

Historic District Commission

June 18, 2020

Draft Minutes

Call Meeting To Order: Patrick Gordon, Chairman, called meeting to order at 7:00 pm via ZOOM.

Members Present: Patrick Gordon, Chairman, Julie Gilman, Select Board Rep, Pam Gjetlum, Douglas McCallum, Curtis Boivin, Vice Chair, Gwen English, Planning Board Rep, Jay Caswell, Developer, Sharon Somers, Legal Counsel, David Cowie, Developer, Adam Wagner, Architect

New Business: Public Hearing: Continued discussion on the application of IOKA Properties, LLC for change in appearance, including window replacement to the existing structure located at 53 Water Street. Case #20-3. Sharon Somers spoke who is the attorney for IOKA BA David Cowie. Also there are representatives from Marketplace Architects Adam Wagner and Christina O'Brien. She stated they were here on May 21st and had a work session with this commission. They received lots of comments from the commission which were very helpful. Since then, the development team has spent a great deal of time trying to address each of those comments and Adam, when he gets up to speak, will be going over things with more detail. Sharon said their goal tonight is to get approval for the project as presented this evening, but failing that, they would like to at least narrow the issues and to then get guidance on what the commission is looking for them to do in terms of any remaining issues they might not be able to reach consensus on. She said those are the goals. Before she turns it over to Adam, she just wants to point out and she hopes the members have received this in their packets. She apologized because they submitted it a little bit late. She wants to bring the member's attention to the fact that they have obtained approximately fifty people or more of residents and business owners in Exeter who provided letters of support for the proposed work they are going to do to the exterior of the building. She thinks it is important they recognize that these are Exeter businesses and residents and she hopes the HDC will take these local indications of support to heart. One of the things she noticed last time is that they heard from a number of individuals who are not residents of Exeter or even business owners in Exeter. They do not believe those individuals are directly impacted by what they are proposing and they would encourage HDC to follow the lead of the pattern boards, such as the Planning Board, ZBA to having participation by members of the public who are directly impacted. They do not believe that members who are outside of the Exeter community are directly impacted and they ask that the commission take this into consideration as they are listening to members of the public. Julie stated that the ZOOM meeting is new to them and typically when they have a meeting they ask the person that is speaking to give their address and if they are not from our town, the board has to agree to allow that person speak. This one fell through the cracks because they are new to this.

Adam Wagner, Architect, thanked the commission for having them again tonight to present to them the proposal for the IOKA theatre. He is going to share his screen to show slides. What Adam is going to go through a series of points and really follow the guidelines of a letter that was written by his colleague Christina O'Brien. It pin points some of the items they heard from the commission and go through some of the research and the response they have come up with. He thinks it is very imperative that the commission know that they were listening and took a lot of good notes. He said they are hoping to get the commission's approval tonight and if nothing less, cross some of the items off the list so they can move past those and narrow down what still needs to be resolved. He then went through a couple of slides. The first was the front elevation of the building and he will get into more detail on what has changed since the last time they presented it to the commission. The next one was the proposed side elevation. It is the alleyway side. Next, for reference, some existing photos of the building. The next slide were photos they presented the last time of the IOKA Theatre dating from 1920, another from 1935 and one with no date but he said it coincides with some snow storm. Adam said if he had to guess at the date, he thinks it is probably the 40s or 50s. He then showed photos of the current conditions and the original. This brings him to the first item he would like to talk about which is the windows. He stated he has the commission's comments in front of him and one was in regards to their proposal for simulated divided lights and that might not be preferred and to ask that they look for an alternative. He then went back to a reference point of an existing photo showing the windows. He said he went through all of this at the last presentation in terms of maintaining the consistency. In regards to the simulated divided light vs true divided one, they definitely took this to heart and did some research. They also talked to several window vendors in this regard. He went back to a slide to show that with the simulated divided light, there is a dual pane of glass so they can meet energy code. The simulated divided light sits on the outside of the glass and on the inside of the glass, giving that appearance, but you do not have a big heavy mullion in between. What they found in their research is to do an actual divided light, the mullion would go from $\frac{7}{8}$ th of an inch, to almost two inches. They felt this completely changed the appearance of the window. The simulated divided light is actually more in keeping with the original ecstatic of the building with these 6 over 6 windows. As a first point of order, they would like this item to be considered that they do move forward with the 6 over 6 with the simulated divided light which is much more in keeping. The next item that relates to the windows, is in the alleyway. They had talked about replacing the block infills with some new windows. They would like to propose that those get filled with a glass block. For a functional standpoint, they do not want them to be fully transparent. They believe the glass block will tie in nicely with the masonry and it will bring natural light into the lower level.

The next item Adam would like to talk about is doors. It was the commission's preference to see the doors maintain a symmetrical design at the lower level. What they had proposed previously was putting in a three foot panel on one side and then having a smaller panel on the other side. What they are composing now is that the main door gets replaced with a three feet wide accessible door with some small side lights. The side doors maintain the original appearance but they are no longer operable doors. These would be fixed and they would maintain the appearance, but not the function. Adam then said that one of the other comments they heard was in regards to the position of these doors relative to the front facade. Some of them are set

quite a ways back in. They have determined they will be able to match that and so as far as the original appearance is concerned, will be able to be maintained. The doors themselves would be simulated divided lights and match it with the windows to get consistency across the board. The next comment was the stair access at the roof looked large and heavy. Adam said this prompted them to look at this roof area and what exactly they are doing with it. They previously had shown the stair access as a red color, possibly brick. They have taken the stair access and tied it in with a roof pergola and have started to establish some roof design elements. Potted plants, some greenery to make this a nice space and a nice amenity for the folks who will be living in the building. Another thing that was talked about is being able to screen mechanicals and they are pretty sure they can bring all of the vents out through the roof and you will not be able to see these things on the facade. Adam thinks this is very important to maintain. They created an additional rendering showing the rooftop pergola, having some greenery up there and on the back of the building, they are proposing to move the bump out and put in a new window and door openings and add new balconies in the rear overlooking the river.

The next piece is the canopy. He said there was a lot of discussion the last time and they are expecting a continued discussion about it tonight. They had presented this as the original IOKA building with the sign posted off the building and a canopy covering the main door. Because the function of this building is proposed to be changed, the necessity of a marquee for this building is no longer functional. Adam said he knows this is something that has been near and dear to the hearts of Exeter residents. They had a sign company come out and look at it and their opinion of it was that it is pretty rough shape and the fastening of the sign to the building was suitable for today's building codes. At the very least, the sign in all likelihood needs to come down and be completely rebuilt. This is one side of it and the other side is just the functionality of it. The letters on it block the windows on the second floor. One of the items they are proposing is to go with a new very slender canopy over the front door that would have tie back rods. He showed slides of what they are looking to do. They would remove a set of the letters and locate them on the front of the building. They have looked at a couple of color options because what they have learned through the photos is that the color the letters currently are, are not the color they have always been. They found an old photograph where they were actually red. They are open to talking about what color the letters are.

Patrick thanked Adam for the detailed response. It is nice to see how each item was addressed so the commission can have a meaningful conversation and be as efficient as possible. Patrick said what he would like to do is go through all of the ball points with the commission members and give them the opportunity to speak about them. He then started with Curtis on item 1 which is the simulated divided lights. Curtis stated that he appreciates the energy efficiency of the proposed window. He would like to make a correction because he does not believe the ICC applies to historic buildings. The energy code just does not apply. He asked if there was a fire rating to the side windows and is that why glass block is being proposed. Adam stated that the first point is absolutely correct about ICC. His client has expressed interest to them in terms of making a very energy efficient building. The second piece in regards to the fire separation of the two buildings is that they have not run all of the calculations of allowable window percentage based on the separation of the two buildings. The glass block helps them in some regards to that on the lower level. From a functional standpoint, they want natural light into those spaces.

They do not necessarily need direct visual into those spaces. Curtis then said that he supports their decision of the choice of windows and thinks simulated divided lights is the correct choice. Having a current window, he just wanted to make sure everyone is on the same page with what the code requires. Curtis asked about the condensers on the roof and asked if there is a common ventilation system for the building. Adam said they have not completed the full HVAC design for the building yet. In all likelihood, the residential units will be served with electric bump heat units, which include an electric furnace in the unit and a condenser up on the roof. This is how they will get heating and cooling. The benefit of these systems is that they have come a long way since the electric heating systems of the 1970s and 1980s. It is a system that does not require any fossil fuels to run. From a sustainable standpoint, it is being looked at very favorably. As for the commercial units, they are not sure what those functions are going to be yet. Curtis said his final point is the marquee in the front. He appreciates that there is an effort of preservation of the existing IOKA letters. He is wondering if they could consider a possible other location, like putting those on top of the two side canopy. They could even be at a slight angle so that it became something that started to represent that angle that used to be there, rather than attaching it to the side of the building. They could be floating right on top of the canopy. He sees this as an appropriate reuse of the historic preservation piece they are trying to do. Lastly, Curtis asked if they would be replacing the brick around the front entry that was a yellow brick with a red brick. Adam said it is not their intention to replace that. Their hope is that they are going to be able to use brick all through the building to repair and replace any where they are disrupting brick. If they do not have enough stock to do that, they will have to take careful consideration in matching that brick.

Doug said that #1, simulated divided light windows, he just does not buy into his presentation on that. He thinks it is an ecstatic decision. He does not think the energy element is that substantial. There are not that many windows. He then said that in their letter of intent, they suggested having actual divided lights on the lower level and then SDL on the upper level. He said they changed what was in the letter. He thinks the front entry doors in the whole facade is wonderful. He thinks it is much better. The sign as they have it with the flat sign and the canopies are great. The added windows really make the building really fit into its surrounding buildings. He thinks it is great, but he is not sure they have to make the side doors inoperable. He said the roof never bothered him but he thinks the whole roof garden concept is great and he hopes they can afford to do it because it would be one of the things that would make him consider living there. The next item is that the front entry doors should be set back. He said Patrick mentioned that the original doors and windows were set back in and he said they discussed the commission would be given some details of the window jams and sills to see how that is all going to be waterproof. He said the vents are an important detail, but they will not know all the answers to that until later on. He would like to have a site visit. In terms of the marquee, not growing up in Exeter, he does not have any feelings about it. He said again that taking the original letters and restoring them and putting them on the side of the building is a good solution. He agrees with the citizen's petition. He thinks there is a lot of support for this project in the community. Generally, he does not have issues other than the simulated divided lights.

Julie thanked them for the presentation. Her response to the first issue is similar to Doug's comment. In the letter it says the first floor level will be true divided light. As she understood tonight, this is not what they are proposing anymore. She asked if the two doors on either side of the main door are inoperable and Patrick said that he believes so. Julie then asked a question because she will be asked about it out on the street. The uses of the front spaces and she realizes they do not know what they are yet, will maybe the doors be usable. Adam said they still do not know what is going to be there and the door openings are not six feet wide and you cannot get two three foot openings. Depending on what happens on the inside, they might be able to make them operable, Based on the information they have now, in an attempt to keep the symmetry, they propose them to be fixed. Julie said she has no problem with them being inoperable. She likes the solution of number three, the stair access to the roof. She really appreciates maintaining the IOKA letters and keeping them as a piece of history. She is not sure about the location yet. She would like to think about that. She would like to talk about the rear of the building, but she thinks that might end up being a longer conversation, so she would like to let the other members talk about the items they have already discussed. Adam said the last two committees had brought up that they had planned to do actual divided lights on the first floor and SDL on the upper level. The reason for the switch is that after the letter was submitted, they got information back from a supplier they were looking to work with on this project and that is where they found out the dividers would go from $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 2". They felt this would create a different aesthetic between the lower level and the upper level and that is why they presented it this way tonight and he wanted to put this out for clarification.

Pam loves what they have done and said they have done a lot of work. She thinks the windows are just fine. She was the one who complained about the roof, and she thinks they did a great job on the roof. She likes the idea of having the IOKA down the side, the way it was at the beginning. She thinks saving the letters is lovely. She really appreciates them saving the Myer Building because she was afraid that was going to go. She is ok with the marquee going as well. She asked if they had seen a picture of the original canopy. Pam said it was very fancy and thick, victorian iron. She would like theirs to look more like the original. She thanked them for saving the building because it looked like it was going to go right down into the river.

Gwen said that along with everyone else, she thinks they have done a wonderful job on this. She is really impressed at how the building looks. She has mixed feelings about the windows. She would like to see them not simulated divided lights. On the other hand, what they are proposing is offering more energy efficiency in the building. She thinks the windows they are proposing are good looking ones. She said that there might possibly be retail space on the first floor. Typically with retail space, you are offering window displays so people can walk by and see what type of retail operation it is, if this is what will be going in those spaces. She is pretty much in agreement with what everyone else has said. She loves what the marquee has done. Bringing the community together and advertising things that are happening in town. She wanted to know what kind of railing they were proposing on the rooftop for safety. She can see something there, but it is hard to tell what it is. She thinks their plan is great and she is glad the building is getting a new life. Adam stated that the railing system would go all the way around. They are looking at something that is lightweight and painted black so that it disappears into the background. Adam said with regards to the retail space that if they were designing the building

brand new, the entire first floor would be glass. That is not appropriate for this building. They are maintaining all of the openings and one of the thoughts is if these spaces do become retail and they do become inoperable door openings, it is at least some component of display for the retailer. Adam again stated that he is not sure what the spaces will be used for. David, one of the owners stated that is exactly what they are planning to do. Have a private door for the different stores and the fixed doors would be the windows.

Patrick thanked all the members for their comments and now he will start with his first, the simulated divided lights. He did like the response of having the authentic divided lights on the bottom and having the SDL on the upper story. It seems like a good compromise. He said he would recommend on the SDL to add the spacer bar and not have them without the spacer bar between the glass. Patrick referred to slide 9 which showed this. With the spacer bar, there is more simulated authentic. Next is number two, the symmetrical doors. He thanked them for that and said he thinks the sign looks great. The doors that flank the center that are the fixed panels now, the side styles of these doors seem to be very thin. They are almost matching the side lights of the center panel as opposed to the door panel itself. He thinks it might be misrepresented. Adam said that they can take a look at it. He does not know why that is showing up that way. The ADA compliant door is an out swing door coming out into the public right of way. He asked if this was required for egress. Adam said it was. Patrick said they have moved it in as much as possible within the given opening. There is still a transition from interior to exterior about 3" or so that would have to be ramped in some way. It might work to move it to even be in plan with those other two flanking doors to help with the transition to the exterior. Patrick said slide number 3 looks a lot better in terms of its proportion. Next, Patrick spoke about the marquee. He said it sounds like most of the commission members are in favor of the proposed design that is here now. He does appreciate them providing the fifty plus names of support. He wanted to make sure that all commission members and all others listening are aware that 60 residents of 14,300 as of 2010 census is less than one percent of the population of Exeter. It does speak of people that are in support of it, he wants to make sure it is not necessarily any majority or even close to the whole population of Exeter that may still have some sentimental value to the marquee. The community and the ways the marquee has been used in the past, such as advertising, community events and things like that, does serve a larger portion of the community itself. He asked them to think about this as serving the entire community in lieu of a few residents and the new residents of the new IOKA Building. Applications have been raised in other areas of NH itself and there is definitely iconography in the marquees that are in our state. For example, the Strand Theatre in Dover. Also the Colonial Theatre in Keene has almost an identical marquee to Exeter. Also, the Palace Theatre which is in Manchester. There definitely is a language of that architecture existing within NH itself. Think about trying to keep this all in consideration for the removal of the marquee completely. He appreciates the report that was done and it looks as though and from the reports, considering the age of the marquee, it is really not in that bad of shape at all for what it has endured to date. Julie wanted to say that the examples Patrick gave of theatre signs that are iconic to the buildings there are in and are still operable in some performing arts way and this is not going to be the same kind of use. She then said that most everyone agrees that it just cannot operate the way it did. There have been attempts to make this happen and it has

not worked. Julie said she does not have a problem with the marquee going. She has seen it all her life. It was not the original and she does not want to replicate the original. She also said that it never really fit the proportions of the building. In her opinion, losing that particular marquee but saving a piece of it and still using it to identify the building is mitigation. She wanted to tell the developers to be sure to check the Zoning Ordinance with the Code Enforcement Officer to check out the signage regulations. Curtis said for a residential building to maintain a sign board is a burden on them for something that does not have a purpose. He echos his earlier comments that he would like to consider that its reuse of the historical character made it more appropriate to have those letters on the front. Try it out and see how it looks. Maybe it works, maybe it does not. His other comment is he still would encourage the use of simulated divided lights as it is permitted. It just seems to be the appropriate use for him. Patrick then let Julie speak about the rear of the building. She said that she understands what is happening to the rear of the building and she has the actual drawings of the rear and they present well. She would like to know why the one at street level is hanging out and is so much larger. She said it is a little troubling to her but she is not sure this is a view people will see. She looked at the photo shot of the rear and maybe it is the time of day or the angle photo but the feeling of the solid to void to her has become overwhelmingly void. She would like to hear the other member's opinion on this. Patrick said that he thinks the street level balcony is a further projection out from the other two floors above. Adam said he was correct and the first level does extend a little bit further. He said they commented on the opening and what that is actually is the opening masonry at the rear. Instead of filling that with brick, they are proposing to take the bump out off and replace it with a glass opening and still allow that to be seen from the interior space whether it becomes retail or commercial. Patrick said that there was one other piece that the commission would want to see more detail on which is the railings. He said Adam did speak to what they were proposing, but he said if Adam could provide more detail on this, it would be great.

Sharon wanted to follow up on some of the discussion that took place on the marquee. In terms of the existence or lack of existence of the marquee, this needs to be viewed in the context of balancing issues and needs and obligations of the parties. The marquee itself as it has been noted, there is no operational need for it. This, unlike some of the examples Patrick quoted is not going to be part of an operating theatre. It is being converted to residential and commercial space. The existence or the need for the marquee has gone away and its purpose in life has ended in connection with the sale of this property. There was a mention as well that there could be some potential need for it because it has been providing informational messages to the community. She does not think this is their obligation to continue this to the extent that this ever occur. She also does not think this is part of the historical preservation purview of this board. She said she has not taken a close look at the letter that came in from the signage man, but it did not look promising.

Patrick stated that he did not see any attendees, but he asked abutters or anyone from the public who would like to speak in support or against the application. There were none. He then asked if there were any additional comments from the commission members at this time. He believes they have a lot of information in front of them and he would like to have a general discussion and consensus about whether they feel they can proceed in at least accepting the

application as complete for the material they need. Julie stated she wanted to remind the commission members and Attorney Somers that they are deciding whether the treatment of this building is appropriate to the district. Not whether they like it or not. Curtis said his question is not whether the existing canopy can be preserved because that is not the point. His question is should it be preserved. He then stated he wanted to make the differentiation between a marquee and a sign board. The sign board is absolutely not necessary and he agrees with legal counsel and it is not something that needs to be on a residential building.

Patrick then asked the commission members if there was any additional information that they would need at this time. Curtis said he would like a railing detail of the actual proposed railing which looks like horizontal slats. He just does not know if it is aluminum or steel. Patrick said another would be the window details they had talked about. The roof structure on the top, the pergola and the designs behind that. He said they also have not seen anything about the manufacturer for the sliding doors in the back. Also, more detail about the preservation of the IOKA letters from the signage and if they will be lit. David said they might be able to eliminate the letters from a different standpoint, but it would not be the actual letters themselves. Patrick said the previous were neon. They would not be replacing the neon within the letters themselves. Patrick would like the final proposal on the simulated divided lights vs authentic divided lights and just taking into account the commission's comments on those. Patrick then asked the members if there was anything that he might have missed. Julie said that she would like a little time to do some research on true divided lights vs simulated divided lights.

Sharon said in terms of the broad approach of what they have presented tonight, in terms of the rooftop, the canopy, reuse of the letters and so forth, on a conceptual level, all of that is something the commission finds to be appropriate. Therefore, they do not need to go back to the drawing board in terms of any major design issues. At this point as she understands it, is what they are doing is to provide to the commission the level of details they need and then at the next meeting make a decision. Patrick said that was a correct interpretation. He said the overall design and concept is favorable. At this point, they truly appreciate the fact that these have been more work session based and discussion based as opposed to trying to cross all the t's and dot all the i's in one meeting. It has been very helpful for the commission.

Patrick then said the public session is now ended because there were no public comments. He then moved to table the application until the next meeting and then they will have the details they have requested. He asked the applicant if they wanted to review what the commission has requested just as a final checklist. David said that they did want to review what they needed. Curtis had the railing material and details. Pergola details, sliding door details, the large opening whether that is storefront or unit glazing in the back. Preservation of lettering and lighting of the lettering. Patrick added simulated divided light vs authentic divided light and Doug added canopy details. Christina had detailed window openings to add. Gwen stated that she likes Patrick's idea of the spacer bar in the simulated divided lights and is this appropriate to have them follow-up on. Curtis said they had it circled on the plan as what they were proposing. They talked about having a site visit and Julie said it should be done before the next meeting. Patrick asked collectively as a commission to find a date or few dates that work and propose those to the applicants. They will do that off line. Patrick said at this time, he will close the public hearing and they will be happy to see a cleaned up application next month. He thanked

the applicants for all the work they have put into this. There is nothing under New Business for this meeting.

Other Business: The first is the State Commission for coastal resilience and economic development program as detailed in SB 285 and he believes this was put on there by Julie. She doesn't think she put it on this month, but this is a bill that was passed in 2019 and the title is rather deceptive. The jest of it is coastal resilience and historic preservation. This is to include cemeteries or burial sites. What it does is establishes a commission and the commission's role is to create rules and make a preservation kind of district. There are almost twenty people on the committee and one of them is a member of the HDC from each town. One is a person from each town and she is on this commission as a State Rep. Julie said this commission has not yet met. She is not sure how to go about appointing someone from the HDC to be on this commission. She would like to know if any of the members are interested. These meetings will be held in Concord. Patrick asked Julie to email the link to it to the members.

The next item is the discussion on the Demolition Review Process. Julie said that one of the Heritage Commission's duty is to review proposed demolition buildings. It does not just include buildings. If you read Zoning Ordinance 5.3.5, the marquee is going to have to go through the demolition process. One of the things that the Heritage Commission has struggled with is at what point does that review come in the process of a project going forward. The Heritage Commission has no regulatory authority so they only advise the property owner and the other boards that will be considering the project.

Next is the approval of the minutes for the May 21,2020 meeting. After discussion and a few corrections, Julie made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Curtis seconded. All were in favor and minutes approved.

With no further business, Patrick made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Elizabeth Herrick
Recording Secretary