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CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

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<u>Draft</u> Minutes of Historic Preservation Advisory Commission (HPAC)

Date: Regular Meeting held: August 12, 2014
Location: Stamford City Hall, 888 Washington Blvd. Stamford CT 06901
Land Use Bureau - 7th fl. conference Room
Present: Lynn Drobbin, Anne Goslin, Jill Smyth, David Woods, Barry Hersh, Rebecca Shannonhouse, (alternate) and Lynn Villency Cohen, (alternate).

REGULAR MEETING (Meeting called to order 7:05)

Approval of Minutes
Minutes were approved without comments additions or deletions. The Commission voted to approve the minutes: (Moved by B. Hersh, seconded by A. Goslin, and carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. FHA/CTDOT reconstruction of Atlantic Street Bridge No. 08012R over Metro North Railroad

L. Drobbin introduced the presenters from CT DOT and the city engineering/transportation department. (attendance list attached) She indicated that the HPAC was brought into this discussion very late in the project. She asked CTDOT, in the future, to provide information on projects earlier in the design process.

- M. McMillan apologized and said that he was not aware of the existence of HPAC until recently
- CT DOT will make every effort in the future to reach out to the community early in the process.
- A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was started in 2009
- CT DOT is seeking signature from HPAC on the MOA currently as a “concurring Party”.
- The MOA needed to be reevaluated in 2013 because more than 3 years had past
- Discussions and approval of the MOA has been completed with the CT - SHPO

M. McMillan made a slide presentation of the design of the bridge. The following bullet points were noted.

- The Atlantic Street bridge supporting the railroad is very old and has a number of issues that need to be addressed. Some of the issues include the stress on the old steel structure, low vertical clearance, pedestrian safety and road access along I- 95 Exit 8 ramp.
- There were originally, in 2009, 5 bridges on the list for reconstruction, E. Main St., Elm St., Canal St., Greenwich Ave. and Atlantic St.

• At the re-evaluation in 2013, two bridges remain on the list: Atlantic St. and E. Main St..
• Atlantic is the first to be addressed as the issues of circulation are complicated and require significant work.
• The MOA has been expanded at the request of SHPO and with input from HNPP. It now includes:

1. Consultation with HNPP on impacts to the South End National Register-listed Historic District and
2. The addition of an CT DOT grant to the City of Stamford for a$50,000 "alternative traffic corridors" study of the south end.

• The design calls for stamped concrete forms for the embankments to simulate the older brownstone.
• The design calls for a concrete encased steel structure. Concrete fascia panel will be visible on the span face of both sides of the bridge.
• The construction is planned for two years, starting in 2015. (expedited schedule)
• Work includes a new auto ramp at Exit 8 of I-95 with a bridge over Atlantic St. and touch down west of Atlantic St. and the new railroad bridge.

Committee comments and questions were noted as follows.

• L Drobbin asked if other bridges need to be improved. (Answer: yes - but others are not a priority - Atlantic St. is no. 1 priority)
• Can CT DOT provide a mock up of brown stone embankments and supporting structures? (Answer: yes)
• HPAC requested a clarification of the traffic study that is in the MOA. (Answer: it is not really a traffic study with counts and data. It is an analysis of the streets in the south end and a "corridor" study – How does traffic and pedestrians get to destinations? What is impact on community? And what improvements should be made to streets?
• HPAC asked if the rail "TOD" development project has been considered in the design and in the traffic considerations for the bridge? (Answer: the design was completed before the proposed TOD, but it does take into account increases in traffic counts and circulation around the new Urban Transitway).
• Has CT DOT considered the lay-down / staging area needed during construction and has there been an evaluation of its impact on the south end? (Answer: yes but the final location has not been determined. There are a number of locations considered. The selected general contractor will have a say in the final selection).
• Can HPAC and HNPP be involved with the final selection of the staging location? (Answer: yes)

W. Haynes of HNPP was asked to express his concerns with the new Atlantic St. bridge project. The following was noted:

• The existing bridge has not been given the respect it deserves. It is a significant historic structure.
• There is concern with the brownstone replacement methods, as many have bad experiences. Are there alternative materials under consideration?

• HNPP is exploring possible reuse of parts of the existing bridge structure.
• HNPP is concerned with traffic in the South End Historic District, and the impacts that may result from the widening of lower Atlantic St. south of the bridge.
• HNPP will defer to HPAC for approval and signing of the MOA. HNPP is in general agreement, considering the previous concerns.
• The rail TOD should be reviewed as a combined project
• HNPP is concerned with the use of concrete for structural elements
• HNPP is currently seeking ideas for reuse of some of the bridge's structure - maybe the "lattice" supports. They will be meeting with DSSD soon to see if there might be an interest with an artist project.
• W. Haynes asked if CT DOT will be willing save some of the structure and framework, and to provide it to a city group, to be determined (Answer: Yes)

CT DOT representatives responded with additional answers, as noted here:

• It is preferred that the MOA is signed by the "concurring parties" HPAC and HNPP, as soon as possible, as preliminary engineering for "break out projects" - relocation of utilities etc., needs to begin in advance of a 2015 start date.
• Bids for construction will be advertised in late fall or winter of 2015
• The concurring parties (HPAC and HNPP) are to be included in the review of design materials and finishes of the new bridge and will coordinate closely with the city regarding the direction of the traffic study, assisting in the development of the RFQ and the RFP before it is advertised for bid by the city, will coordinate with the selected consultant and the city during the study and will also assist in the development of the resulting recommendations.
• CT DOT believes that the concrete stamp method of simulating brownstones and the staining process has improved significantly and the results will be good.
•CT DOT suggested that the commission members look at similar bridges completed more recently in Darien and Norwalk.
• Anti - graffiti finishes can be explored
• The railroad does not use salt on tracks or right of way and believes that the concrete will not be affected. They believe this structural system is the best for this location and speed of construction.
• CT DOT will consider contributing parts of the structure to city groups however CT DOT has some concern about the sequencing of the lead paint removal on some of the structural elements and needs to do some research on its removal before it can be determined if salvage is a viable option.

The HPAC voted on the following resolution: (Moved by B. Hersh, seconded by L. Drobbin, and carried unanimously.) It is agreed L. Drobbin will sign the MOA with the understanding from CT DOT that:

1. HPAC will be actively engaged in the "alternate transportation corridor" study to be conducted by the Stamford Engineering Dept.

2. HPAC will be actively engaged in the review and selection of design materials and finishes of the Atlantic Street Bridge over Metro North Railroad as the work proceeds.

   • L. Drobbin signed the document
   • W. Haynes also signed the MOA in concurrence with HPAC

2. Pre-application for RMS development at Main St. and Washington Blvd.

L. Drobbin introduced documents that were sent to her in advance of submittals to the city. The package included a letter from Mr. Hennessey and schematic design documents in full size format.

The site is at the corner of Washington Blvd. and Main St. and adjacent to the government center. There has not yet been a formal request for review by the developer or by the city or the Planning & Zoning commissions. Submittals may occur in the fall or in early 2015. There was limited discussion and the item was tabled until further review at the next meeting
A. Goslin offered to do some additional research on the history of the Nobu florist building. No action was taken.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Update / discussion, Historic preservation elements of the Stamford master plan.

L. Drobbin indicated that the review of the master plan is on going. There is a comment period in early October.

• The City will work with HPAC to search for funding to hire a consultant to prepare an amendment to the master plan document as the current preservation section prepared by the consultants is inaccurate and inadequate.
• The section on historic preservation may remain in the “neighborhoods” section.
• The commission has until October 7 to suggest changes
• A section on historic preservation policy may be added. A draft will be started by L. Drobbin.
• L. Drobbin will be editing the introduction chapter and will distribute to the commission for review.

L. Drobbin expressed concern about two items that may be included in the master plan and should be considered by HPAC.

1. There is a suggestion that a “convention center” should be included in the city. A location has not been identified at this time.
2. There is a recommendation that the master plan include a new designation for a downtown “collar district” and changes to the zoning to allow for greater density. 50 units per acre is being proposed.

The following was noted:

- HPAC members will need to research this proposal and the impacts on the neighborhoods north of the downtown districts.
- HPAC tabled the discussion until more is known
- D. Woods volunteered to talk to the Chamber and to DSSD to get a feel for the issues.
- This Item will be included in the next meeting agenda

3. Review of statement from HPAC for City of Stamford's acquisition of the Sacred Heart Academy

J. Smyth read a draft statement from HPAC that will be sent to various city representatives. The following was noted:

- J. Smyth will complete some minor edits and get the letter ready for distribution
- Other examples of successfully preserved school building projects in New Haven will remain the draft. (All agreed)

The HPAC voted on the following resolution: (Moved by L. Drobbin, seconded by A. Goslin, and carried unanimously.) It is agreed J. Smyth will revise the draft statement. The draft statement will be e-mailed to the group for final review. J. Smyth will direct letter to the Mayor and copy a number of other interested parties. It will be distributed by email with hard copy to the Mayor.

3. Review of HPAC press release

R. Shannonhouse provided review of the final draft of the HPAC press release. The following corrections were noted.

- R. Shannonhouse to add some language about the Atlantic St. bridge approval
- The section about "ladies in white tennis shoes" will be edited to be more positive.
- A quote from the mayor will be considered. R. Shannonhouse will solicit that.
- A quote from Harry Day will be considered. D. Woods to solicit that.
- The circulation list will be determined later.

4. Discussion about draft of by-laws, and adoption of submittals requirements.

J. Smyth reviewed the latest draft of the by laws. The following corrections were noted:

- The submittal deadline for commission review was agreed to be 14 days
- It was agreed that an application form should be in addition to the by-laws.
- The D. Woods draft of the application form needs to add a space to list the dates of construction for the original/historic buildings on a site as well as any known dates of alterations that have occurred.
- It was agreed that a check list of submittal requirements should be in addition to the by-laws, but should be attached to the application form.

- The submittal requirement check list needs to add a requirement to provide historical information, if known, about any existing structures on the site
- It was agreed that submittal of the PDF files can be sent to HPAC via email or a drop box, as may be determined later.
- A section on the timing for commission response or approvals should be added. D. Woods will provide a draft paragraph to J. Smyth for review.

Ms. Drobbin adjourned the meeting at 10:20 p.m.

Submitted by: David W. Woods AIA secretary - August 20th 2014
Stamford, Historic Preservation Advisory Commission

The next meeting will be on the second Tuesday of the month on September 9, starting at 7:00 pm in the 7th floor conference room, number 7-C.