

**City of Salem Massachusetts
Public Meeting Minutes**

Board or Committee:	Redevelopment Authority, Regular Meeting
Date and Time:	Wednesday, April 12, 2023, at 6:00 pm
Meeting Location:	Virtual Zoom Meeting
SRA Members Present:	David Guarino, Chair Grace Napolitano, Cynthia Nina-Soto, Christine Madore, Dean Rubin
SRA Members Absent:	None
Others Present:	Tom Daniel – Director of Planning and Community Development
Recorder:	Colleen Brewster

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Daniel stated:

1. Several programming RFPs are being sent out:
 - a. Old Town Hall: Seeking October programming and to provide new opportunities.
 - b. Charlotte Forten Park: An RFP is currently advertised that is seeking to provide consistent programming. Responses are due 4/19/23. Public Art at the park is continuing their efforts Board member Dean Rubin on the committee. Financing has been delayed. Mr. Daniel, Ms. Newhall Smith, and Ms. Julie Barry are looking to install a shade structure and they will have design concepts in the future.
2. Goals for 2023: Record keeping and financial review with city Finance Officer.
3. Remote Meetings have been extended by Governor Healey and will continue through March 2025. Acting-Mayor Robert McCarthy and the City Solicitor are working to provide an update for board members regarding in person, hybrid, and remote, as well as remote meeting participation requirements. They hope to discuss the meeting format in May.
4. Mr. Rubin added that the Charlotte Fortin Park committee is assembling the 'Call for Artists' proposal and the draft edits were due on Monday, April 10, 2023. They will send that out to various artists' groups and the deadline for submissions is May 30, 2023.

Projects in the Urban Renewal Area

1. **301 Essex Street:** Schematic Design Review – Review of DRB Recommendation of the proposal to erect a three and one-half-story addition above the existing building (known as Jerry's Army & Navy Store) with eighteen (18) residential units and twelve (12) onsite parking spaces located inside the building at the first-floor rear with retail space fronting on Essex Street.

Michael Becker and Carissa Vitas (Owners/Developers of Jerry's LLC) and Daniel Ricciarelli of Seger Architects were present to discuss the project.

Mr. Ricciarelli stated that they received good comments from the DRB in March. The proposal is to add 3-1/2 visible stories and 1 inset story, for a total of 4-1/2 stories on top of the existing 1-story building. The existing building is currently 6,000 square-feet and with the addition will be 29,000 square-feet, including the basement. Twelve (12) parking spaces will be on the interior

ground floor with 10 off-site parking spaces to satisfy the new construction parking requirements of 1.5 for the existing and 1 to 1 at the new construction.

Mr. Ricciarelli stated that they have considered color options to fit in downtown. The DRB felt the windows were large so a panel, matching the base, was added below each sash to create a more residential sill height and to create a bay expression. They wrapped that expression onto Summer Street to hold the corner and included punched masonry opening along Summer Street as well. They introduced banding to break down the massing and tie the parts together. An upside-down townhouse was placed at lower levels of addition, the mid-level has 4 flats, and the upper floors and penthouse will be townhouses. A glazed overhead garage door is proposed with a panel above to quiet down the opening. They added a bay above to quiet the addition as well but are still reviewing the cornice and whether it should match the cornice at the corner or be diminutive. The DRB raised concerns with making the parapet stronger and the proposed color, which they are now considering iron spot brick, although some felt traditional red brick was best. The DRB did like the color section which highlighted Jerry's and the details on Essex Street. The DRB was in favor of the wrapped corner adjacent to Bonchon, but requested it be one bay deep rather than two. With flat board panel materials, its use at this location and the rear will be minimally visible. The base of the façade will be restored, and the mullion above will remain if they add café windows, although that is tenant dependent. They will work with the DRB to refine the rear and side elevations.

Ms. Newhall-Smith stated that the DRB's considerations are in the recommendation posted to the project file.

Mr. Rubin stated that he is happy with the design, the setback, the treatments, but he has concern with the modern top-heavy design, given its location at the entry to downtown and across from the McIntire Historic District. He noted that the public comments share similar concerns and notes that not everyone can be pleased all of the time. The addition looks modern relative to historic structures surrounding it. He confirms that need to review a materials board during final design review.

Chair Napolitano asked why they proposed a change in color and materials. Mr. Ricciarelli stated that the design intent was to make the new addition stand apart from the original building, and they felt this building was strong enough to stand on its own. The thought was that the red brick was abundant on buildings all around the site but note that the development team is not wedded to the currently proposed color scheme and materials.

Chair Napolitano agreed with Mr. Rubin's 'modern top heavy' determination and asked for clarification on the parking. Mr. Ricciarelli replied that a ratio of 1.5 spaces per residential unit is required at the new construction and the 10 existing units require a 1 to 1 ratio with spaces that may be provided offsite, in accordance with the parking regulations in the B5 zoning district.

Mr. Rubin agreed with the need to soften the façade and make it blend in with the neighborhood because it currently does not blend or complement its surroundings.

Ms. Newhall-Smith requested additional clarification on the parking. Mr. Becker stated that he has two parking spaces off site and eight others at two possible locations. He's been paying for two parking spaces that are currently empty, just so that he can begin this review process.

Ms. Madore was surprised by the change in color palette, noted that in January they discussed revising the colors, but noted that the renderings made the color scheme seem washed out. The rendering may be making it feel darker than it would in person, and she hoped to see a materials board. She believed the color palette could be tweaked at the addition to soften it but liked how the red ribbon is darker, which is a combination of modern and historic. She liked the columns around the garage door and the continuation around the building that made the addition more cohesive, but she also liked the January proposal. There is a lot of banding and its end along the Salem Inn lacks a cornice to create a better transition. She liked that the addition needs to stand out and thought they were drawing cues from the Witch House across the street. Mr. Ricciarelli replied that the link to the Witch House has been mentioned by others but again, they aren't married to this color. He agreed to assemble a materials board for their in-person review. The materials are brick, composite panels, and aluminum windows and the rendering is darker than its real-life expression.

Mr. Guarino agreed with the comments made but prefers red brick. He liked the design, agreed with the DRB, and was in favor of the bay centered over the garage door. It's in good shape but the color palette makes it stand out in a negative way.

Ms. Nina-Soto appreciated wanting the new construction to stand out and references the Brix development that created a modern feel but included details, like using red brick, to fit the neighborhood. She likes the project overall, but is not a fan of the color palette, although she appreciated that it blends in with the Witch House. She encouraged the development team to be more respectful to the McIntire District and create an addition that feels as if it had always been there.

Mr. Daniel asked if the retail space has changed since January. Mr. Ricciarelli replied that the retail space is now 1,500 square-feet, plus the basement, which will also be used by the residents for storage and as utility space. There are two doors to the retail space along Essex Street and the residential entrance will be along Summer Street, which leads to the elevator and is on the same side at the parking garage entrance. Mr. Daniel asked about the minimum ceiling height of the retail space. Mr. Ricciarelli confirmed that the minimum height is 9'-3" and stated that they hope that their structural engineer will be able to find more height once he gets into the building.

Public Comment:

Ms. Newhall-Smith stated that she received the following public comment letters.

- Emily Rodgers, 34 Broad Street. Dated April 11, 2023
- HSI, 9 North Street. Dated April 11, 2023
- Laurie Brooks, 17 Delapa Circle, Westwood, MA (though she owns property in Salem as well). Dated April 12, 2023
- Josh Turiel, 238 Lafayette Street. Dated April 12, 2023
- Ben Shallop, 26 Upham Street. Dated April 12, 2023

Polly Wilbert, 7 Cedar Street. Noted that the meeting agenda identifies the project as a 3-1/2 story addition, but it is really 4-1/2, and the renderings make it appear as if it is only 3-1/2. To clarify it for the public, it should be identified accurately. When the DRB reviewed signage for the Hampton Inn building they felt that areas for exterior signage had not been identified early on, and that should be considered for this building. Not in favor of the color scheme, the brick color should mirror that of the neighboring buildings, so this doesn't stand out in a looming way along

the edge of the downtown and across from the McIntire District. Mr. Ricciarelli replied that the original building incorporated sign banding that will be maintained.

Emily Udy, HSI. The main concern of their letter is with the color of the brick. It's easy to defer to the design professionals regarding the design review process, but it is still important to consider the public comments which are generally in favor of the red brick. In this context, the columns on the Essex Street side could be anything but the dark color is a good option because it adds variety to the street front. The brick façade along Summer Street correlates to the adjacent buildings and is supported by many in the public. She commended the designers on the level of details and features. As they move towards final design review, the designers should consider what finer details could be reintroduced from previous iterations that added a lot of character.

Barbara Clearly, HSI. Echoed the comments of the SRA and the public comments that were in favor of the more traditional red brick. Red brick does not solve all problems, but their design review subcommittee was disappointed to see the dark brick color scheme, which brings a heavy look to the building. They strongly recommend the SRA condition their approval to revisit the traditional red brick color scheme.

No one else in the assembly wished to speak.

Mr. Rubin suggested the designers review how the penthouse units relate to their living quarters.

The Board discussed conditioning the color palette. Mr. Rubin suggested an approval with their concerns regarding the color palette that is referred to the DRB. Mr. Daniel suggested that as the schematic review, the SRA concerns regarding color palette should be a condition, and part of the record, so that it is carried forward. Chair Napolitano suggested the condition be a traditional color palette. Ms. Newhall-Smith suggested the use of stronger wording. Ms. Nina-Soto suggested the color palette would be between the proposed color scheme and the red. Mr. Daniel suggested requesting a more traditional brick color rather than asking the DRB to only consider it.

VOTE: Rubin made a motion to approve the schematic design, prior to presenting final design they consider: a change in color palette to traditional red brick, to secure all necessary parking prior to permitting, and all other DRB conditional approvals. Seconded by: Guarino. Roll Call: Guarino, Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

New / Old Business

Redevelopment of the Historic Courthouses and the Crescent Lot: Update on Project Status

Mr. Daniel stated:

Winn has been looking for a partner for the non-residential uses within the court buildings. They are looking to finalize the MOU with Urban Smart Growth, and are currently within their due diligence process, and will meet with the SRA and other stakeholders. Historic Tax Credits are a key component of courthouse finances, and they are working with the National Park Service and Mass Historic. Applications were sent and comments were received. Additional meetings are in the works to keep the process moving, but accumulating the tax credits will be a lengthy process. They are working with Winn on the most efficient mechanism for the use of the grant funds, \$600,000 was received for pre-development costs in 2022.

Crescent Lot: The local permitting is complete; PEMA is complete, and the Ch. 91 is forthcoming. The execution of the sliver parcel from the MBTA to the SRA is nearing completion and awaiting the development of the legal description. Ms. Newhall-Smith added that the courthouse project is slowly moving forward but more should happen in the future. Mr. Daniel added that the work is all behind the scenes, the application will come before the SRA in late summer or early fall, but the timeline globally is on track. The financing on both sides of the street is different, and the projects are on different timelines. The funding for the crescent lot site is dependent upon the low-income housing tax credit rounds through the state and a mini round is anticipated in the spring/summer of 2023 to apply for additional tax credits. No housing can occur until the other pieces are ready to go because despite being one project with two components and different financing, they are interdependent.

Ms. Madore stated that an additional \$200,000 was requested from the CPA for the crescent lot project. She asked if that was a make-or-break dollar amount. El Centro is also requested \$350,000, so the crescent lot may not receive the full \$200,000. Mr. Daniel replied that additional funding was applied for, the CPC met on Tuesday, April 11th to rank the projects and Winn was ranked low. There is approximately \$1M available but there was \$2M in requests, so not everything was going to be funded. 7 or 8 of the 11 applications were ranked high. Funding can be applied for next year. The court buildings have a lot of historic preservation while the crescent lot has affordable housing piece. It's a big request from the state, and securing local funding helps them look more competitive. There are other funding sources for them to consider and \$100,000 in home funding was received from The Consortium, and that was not their full funding request, but The Consortium was considering the value of the project to the city.

Ms. Madore stated that on this City Council agenda for this week there was an order from Councillor Varella requesting an ordinance amendment to allow outdoor dining and the SRA was named in the group that should help craft the amendment. There was a deadline to submit it to City Council by May 8, 2023, the SRA is not scheduled to meet before that date, so she asked how that would be handled. Mr. Daniel replied that Ms. Newhall-Smith has been the point person on outdoor dining, the intent is to acknowledge that within the Urban Renewal area there is an extra layer required by the SRA and that needs to be incorporated. Ms. Madore asked if the SRA will have an opportunity to review the draft. Mr. Daniel replied not on that timeline. Ms. Newhall-Smith added that she only heard about it today but will investigate the matter tomorrow. Ms. Madore noted that the SRA members are available to help.

SRA Financials: Received.

Other: None

Approval of Minutes

1. Review of February 8, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes

VOTE: Rubin made a motion to approve the minutes from February 8, 2023, as edited by Madore and Rubin. Seconded by: Madore.

Roll Call: Guarino, Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

2. Review of March 8, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

VOTE: Rubin made a motion to approve the minutes from March 8, 2023, as presented.
Seconded by: Guarino.
Roll Call: Guarino, Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

Other

Adjournment

VOTE: Rubin made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting. Seconded by: Guarino.
Roll Call: Guarino, Madore, Nina-Soto, Rubin, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05PM.

Know your rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. c. 39 §23B and City Ordinance Sections 2-028
through 2-2033