Approved 6/3/14

CITY OF ROCKLAND
PLANNING BOARD
Minutes of Meeting
May 20, 2014

Board Present: Chairman E. Laustsen, W. Bodine, C. Jordan, K. Swan, and P. vanVuuren

Board Absent: A. Knickelbein

Staff Present: Code Enforcement Officer J. Root and Secretary D. Sealey

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:18 P.M. and reviewed the agenda. He then welcomed new PB member Charles Jordan.

Communications: CEO Root listed the five communications items on the agenda, in addition to following late arrivals: emails from Dan Bookham, Amy Files, Sandra Dillon, and Maggie Trout, and a letter from James York. All of the communications concerned the ADZ Properties' proposed hotel. Additional information had also been provided: an email from City Attorney Kevin Beal to the City Council regarding the issue of building height in the downtown zone and a memo from Pollution Control Director Terry Pinto regarding sewer capacity availability for the hotel proposed for 250 Main St.

Old Business:

ADZ Properties, LLC – 250 Main Street – Continued Site Plan Review of Proposal to Construct a New 5-Story Boutique Hotel – Public Hearing - Tax Map #5-C-9: Architects Scott Teas and Pamela Hawkes of Scattergood Design and owners Cabot and Heidi Lyman represented the applicant. Mr. Lyman said he had been asked why he did not continue with his approved application for a mixed residential and retail use at this location. He said that plan was not financially viable for the current economic times. Studies had shown that a hotel run by professionals from MIGIS Hotels would be more successful. Mr. Lyman wanted to be part of the reinvention of Rockland, which he said could use some beds for the 100,000 people who attended the Lobster Festival and other events. He wanted an environmentally friendly building and had worked hard to stay within the code requirements. Mr. Lyman concluded by expressing his desire for a viable building with longevity and architectural interest.

Mr. Teas said Mr. Lyman had made clear to him four years ago that, due to the transformation going on in Rockland, this building had to be very special. Both Mr. Teas and Ms. Hawkes had wanted to do something connected with the community and had worked hard to honor that commitment. Mr. Teas had explained at last month's meeting the changes from the original approved plan to the new proposal: the building was approximately 1/3 larger, the mass was very similar, and the height had not changed. He noted that the view of the hotel from the harbor remained unchanged.

Mr. Teas listed changes to the design made since last month's presentation. Parking would be by valet, with the leased parking lot on an adjacent block accessed from Park St. The west property line had shifted 3' to the east, allowing more windows. Four planters had been placed in the arcade, allowing vines to crawl up the west side of the building. Facing the adjacent residential properties, the building's scale would be three stories.

Mr. Teas explained the layout for the ground floor. There would be no corridors in the hotel; instead, there would be a gallery on each floor. As the building was made smaller, the stairs had pivoted on the lower floors. In response to questions about massing, the portion of the stairs and elevator shaft extending above the roof had been reduced, while the west stair and enclosed roof lobby had been eliminated. Mr. Teas stressed that the building did not fully encompass the perimeters allowed by zoning. He displayed an updated elevation to show the space the building could be allowed to encompass.

Mr. Teas introduced his partner, Ms. Hawkes, saying her strength was historic preservation and listing some of her experience. Ms. Hawkes said she had responded to both the Downtown and general standards. Acknowledging the concerns about massing and scale, she said the Rockland downtown was very diverse, with 2-, 3-, and 4-story buildings, and pointed out that the courthouse was taller than the hotel proposed. Ms. Hawkes said the prime expression of the hotel's facade, the terra cotta tiles, was only 4 stories and the 5th floor had been set back a foot to lessen its impact. The massing had been broken down to represent two separate buildings on the Pleasant Street side. Ms. Hawkes mentioned that the brick, granite, and slate being used on the exterior reflected traditional Main St. buildings. There would be an 18" granite base on the first floor and fiber-reinforced cement for portions of the north and west facades. The overall proportion of the materials modules had been reduced since last month: the terra cotta tile had been reduced to 1' X 3' and the reinforced cement to 2' X 6', resulting in a more horizontal proportion. The first floor windows created a storefront look and the 5th floor acted as a cornice. The entrance was recessed 3' on Main St, with balconies and a marquee over it. Windows were set back 4" from the facade, as well.

Ms. Hawkes said side facades typically used less expensive materials and had fewer windows, in the expectation that adjacent buildings would closely abut them. Looking to Rockland's history of granite and lime quarries, the proposed cement panels were cut into shapes to suggest fractured quarry walls. Mr. Teas said the fractured concrete was an early attempt, not a final solution, to convey an idea. Pulling the building back on the west side had allowed more and larger windows, as well as terra cotta panels. The architect continued his presentation using a 3-dimensional computer model to illustrate his points.

Chair Laustsen asked about access to the building, particularly if 2 to 4 cars arrived simultaneously. Mr. Teas responded that there were only 26 suites that would not be turning over every day. He said the likelihood of 2 or 3 guests arriving or leaving at the same time was reasonable, but more than that would be unusual; there would be fewer turnover trips than for a restaurant or commercial establishment. Chair Laustsen said blocking the street was the main concern. Mr. Teas said there would be 3 or 4 spaces on Pleasant St. and the applicant would be asking the City Council to designate 1 or 2 10-minute spaces on Main St. Mr. Laustsen said residents were concerned that cars would stack up while waiting for the valet to return from parking a car. Mr. Swan asked if Main St. spaces would interfere with people trying to turn onto Pleasant St. Mr. Teas responded that valet parking seemed to work itself out.

Mr. Lyman asked Jesse Henry (MIGIS Hotels) to respond to the valet parking questions. Mr. Henry said there were thousands of hotels in the country that used valet parking all the time. He acknowledged that it could be sticky at times and good, trained staff was needed. He suggested the number of hotel rooms made this more like a bed and breakfast. Mr. Bodine asked where the first space was located on Pleasant St. and City Attorney Beal said from the audience that it was 55' west of Main St. Suggestions of alternative parking solutions were made and there was further discussion of parking concerns. Mr. Henry said that with designated parking spaces, and other spaces nearby, this would not become an issue. Chair Laustsen said the issue was cars standing in front of the hotel, not the number of spaces the hotel had.

Chair Laustsen complimented Mr. Teas on wrapping the terra cotta tiles around the corner of the building to the west side and stepping the 4th and 5th stories back. However, he was still concerned that there was a very blank wall on the north side. Mr. Teas responded that this would not be a blank wall if it were energized and said they would continue to work to find a good solution.

Mr. Swan asked about the 3' space before the property line since there had to be a fireproof wall and the windows needed to withstand pressure from a fire hose. Mr. Teas said they had moved it back 3' because then fire glass was not needed, though it would still be a fire-rated wall.

Mr. Bodine said he could appreciate wanting to honor historic architecture; however, when someone came to the Park and Main Streets intersection, the impact of the wall would be increased because it would be the largest structure to the south. He thought brick would be a better choice and said choosing gray for the north side of the building simply announced, "Hello, I'm a mass."

Chair Laustsen opened the public hearing at 6:45 P.M. He noted that the zone changes in effect here had been made in 2010; though the PB might have preferred 3 stories, that was not how the ordinance read.

Elizabeth Dickerson, 260 W. Meadow Rd., said there had been confusion among the city councilors over the last couple of days. In December 2010 the Comprehensive Planning Commission [CPC] had recommended a 50' height limit, but related Ordinance Amendment #40 had never come to agenda setting and was never voted on. She asked that the PB give the council time to rehear the amendment and allow the public to come to the council about it.

Joan Wright read part of a letter from Amy Files, wherein she said Lyman Morse had done a very good job trying to fit the regulations, but the building was just too high. Ms. Files said the pick-up/drop-off parking would cause traffic congestion, thus raising safety risks.

Ben Levine, 20 Orange St., said he lived in the south end because he could walk downtown in 8 minutes through a lovely area. The corner of Pleasant and Main Streets was the gateway to his neighborhood and not an urban area. Mr. Levine said the north wall of the proposed hotel was a big problem visually. He saw no need for a hotel since existing ones were empty most of the year.

Mary Colton, owner of Pine and Jefferson Street houses, thought the plan was brilliant and the city was very lucky to have Scott Teas as the architect. She noted that Wass' hotdog stand was next to the Rankin Center and said we need to look forward and welcome good things to the city. Ms. Colton thought the city should have artistic input and said ADZ Properties had the right to develop as it wanted within the guidelines.

Susanne Ward, 55 Masonic Street and owner of Rock City Coffee Roasters, said she had 25 employees and felt the proposed hotel was not an appropriate size for the neighborhood and that it would overwhelm her abutting building. In the past, her business had almost been shut down by complaints by a neighbor about the smell of roasting coffee. Her smokestack had been raised 15' to appease the neighbor, but running the stack through the hotel's structure would be a big problem for her. Ms. Ward stressed that she had no agreement with the hotel on this issue and was sure she would receive odor complaints.

Alexander Shaw, 39 Pleasant St., had concerns related to code height provisions and traffic. He read from the code the exceptions for rising above 65', which he said the PB must approve. Mr. Shaw said the stairs and elevator, which would rise above the roof, were intended for human use.

Tegran Atwell, 81 Pleasant St., read aloud a letter from Barbara Michaud that began, "I believe in development, but not in my neighborhood." Mr. Atwell disagreed with the contention that hotels in Camden did not cause traffic problems. He asked Mr. Teas how respectful it was to destroy a community.

Peter Proeller, 57 W. Meadow St., asked if we wanted Main St. moving south. This development would be a major change, resulting in an urban setting.

Maggie Trout, Broadway, said the glowing panels on the west and north sides of the hotel would affect everyone at night. Ms. Trout talked about the MONY building in Syracuse, NY, and concluded by saying this hotel was in the wrong place.

Debby Atwell, 81 Pleasant St., said 35 people from the neighborhood had signed a petition, which was in the PB members' packets. She said Rockland was a market town with a market-based economy. She contended that the builder was trying to dominate the street in order to meet his needs. Ms. Atwell read the introductory statement to Chapter 15, Article I of the Ordinance, stressing its claim of the "individual rights of citizens in use of the streets." She then questioned the feasibility of valet parking and its possibly chaotic outcome. In asking for a traffic study, Ms. Atwell said the building was too tall, massive, did not harmonize with its neighbors, and she didn't like the gray walls.

Theodore Barry, 39 Crescent St., said civil trespass by motor vehicles resulted in a $100 fine if parked in a private driveway. Chair Laustsen told Mr. Barry that had nothing to do with the PB.

Deborah Rainey, Dodge Mountain Rd., said the wall was just terrible and asked what was wrong with respecting what existed by using brick.

Sandra Schramm, 16 Broad St., said a conflict existed between the PB decision and the comprehensive plan. She said the mass and scale of the hotel were vastly overblown and not in scale with the neighborhood. Ms. Schramm wanted a feasibility and traffic impact study. She said seven roads fed into the area and DOT had removed nearby spaces on Main St. because it was the narrowest part of the road. She said the Limerock Inn had been turned down when it requested designated parking spaces and approving it here would set a precedent. Ms. Schramm pointed out problems with parking spaces at an already busy intersection. Chair Laustsen stated that the north side of Pleasant St. was zoned commercial and there was no parking in the first 55'.

Karen Lannon, Pleasant St. and 14 Broad St., asked if the road would be blocked during construction. She said the hotel was too massive to be on that small lot.

George Terrien, 222 Broadway, said the points made would affect the PB decision. He stated that zoning was to protect the less intensive use from the more intensive use.

Valli Geiger, Broadway, said she was Chair of the CPC but speaking only for herself. She had lived in Rockland for 18 years and had watched its renaissance. She was concerned with the size and scale of the hotel. Ms. Geiger thought there would be many requests to do similar developments.

David Myslabodski, Broad St., asked if the project respected the spirit of the city code and comprehensive plan. He said the submitted drawings were not accurate, noting that a lamppost was located right in front of the entrance. Mr. Myslabodski said there were traffic rushes all the time and this would not work in Rockland as well as in Camden. However, he wanted the developer to get due process.

Melissa Hunibel read a letter from Linda Webbenhurst, 33 State St. Ms. Webbenhurst objected to the building height in the initial approved plan and felt that issue remained in the new application. She felt the change of use to a hotel was problematic, stating that parking restrictions were in place for a purpose. Ms. Webbenhurst also questioned how deliveries would be handled with no parking on Pleasant St. The letter concluded with Ms. Webbenhurst saying that the north and west sides of the building were objectionable because there was too much concrete and there were too small or no windows.

Allan Toubman, 45 Ocean St., said this connection between commercial and residential uses required the PB to weigh equally the impact on the residential section next door. He said the sweat equity of residential owners was the reason these people were here with this development. Mr. Toubman said he would go for a zone change since the land across the street from him was zoned commercial. He asked for a study of the effects of traffic, noise, and other pollution on the residents in the area.

Max Prindiville said he had moved to Rockland in 1998 and lived at 36 Pleasant St., later purchasing 87, 89, and 112 Pleasant Street. He had originally liked the idea of the hotel until he saw the drawings showing how massive it would be. Mr. Prindiville asked that we not begin ruining a great town with a proposal like this.

Gretchen Kuhn, 15 Robinson St., said she wanted the project to be respectful of the neighborhood. She said the height was too great and she supported Ms. Dickerson's suggestion that the City Council look at 50'. Ms. Kuhn later said the smell of coffee roasting would bother the hotel.

Ron Huber, 140 Broadway, said he echoed the already stated concerns about traffic, pedestrian safety, scale, and visual experience.

John Steen, 53 Pleasant St., said he had seen a lot of changes and enjoyed the conveniences while growing up on Camden St. He noted that Hollydachs had been a fire concern. Mr. Steen said he was an employee of Lyman Morse and lived next door to the house that had recently been demolished. He wanted to speak to the character of Cabot Lyman, whom he said would not come into the town and try to

ruin it. He asked people to look at what Mr. Lyman had done in Thomaston and give him a chance to show what he could do in Rockland.

Nancy Comeau, 145 Pleasant St. Ext., said this was a busy intersection and the traffic had increased in the five years she had lived there. She asked for a feasibility traffic study. Ms. Comeau said she liked the exterior of the hotel, with the exception of the two walls and said the developer should say what he was going to do with the building before it was approved.

Hal Perry, 25 State St., asked what would be done with a dozen people coming with guests to the hotel at one time? Where would they park?

Chair Laustsen closed the public hearing at 8:27 P.M. and declared a 10-minute break in the proceedings.

Chair Laustsen listed his concerns: the north wall, accommodation for the coffee stack, noise from the roof in the evening, and access for people coming to the hotel and cars possibly backing up. He said the last issue was the weakest part of the application. Mr. Lyman said he couldn't afford to allow noise on the roof because it would bother guests. Mr. Teas added that any noise would occur in the middle and tall parts of the building. Mr. Laustsen said the noise issue might be a condition of approval. He then said the PB would need a professional traffic study to show how it would work. Mr. Teas agreed and said he would have a study done.

Mr. Lyman said he had bought the building under the current zoning rules. Mr. Laustsen responded that, even if the rules changed, his application had been found complete under the current rules and would be reviewed under them. Mr. Lyman then commented that fire code prevented him from making a more attractive wall. Mr. Swan said the two party walls would be very visible if the zoning were changed to a maximum 50' height and no walls abutted them. Mr. Jordan said Pleasant St. had multi-story buildings before the fire of 1952 and Mr. Lyman said Hollydachs had been 4-1/2 stories.

CEO Root said the board needed a full size updated plan. Chair Laustsen also asked that the applicant list each element requirement and how it was met. Ms. vanVuuren asked that this also be done for the Design Standards Part B.

Minutes of Previous Meeting: 5/6/14

ACTION: Ms. vanVuuren made a motion to approve the minutes of the 5/6/14 meeting.
Carried 4-0-1 (Mr. Jordan abstained)

Adjournment: Mr. Bodine made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 P.M.
Carried 5-0-0

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Sealey
Recording Secretary