

City of South Portland
Arts and Historic Preservation Committee
Workshop Meeting
March 4, 2015, 7:30-9:00am
Planning Department, Sawyer & Ocean Sts.

MINUTES

Present: AHPC members Jane Batzell, Kathy DiPhilippo, Tex Haeuser, Amanda Larsen, Jessica Routhier, and Aimée Turner, plus Christopher Closs (representing Greater Portland Landmarks) and David Latulippe (representing Priority Real Estate Group). Absent: Rob Schreiber, John Schwartzman, Scott Whitaker.

Jessica Routhier called the meeting to order at 7:30am.

It was agreed that David Latulippe, as a member of the public, would be offered at least 5 minutes of direct address to the committee, and that the committee would engage him in Q & A as time and topic allowed.

Overview of Armory project plans:

Tex presented the aerial schematic of the Armory property and abutting properties, the view from the street (using Google Maps, it was the view from Broadway looking south to the façade of the Armory), a to-scale schematic with signage areas indicated both on the façade of the building and free-standing in front of the building, with a variety of potential allowable sizes (according to the current guidelines). AHPC members convey concern about the size and placement of signage. Jane asks if there was ever a plan to put in pumps while also retaining the Drill Hall. Jon says that the Drill Hall must be removed in order to install the underground storage tanks because of nearby wetlands [and a required distance from the wetlands?]. Tex says the Drill Hall is “in really bad shape.” Jane asks again about the tanks & the wetlands, Jon said there’s no problem with the wetlands, but the DEP will weigh in on that issue later on in the timeline of the overall project.

Christopher Closs, Preservation Services Advisor from Greater Portland Landmarks (GPL): pleased South Portland has formed this committee. Explains that the Armory was named a “place in peril” a few years ago. His handout provides some recommended language changes to the working “Conditional Armory Zone” (CAZ). According to Chris, the Armory is eligible for the National Registry of Historic Places (NRHP), and it may be eligible for grant money as the repurposing project gets underway. A grant application will trigger a review by the NRHP and consideration by the Maine Historic Commission. (The state office conducts roughly 3,000 reviews each year pursuant to 1966 federal law.) At this time, GPL has not taken a public position on the issue, although Chris indicates concerns about the historic importance of the Drill Hall, which is 80% of the footprint of the building. He says it may be eligible for a tax credit, but it’s “late in the game” for a tax credit. The whole issue is a matter of constraints vs. opportunities. Chris asks whether the CAZ document was originally prepared by the developer for Armory use as a soundstage.

Significant discussion of the language of CAZ 2-25-15:

Chris: removed “best efforts” from original (c) – very important to attempt to *maintain* – the masonry will require repointing, coping, etc. Jessica asks for clarification regarding definition especially re: masonry & parapet wall.

Chris: Also, the lower end of the wall facing the proposed gas pumps is currently an interior wall, and may have windows or other openings. These openings should be addressed for treatment.

Chris: New (d) Windows should be replace in adherence to Secretary of Interior recommendations. Masonry should be of ornamental cast concrete, brick, basically, best masonry practices.

Jessica inquires about the paint colors in the CAZ 2-25-15. Chris says paint color choices should be reviewed. Chris continues to address some language corrections. Tex reminds the group that we don’t have the authority to make some of the changes to the language that we are proposing; that is the job of the Planning Board. Jessica concurs.

Chris: “Section 106” refers to a federal review, but the “brownfield” review will also trigger a review of the historic structure. The “Standards & Guidelines for Rehabilitative Projects” will be the guidelines for the Maine review, which follow the federal standards. Although states have the latitude to deviate from the federal standards, for the most part, states follow federal standards.

Amanda: Due to the pending destruction of the Guild Hall – 80% of the footprint – will the Maine Historic Preservation Committee have jurisdiction of zoning and planning?

Chris: “Section 106” is too often left for last.

Tex: Does the City have the choice of pursuing funding?

Jon: There is a meeting coming up regarding the brownfield issue. Can the historic review stop the redevelopment?

Chris: No

David Latulippe joins the meeting.

David: The goal of the project is to celebrate the building and bring it back to life, while also giving it a new purpose. The intent is to repoint the building, restore the masonry, keep the original look and feel, as well as keep the appearance consistent with the Fire Station. The issue of signage limitations is sensitive because it’s unusual for a gas station to position pumps behind the building. Signage is important for their business’ awareness. He is amenable to changing the pylon sign to a monument sign, but is concerned about adequate height of the sign, especially in regards to winter snowbanks. He expresses that he wants to work with us to make this project go forward. He refers to the artistic rendering, highlighting the pennants on the façade: these are not intended to be additional commercial advertising but to be community-based (Red Riots, etc). Also, the three flagpoles would likely have the US, Maine, and POW-MIA flags, but he welcomes community input (especially on the nature of the 3rd flag; if a South Portland flag existed, that would be appropriate).

Jessica: tell us more about the gazebo [in the rendering].

David: Seeking an easement for the gazebo. Would create a seating area, particularly if there is a restaurant or coffee shop in the repurposed Armory. They are also asking CMP to re-landscape their frontage.

Jon: Window issue. Refers to (b) and (d).

Chris: This is a rehabilitation, not a restoration (different constraints).

David: The windows are in rough shape.

Jessica: clarification about the window issue: "You're not secretly attempting to change the façade windows, right?"

David: No, that's not the intent.

Discussion moves toward façade:

David: We would like to evaluate the use of the front, but it's a security issue for a convenience store.

Kathy: Concerns about the re-coloring of the band of masonry accent around the top of the building.

Others in the group echo her concern.

Aimee: Will signage be permanently attached? I'm concerned about making a permanent alteration to the building now, and also setting a precedent for 10 or 15 years into the future if a different tenant is in that building.

Jessica & Jon share those concerns.

Kathy: (a) suggests specific language about changes.

Tex: Let's not get into wordsmithing now.

Jon & Kathy: want "City shall designate a custodian."

Aimee: in favor of strengthening (c)

Group favors changing language pertaining to the Head House

Kathy: regarding windows: the language shouldn't restrict the tenant to "restoring" the original windows; it's too restrictive and not energy-efficient

Jessica: This should be about finding fabrics that harmonize with the building.

Jane: Concern about design and materials choices [not sure if this is in regards to the windows specifically or the building in general]

Jessica: Paint and other materials should reflect the original color palette

Aimee: Where on the building exactly is paint used?

David: The window trim.

Aimee: questions about the color palette of Mahoney, Fire Station, and Armory.

Tex: all three are green.

Jane: But the goal is not to have these buildings match each other color-wise but to maintain the original integrity of the Armory.

Kathy: We need to more clearly define what we mean by “original materials.”

Aimee: Materials need to replicate the originals but still have 21st century properties. The paint that is currently on the Armory probably has lead; we’re not going to use lead paint because it’s the original. And maybe there are windows that are similar in appearance and texture to the originals but have some of the benefits of 21st century technology.

Jane: The wording can’t be “best efforts” – it’s too broad – GPL recommends “preserve,” and if that can’t be met, THEN we consider the next best thing.

Kathy: Those windows MAY be repairable.

Tex: Doesn’t think the windows are salvageable, thinks that looking for a replacement that replicates the originals as much as possible is the best course of action.

Chris: Language may already exist in the federal guidelines that can address this issue.

Jessica: Let’s not forget that our job is to advocate.

Kathy: It’s a give-and-take. There may be a material or design that works for today. It’s more important to preserve the unique masonry than to force the issue of the windows and create an energy hardship for the tenant.

Jessica: asks GPL to clarify points (f) and (g); notes that (f) triggers a revisit back to the APHC review

Signage conversation:

Tex: It’s important that the sign on the building NOT go in the center of the façade

David is amenable to doing this right for the appearance of the building.

Kathy: suggests “signage will be integrated into existing architecture”

Jon: reiterates concerns about existing masonry band at top of building and proposed color changes

Motion to adjourn, seconded, meeting is concluded.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Aimée L. Turner.