

**HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Public Information Meeting
Case 21618**

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

Monday, March 5, 2018

7:00 p.m.

Halifax Forum (Maritime Hall), 2109 Windsor Street, Halifax

STAFF IN

ATTENDANCE:

Stephanie Salloum, Planner, HRM Planning
Alden Thurston, Planning Technician, HRM Planning
Tara Couvrette, Planning Controller, HRM Planning
Steve Higgins, Manager of Current Planning

ALSO IN

ATTENDANCE:

Councillor, Lindell Smith, District 8;
Councillor Matt Whitman, District 13
Connor Wallace, WSP Canada Inc.

PUBLIC IN

ATTENDANCE:

Approximately 36

The meeting commenced at approximately 7:04 p.m.

Call to order, purpose of meeting – Ms. Salloum

Ms. Salloum stated they were the Planner and Facilitator for this application. Ms. Salloum also introduced, Steve Higgins, Manager of Current Planning, Tara Couvrette – Planning Controller, Alden Thurston - Planning Technician, Connor Wallace - WSP Inc.– applicant, and Councillor, Lindell Smith.

Case 21618 - Application by WSP Canada Inc. for substantive amendments to an existing development agreement that enables an eight-storey mixed use development at 5511 Bloomfield Street, Halifax to allow additional residential units, changes to the parking, landscaping and design of the approved building.

Ms. Salloum explained; the purpose of the Public Information Meeting (PIM) is: a) to identify that HRM has received a proposal for the site; b) to provide information on the project; c) to explain the Planning Policies and the stages of the Planning Process; d) an opportunity for Staff to receive public feedback regarding the proposal. No decisions are made at this PIM.

1.a) Presentation of Proposal – Stephanie Salloum

Ms. Salloum provided a brief introduction to the application and then made a presentation to the public outlining the purpose of the meeting, status of the application and the developer's request. Ms. Salloum outlined the context of the subject lands and the relevant planning policies. Ms. Salloum explained what has already been approved and what is being proposed.

b) Applicants Presentation – Connor Wallace

Mr. Wallace explained what they were looking to do on the site and gave a brief history of the site.

2. Questions and Comments

Katherine Kitching – Bloomfield St., would like clarification regarding the status of the parking garage entrance which was originally shown off of Almond St. **Ms. Salloum** explained that under the original development agreement there were two parking garage entrances, one on Bloomfield St. and one on Almond St. the Development Officer has the ability to approve minor differences to the design. When the permit application was submitted the Development Office only approved one parking garage entrance along Bloomfield St.

Cliff White – Black St., Is surprised that nobody mentioned in their presentation that there is a stop work order at this site because the developer went ahead and violated the existing agreement. Finds it concerning that there are no consequences just a stop work order. This sends a message to not, just this developer but other developers, go ahead and break the agreement and there will not be any consequences. The neighbourhood is an active neighbourhood and is safe for children and people to get out and know each other and organize events. The neighbourhood is not happy with the existing proposal and the advisory council advised against it but then it is approved by the Planning department. The new agreement adds 22 more units and only 2 more parking places. Parking is already an issue, there will be increased traffic on this very narrow street. Why the decision was made to move the parking garage from Almond St. to Bloomfield St. which is much narrower doesn't make sense. This is a detriment not an improvement. **Stephanie Salloum** advised that a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) was completed under the previous case and was reviewed by the engineers and deemed acceptable to the municipality. **Connor Wallace** advised that around parking and the overall design. The parking garage entrance is setback from the property line which gives accurate sight distance for pedestrians as they are walking past the building. There is also space for vehicles when leaving the building to see if there are any pedestrians. **Steve Higgins, Manager of Current Planning** spoke to the stop work order and what being out of compliance/in compliance means.

Pete Lavell – Belle Aire Terrace, is mystified by this process because it seems like that is somebody has a complaint somebody from the staff is going to get up and then give some sort of rebuttal which may deter people from getting up and speaking. Feels this is a ratcheted process because the developer already has an agreement and instead of the whole thing going back to ground zero and then building it again, he already has what he has and then we are struggling to figure out what more he wants but there is no going back. Mr. Lavell doesn't feel there should be any commercial on Bloomfield St. because it is a residential street and a residential zone. They don't understand why there is a car entrance on Bloomfield St. The TIS only considers car traffic not pedestrian traffic. Policy demands that traffic be directed to the busier street so Almond Street seems to be the place for that to go. There should be as much parking as possible, no four storey addition on Almond St., leave it as parking.

Patrick – stated this area of Bloomfield, Belle Aire, Fuller Terrace, Almond St, Black St. is an area where some of these buildings are buildings that survived the Halifax explosion. It has a very active neighbourhood. Doesn't feel there is a need for commercial at the bottom it should be residential. Stated there is no setbacks for this building. Doesn't feel it should have been the public who pointed out there was a stop work order on this site, that is what makes people suspect. Doesn't like that one Development Officer can make the decision to change the parking garage entrance to Bloomfield St. **Stephanie Salloum** commented on the streetscape on Bloomfield St. and Gottingen St.. Ms. Salloum also clarified about the entrances and that there are no commercial uses proposed for the Bloomfield side of the development and on Gottingen the full width is commercial.

Katherine Kitching – Bloomfield St. stated the esthetics seem better on the new proposal. Is supportive of larger units because they like the idea of encouraging families to live in the neighbourhood. They would like to see more feature in the building that would attract families.

They don't like the look of the surface parking however feels the four storey addition they are proposing is not as existing or welcoming as they would want. There was a flex space originally where trucks could park and maybe a potential for other things to happen on that space in the future and now it is a big four storey block. More greenspace is great, so sure bring back the rooftop deck. Concerns, the building is already too big when you look at it against the Centre Plan. If the developer wanted us to support a bigger building we would want to see it as a win win thing. You want more mass what are we going to get that is going to make us excited when this giant building appears at the end of our street. The exit going onto Bloomfield doesn't make sense to them or in terms of policy. Some cool ideas to get the mass they want and have the community embrace it are; reduce the Hight from 7 to 6 storeys, public right-of-way formalized, narrow the building and widen the right-of-way with added greenspace, maybe try something like Bishops Landing where there are all kinds of cool things.

Phil Cornish – Wanted to know where you going to get the people to fill this building. They don't feel they are going to be able to fill it. Stated there is a building on Almond St. now that they don't think has reached 30% occupancy yet. There was a study done looking at the over building of office buildings in downtown Halifax with something like 70% vacancy. A low occupancy rate will cause more issues/problems. **Connor Wallace** stated for this project stated they believe there is demand for this area. There is an encouragement for growth in this area where services are available.

Steve Heart - Fuller Terrance doubts very much that moving people into the city where services are would work without a few other things to attract people. Doesn't know who they are walking to, who is WSP? **Connor Wallace** explained his role and who WSP are. **Steve Heart** there was a lot of people and work put into making this neighbourhood what it is today and they doesn't feel this is going to contribute to the current neighbourhood. You are getting the neighbourhoods gift because you wouldn't be building here with that kind of building without those communities and people having transformed this area into what it is today.

Helen Whyman – Almond Place stated with all these high rise buildings there isn't much thought given to wind tunnels. This makes it hard for people to get around.

Donna Hennigar – Almond Place – doesn't think the building is going to be as bad as many think it is. Ms. Hennigar loves the building and the people that move into the building are going to be educated with good jobs and don't need cars. A lot be walk downtown and use transit. Thinks it will be a positive thing.

Norman Moulton – Almond Place has concerns about the people who face Gottingen St. and all the noise pollution with the construction and it goes all day long from 8am – 8pm.

Mark – Bloomfield St. is excited about the commercial. Likes that there is development happening. They feel like option 2 is exceeding more attractive to the streetscape than a giant white brick wall. Wish's it was the same on Bloomfield St. as it was in the initial. Excited about the potential for commercial along Almond St. and hopes the right-of-way will remain and become more inviting rather than the scary space it is now. Also, has concerns about parking.

Ron Skibbins- Black St., thinks what was approved is great and isn't in favor of option 1 or 2. Would like to keep it as what was approved because it is a reasonable amount of use of the space. The Almond St. addition that is in both option 1 and 2 takes away the possibility that the access to parking in and out was originally split between two streets and now is only focused on the smaller of the two streets which is not really in mind with city policy. Stick with what was approved. Would like more information about why the stop work order was given. **Connor Wallace** explained why the stop work order was issued.

Mik Owen – Black St., asked that Steve Higgins answer what was looked at that feel out of compliance and the stop work order. **Mr. Steve Higgins** answered why they stop work order was given. The building inspectors and Development Officers reviewed the drawings that were part of the development permit and they have assessed the construction on site and there were pieces of the building there they currently don't comply with the permit that was issued. **Mik Owens** asked about the slabs and drainage. **Paul Skerry** answered questions regarding drainage and surface parking stating it was always an elevated slab. **Mik Owens** said Mr. Wallace summarized January's hearing as having general approval for this four storey addition but they said they were there and didn't hear that at all. What is bring proposed here today is what was refused in January for the most part with a few changes here and there. The former developer negotiated a deal, sold the property to somebody else who then wanted to change it to add another four storeys. 8 metres (24 feet) is how far away that wall is going to be from the closest neighbour and that is a four storey wall that they will be looking at. Zero setback and four storeys right on the property line, that is ridiculous. Not in favour of any four storey addition at all. They wanted to know if there are any loading areas for all the commercial uses because the loading zones should be on their own property not on city streets. The bike lane they are proposing will be used.

Jim Williams – Fuller Terrance stated with what is on the horizon for the neighbourhood over the next 5-10-15 years to add an additional 22 or 25 units to the project of 70 units with the same amount of parking spots, they are not in favor of any additions. The development as it was originally proposed is fine and should continue to be fine for this developer.

Public – Centre Plan – puzzled why the planning dept. would help facilitate what goes against the Centre Plan. **Stephanie Salloum** explained that decision can only be made by the policies that are currently in place and the Centre Plan is not approved yet. This isn't to say that they don't look to see what the direction of the Centre Plan is but it isn't something they can base their recommendations on.

Mik Owens – Wanted to know why there are options given. **Ms. Salloum** explained this is unusual as they typically aren't given options but given the history and the application that went forward to council in January the applicant wanted to get feedback on the two options. All the comments that have been received tonight will be considered as they negotiate changes to the design. The applicant will have to finalize the design that they wish to move forward with before going to the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) as they have to make a recommendation on the development as it is presented to Community Council. **Mik Owens** – how will the public know what was approved. **Ms. Salloum** explained how the public could find out – there will be updates on HRM's website, there will be a Public Hearing as well. **Steve Higgins** – explained the process.

Public – wanted to know the timeframe for this process. **Mr. Higgins** – The very quickest would be that it would go to PAC the end of March, initial consideration at Community Council in April, and the Public Hearing in May. That is the fastest possible route, it can't get any shorter it can only get longer. **Stephanie Salloum** advised that everyone who got a postcard for the meeting tonight will also get notification when the public hearing is scheduled.

Councillor Lindell Smith thanked everyone for coming out.

3. Closing Comments

Ms. Salloum thanked everyone for coming and expressing their comments.

4. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:43 p.m.