

WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL DISTRICT COMMISSION  
**DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE**

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**MINUTES OF AUGUST 4, 2005**

Present: Jay Gregory, John Gowell, Jacob Harpootian, Luis Torrado, Jeanne Boyle, Renee Kinchla.

1. Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Jay Gregory called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He introduced and welcomed new member, Terry Gray of the RI DEM to the Design Review Committee.

2. New Business

A. Application of Monarch Industries Inc., 10 New Road.

Chairman Gregory noted that no one was present to represent Monarch Industries Inc before the Committee tonight. They were going to submit a request for approval to install a wood burning furnace and a silo to feed it automatically. He states the DRC will then go on to Item B. below.

B. Pre-application Presentation – Red Bridge Residential Development, 1 Waterman Avenue, Map 105, Block 5, Lot 17 and Map 105, Block 1, Lot 1 FRE Building Co. Inc.

Mr. Gregory noted this is a pre-application meeting.

Mr. Gregory noted that he wanted to inform the Design Review Committee that the FRE Corporation is a customer of a company that he owns 50 percent of. They are in the equipment business like J.J. Gregory in Uxbridge, MA. He said that there will be very few contractors that come before this Board or the Waterfront Commission that he has not had some business contact with and will ask the Executive Director to make a decision as to whether it is a conflict of interest at this point. Ms. Boyle suggests that they consult with Attorney Main, and stated that since this is just an informational meeting, there is no vote being taken tonight,

Chairman Gregory asks that everyone speaking to please identify themselves.

Janice Hannert of FRE Building also known as Faford Real Estate introduced the members of her team. ESS Group, Glen Almquist, Jan Greenwood, and Laura Ernst who have been working on the hazardous waste and site issues. Mike Cassavoie of Edwards and Kelcey and Keith Patterson are doing the architectural work. Ms. Hannert said she and her staff is very pleased to be part of the East Providence waterfront project. She has spoken with Jeanne Boyle for a number of years and have come to all of the Commission's meetings. She and her staff are very impressed with the professionalism with the Design Review Committee and the Waterfront Commission and staff in particular and are very pleased to be a part of this.

Ms. Hannert gave a brief summarization of the FRE and Faford Real Estate Corporation. She said they are a fully integrated privately owned real estate company and have been in Massachusetts for the last 30 years. We have done a number of projects around the Rt. 495 and the Metropolitan/Boston area. We are presently working on about 15 towns ranging from Salem on the north down to Bellingham in the southern part of Massachusetts and are happy to be working in Rhode Island. We have done approximately 4,000 housing units in the last 30 years. Approximately 3,000 of those have been multi-family units and about 1,000 have been single-family units. We have also done a fairly large number of commercial and industrial space, about 10 million square feet in the Boston/Metropolitan area.

Ms. Hannert explained that FRE is proposing to construct 147 high-end luxury condominium units in East Providence on what is called the Red Bridge property in the Crook Point District. This is designated a high-density residential area in the Waterfront Plan. We have had a number of issues in development of this site. It is an extremely constrained site with a lot of easements and access issues. We agree with the objective of the Waterfront Commission that there should be a 50-foot pedestrian access area along the Seekonk River. We are proposing to basically encumber that full 50 feet. The site is a seven-acre property. A 50 foot access strip on this particular site does take up a significant portion of the site, but we feel it is necessary and will produce a great deal of benefit for the project and the City of East Providence. There are also a number of other access easements such as Algonquin gas easement that runs the length of the site. There is a Getty pipeline 10-foot easement that runs the length of the site. There are railroad corridors and Narragansett Electric has a utility line. Ms. Hannert states that they have met with the CRMC because we needed their input as to how we should go about this. With the help of the City staff we had several meetings with them. The lower, larger footprint building that we originally started with has now been reduced back to a higher structure to compensate for the CRMC issues. She noted she has the preliminary determination permit that has the full support of the CRMC staff. In terms of designing the building, Ms. Hannert noted that there is a series of five structures with vegetated view

corridors in between. The structures are clustered so that there will be a view to the water. There will be green space patio areas to help relate the outside of the building. All the units will be two bedroom structures. We are not proposing any one or three bedroom units. Our target market would be single or young married professionals, empty nesters which is typical of what you might see in a condominium type development.

Ms. Hannert stated that high-end condominiums produce more in revenue to the City than they take in terms of City services. The units would be responsible for their own trash removal. There would not be a public road so they would be responsible for the maintenance of the roadways. The tax revenue that is generated by a project goes at least half to the school department and half to maintain other City expenses. These types of units would have an average of 11 children for every 100 units developed. She showed the Committee how they arrived at these figures. The units would be all sold privately and individually owned. There would be a professional condo association management company that would manage the units. Ms. Hannert noted that she would comply with the 10 percent affordable housing objective. They will provide some of the units on-site and some off-site. She said she has had experience in a similar development and provided affordable units in Marlboro Massachusetts. There were 56 affordable units there. Some were off-site and some were on-site. It could help relieve market pressure in terms of you put the deed restriction on, but as the years go by and the units resell, they are more likely to remain in the neighborhoods than on the waterfront. Ms. Hannert emphasized that this is a very difficult and is working with RIDEM in terms of how we go about the remediation etc. We are still working out easement and access issues. She thanked the Committee.

At this time, Jan Greenwood and Laura Ernst discussed some of the visual and site issues and it was noted that Michael Cassavoie, Edwards and Kelcey of Providence, RI, and Keith Patterson will get into the architectural portion later.

Jan Greenwood, ESS Group states she is the civil engineer on this project. She walked the Committee through some of the site issues that they had to deal with when working on the project. She said the site is located near the Henderson Bridge at Rt. 195 at the Crook Point Area at the end of Waterman Avenue. With the aid of a map Ms. Greenwood showed the Board the existing conditions on the site. There are two parcels, one is a little over six acres and the other about .3 acres which is too small to do anything with. The six-acre parcel is what we are going to develop. There are some existing buildings on it now. Over time, it has been used as various industries and in the past more heavy industry and more recently, light industry. One of the past uses was metal recycling. The constraints in addition to the waterfront itself. There are quite a few easements that go through the site. Algonquin has a 24-inch underground pipe within that easement. They do not allow any structures within their easement. The Getty line has oil and gas and some of these are still active and that is when they we

found some contamination in the property. There are some overhead lines that go through the site, there is a railroad easement that is now abandoned. She stated they met with the CRMC and have talked with them about this project. They have agreed to a 25-foot vegetative buffer and a 50-foot setback from the waterfront. We are left with a very long and narrow space for the proposed building which part of it is in a flood plain. Access right now is from Waterman Avenue and then turns. Because we are also in the flood plain, the design of the building has two stories of parking. The first story of parking is actually below the flood plain level. All the living spaces will be above the flood plain level and that was part of the consideration in constructing the building. The entrance will be at Waterman Avenue and coming up closer to Massasoit Avenue. Entering the garage is at the upper level on this side of the building and then down the hill and you would enter the garage at the lower level at the ends. The requirements are that we provide 298 parking spaces. There will be parking inside for 204 cars and 110 for the outside. There will be 20 extras for visitors.

Regarding the view on this property, Ms. Greenwood stated that there are five individual buildings with 30-foot view corridors between them. The parking deck is contiguous and the buildings rise above that. Ms. Greenwood states that they took a look at the view corridors from outside the building and what that would look like. We choose five lines of sight from public spaces to see what the public would actually see when they drove by on Waterman Avenue, the corner of Central and Massasoit Avenues and Valley Street. The proposed grade for the lowest level of the garage is about 50 feet lower than the elevation of N. Brow Street. Although the buildings are high, they are starting 50 feet lower. The only view from these lines of sight that can see the water is from Waterman Avenue. Everything else is impacted by vegetation that is obstructing the view to begin with. We also looked at the five residential buildings on this side of N. Brow Street before it gets into the industrial property. She spoke of the access for vehicles from Valley Street. We will have to go through a private property owner that FRE has been speaking with. There is also opportunity to come down through RIDOT's property on their railroad there. We did meet with them and are working with us regarding the access. They will be taking down the bridge and will be providing us with temporary access when they go through the process.

Regarding public access, Ms. Greenwood showed the Committee the pedestrian path. It also doubles as fire access. We will be using impervious materials where NFPA requires a 20-foot wide access. The public access walking paths will be pea stone or gravel and turf reinforced with grass on it. It will connect up to Waterman Avenue. CRMC encouraged them to provide public parking and they agree. We have shown tentative parking on Waterman Avenue with parallel spaces in this vicinity. CRMC encouraged us to put in a wet pond. It will have aquatic vegetation in it. All the storm water will be treated through that pond. CRMC also wanted us to reinforce the shoreline which we will do.

Mike Cassavoie from Edwards and Kelcey in Boston, distributed his presentation

to the Committee regarding the parking. He noted the remediation is expensive and distributed a parking layout. He said vehicles will come in from the east side, drive through and park at the numbered spaces. It will be dedicated parking. There are three larger buildings and two narrower buildings. There will be back-to-back parking. The second level of parking will be accessed through the front of the building itself and showed the committee the access points. The parking garage will be above grade and terraced so that you will be able to enter the buildings. The goals also regarding trash and dumpsters and removal is to have it all internal to the building itself and not outside trash and then roll it out for the pickup. The lower parking level has 116 parking spaces and the second level has 112 parking spaces. The third level up which is the plaza level is where we start to define the building itself and the residential units. There will be security for people getting in and out. There are two types of floor plans. The first plan, number 2 shows units that are stacked. The second would be the shorter rectangular units on the Seekonk River side.

Mr. Cassavoie explained the elevations and distributed some photographs which were taken across the river which shows the full build-out of the plan itself. It showed the lower and second level elevations with view corridors. He said their concern was like the Committee's regarding the size of the building. He showed methods to reduce the size of building and showed the different types of materials and colors for the roofs. A light gray material will help to tone down the size of the building. Gables have also been added on the building itself in various locations which is what is in the surrounding area. The units will have windows and balconies. The building will also have different colors and shades to cut down on the mass of the building. There will be cornices on the upper part of the building. The materials used will be long lasting since the building is on the water.

Ms. Boyle asked them to describe what they are doing in terms of access to utilities. Jan Greenwood stated that they just put in a new water line that is crossing the bridge and the railroad. That is a private water line that services existing buildings. Assuming that that size is appropriate what we would like to do is take that water line and come in and service the building from that waterline. We have met with Steve Coutu and Ken Booth and we would like to run a new water corridor down Waterfront Drive. We have spoken to them regarding this. The only source of water is here. If they say we have to come back and say we need to tie into Valley Street or do a loop through Valley Street and come off of Valley Street, that is something that I have asked them to come back to us with and tell us where we can tie in. We will revise the plan to whatever it needs to be. With respect to sewer, there is a sewer line that runs behind these residential buildings. Because we are so low here we will be building a pump station facility. We will take the force main and go wherever the City directs us to go.

Ms. Greenwood states that the gas line was abandoned in 1975. There is one on

Massasoit Avenue and in Waterman Avenue. We could put a new line in the same location. We propose to come off the corner of Massasoit and Waterman Avenues and go along the same line if it is still available for gas still even though it is now abandoned. Then come in parallel to our access road. Regarding electric, we will need to move one of the poles coming down Waterman Avenue for entrance. We will come off one of the existing poles and go underground to service the site.

Mr. Coutu asked in respect to the other utilities what happens when the bridge is gone. She states that the gas line is under ground and is not on the bridge and they will possibly go underground.

Mr. Coutu asked what will happen to the other piece of the site; the small triangular piece which is 0 Waterman Avenue? Ms. Hannert states that the CRMC asked that they keep that in its natural state. They felt this was important to have the vegetated areas remain, but it will be cleaned up. She states there is no construction proposed on that site.

Mr. Harpootian asked how high the buildings would be. Mr. Cassavoie answered from the 10 foot level elevation, the floor level has to be less than 75 feet because we want to make sure they are less than the high-rise buildings themselves. He asked how many units. Ms. Hannert answered 33 in the square building and 24 on the rectangular. It would be 1,200 to 1,800 square feet per unit.

Mr. Gregory asked about the height of the high tension wires. It was noted that would be discussed with Narragansett Electric anyway because the grade is going to be raised to have site clearance to them. It is around 75 feet now. Mr. Gregory asks if the present lines could go underground, but Ms. Greenwood stated that the services lines are not within her control, but that anything that we add will be underground.

Ms. Boyle stated that the City has been involved with the electric company as far as putting the lines underground further south along the waterfront, but that it would be a massive expense.

Mr. Gregory asks for a description of the riprap along the waterfront and are we would to maintain the existing shoreline or will it change. Ms. Greenwood states that they have not designed the riprap yet. We will look at the water currents and will size the stone properly so that the tides and currents do not dislodge the stones. We will calculate what kind of stone will be needed to keep in place.

Regarding contouring the shoreline, Laura Ernst said that CRMC wants the shoreline cleaned up and they also want to see something aesthetically pleasing as well. Terry Gray, RIDEM states that it will be important to have the same look as you go property to property.

Mr. Gregory states for the record that his version of riprap is a lot of smaller stone vs. the unattractive old slab blocks they use to use. Ms. Hannert states she will keep that in mind through the process and in particular the next phase of the CRMC process as well.

Mr. Gregory asks if they are going to cross the railroad track with the sewer discharge and whether they are going to go under the tracks or over them. Ms. Greenwood answered that part of that will depend on the time of the event of that railroad. We have spoken to RIDOT and P&W and for now they are looking to abandon that railroad. We are hoping that they won't preserve the tracks and they can go underground. Ms. Boyle states that P&W has submitted all their documentation to the Surface Transportation Board for the request for abandonment of those tracks.

Regarding the timeline of the buildout of the road, Ms. Boyle states that the City was informed by the RIDOT that they have spoken to their consultants to proceed with full design and will have it ready for construction ready drawings by the end of 2006 and out to construction in 2007. She said through Representative Kennedy and Senator Reed's office they were able to obtain \$5.5 million through RIDOT towards the construction of that phase and have been working with the Federal Economic Development Administration for \$2 million towards the utilities.

Mr. Gregory asks if all the parking will be constructed at once then all the individual buildings will be developed. Ms. Hannert states yes and that we have to build the parking structure first and then we will market the units and build one building at a time as the units are sold.

Mr. Gregory asked about any fire issues. Ms. Boyle stated she received a memorandum from Acting Fire Chief Brassill. He states he has agreed to the proposal by the applicant for apparatus access. Ms. Boyle states that the entire package when received will be submitted to the Fire Chief for his review. The Chief's main issue is to make sure the fire apparatus will be able to access the development. There will be reinforced pavers along the area. Mr. Gregory asks that the applicant prepare for questions from the full Commission regarding the view corridor from as the committee as the development progresses.

Mr. Torrado commended the applicant for coming in at this early stage and seeking out an opinion from the Committee. It will make for a smoother application process. He states he also appreciates the challenge that the site restrictions represent in trying to maximize the number of condo units. He says he understands challenges that this project represents. Mr. Torrado states that his concern is the aesthetics and the volume of the buildings. He suggests a break down of the massing and the scale of the buildings. The fact that the buildings are all aligned aggravates that problem and the fact that you have repetition in design further aggravates it. He suggests they reduce the scale of

some of the buildings. He cautions the applicant on using the current building across the river for inspiration. He would like to see better materials used on the building also.

In answer to Mr. Torrado's comments, Mr. Cassavoie states that they started to review the exterior materials and because the land and remediation is so costly they would be using a higher quality synthetic material, which is better than what you would find in the local market. We are trying to soften the building also with color and glass to the exterior so that the corners will somewhat disappear.

Regarding the traffic issue, Mr. Gregory noted he asked why Walnut Street was not included in the review. Walnut Street is a primary road which heads north/south. The peer review is underway. He suggests that Walnut Street be included within the peer review since it does get a considerable amount of the traffic. Ms. Hannert states she would be happy to make sure that Walnut Street gets included in the peer review for traffic.

Steve Coutu states that he has received information from the people on Summit Street regarding their traffic problems with the extension of the I-195 ramp. The study itself does not look at the advantages of Waterfront Drive at this time. Ms. Hannert stated that when it was done, the consultants were clearly aware of Waterfront Drive which will eventually take the excess traffic off the neighborhood streets.

Ms. Boyle states that the consultants that are doing the peer view are also doing the environmental assessment for the City and the interchange project. They have come up with four different alternatives which are now being reviewed by the RIDOT. This will be part of the public hearing that we will hold in late September. One of the alternatives will be a ramp down onto Waterfront Drive in the vicinity of Valley Street, but two of the alternatives do not include that. One of the alternatives is a dramatic change which is intended to a large extent to address that whole problem with cut-throughs on Walnut and Anthony Streets.

Regarding the appearance and design of the buildings, Mr. Gregory asked Mr. Torrado if he had any recommendations of alterations to the building design and roof lines. Mr. Torrado states that starting with the north elevations there is a lack of balconies and windows on what will be a nine story façade. Mr. Cassavoie states that every unit has windows and some have corridors that are so narrow. We have not addressed that yet. The balconies project out and some of them are recessed in. They discussed how some of the balconies project outward and some of them are inward. Mr. Torrado states that having some of them project in and out would break up a thick mass of the façade. He suggests that a component of the building have a three story element and then a two story element above with a projected roof on the three story element. This

way it would break down the scale of the height of the building. Also he suggested putting in decks on the upper levels.

Ms. Boyle asks Mr. Torrado if there is a specific material that he would like to see in terms of the appearance of the building. Mr. Torrado suggested masonry or a look of masonry. Mr. Cassavoie said what they have on the design now is a rougher texture at the lower side of the buildings and the lighter materials on the upper portion of the building. Smoother materials would be at the upper levels that way you would get a layered look. Mr. Cassavoie thanked Mr. Torrado and the committee for their ideas.

Mr. Gregory asks Janice Hannert if she has any questions of the Committee. She commends the Committee and City staff for being very thorough and answering any questions they have had up to this point. She said there are a number of issues evolving with Waterfront Drive etc. that we want to work with the City and the staff on, and that they have been very helpful in the process.

Ms. Boyle said that the application that FRE has submitted so far is very close to complete and asks them if they wish to proceed with the formal process and deem this complete, or would they take into consideration the Committee's comments tonight and modify the design? She informed them that once they call it a complete application, then that is where the formal process begins. Ms. Hannert states she and her staff would like to have the opportunity to digest some of the comments that were suggested tonight and will get back to Ms. Boyle and the Committee with a new design.

Regarding affordable housing, Mr. Gregory explained to Ms. Hannert that the affordable housing issue will probably come before the Waterfront Commission at their next meeting of August 15th and that DRC will need more direction from the full Commission. Ms. Hannert agreed and explained that in the past, they were always required to keep the same proportionate number of affordables to market rate as they went through the process. Ms. Boyle asks Ms. Hannert to provide more information to her before the next full Commission's meeting in August.

Jan Greenwood, ESS Group, asked to get a copy of the formal meeting minutes. It was noted by Ms. Boyle that they would probably be ready for the August 15<sup>th</sup> meeting for approval.

At this time, there were no other questions. Mr. Gregory thanked the people of ESS and FRE for coming in tonight and thanked them for a very nice presentation.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully

submitted,

Jeanne M. Boyle  
Interim Executive  
Director

JMB/SAC