

CITY OF SOUTH PORTLAND
Arts & Historic Preservation Committee
October 7, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Members in attendance:

Hannah Holmes, Chairperson
Doreen Gay, Vice Chairperson
Jessie Kessler
Jim Flahaven
Caitie Whelan
Alessa Wylie, Greater Portland Landmarks
Mark Wiesendanger

Staff in attendance:

Justin Barker, Community Planner

Absent:

Kathy DiPhilippo, South Portland Historical Society

The meeting was called to order at 8:07 a.m.

Caitie Whelan was introduced to the committee as a new member.

Hannah moved to approve the October 7 meeting minutes; Doreen seconded. 6-0 vote (Caitie abstained).

Justin introduced the proposed Adaptive Reuse text amendment. This is a request from the current owner of 265 Cottage Road that would like to develop multi-family housing using the existing structure. There are conflicting standards in some zoning districts regarding the number of units that may be developed on a property, and the most restrictive prevails. The request is to allow a project requesting an Adaptive Reuse approval as a low-intensity use as deemed by the Planning Board under Section 27-1592(k) to use the least restrictive standard.

Doreen asked what the implications would be for other properties. **Justin** noted that it currently only would affect the 2 properties that have been designated historic by Council, but would eventually increase as the historic inventory increases.

Caitie said this may not be an insignificant standard to include and asked what the widespread impacts might be. **Justin** noted that not all designated properties will want to pursue multi-family housing, and not all of them will be considered “low intensity” by the Planning Board. In reality, this would likely only be pursued by a small fraction of properties in South Portland.

Mark noted that he lives near the applicant’s property and that the proposed density on that project is well within what exists in the neighborhood.

Hannah noted that she generally prefers an increased density in developed, particularly for preservation, than spread out development.

Jessie agreed and noted that there is a housing issue. She asked if the applicant's property would be condos or rentals, and if they would be affordable. **Justin** said he believes the applicant plans to live in one of the units and will likely do the rest as condos. Affordability is somewhat of a relative term, but it is not anticipated that these units will meet any particular affordability standard.

Caitie agreed that there is a housing crisis, and that not every type of home will address this problem. However, affordability is a real concern and is not sure that this proposal addresses that. **Justin** noted that affordability is an important concern for the City, but not every policy solution can address every issue at the same time. The primary focus of the adaptive reuse provisions is to incentive property owners to retain and reuse historic structures.

Mark wishes that there was a standard that requires a certain percentage to be affordable housing, but that is not the place of this committee to require that.

Jim noted it is time for something to happen on this property and asked if the committee will have a chance to have input on the design of this project. **Justin** replied that they would when the applicant applies for Planning Board approvals.

Doreen moved to recommend that the City Council approve the proposed amendment;
Hannah seconded.
6-1 vote (Caitie opposed).

The meeting adjourned at 8:41 a.m.