



Waterfront Special Development District Commission

Minutes of Monday, October 16, 2006 Public Hearing

Present were members: Chairman Patrick Rogers, Jay Gregory, John Pesce, Jacob Harpootian, Bruce Chick, William J. Fazioli, Steven Hardcastle; ex-officio member: Lori Capaldi; counsel: Attorney Robin Main; and staff: Jeanne Boyle and Roberta Groch.

The meeting began at 7:15 p.m.

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks

Chairman Rogers welcomed Mr. Hardcastle to the Commission. Chairman Rogers also introduced the new waterfront planner, Roberta Groch. Chairman Rogers notified the Commission that the new East Providence Waterfront website is up and running.

2. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of August 21, 2006

Motion to approve was made by Mr. Harpootian and seconded by Mr. Fazioli. Unanimous vote to approve with no changes.

3. New Business

A. Appointments

Chairman Rogers appointed Mr. Hardcastle and Mr. Chick to serve on the Hearing Panel.

B. Presentation by Essex River Ventures

Mr. John Fenton, Principal- Essex River Ventures

Ms. Martha Werenfels, Architect- Durkee Brown Viveiros & Werenfels

Essex River Ventures and Durkee Brown gave a presentation on the proposed Phillipsdale Landing project.

Mr. Chick asked if the project team had given consideration to insurance issues related to wind damage. Ms. Werenfels answered that they are aware of floodplain issues. She also stated that there are new codes for window types in high-hazard zones but that the development is not in that zone.

Mr. Hardcastle asked about the parking in the interior of the development. Ms. Werenfels stated

that the original beams and columns from the existing building will be kept in order to show that there was a building there, per the National Park Service and the RIHPHC. They will also be used to hang lights and planters, and to make the parking more attractive.

Mr. Fazioli asked if there are tax credits available for the project from the State: Mr. Fenton answered that the project is not dependent on tax credits. Mr. Fazioli asked what the mix of residential and commercial was within the project: Mr. Fenton replied that there is approximately 40,000 sf of commercial development, including a restaurant and a health club. The commercial is mainly to serve the community.

Mr. Fenton stated that the first phase of the project is very affordable (\$200K-\$350K) for empty-nesters and first-time buyers. When the other phases are built the units will be bigger and more expensive.

Mr. Fazioli asked about water and sewer service. Mr. Fenton stated that the sewer will be provided through the Narragansett Bay Commission. Ms. Boyle stated that water service will be addressed.

Questions were also asked about roadways: Ms. Boyle said that a consultant was reviewing the plans and may recommend off-site improvements. The remediation of this site was also addressed. Mr. Fenton stated that lead “hot spots” would be removed; it is mostly in the form of slag. Any stormwater will be channeled away into culverts away from the hot spots. Ms. Werenfels added that the excavated soil will create the opportunity for underground parking.

Chairman Rogers asked how many units total are there and the build-out period: Mr. Fenton replied that there will be 240 units built over three years. Chairman Rogers inquired about the taxes currently paid on the property: Mr. Fenton said that he did not have the specific amount for the meeting. Chairman Rogers asked about the company’s experience with similar developments: Mr. Fenton said that Essex River Ventures was formed three years ago and has approximately 1.5 million sf of privately-financed space. Mr. Fenton has 20 years of experience. The company has acquired Richmond Square in Providence and is constructing a 40-unit condominium project there.

Ms. Boyle stated that the project does not have a certificate of completeness yet: the DRC needs a formal referral from the Commission. One conditional use is being proposed. Mr. Fazioli made a motion to refer the project to the DRC; Mr. Hardcastle seconded the motion. There was no discussion. All members voted in favor of the motion.

C. Application for a Cellular Antenna by Modeo

Modeo wants to hang an antenna on the same tower as mentioned in their previous application. The antenna is a conditional use in the waterfront district. The action to be taken is a referral to the DRC. Chairman Rogers stated that the application must come before the Waterfront Commission for a vote. A motion was made by Mr. Harpootian to refer the application to the DRC, which was seconded by Mr. Pesce and passed unanimously.

D. Audit Status

Ms. Boyle stated that the audit of the Waterfront Commission is near completion, with no adverse findings. One of the recommendations by the auditors will be to have the Waterfront Commission exercise its autonomy from the City. Copies of the audit will be distributed to members when it is ready.

E. Minor Modification: Aspen Aerogels

Aspen Aerogels is requesting a minor modification to their approved plan for exterior propane storage. The matter was unanimously referred to the DRC under a motion made by Mr. Pesce and seconded by Mr. Fazioli.

F. Affordable Housing Tour

Mr. Patrick Hanner from the Planning Department has arranged a tour of affordable housing projects in the Olneyville section of Providence for the week of October 23, in the afternoon.

4. Continued Business

Ms. Boyle indicated that GeoNova is continuing to revise its application for completeness: it is expected within two weeks.

5. Reports of Commission's Subcommittees

A. Design Review Committee

DRC Chairman Gregory reported that the DRC held a joint meeting with the Hearing Panel on September 25, 2006 regarding the Fiber Tower Corporation's request. The request was approved. No further action on the matter is required by the Commission.

B. Hearing Panel

Hearing Panel Chairman Harpootian reported that the Hearing Panel had held a joint public hearing with the DRC on the Fiber Tower application and had voted to approve the application.

6. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made at 8:15 p.m. by Mr. Harpootian and seconded by Mr. Pesce. Vote was unanimous to adjourn. The remaining agenda items will be discussed at the November meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne M. Boyle
Interim Executive Director

JMB/rg