



**DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
MINUTES
September 13, 2018**

PRESENT: Matt Neville, Chair
Colin Duggan, Vice-Chair
Marianne Abboud
Rick Buhr
Catherine Courtney
Ted Farquhar
Jonathan Lampier
Rob Leblanc
Tara Ralph

REGRETS: Gregory MacNeil
Kautilya Gandhi
Malcolm Pinto

STAFF: Carl Purvis, Planning Applications Program Manager
Phoebe Rai, Legislative Assistant
Simon Ross-Siegel, Legislative Support

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, reports, supporting documents, and information items circulated are online at halifax.ca.

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 p.m., and the Committee adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m. in Halifax Hall, 2nd Floor City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 8, 2018

MOVED by Jonathan Lampier, seconded by Rob Leblanc

THAT the minutes of March 8, 2018 be approved as presented.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Additions:

11.1 – Non-substantive amendments to site-plan approvals

MOVED by Jonathan Lampier, seconded by Rob Leblanc

THAT the agenda be approved as amended.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES – NONE

5. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS – NONE

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS – NONE

8. INFORMATION ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD – NONE

9. REPORTS

9.1 STAFF

9.1.1 Design Review Committee Appointments Expiring November 30, 2018

The following was before the Design Review Committee:

- A staff memorandum dated September 13, 2018

Phoebe Rai, Legislative Assistant, spoke before the Committee and informed members that should they wish to reapply for membership or wish to encourage other members to apply, they are notified as to the process to do so through the Clerk's office. Staff clarified in reply to questions that there is a term limit of two terms for members, but Council may waive this rule where there are insufficient applicants.

10. PRELIMINARY PRESENTATIONS

10.1 Fougere Menchenton – 1874 Brunswick Street Development

The following was before the Design Review Committee:

- A presentation submitted by Fougere Menchenton dated September 13, 2018

Ron Fougere, the applicant, spoke before the Committee. The applicant noted that Rex Avery from Steele Hotel group was also in attendance. The applicant outlined the subject site and key aspects of the proposal and design priorities. The Committee thanked the applicant for their presentation and asked several follow up questions.

Regarding a section of municipally owned property on the corner of Gottingen and Brunswick Street, the applicant proposed several options to creatively incorporate the space into the project design. The applicant currently proposes to build a deck space connected to the bar and restaurant with a potential greenwall or partial water feature on the retaining wall below the deck on Brunswick Street. Several members expressed concern that a patio for a bar or restaurant may not effectively exploit the opportunity for this corner to be a marquee corner for the entire city. The applicant stated that the design foresees an encroachment and the applicant is willing to purchase the property from the municipality if necessary.

Carl Purvis, Planning Applications Program Manager, responded to questions about the disposal process for surplus municipal property. DRC's mandate regarding site-plan approval is limited to lands that are privately owned. If the applicant wishes to purchase property from the municipality, Regional Council would need to designate the property as surplus. This is a complex process which would very likely require a public hearing. There are also likely to be a number of discussions and input from HRM traffic staff regarding the subject site's right-of-ways and the application of the Integrated Mobility Plan. All of the following makes the Committee's discussion of the site highly speculative at this time.

The applicant replied that their main wish is to build the hotel building as-of-right and they are willing to remove design proposals regarding the municipal site and maintain a dialogue with the city regarding how to deal with it. Some members expressed that this issue will likely have to be resolved with the application, since leaving the issue unresolved risks leaving a large slab of wall facing an open space with little to no connectivity. The applicant and members expressed eagerness and hope that the applicant and the city can continue to communicate regarding solutions to this issue.

Several members asked how the applicant plans to service the proposed building. The applicant stated that the proposal envisions all service to be conducted through small service trucks which will enter and exit the building in a clockwise pattern through an access bay on Brunswick Street. The applicant expressed confidence that this bay will be sufficient to provide valet service as well as to service the building without the need for curbside garbage pickup. The applicant also replied that they were confident that dedicated cycling infrastructure and cycling traffic will not interfere with the applicant's ability to service the building. The applicant stated that they are exploring options to partner with other parking garages in the downtown area to service the hotel, and have received favourable responses from several potential providers.

The applicant asked Committee members for indications as to what might be preferred post-bonus investments. Several members suggested that public art may be a valuable contribution in this case. Several other members suggested the location of the proposal is a particularly significant demarcation between the Halifax downtown area and the north end, and efforts to build connections and encourage tourists to transition into the north end would be hugely beneficial. The applicant stated that they had considered a number of themes in the early design phase including music and Jazz, however, should the Committee express an interest in other site-specific themes the applicant would consider performing some historical research.

In response to questions, the applicant stated that the current penthouse design is only meant to hold mechanical parts. Several members stated that being close to Citadel Hill, it is important to the Committee to ensure, like other similarly located buildings, that the building's roof shape is appropriately aesthetic. Some other members expressed that they would love to see some amenity space and possibly a rooftop deck if it were possible, while recognizing this may be challenging given height restrictions and the need for mechanical equipment to provide access. The applicant replied that they have been considering a slash structure to hide the mechanical equipment, however they may also be open to an amenity space. The applicant proposed to work further with staff to explore whether this is feasible given the maximum height restrictions.

The Chair summarized comments and questions from Committee members and stated that when the application returns to the Committee for approval, the Committee will likely consider several key matters including proposed massing materials, the site's sloping conditions, a designated prominent civic frontage

with high quality materials, the amount of space designated for parking frontage, and exterior lighting plans.

11. ADDED ITEMS

11.1 Non-substantive amendments to site-plan approvals

Committee members had a general discussion about the site-plan approval process, and several members discussed instances where significant materials changes are approved without a requirement to return before the Design Review Committee. In particular, several members expressed concern about instances where significant material and external cladding changes were approved without an opportunity for the Committee to comment or provide input. Several members were curious to better understand what constitutes a substantive amendment in similar matters.

Carl Purvis provided information to the Committee regarding this topic. Staff stated that Design Agreements provide some latitude under the Land Use Bylaw (LUB), and Compliance Officers have some flexibility to determine whether or not a change constitutes a substantive amendment in circumstances where it materially changes the look of the building from the public ground. While the design approval process normally delegates responsibility for quantitative decisions to the Compliance Officers, and reserves qualitative decisions to the Design Review Committee, staff stated that there is some overlap in instances involving substantive amendments.

Staff and Committee members discussed options to better understand this process and staff proposed it may be helpful to invite a Compliance Officer to discuss their understanding and perspectives regarding decision making and substantive amendments. Members expressed interest and enthusiasm and several members expressed that it would be potentially good for all parties to better understand one another's interests and concerns.

12. IN CAMERA (PRIVATE) – NONE

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – October 11, 2018 in Halifax Hall, 2nd Floor City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax

14. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Simon Ross-Siegel
Legislative Support