

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 18, 2024
DRAFT**

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Alden, Chair; Robert Mount, Vice-Chair; Cristin Gildea; Maggie Massey; Dylan Zwicky

ADMINISTRATION: Chris Yuen, Community Development Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Bryan Currier, Greg Dixon, Mary Jo Engel, Dan Goltzman, Gabe Handy, Eric Hanko, Christine Kosmider, Greg Rabideau

Mr. Yuen noted that this is a hybrid meeting, and that staff are present at the City offices to ensure public participation. While efforts will be made to accommodate remote public participants, in-person participation is the only legally mandated form of public participation. If there are technical difficulties the meeting may be paused and resumed later.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Alden called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

2. ADDITIONS OR AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

Mr. Yuen said that applicant Mr. Handy has requested that Public Hearing Item C, 227-229 Pearl Street, be heard prior to Public Hearing Item B, 17 Park Street. All agreed to this change.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

None.

4. MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting – March 21, 2024

MOTION by DYLAN ZWICKY, SECOND by ROBERT MOUNT, to approve the minutes of March 21, 2024 with changes. The motion passed 5-0.

The following changes were requested:

-In regard to the 4 Church Street property, compliance with state energy code was listed as one of the conditions.

5. PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Alden swore in all individuals who intended to speak during this hearing under the following oath: “I hereby swear that the evidence I give in the cause under consideration shall be the whole truth, nothing but the truth under the pains and penalties of perjury”

a. Final site plan to construct 4 story building with 39 residential units with parking at 8 Railroad Street in the VC District, by Franklin South, LLC, owners.

Mr. Currier, of O’Leary-Burke Civil Associates, presented on behalf of the applicant. This project received conceptual approval last fall, and no significant changes have occurred since. Mr. Yuen said that the applicant has requested a waiver for a twenty-foot parking aisle. A waiver to use an alternative species to gray dogwood for landscaping has been requested. The City Engineer has asked if utilities will be

underground, as this is what the Land Development Code (LDC) recommends. Mr. Currier said that the overhead service will remain with an existing pole on Railroad Street as well as a new transformer. Mr. Yuen said that the stormwater system that is proposed is intended to tie into the City's stormwater system on Railroad Street, but that this road was recently paved and must be restored without pavement patches if disturbed. Mr. Currier indicated that the applicant is amenable and hopes to only disturb sidewalks. Mr. Yuen said that excess snow must be removed from the property. The lighting plan shows a few areas with possible light trespass; however, Mr. Yuen said that this is minimal. Mr. Alden said that he would like to see the gambrel roof pushed back. He suggested that more color be added to the front of the building to make it look more compatible with other buildings in the City. Mr. Hanko said that he agrees with Mr. Alden and that the building looks compressed. He said that he liked the previous brick iteration of the design.

The applicant will have a waiver for trash pick-up on the Essex Agency property. Mr. Yuen said that he believes that a twenty-foot travel lane is sufficient; the DRB agreed. Mr. Alden said that he hopes that parking is allocated in a way that there is space for larger and smaller vehicles. Mr. Hanko expressed concern that the current utility pole closest to the entrance to Gaines Court will stay, and asked why this was. Mr. Handy said that it is about to be removed. Ms. Engel asked about the configuration of the power on Gaines Court, stating that she was concerned that she would need to move her electrical panel and that a power line will be across the front of her home and could damage her landscaping. Ms. Gildea said that at a previous meeting Mr. Handy said that the utilities would be moved underground. Mr. Handy indicated that he was willing to work with Ms. Engel to develop a solution that she would be comfortable with. Mr. Yuen suggested that it be a condition of approval that the applicant submit updated plans for utilities showing a good faith effort to work with the two adjacent homeowners. Ms. Engel indicated that she was amenable to this. Mr. Zwicky asked for a report back to the DRB showing how this was resolved.

Mr. Alden suggested that the gambrel roof be widened if feasible and suggested adding additional trim to the front side of the building. Mr. Rabideau said that more colors could be added to the building and said that a good faith effort will be given to improve the front side.

CRISTIN GILDEA made a motion, seconded by DYLAN ZWICKY, to close the public hearing. Motion passed 5-0.

DYLAN ZWICKY made a motion, seconded by ROBERT MOUNT, to approve the final plan with amended proposed conditions. Motion passed 5-0.

b. Conceptual site plan to construct a new building with 39 residential units and parking at 227-229 Pearl Street in the MF/MU1 District, by Handy Hotels & Rentals LLC, agent for Milot Real Estate, owners.

Mr. Dixon said that these plans were previously approved by the DRB when the property had a different owner. Minimal changes have been made since then, however the building is now in line with the neighboring multi-family property. Underground parking is included, and the applicant is requesting a parking lot travel aisle waiver of 22 feet. There is an accessible entrance on Pearl Street and the possibility to add amenities such as picnic tables to the back of the building. The distances between this building and the surrounding buildings were discussed, with Mr. Alden expressing concern about the closeness between the buildings. Mr. Alden noted that this building is not very architecturally interesting and not in line with the rest of the surrounding buildings. He encouraged the developer to work on creating the context for

this building. Mr. Handy said that affordable housing is needed in the area, and that these changes will push up the construction costs and thus affordability. Mr. Alden encouraged him to work with the designer to find lower-cost solutions and said that he believes that the developer is on the right track. Mr. Yuen said that this is the first time that design review is being applied to this property, as it was not in place with the previous approval. He said that if major changes are required that the hearing should be left open, and a new plan requested. Mr. Handy said that he would accommodate the DRB's requests but said that extending the planning process is a barrier to construction. Mr. Alden suggested that the applicant explore different surface treatments to ensure the front and side of the building doesn't look overly flat. Mr. Alden also suggested that the applicant add a canopy to the front entrance to provide protection from the elements, similar to the previously approved design. Ms. Gildea expressed that she like the previously approved design, and that the applicant should consider using design elements from those plans.

CRISTIN GILDEA made a motion, seconded by MAGGIE MASSEY, to close the public hearing. Motion passed 5-0.

MAGGIE MASSEY made a motion, seconded by ROBERT MOUNT, to approve the conceptual site plan with amended conditions. Motion passed 5-0.

c. Final site plan for a proposed mixed use development to construct 5 story building with 2 commercial spaces on the 1st floor and 53 apartment on the upper stories at 17 Park Street in the VC District by Milot Real Estate, agent for Handy Hotels and Rentals, LLC, owners.

Mr. Rabidou, architect, Mr. Dixon, engineer, and Mr. Grabowski, applicant, presented. Mr. Rabidou explained the changes that had occurred since this project was last presented to the DRB. The project received a state stormwater permit and the majority of storms will be treated onsite. A raised walkway will be available for outdoor dining and covered bike parking will be available. ADA access will be provided. CU-Structural soil will be used rather than cilia cell soil as this is the same product as was used on 11 Park Street. The DRB was amenable to this.

Mr. Grabowski discussed bike parking, noting that he would like to have availability without encouraging bikes into the pedestrian access area. Mr. Alden discussed bike overparking, with Mr. Grabowski noting that there is minimal demand for bike parking. The DRB decided that public bike parking should be made available for this project. Mr. Alden said that he liked the idea of the terrace for shopping or outdoor dining. Mr. Grabowski spoke of trying to create a district in the area which is coming to fruition. A rooftop terrace will be available for the building's use. Level 2 EV chargers will be available. There is no minimum parking requirements, however the DRB can determine what is considered to be sufficient. Mr. Grabowski spoke of the connectivity and public parking options in the Five Corners area.

String lighting was discussed, with Ms. Gildea stating that this should not be the only source of lighting in the area. Mr. Grabowski confirmed that it was not. Mr. Yuen said that the Planning Commission is considering allowing string lights during open business hours, however that they must be off during non-business hours. Mr. Yuen suggested a condition of approval to ensure that the pedestrian path of travel cannot be blocked. He noted that area outside of McGillicuddy's is roped off due to the serving of alcohol. Mr. Grabowski was amenable to this. Mr. Yuen said that Green Mountain Transit expressed concern about ramp accessibility at a bus stop. He said that the existing curb could be bumped out a little bit to mitigate this. The applicant is amenable to this. Mr. Yuen said that staff will need to receive a traffic control plan, and that there is public concern about prolonged lane and sidewalk closures. Mr. Grabowski

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said that he plans to open the sidewalk as soon as safety allows. Pedestrians will detour around the back of the building. An updated traffic control and construction phasing plan will be submitted to the City engineer.

Mr. Alden listed the following additional conditions: the applicant ensuring that the raised pathway is not blocked to pedestrians, a revision to the sidewalk to accommodate bus services, and the addition of public bike racks near the front entrance of the building, as discussed.

ROBERT MOUNT made a motion, seconded by CRISTIN GILDEA, to close the public hearing. Motion passed 5-0.

CRISTIN GILDEA made a motion, seconded by MAGGIE MASSEY, to approve the final plans with amended proposed conditions. Motion passed 5-0.

6. OTHER DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD ITEMS

None.

7. ADJOURNMENT

DYLAN ZWICKY made a motion, seconded by MAGGIE MASSEY, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Darby Mayville