30" Maple Tree previously cited to be removed will be preserved.

MARC STERNICK stated that also due to costs, all the concrete walkways have been replaced with bituminous. JEFFREY BURKOTT noted that this change was not listed on the revision list.

MARC STERNICK, in further reviewing the landscaping, stated that approved trees to be planted would be eliminated and eventually additional funding would be sought to install the playscape area.

The Board noted that the amended plan has been reduced to be far less appealing; City trees may be available to the Applicant.
MARC STERNICK stated that at 193 Chestnut Street, the existing front porches would be removed but the roof overhang would remain; plantings would be installed under them.

JEFFREY BURKOTT questioned if the Applicant could plant something more visually appealing than Lillyturf, like azaleas and rhododendrons. The Applicant was amenable to upgrading the Landscaping. MIMI PANITCH noted that she would appreciate any improvements to the landscaping since there have been so many other cut backs in the project.

JEFFREY BURKOTT questioned if the Applicant would consider plantings/fencing around the Barlow site to avoid the potential for it becoming a parking lot and snow stockpiling. MARC STERNICK stated that budgeting may allow for shrubbery.

The Board noted their disappointment regarding the elimination of many elements of the approved plan especially for a grassy area. The Applicant noted that they hope to find a donor to cover this expense.

Additional changes were noted regarding the exterior elevations, front entrances, and construction materials. The Board requested renderings of the proposed exterior and information regarding the longevity of the exterior materials. MARC STERNICK replied that images will be provided adding that when properly maintained, the proposed corrugated building metal should last 20 years.

MARC STERNICK stated that the use of fiber cement panels at the back side of the building will allow an artist from the Care Center to fund a large community art display.

MARC STERNICK noted the internal floor plan changes to the nurse’s residents’ building were requested by the National Park Service in order to receive historic tax credits. PETER SERAFINO added that no demolition delay had been imposed by the Historic Commission.

The Board questioned the amendments to the lighting plan were as several of the lights have been removed along with the proposed play area. MARC STERNICK responded that it appeared that one was needed.

The Board reviewed the outstanding issues that need to be addressed and questioned if the project intended to be phased. PETER SERAFINO responded noting that the intent was to do the construction phase all at once but the potential did exist that one building may be ready for occupancy prior to another.

JEFFREY BURKOTT in reviewing the Staff comment letter dated 1-26-19 the following was noting:
#2 – All revisions (tanks, materials, details) should be added to the revision list;
#3 – Plans must be signed and sealed by the appropriate designer;
#4 – Phasing of the project meant that in order to receive a temporary certificate of occupancy permit, some portions of the project may need to be completed which may not fall in line with their schedule. It was imperative to identify ahead of time if phasing was going to occur to avoid unnecessary delays, creating a legal agreement, or posting of bonds;
#8 – Grassy area upgrades (playscape) requiring additional costs could not be agreed upon at this time;
#9 – Fencing/landscaping around the grassy area at the Barlow will be considered;
#10 – The word “Planting Bed” will be removed where there are not planting beds proposed;
#11 – The Maple tree will be added to the plan;
#12 – The switching of tree species will be explained;
#13 – The planter detail and maintenance plan remain outstanding; and
#14 – #1 bullet, Tree Warden approval is required for planting in close proximity to the right-of-way;
#2 bullet, the number of plantings represented do not match to the legend; and #3 bullet, if quantities differ between the plant list and symbology, the higher number will prevail. Revisions to the plans will be required.

EILEEN REGAN asked for those that wished to speak for or against, or to ask questions to come forward. No one was forthcoming.

Adjournment – At 6:57 p.m., due to outstanding information to come before the Board, EILEEN REGAN called for a motion to continue the Public Hearing. A motion was made by JOHN KELLEY and seconded by MIMI PANITCH to continue the Public Hearing until March 26, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. The motion carried 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Mimi Panitch, Secretary

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