

FINAL MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Historic District Commission of the Town of Greenwich
Wednesday, September 12, 2018, 7:00pm
Mazza Room, Town Hall

ATTENDEES PRESENT

COMMISSIONERS: STEPHEN BISHOP – CHAIRMAN, DARIUS TORABY, ARIS CRIST

ALTERNATES: MARTIN KAGAN, SERENA BECHTEL

ABSENT: FI FI SHERIDAN, KATHRIN BROWN, ANNIE MCGINNIS, MARIE WILLIAMS,
CYNTHIA SMITH

Mr. Bishop called meeting to order at 7:04pm

1. ADVISORY OPINION TO PLANNING & ZONING

171 Greenwich Avenue

Owners: Winter-HPG 171 Greenwich Avenue LLC

Represented by: Paul V. Giammona, Crown Architecture and Anthony Totilo
Architects

Review revised window plans for front façade, second and third floors.
Continued from July 2018 meeting

Mr. Friedman [Crown Architecture] began his presentation and recapped his proposal from the last HDC meeting, July 11, 2018 and stated that the applicant was to have an exterior renovation to the second and third floor while maintaining the existing conditions on the retail (street) level floor where Club Monaco currently is. Further, the applicant proposes to remove the existing glass brick, relocating windows within the existing opening as well as where there aren't any windows - infilling those portions with stucco and a paint filler to match.

Mr. Friedman went on to discuss additional details from the July meeting. One being the windowsill at the second floor and the requirement that the band that needs to read Club Monaco as well as a cornice detail at the top of the building to match the band of the Club Monaco (as described).

Mr. Bishop asked exactly where this cornice was located. Mr. Friedman responded that it was at the top.

Mr. Friedman offered two options for the HDC members to consider. The first option has a window configuration of double hung with a transom across and an option of divided light. As of speaking to the owner, this option is one that is no longer being pursued. Rather, the

option that removes the divided light in the center windows that are fixed creating a picture frame that offers an aesthetically appealing design of the façade while also incorporating the transom all the way across the second and third floors. Mr. Friedman further stated that we wanted to give the occupants the ability to have unobstructed views. We want to minimize the obstruction while still keeping the divided light that is seen along Greenwich Avenue. So the compromise from past discussions is to remove the divided light on the center along both floors while still maintaining the transom all the way across.

Mr. Bishop inquired about the color of the windows.

Mr. Friedman responded that it would be more of a bronze rather than a black.

Mr. Toraby asked if the client was going to submit a corrected elevation.

Mr. Friedman said that the goal tonight was to get something approved and then something could be provided to HDC members.

Mr. Toraby then inquired about the cornice – although I agree it would be a good treatment for the façade, the size of the molded profile is only 6 inches so it is miniscule. It would have to be 2X or 2.5X that size in order in order to be meaningful and visible.

Mr. Friedman responded that he would update and provide specs on the cornice portion that would include size and profile so that portion could be approved by HDC members. He continued that this element was being proposed to make a statement as well as match the Club Monaco band. The cornice is to complement what Club Monaco already has.

Mr. Toraby respected the thought behind the proposed cornice detailing but felt that to make it effective, it must be 2.5 X as big.

The applicant is not opposed to his suggestion and will provide other options.

Mr. Toraby continued and commented, in terms of the construction, the applicant is showing a demolition drawing and asked the applicant to clarify and asked about the size and limits of the masonry opening – from one end to the other.

Mr. Friedman stated that what is currently existing here, has already been framed out so anything we need to adjust for the new windows and the transom we can provide additional structure and the drawings show that we are providing a lintel for all of the details. He further added that based on past discussions of where the window sits, research revealed that the window sits significantly in the center of wall.

Mr. Bishop stated that he would like to proceed with ruling on the application and asked the members if they were in favor of the new window design

Motion to approve the windows with the transom and the center window being open with the applicant to forward final drawings

Moved by Ms. Bechtel
Seconded by Mr. Crist

Voting in favor: Mr. Bishop, Mr. Toraby, Mr. Crist, Mr. Kagan, Ms. Bechtel

Unanimously approved

The applicant is to work on the cornice and to return with a cornice design

2. ADVISORY OPINION TO PLANNING & ZONING

10 Glenville Street (NRHP) / 350 Pemberwick road (Historic Overlay)

Owner: The Mill Owners Company LLC

Represented by: Granoff Architects

Review proposal to convert the majority of existing office space in the 1881 Building, the ground floor level of the Centro Mill Building and the majority of the 1981 Building to market rate residential apartments

Mr. Schacter (partial owner of property) began his presentation and spoke of the purchase history of the site and its restoration.

Mr. Granoff then began to discuss the proposal of repurposing the three distinct buildings. Both the 1881 Building and the Centro Building are partially but not completely visible from the road. The 1981 Building while visible is non-descript and set far back from the street and is slightly camouflaged by trees. The conversion is 100% office use to 100% residential use.

1881 BUILDING

Beginning with the 1881 Building, Mr. Granoff showed various before and after elevations. Brick would be restored as needed. The windows were mostly replaced about 8 years ago (approved by HDC). The interior will be gutted. The two “bubbles” shown in the east and west elevation drawings show a conversion of a window opening to a door because those apartments will have terraces. The doors will be “French doors” with a similar divided light pattern as the window. The concept being “it was always there”.

Mr. Bishop asked for site clarification. Mr. Granoff responded that the three-story is ‘Byram River’ side and the two-story is the “passage side” offering a walkway from the small parking lot to get to Centro. The walkway will be completely landscaped and embellished. Private terraces/patios will also be included on that ‘passage side’ and will be privately enclosed due to sensitive landscaping (first floor units only).

Mr. Bishop asked if the windows that had been approved by HDC were to remain.

Mr. Granoff confirmed that they would remain.

Mr. Granoff said that the proposed French doors would mimic the present windows.

Mr. Bishop asked Mr. Granoff to detail his restoration plans for the brick.

Mr. Granoff responded that lime exists on some of the brick and that cleaning is required but not repointing. Mr. Bishop reminded him that brick is a sensitive material and Mr. Granoff agreed and said that he was well aware of the care required for old brick.

Mr. Toraby inquired about the patio fencing. Mr. Granoff responded that the fencing would be 'green' not man-made one. He also added that exterior lighting would not be attached to the building.

Mr. Bishop suggested that a vote be taken on each building separately. The HDC members approved.

Motion to approve the proposed design as presented for the "1881 Building"

Moved by Mr. Toraby

Seconded by Mr. Kagan

Voting in favor: Mr. Bishop, Mr. Toraby, Mr. Crist, Mr. Kagan, Ms. Bechtel

Unanimously approved

Mr. Toraby inquired about the air conditioning. Mr. Granoff responded that it had not yet been designed. Mr. Bishop further added that HDC's approval then is on condition that the air conditioning mechanicals would not be visible. Mr. Granoff understood and agreed.

1981 BUILDING

Mr. Granoff next presented the "1981 Building" and is sited on the other side of the Byram River on Glenville Street. He further noted that the red brick does match the 1881 building. Mr. Granoff is proposing that wherever there is a living room plan, that two windows will have a steel lenth inserted and it will be opened up to a larger expansion of glass. Also being proposed is the addition of steel terraces where the windows are to be widened. The proposed windows offer a variation from the present monotony of the present window style. The brick is to remain the same. Also to be added is a roof top amenity/deck. The same railing detail will be used as the terraces.

Mr. Toraby inquired about the roof railings and asked why they weren't continuous as they are in one area, not the complete area.

Mr. Granoff responded that the waterside is considered the occupied area and the 'non-water side' (the other half) is to be used for mechanical equipment. The roof is about 30,000sq feet.

Mr. Toraby then asked the location of the structural system.

Mr. Granoff replied that the building is a steel frame building (metal deck) and is a very straightforward structure.

Mr. Granoff further added that the proposal includes filling in a piece of the building (an open parking area) and it is to be enclosed and turned into apartments.

Mr. Bishop asked if all brand new windows will be brought in and what is being proposed.

Mr. Granoff confirmed and added that the exact window had yet to be determined and offered to look at the company that did the 1881 Building windows.

Mr. Bishop suggested a double hung window with a pane.

Mr. Granoff stated that he is showing double hung and sliding doors but is intentionally not showing divided light as this is not an old building.

Mr. Bishop said that he would like to see "2 over 2" rather than "1 over 1".

Mr. Toraby agreed with "2 over 2".

Mr. Bishop stated that he wants some detailing.

Mr. Granoff would consider that.

Mr. Granoff stated that some office space would be left that would include the present windows.

Mr. Bishop felt that the office space windows should be the same as the residential ones.

Mr. Kagan offered that you could mirror the other building on the other side of the river.

Mr. Granoff said that's an interesting discussion but as the detail is missing from the 1981 Building that is on the 1881 Building, he would prefer to not to copy the older structure.

Mr. Toraby inquired how the balcony is to be constructed.

Mr. Granoff replied that it will be cantilevered out offering a clean design and is to be 4-5 feet deep.

Motion to approve the general plan and the window openings and placement and the applicant is to return before the window plan is finalized to have HDC approve the window design and the applicant is to return with the design of the balcony and the materials used to create it

Moved by Mr. Kagan

Seconded by Ms. Bechtel

Voting in favor: Mr. Bishop, Mr. Toraby, Mr. Crist, Mr. Kagan, Ms. Bechtel

Unanimously approved

CENTRO MILL BUILDING 1983

Mr. Granoff showed various elevations of the structure and pointed out the retail and residential areas. He indicated that the lower level parking garage (bottom) will become apartments and the plans is to insert double openings that are patio doors and single openings that are bedroom windows. The architecture will be consistent with the above floors. So two specific things – taking lower level of parking garage (blank wall) and adding ‘punctures’ and the open parking garage will convert to apartments.

Mr. Granoff further mentioned that the staircase that brings you down to Centro is in disrepair and should be remediated. As an elevator will be required, the proposal calls for adding a ‘feature elevator’ that will now connect all the floors – that will be a brick and glass enclosure.

Mr. Kagan asked about fencing with the terraces. Mr. Granoff replied that fencing would be created through landscaping.

Mr. Bishop commented that the fenestration is really important as it is mimicking what was there and is in close in proximity to the 1881 building.

Mr. Granoff responded that for this building none of the windows would be replaced. The only changes being proposed are occurring at the lowest level.

Motion to approve the plan for the Centro Building 1983 as presented

Moved by Mr. Kagan

Seconded by Mr. Toraby

Voting in favor: Mr. Bishop, Mr. Toraby, Mr. Crist, Mr. Kagan, Ms. Bechtel

Unanimously approved

3. CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AND ADVISORY OPINION TO PLANNING & ZONING

226 and 230 Mason Street and 16 Havemeyer Place (buttressing Greenwich Municipal Center – NRHP); and 230 Mason Street (National Guard Armory Building – Contributing Structure to Greenwich Avenue District, NRHP)

Owner: GDC Havemeyer, LLC and GFC, LLC

Represented by Thomas J. Heagney, Esq., Heagney, Lennon & Slane, LLP

Review proposal to preserve the front portion of the Armory and construct a synagogue on the corner of Mason Street and Havemeyer Place Continued from July 11, 2018 meeting

Mr. Heagney began the presentation by reviewing HDC comments from the July 11, 2018 meeting and listed the changes made to the design.

Mr. Granoff stated that he began his presented design by taking a fresh look at the context and the variations of the different facades that surrounded the site and felt the common theme of the historic buildings are symmetry and masonry. Each one stands on its own. Mr. Granoff commented that HDC had stated that the proposed building should fit in more historically and its scale should be relatable to its neighbors. Mr. Granoff said that he was conscious to relate the scale to the other surrounding buildings and feels that his proposal tonight is much more traditional architecture.

Mr. Granoff is still proposing to use Jerusalem Stone but with larger panels. The mass of the two-story portion relates to the Armory Building and the third story is now set back and a pocket park has been created.

He continued saying that the entry was moved from the corner, in part due to HDC comments and due to the applicant's Building Committee who felt the entrance on Havemeyer is more appropriate should, for example, the congregation decided to walk down Greenwich Avenue on Holy Days.

Mr. Granoff finalized by describing the entrance is a portico that relates to the old Masonic Building portico. The fenestration has taken its cues from the Central Fire Station. The worship space will still retain its glass wall.

Mr. Bishop inquired about the size of the limestone blocks. Mr. Granoff replied that they are 2 X 4 feet.

Mr. Toraby stated that he did not see anything traditional about the design. He continued, adding that all the surrounding buildings have a distinct traditional design style. The present design is devoid of architectural style. Mr. Toraby stated that the proposed floor plan is beautifully laid out.

Mr. Granoff addressed Mr. Toraby's comments saying that the design has a symmetrical facade and a portico at the entry with columns making it pretty traditional. He added that he is not designing a neoclassical building and hoped that the HDC was not directing him to do that. He ended saying that the design is a nice blend that is to be completed in 2020 that harks back to the past with a masonry structure and symmetrical facades with a hint of a forward thinking context.

Mr. Bishop stated that he still finds the building very massive and not attractive.

Mr. Granoff said that the building completely complies with all P&Z zoning regulations and ordinance.

Mr. Bishop continued saying that all the other buildings on the other three corners are set back.

Mr. Granoff appreciated that observation and added that based upon the applicant's needs, the design could not afford to have that design aspect.

Mr. Heagney drew attention to the size of the Public Safety Complex especially as it affects the Mason Street side as he considers that site perspective to be massive.

Mr. Bishop appreciated that Mr. Granoff produced a design that incorporated his client's needs, however, HDC is only responsible in focusing upon the appropriateness of the design and that the one presented at the meeting was still too massive and should be set back.

Mr. Granoff stated the present design of the front façade of the building is lowered to the heights of the Armory and the Weber building so it would relate between the two and that was a change from the previous July design and is in keeping with the zoning and building regulations.

Mr. Bishop opened the meeting to public statement.

Linda Hannel, Greenwich resident, stated her concern and worried that a historic building would be demolished. She wants HDC to be the voice of historic building protection. She shared her concern that a precedent would be set by approving the demolition of a portion of a historic building and that others would follow this model.

Elsa Ballustrino, Greenwich resident on Mason Street, stated that the design was beautiful but not for the present location on 230 Mason Street. She prefers the openness that the site presently has.

Rose Nichols, Greenwich resident, is concerned about demolishing a historic property.

Mr. Bishop explained the difference between a National Register of Historic Places district and a Local Historic District regarding protection and demolition. In this case, the Armory can be torn down as its designation does not provide protection from demolition. He reminded the speakers that the proposal does call for the front part of the Armory building to be preserved in perpetuity but there would be a partial loss of the structure.

Mr. Kagan commented that one of the immediate reactions is that all the buildings tend to give the perception of the horizontal. This building because of the windows tends to give a perception of the vertical. The windows make you look up rather than across.

Mr. Granoff responded as this is a religious structure, that was a good thing. He further noted that the Public Safety Complex is vertically inclined.

Ms. Bechtel said that the proposed front entrance juts out and feels a bit invasive and that the columns make her feel uneasy. She understood that her comments did not coincide with July's HDC comments.

Rabbi Deren asked to speak and he posed the question, "How do you define traditional? What is it we are meant to be aspiring toward? Initially about the massing, it may be possible that the presently designed windows lend towards the 'feel of being massive' and perhaps a change to making the windows more in sync with the buildings around it perhaps would result in a more traditional feel."

Ms. Bishop replied that he couldn't say based upon the presented design. He felt that what was being shown tonight was out of character with the other buildings, that the mass was still too big and as yet, there hasn't been any discussion on the building's finish. Mr. Bishop further stated that as the site is such an important spot that the design has to be something that is a great piece of architecture and tonight's design has not accomplished it. He further added that his comments were not meant to be offensive and suggested more work was required on the design that called for reducing the mass and pulling the structure back from both streets.

Mr. Sanbell (Granoff Architects) volunteered to provide another aerial view suggesting that might offer a better perspective of scale.

Mr. Toraby stated, "Where is the character of this building? Where does it say that I belong in Greenwich? Where does it say that it is traditional?" Mr. Toraby felt that the present plan were different components of design juxtaposed together, made symmetrical and called good architecture. He continued saying that it wasn't bad architecture but that the design did not belong on the corner of Havemeyer and Mason.

Mr. Granoff responded, "You're saying there is continuity to these six (neighboring buildings) architecturally?"

Mr. Toraby responded absolutely.

Mr. Granoff said that he would withhold his comments but Mr. Toraby encouraged him to voice them.

"There is zero continuity", he declared. "I design for context. There's six completely different buildings here. That is my context."

Mr. Bishop commented that there is no context between the design and the present streetscape.

Mr. Granoff continued, "Six beautiful buildings and I'm trying to create a seventh. You call yourself an architect?" he directed to Mr. Toraby. Mr. Granoff continued by saying that the design had been vetted with the Chabad community and that, "Everybody loves it."

Mr. Granoff stated that he had a good relationship with Mr. Bishop and understood Mr. Bishop's dislike for the proposed building saying directly to Mr. Bishop, "You are not an architect – I get that and you do not have the capacity to give constructive criticism on architecture. This is an extremely important project and it complies with every section of Planning & Zoning ordinance."

Mr. Heagney spoke up and identified that the design did address the past comments from HDC.

Mr. Bishop finalized by saying that he would prefer not making a decision tonight as he had been in receipt of the plans for only five days and would like to study it to be able to produce constructive criticism. He also urged the Commission members to individually visit the site to best assist the applicant in providing guidance.

Mr. Heagney felt that decision made sense.

No decision rendered.

MINUTES

Motion to approve July 11, 2018 minutes

Moved by Mr. Kagan

Seconded by Mr. Toraby

Voting in favor: Mr. Bishop, Mr. Toraby, Mr. Crist, Mr. Kagan, Ms. Bechtel

Unanimously approved

DEMOLITIONS

59 Locust street

Greenwich, CT

[note: any Greenwich resident may place a stay on a noticed demolition].

Motion to end meeting

Moved by Mr. Kagan

Seconded by Mr. Toraby

Meeting adjourned at 9:35pm