



DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

MINUTES (FINAL)

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2020

6:30 P.M.

ZOOM WEBINAR

PRESENT: Tamie Ehinger, Chairman; Leslie Mechem; Chris Bennett; Ellen Sheehan

STAFF: Bradley Birge, Administrator, Planning and Economic Development, City of Saratoga Springs

ABSENT: Leslie DiCarlo

LATE ARRIVAL: Rob DuBoff arrived at 6:38 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER: Tamie Ehinger, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman, stated the proceedings of this meeting are being recorded for the benefit of the secretary. Because the minutes are not a verbatim record of the proceedings, the minutes are not a word-for-word transcript of the recording.

A. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Approval of meeting minutes was deferred to the August 5, 2020 meeting.

B. POSSIBLE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

The intent of a consent agenda is to identify any application that appears to be “approvable” without need for further evaluation or discussion. If anyone wishes to further discuss any proposed consent agenda item, then that item would be pulled from the “consent agenda” and dealt with individually.

1. **20200425 AURORA TATTOO SOCIETY SIGN**, 73 Henry Street, Architectural Review of a wall sign within the Transect-6 Urban Core District.
2. **20200381 KIESERMAN REAR ROOF**, 165 Phila Street, Historic Review of roof replacement on rear shed roof section within the Urban-Residential-3 District.
3. **20200427 ZASTROW RETRACTABLE SCREEN**, 38 High Rock Avenue, Unit 3A Architectural Review of a Retractable screen within the Transect-6 Urban Core District.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman asked if there were any questions or comments from the Commission. None heard.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman asked if anyone in the audience wished to comment on this application. None heard.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman made a motion in the matter of the Aurora Tattoo Society Sign, 73 Henry Street, Kieserman Rear Roof, 165 Phila Street, and Zastrow Retractable Screen, 38 High Rock Avenue that the applications be approved as submitted. Ellen Sheehan seconded the motion.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman asked if there was any further discussion. None heard.

VOTE:

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman, Leslie Mechem, in favor; Ellen Sheehan, in favor; Chris Bennett, in favor

MOTION PASSES: 4-0

C. DRC APPLICATIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION

1. **20200142 TAIT LANE RESERVE WORKFORCE HOUSING**, 114 Tait Lane, Architectural Review of 12 Buildings (202 units) of mixed-income workforce housing with supportive activities and site amenities within The Transect-4 Urban Neighborhood District.

Agent: Doug Heller, LA Group; Chris Dirr, NRP Senior VP for Development; Tom Nester, NRP

Mr. Heller provided a brief overview of the project and where the applicant is heading. One and one half years ago the applicant requested a Special Use Permit. We appeared before the DRC as part of the SEQRA process. Lead Agency was deferred to the Planning Board and we received a SEQRA Negative Declaration and also a Special Use Permit which allows 202 units, up to 600 square feet of commercial/office and 4400 square feet of clubhouse. Since that time, we have advanced designs which were forwarded to the DRC and we have submitted an application to the Planning Board for Site Plan Approval.

Mr. Dirr provided a visual presentation of the location of the site on Allen Drive. The primary access point for the site is on Allen Drive. They have been working with the City and are proposing 202 units of workforce housing. It is a combination of Garden Style apartments and Townhomes.

NOTE:

Commission member Rob DuBoff has taken his place on the Commission at 6:38 P.M.

Mr. Dirr stated they have been working with Homes and Community Renewal and the Housing Finance Agency in New York. We are in the process of obtaining all local approvals prior to advancing the financing. Mr. Heller will provide an update on the site.

Mr. Heller provided a visual of the site. Prior to the application for the Special Use Permit the applicants met with Planning Staff and Planning Board to arrive at this grid style layout. Allen Drive is the main access road and where the Townhomes are located. Another road runs north to south through the site which provides more of the streetscape elements. This area will be providing parking and the streetscape amenities such as sidewalks throughout, street trees, and street lights. The 202 units are divided into 12 different buildings.

Mr. Nester, NRP Group stated they are working with RDL Architects as well Doug Heller on this project. He reviewed the primary access roads and the locations of the townhomes, clubhouse location and garden view apartments. He reviewed the elevations for the Commission as well as views of proposed Buildings 1 & 2. Reviewing the first building which houses one and two bedroom units. There are two stair tower main entry points on both sides of the buildings. Entry points are treated with stone veneer products with small canopies and are recessed a bit. On the main façade we are proposing cement board siding and trim. We have used a mixture of horizontal and vertical batten vinyl siding. On the ends of the building we are proposing cement board panels with trim as well. Most of the units have patios or porches. The third building type housing the primary stair element in the middle flanked by three stories of one bedroom units on one side and two bedroom units on the other. On the two ends we have stacks of two three bedroom units which are walkups. We are keeping with consistent materials and colors trying to create a neighborhood feel. Mr. Nester provided views of Buildings 4, 5 and 6 which are the townhomes. These are a bit more modern with flat parapets and breaking down the scale a bit while introducing an accent color. Building 7 also houses townhomes with a connection of a three bay structure housing the clubhouse. The streetscape changes in this area to make this more of a commercial feel. Photographic color choices were provided as well as horizontal and vertical siding colors, along with roof shingles, stone veneer and lighting. Floor plans were provided for the Commission's review.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman stated this is a big project encompassing 12 buildings. We are delighted to have you before the Commission with views of the design and schematics. In terms of managing the Commission's discussion and review of 12 buildings with four different design types, we will discuss what was presented providing thoughts and the direction this project is taking. As we move forward we will focus on a particular design style and building reviewing one at a time providing suggestions and input to you. In reviewing the materials seem quite appropriate for the project. The Chair questioned the window type being proposed.

Mr. Nester stated they are proposing white vinyl single hung windows. They will be energy star rated and will meet the green requirements.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman stated as we move forward an item you might consider is whether you could use a different type of window material perhaps an aluminum clad. It is rare that a large building of this scale we would approve a vinyl product. In terms of what the Commission will be focusing on as we review each of the building types it will be front entrances. What is really important since we are building a new neighborhood is the streetscape and the pedestrian feel of the neighborhood which is being developed. Specifically, allowing the structure to have an inside and outside feel, being more inviting to pedestrians. Mass and scale will be important. The building which seems most appropriate and in line with the City's comprehensive plan is the townhome style and individual entrances.

Ellen Sheehan stated she agrees with the Chair regarding the Townhomes. They seem to harken back to traditional workforce housing and the streetscape is very approachable. Ms. Sheehan questioned the largest of the buildings which is Building #3 and the scale of the large white stairwell element without windows. Since there are no elevators tenants will be using the stairs without windows.

Mr. Nester stated there are no windows currently in this location due to the location of resident storage areas.

Leslie Mechem likes the large building and the asymmetry of it provides visual interest and draws your eye. She is having trouble with the white aspect of the stair tower. That draws attention to the structure. The townhomes attached to the clubhouse are nicer than those that are unattached. They appear a bit cookie cutter.

Chris Bennett stated the larger building's entrance appears weak. The entrance needs to be emphasized more. Overall the design is fine, but he voiced concern regarding the redundancy on the buildings. Perhaps changing up a few of the styles. Mixing and matching styles would be more effective and create uniqueness in the product. He agrees with the Chair concerning the usage of vinyl windows and prefers the double sash in the windows. Overall, it is a nice design.

Rob DuBoff agrees with his fellow Commission members. Choice of the cement board siding is excellent. He echoes what Chris Bennett stated concerning the vinyl windows. An aluminum clad exterior window would be a far better choice. Regarding the entrances he also agrees with Chris Bennett in articulating those better and making them more prominent. He encouraged the applicant to raise the building by a step or two which would also provide additional prominence to that entrance.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman asked if anyone in the audience wished to comment on this application. None heard.

Chris Bennett questioned if there is a trail or greenbelt or bicycle trail system connection nearby. Anything involving charging stations for vehicles or just surface parking.

Bradley Birge, Administrator, Planning and Economic Development stated the City is trying to find ways to link this area as it grows. A major hurdle is bridge over the railroad tracks. That is a real issue. We are having successful conversations with CDTA to have more of a mass transit stop here. This will essentially loop through Allen Drive to gain access to this entire area.

Mr. Dirr stated we have anticipated and are working with CDTA since we have anticipated a bus stop in our site plan.

He explained some amenities a park and grilling area to engage the tenants. They are in conversation with management regarding charging stations. The agency is very cognizant and their real focus is on workforce housing and they will not fund covered parking in this type of development.

Bradley Birge, Administrator, Planning and Economic Development stated this project has received a Special Use Permit and they will be before the Planning Board for Site Plan Review. We have asked the City's designated engineers to provide comments and we are still awaiting their responses.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman stated in reviewing some of the suggestions which were made by the Commission this evening they would be to take another look at window materials, focus is on the entrances, and especially the main entrances should be enhanced. We are looking at a pedestrian friendly neighborhood feel. A suggestion was made to potentially raise the elevation of the buildings in an effort to emphasize the main entrance. There were several opinions on the cement board siding. There may be options the applicant will return before the Commission with.

Rob DuBoff requested information on the porches, railings and columns.

Mr. Nester stated they are proposing an aluminum picket fence there with columns in either Azek or cement board.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman stated the Commission has basically reviewed Building Type 1 and 2 without the 3 bedroom units. In reviewing building Type 2 she feels it reads better to her in terms of what we are looking to achieve with the neighborhood feel than the first type. This type of look and feel is less like a center block apartment.

Discussion ensued regarding the building types and the locations of the proposed buildings on the site. A visual of the site plan was displayed for the Commission's review including the site lines from the street.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman asked if anyone on the Commission has any further questions or comments. None heard.

Mr. Heller questioned if there were any concerns with regard to the Mass and Scale of the project as the applicants are progressing through the Planning Board. Is there comfort with the Mass and Scale.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman stated her initial thoughts about the project are the Mass and Scale is not inappropriate.

Mr. Heller questioned if there is one particular building the Commission prefer attack one at a time.

Tamie Ehinger, Chairman stated she feels it would make sense to review Building #1 but that is a decision for the applicant. Based on the feedback from fellow Commission members it appears to have the most comments this evening.

Bradley Birge, Administrator, Planning and Economic Development stated the visual the Commission has been presented with so far have been great for giving the overall viewpoint of a very large project. He would suggest as the Commission moves forward it would be helpful to have one sheet that focuses on one building. Something that provides a very close up focus of what the façade would be. The materials, the profiles, the dimension, windows, doors, railings, entrances and trim board finer details. Secondly, since you are building an entirely new neighborhood it would be helpful to have street scale perspectives and angled perspectives as you walk down the street from point A to point B and how these buildings present themselves to the streetscapes.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS/MEETINGS:

Design Review Commission Caravan, Wednesday, July 29, 2020 at 5:00 P.M.

Design Review Meeting, Wednesday, August 5, 2020 at 6:30 P.M.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business to discuss Tamie Ehinger, Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Buzanowski
Recording Secretary

APPROVED 8-5-20