

**City of Salem Massachusetts
Public Meeting Minutes**

Board or Committee:	Redevelopment Authority, Regular Meeting
Date and Time:	Wednesday October 14, 2015 at 6:00pm
Meeting Location:	Third Floor Conference Room, 120 Washington Street
Members Present:	Chairperson Robert Mitnik, Russell Vickers, Robert Curran and Conrad Baldini
Members Absent:	Grace Harrington
Others Present:	Lynn Duncan, Executive Director and Andrew Shapiro, Economic Development Planner
Recorder:	Andrew Shapiro

Chairperson Robert Mitnik calls the meeting to order. Roll call was taken by Lynn Duncan.

Executive Director's Report

Lynn Duncan said that her report would pertain primarily to updates regarding the process to convey and redevelopment the District Court property. Under new business the Board will take up discussion and a vote on the letter of intent to be signed by the SRA and the selected developer.

Urban Renewal Area Projects

- 1. 209 Essex Street (Hotel Salem):** Discussion and vote on proposed façade/building improvements (small project review)

The proposal before the SRA included a cover letter and a comprehensive set of materials about the proposed façade improvements, including photos, floor plans, elevations, and drawings. A slide presentation was shown. Mark Meche of Winter Street Architects, and Rob Blood and Shawn Shea of Lark Hotels were present on behalf of Hotel Salem.

Blood introduced himself and explained that Lark Hotels is a North Shore based company. The company owns a number of hotels, mostly in coastal New England. The hotels are mostly boutique in nature and have a strong sense of place. Lark Hotels is very excited about being in Salem, in fact the company will be managing the new boutique hotel that will be operating out of the Joshua Ward House property.

Blood continued by noting that the property being discussed this evening is currently an office building on Essex Street and that the company is looking to adaptively reuse it as a 44 room hotel. It will have a rooftop restaurant and a bowling alley in the basement.

Meche then began a presentation by showing a locust map and location of the building being discussed. He noted that the project has already been before the Design Review Board. Return trips will need to be made to both the DRB and SRA to discuss an outdoor seating area on the

ground floor, as well as signage. Tonight's discussion will revolve around façade and building improvements.

Meche noted that Lark Hotels hopes to be able to open the new hotel in about a year's time, in October or November of 2016. He showed the ground floor elevation and floor plan, noting that the lobby entrance would be centered along the street edge and that there would be a café and bar area in the lobby. The guest rooms along Holyoke Court on the ground floor will be loft rooms with two levels.

The lobby will connect to a lounge area on the basement level, which will have two bowling lanes. There will be an exit to Derby Square from this lounge area. The second and third floors will be identical; some of the rooms will be micro rooms. Micro rooms will be less expensive lodging options and will be only about as wide as a bed.

Blood noted that micro rooms are an emerging trend in the hospitality industry and aim to accommodate budget conscious travelers and/or the millennial generation. The hotel will seek to accommodate a broad range of guests.

Meche then moved on to the design of the rooftop dining area, which will have seating and a bar. There will be low level planters on the edges.

Baldini asked whether the rooftop deck will be seasonal or all year round.

Blood responded noting that it would be open for about two and a half to three seasons per year. There will be gas heaters but the area may close down earlier in the season depending on the weather.

Meche then began to cover the exterior of the building, noting that most of it is currently in good shape. A new storefront system will be installed on the ground floor and bring the face of the building in-line with the upper portion of the building. A cast-stone like cladding system will be used to clad the columns. It will look like a solid stone like material that will have depth.

A new marquee will be installed above the front door and will most likely be a location for primary signage. The upper levels of the building are primarily blond brick and sandstone. Those areas will primarily be cleaned and repaired where needed. Repairs and repainting will be made to the sheet metal cornice.

Meche noted that there will be a screen constructed to shield mechanical elements on the roof, but it will not be seen from the ground level because it will be set too far back. The DRB questioned whether the roof deck should be pushed toward the front of the building to celebrate Essex Street, and have the mechanicals and screening shifted elsewhere on the roof. Ultimately, the applicant and the Board agreed that the current configuration works best. Meche noted that there should not be a privacy or noise issue associated with the proposed configuration of the roof deck as it relates to surrounding properties. He also noted that the

small structure on the roof deck, which would house some restaurant operations, could be clad with either copper shingles and/or recycled timber products.

Mitnik asked whether the applicant would come back before the DRB when materials are finalized.

Meche responded by noting that the DRB did not express an interest in wanting to see construction documents, but that the applicant is certainly willing to return to the Board if changes in materials are made or if significant details change. He noted that the design of the marquee could be brought back before the boards when signage plans are presented.

Duncan asked for more clarity about how material selection should be treated in the review process.

Shapiro noted that the DRB did not express a concern for the materials as they were presented and did not ask for the applicant to return for further explanation of materials.

Mitnik requested that the applicant return to further articulate material choices when presenting on issues such as signage and outdoor seating in the future.

Duncan cautioned that the applicant might be looking to move faster on the project, which could affect how approvals on materials are made.

Meche said that there are really only two primary areas for materials to be considered. He noted that the storefront system on the ground level would be aluminum and glass. He explained that the idea for copper siding on the rooftop element has yet to be finalized, but that the building will not be highly visible from the ground plane. The cast stone and/or GFRC cladding for columns on the ground level are unlikely to change; it is just a matter of what manufacturer of this type of product to use.

Shea reiterated that they would return to the Boards for any final details being requested. He then noted that they intend to keep the old “Newmark” sign that is faded and painted on the side of the building. We may present a plan to restore that sign with an addition noting the word “hotel” somewhere on it.

Duncan remarked that she thinks that the project is very exciting and that it could be a “game changer” for the pedestrian mall.

Both Mitnik and Baldini remarked that they agree with Duncan that the project is very exciting.

Vickers: Motion to approve proposed exterior improvements to the building at 209 Essex Street as presented in drawings and plans dated September 15, 2015 and as recommended by the Design Review Board, subject to the applicant returning to receive final approval of materials for column cladding.

Seconded by Curran. Passes 4-0.

2. 144 Washington Street (Hauswitch Home and Healing): Discussion and vote on proposed a-frame sign

The submission before the SRA included photos, proof of liability insurance, and a plan for placement of the sign.

Shapiro noted that the applicant received approval from the SRA earlier in the year for building signage and is now seeking to place a portable a-frame sign outside of her storefront. He noted that the proposal is for a wood-framed chalkboard a-frame sign and that the proposal is in compliance with the City's sign ordinance.

Shapiro also noted that the DRB asked that the sign be placed curbside, as opposed to directly next to the building, in order to have a clear path for pedestrians. He noted that the applicant has agreed to place the sign as recommended by the DRB.

Conrad: Motion to approve as recommended by the Design Review Board.
Seconded by Curran. Passes 4-0.

3. 320 Derby Street (Edward Jones): Discussion and vote on proposed installation of signage

The proposal before the SRA included a sign permit application, photos, and drawings/designs.

The applicant is requesting to have window signage in the form of white typeface on one of the storefront windows, as well as on the doors. They are also seeking to erect a blade sign within the existing black bracket mounted above the storefront.

Vickers: Motion to approve as recommended by the Design Review Board.
Seconded by Curran. Passes 4-0.

4. 161 Essex Street (Peabody Essex Museum): Discussion and vote on approval to proceed to schematic design review of proposed museum expansion (development review)

The proposal before the SRA included a coverletter and full set of architectural plans and renderings, as well as a slide presentation. Bob Monk and Phillip Johns of the PEM, and Greg Clausen of Ennead Architects were present on behalf of the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM).

Monk explained that the museum is in the process of developing a schematic design. The current design is very different than what had been seen in the past. Monk then introduced Clausen.

Clausen explained that Ennead is a New York firm that has been in business for over 50 years. The firm works almost exclusively on large institutional buildings. It has worked on the Museum of Natural History in New York, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Museum of Natural

History in Utah. The firm focuses on modernist style architecture, but also prides itself on contextual surroundings and collaboration with communities when developing projects.

Clausen then presented the site plan for the proposed project. He noted that the current garden area is the primary site for the museum expansion. A new garden is being proposed to be developed behind the new building.

Clausen then presented traffic and circulation routes around the site. He noted that where the loading dock currently sits will remain unchanged with the expansion. A secondary entrance into the museum will be proposed on Essex Street, into the new building. It will primarily accommodate larger groups such as school field trips.

Elevations of Essex Street were shown. Clausen pointed out that the new building would be in scale with its surroundings, such as East India Marine Hall and the properties along Essex Street. He also noted that the building would seek to let in a lot of natural light and utilize materials such as natural stone to create a monumental effect. The idea is that the new building would provide a bookend to the museum campus and feature East India Marine halls as a centerpiece building.

Clausen noted that the new building would be about 34,000 square feet. There would be three floors of galleries stacked atop each other, and two public atrium spaces; one in the front and one in the rear.

Vickers asked whether the public spaces being referenced would be available to the general public.

Clausen responded noting that the public space references enclosed common areas that require museum admission to access.

Monk pointed out that small one-story structures behind 173 and 179 Essex Street would be taken down and removed in order to facilitate creation of a new garden.

Clausen explained that the current plan is to begin construction in early November 2016, and to be complete somewhere toward the beginning of 2019. Heavy construction would most likely occur over only one Halloween season.

Monk noted that the museum would most likely request to utilize a portion of Essex Street for staging and prep, much as it did during the 2013-2014 enabling phase project. Space that will be created by the demolition of the boiler plant building will also be used for staging and logistics and the offices above storefronts on Essex Street will also be used for construction office activities. The lot at 289 Derby Street will continue to be leased for parking.

Mitnik asked whether sustainability was being considered in terms of design and/or construction, and whether the new garden will implement newer thoughts on green strategies and design.

Monk explained that the museum is in the process of getting a landscape architect on board and more will be known about the garden as the project progresses. He also noted that sustainability is of primary importance to the museum, although LEED certification will not be sought.

Clausen added that Ennead is dedicated to sustainable design and efficiency. Those issues will be front and center.

Duncan noted that it is exciting to know that although a new building is being developed, and that East India Marine Hall will be the focus. She acknowledged Councillor Tom Furey who was sitting in the audience and noted that the museum would need to seek approval from the City Council to use any portion of the public way along Essex Street for staging or construction purposes.

Baldini: Motion to approve proceeding to schematic design review phase with the Design Review Board,
Seconded by Vickers. Passes 4-0

Duncan asked about the status of the museum's search for a collection stewardship center.

Monk responded by explaining that the issue was still being sorted out. The museum needs to decide whether it will be more economically and logistically feasible to build anew or to renovate an existing building. Sites are being looked at and the goal is to remain in Salem.

New Business

5. Discussion and vote on letter of intent to be issued to selected developer for the former Salem District Court property

The Board was presented a draft letter of intent to be entered into by the SRA and the developer selected for the project to redevelop the District Court property.

Duncan discussed edits to the letter that were made between the time the Board had received an original draft, and when a revised draft was distributed at the meeting. She explained that it would be incumbent upon the SRA to provide a clear and marketable title for the property. She also noted that the developer would have 90 days after execution of the letter to complete any due diligence on the property. A land disposition agreement would need to be signed on or before January 15, 2016 if no party has withdrawn within the due diligence period, unless both parties agree to extending to a date further in the future.

Duncan noted that the developer had requested that DCAMM be a party to the letter of intent. DCAMM denied that request and will not be a party on the letter because the SRA will act as the seller of the property.

Vickers noted that an insurance company would most likely need to do a title search in order to certify it. He continued by noting that the document seems to imply in one area that the responsibility to perform this action is with the developer, and in a separate section, it puts the responsibility on the SRA.

Duncan suggested leaving the language in the letter as is because it has already been reviewed by the City Solicitor and the developer. The issue of whether the City needs to do a title search will be explored. The cost for a title search can be covered by SRA funds that will be reimbursed from proceeds of the sale of the property.

Curran: Motion to approve the letter of intent and to authorize Chair to sign the letter.
Seconded by Vickers. Passes 4-0

6. Discussion and Vote on concept for City sponsored public art initiative to artistically paint crosswalks at Dodge and Lafayette Street, and Peabody and Lafayette Street.

Shapiro explained that the City was awarded a grant from MassDevelopment to artistically paint two crosswalks, one at the Dodge Street crossing and one at the Peabody Street crossing, along Lafayette Street. The City is working with well-known street artist Ruben Ubiera who is based in South Florida and is a native of the Point neighborhood. The project was reviewed by the Public Art Commission and approved in concept, although a final design has not yet been developed.

Baldini asked whether the SRA would be able to vote on the ultimate design.

Shapiro noted that it would not, and would be approving for the project to proceed in concept and at the locations proposed; both of which are within the Urban Renewal Area. Shapiro added that the Public Art Commission assigned two members to approve the final design when it is developed.

Vickers: Motion to approve concept for City sponsored public art initiative to artistically paint crosswalks at two noted locations along Lafayette Street.
Seconded by Curran. Passes 4-0

7. Discussion of input for Fiscal Year 2016 Community Preservation Plan

Shapiro explained that the Community Preservation Committee is seeking feedback from public boards on its Plan for the upcoming year. The Plan has been provided to the SRA for review, as well as comments sent to the CPC last year.

Comments last year encapsulated asking the CPC to consider sustainability and sea level rise in future projects, among others.

Shapiro explained that the SRA could reemphasize those comments or add on to them.

Mitnik raised past proposals regarding the proposed parking area in front of the Old Salem Jail, related to berms or sculptures that may help screen parking.

Duncan noted that those sorts of proposals would most likely not be covered under CPA. She then raised the issue that the design of the parking area would need to come before the DRB and SRA; so the Boards will have oversight over the project.

Vickers: Motion to reaffirm the same comments forwarded to the CPC from last year.
Seconded by Baldini. Passes 4-0

Minutes

The minutes from the September 9, 2015 regular meeting were reviewed.

Vickers: Motion to approve.
Seconded by Curran. Passes 4-0

The issue of reviewing minutes from the September 10, 2015 special meeting was tabled.

Adjournment

Baldini: Motion to adjourn, seconded by Curran. Passes 4-0.
Meeting is adjourned at 7:45 pm.