

**City of Salem Massachusetts  
Public Meeting Minutes**

<b>Board or Committee:</b>	<b>Redevelopment Authority, Regular Meeting</b>
<b>Date and Time:</b>	<b>Wednesday, December 8, 2021, at 6:00 pm</b>
<b>Meeting Location:</b>	<b>Virtual Zoom Meeting</b>
<b>SRA Members Present:</b>	<b>David Guarino, Dean Rubin, Cynthia Nina-Soto</b>
<b>SRA Members Absent:</b>	<b>Chair Grace Napolitano, Russ Vickers</b>
<b>Others Present:</b>	<b>Tom Daniel – Director of Planning and Community Development</b>
	<b>Kate Newhall-Smith – Principal Planner</b>
<b>Recorder:</b>	<b>Colleen Brewster</b>

### **Regular Meeting**

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#### **Executive Director's Report**

Mr. Daniel stated:

1. One of the SRA goals was to work more with the City Councillors, and they've had a series of briefings with the new City Councillors and will meet with more next week. He informed them of the origin of the SRA, the SRA's shift to preservation, and provided a courthouse and crescent lot project update.

Mr. Guarino requested an update on the 5 Broad Street project. Mr. Daniel replied that the developer had spent significant time to change the easement agreement but that did not go in the developers favor, he made modifications to the site plan, and will begin the permitting process with the Historic Commission in January. The project will be a special permit through the Planning Board.

### **Projects in the Urban Renewal Area**

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1. **302A and 302B Essex Street:** Small Project Review – Replacement of three doors

Liz Frazier of Witch City Wicks and Sarah Jane Kurpeski of Moon Baby Salon were present to discuss the project.

Ms. Frazier stated that they are seeking approval to upgrade the two storefronts after both businesses were broken into, Moon Baby Salon at the end of November and Witch City Wicks two weeks later. The existing doors are residential style wood doors with glass lites and the thief was able to break the glass and reach in and open the door from the inside. Their customers sometimes have difficulty operating them, so they reviewed commercial entrances on their side of Essex Street which are all commercial style doors. This change will help differentiate them from the actual residential doors, reduce heat loss, and provide better security. No signage is proposed at this time, except for perhaps adding their addresses to either the door or transom.

Mr. Guarino stated he was sorry they had to deal with this as business owners and asked if any logos would be proposed. Ms. Frazier replied no and noted that they are looking to clean up their appearance and secure their properties. Ms. Nina-Soto reiterated Mr. Guarino's concern and noted her support of creating consistency with other commercial spaces.

Public Comment:

No one in the assembly wished to speak.

**VOTE:** Nina-Soto made a motion approve pending completion of DRB review. Seconded by: Guarino.

Roll Call: Guarino, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

2. **73 Lafayette Street and 9 Peabody Street:** Schematic Design Review – Redevelopment of 73 Lafayette Street and 9 Peabody Street through the construction of mixed-use structures for affordable elderly supportive housing, compact residential units, the North Shore Health Center, and additional space for non-profit organizations. Request to Withdraw without Prejudice.

*NOTE: The scope of this proposal changed, prompting the Request for Withdrawal without Prejudice. The applicant has refiled the project, which includes the proposed full demolition of the building at 73 Lafayette Street.*

Ms. Newhall-Smith spoke with Attorney Grover regarding the withdrawal without prejudice and subsequent refile.

**VOTE:** Guarino made a motion approve the request to withdrawal without prejudice. Seconded by: Nina-Soto.

Roll Call: Guarino, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

3. **73 Lafayette Street and 9 Peabody Street:** Demolition of existing building at 73 Lafayette Street and construction of new, mixed-use structure with 35,000 square feet for the North Shore Health Center, pharmacy, and urgent care facility and for income-restricted senior housing residential units. Construction of a new mixed-use structure on 9 Peabody Street with income-restricted senior housing residential units, commercial and gallery space.

Attorney Scott Grover, Mickey Northcutt of Northshore CDC, and Johnathan Evans of Mass Design Group were present to discuss the project.

Attorney Grover stated that six months ago the project was referred to the DRB, made progress with municipal permitting, and the ZBA approved the Special Permit for the Health Center Use. The Planning Board reviewed it and it was very well received, but that review is on-going as it relates to engineering, traffic, and parking with the city and peer review consultants. They hope to wrap that process up this winter. Input from Board members, the public, and design team, they discovered it wouldn't be possible to preserve the original building for structural and resiliency purposes. Most recent plans called for the complete demolition and to honor that original structure in the new design.

Mr. Evans stated that two buildings are still proposed, one on Peabody Street and another at the corner of Lafayette and Derby Streets.

### Peabody Street Building

The biggest changes to the Peabody Street building are a reduction in bulk, the 5-story building is entirely residential with 29 age-restricted affordable units, 1,000 square-feet of gallery space, a reduction in height that is in keeping with the scale of the neighboring buildings, and a connection to the revitalized park and Harbor walk. The Lafayette and Derby Street building will still house a health center, 18 age-restricted affordable units, 6 compact units, ground floor commercial space, a public lobby, and public art. The project scale has been reduced with enhanced view corridors to celebrate the water. They've considered how they can reincorporate the original building design, by mimicking the cornice patterns, brick details, patterns, brick type for a weathered look, and to keep the name plate of the building.

They were required to bring the entire building up to code and resiliency efforts lead them to raise the first floor a minimum of 2-feet min, from 9 to 11-feet, but they will raise it to 12-feet, and 14-feet in some places, based on FEMA maps. The culvert below requires repair and that cannot be done with the building in place. The new design creates a front porch condition with an exterior ramp and stairs leading to the lobby, will keep true to the historic masonry details. They will enhance connectivity to the Harbor walk by introducing public art.

### Parking

The Peabody Street building will have 14 residential parking spaces at grade with gallery space along the riverfront. The Lafayette Street building will have 15 visitor parking spaces and a drop-off area to load and unload passengers on the abutting parcel behind the building. They used a ratio of .3 spaces per unit, which is consistent with Salem Housing Authority parking ratios. Staff can park at the Church Street lot and their parking research indicated that there are spaces to utilize.

### Site

The site will be utilized as a large event space for public gatherings and a sea wall will be incorporated at the back side of the Lafayette Street building to help with storm surge. The site will be well lit, with security cameras, planting, seating, performance spaces, and artwork along the waterfront.

Mr. Rubin requested all parking study and patient quantity and location information be provided to the SRA.

Mr. Guarino asked about the process, when demolition of the building was first mentioned, if all other Boards aware of this change, and for the thoughts of those Boards. Attorney Grover replied that they originally filed with the SRA in May of 2020 to maintain the original building before they went before the Planning Board and the City Engineer raised concerns with the original building as well as other issues. Plans presented to the Planning Board in September called for the complete demolition of the original building. The DRB saw those plans and the SRA is the only board that saw the initial plans to maintain the original building. Mr. Guarino recalled the SRA being split on the vote when they last saw the project, and asked that with so many changes, was there a thought to return to the SRA before now. Attorney Grover replied that the project was still in the Schematic Design (SD) phase, they needed to address the DRB concerns, and they always planned to return to the SRA.

Mr. Guarino asked if it was not possible to save the façade or is it was cost prohibitive. Mr. Evans replied that the engineers determined that given its age and demolition proposed around it, it may not survive on its own with the necessary culvert repairs. They are unsure how to keep it in place while repairing a culvert approximately 6-feet below the building. Atty. Grover noted that raising the building height with the original structure in place isn't possible. Mr. Evans added that there are too many challenges with no clear path given the degree of work they need to undertake.

Mr. Daniel stated that he was impressed with their introducing resiliency early on despite their now being concerns with the façade and the culvert. The engineering assessment on the culvert is 10-years old, and the current extent of what needs to be done isn't known at this time. Mr. Evans replied that the reports call out immediate/urgent work that is needed on the entire roof of the culvert, which hasn't been done, so the current level of work is undetermined. He presented a plan of the culvert extending beneath the building and curved front façade.

Mr. Rubin asked why the urgent repairs weren't acted upon 10-years ago. Mr. Daniel replied that he believed funding wasn't available at the time but will speak with the Engineering Department to determine the cause of the delay. Mr. Rubin noted that the proposed plan is logical but questioned if the culvert can be repaired without demolishing the building. Ms. Nina-Soto agreed, noted her uneasiness with approving demolition of the building without additional information, and requested the engineering reports be provided to the SRA. Mr. Evans agreed to provide a more informative report for the SRA. Attorney Grover added that they will also expand the scope of the civil engineering review to include a peer review of the investigation on the culvert. The structural engineer will also address the integrity of the building façade if the building were to be demolished, which was their original plan.

Mr. Daniel asked if the Planning Board peer review include the approach to do the work and to raise the building. Attorney Grover replied that they could expand the peer review to include their findings on maintaining the original building, although the structural and resiliency efforts were their concern, in addition to the culvert repair. Mr. Guarino requested the timing of the peer review. Attorney Grover replied that an aquatic engineer would conduct a survey in December and noted that the Planning Board is trying to accelerate the peer review so the consultants can participate in the process from the beginning.

Mr. Rubin asked if it were possible to relocate interior walls only and raise the building 2-feet. Mr. Evans replied that if they are doing work that is more than 200% of the building's value, they must meet all current code requirements.

Ms. Nina-Soto asked if parking was increased, what ratio is needed, and if even more parking space could be created. Mr. Evans replied that they reduced the building size to reduce the parking demand and will be providing off-site parking for health center staff. Their current ratio is allowed for affordable elderly housing created by the Salem Housing Authority via a provision in the zoning, they added a rear drop-off area, and 15 on-site spaces. Attorney Grover noted that commercial use requirements for a B5 Zone have no parking requirement, the City has to provide space to serve the commercial uses, residential use allow 1.5 spaces for new construction, but there is an obscure ordinance for housing created by the Salem Housing Authority in the B5. This ordinance doesn't apply to them since this is not a Salem Housing Authority project, but it serves the same clients and demographics, and that standard requires .3 spaces per unit. They comply with the spirit of the requirements but not the code required based on zone. Mr. Northcutt

added that they have developments of a similar nature and ask tenants when they move in how many vehicles are registered to them and it's lower than .3 per unit. They asked the Salem Housing Authority for input that have four developments in B5 zones, each uses .3 spaces per unit. Occasionally they have one or two people on a waiting list, but at the time there was no one waiting. Most staff park at the Church Street parking lot. Each site has a couple of spaces for maintenance vehicles. Their proposal maintains that consistency.

Ms. Nina-Soto asked about staff parking at Church Street and whether there is overnight parking. Mr. Northcutt replied that the health center has limited evening hours only, between 4-8PM. The urgent care ends at 8PM, and only 5-6 staff will be present at that time. All other services are between 9AM and 5PM.

Mr. Daniel asked if parking for the bank will be provided and if Chapter 91 spaces are required. Mr. Northcutt replied that the bank would have two spaces on the Lafayette Street lot and no Chapter 91 spaces are proposed, but there is visitor parking.

Mr. Rubin asked how many spaces are provided on the Peabody Street lot. Mr. Evans replied 20. Mr. Northcutt noted that the current number of spaces has been recently reduced to 12 due to two construction trailers on the lot for another Peabody Street project under construction, and those construction workers are also parking there now.

Mr. Rubin asked what the health center is gaining by this move and how does it relate to the traffic study. Mr. Evans noted that the traffic study takes the square-footage and patient load into account.

Mr. Rubin asked if parking will be enforced. Mr. Northcutt replied that the bank spaces will be labeled, and the visitor spaces could be utilized by the bank staff as well. Regarding the need for the health center to move from their current location, they are seeking a more sustainable location since they currently rent at Shetland Park. They believe their growth will be from residents in need of this type of convenient care and residents in other.

Mr. Rubin requested their back-up plan if in a worst-case scenario, the building isn't approved. Mr. Northcutt replied that he doesn't think that will happen.

Mr. Rubin stated that the building is beautiful and blends nicely at this intersection, his preference would be to maintain the façade. He doesn't understand the commercial unit at the backside of the river at the Peabody Street building, but appreciates the activation of the river, the open space. A centrally located urgent care facility for the community is a plus.

Mr. Daniel requested the project phasing, when the Peabody Street building, and Harbor Walk will occur. Mr. Northcutt replied, Phase 1: The commercial aspect including 95% of the ground floor, all but the residential lobby and health center, and open public space improvement on that parcel. Phase 2: Residential lobby for the Lafayette and Derby Street entrance, the Peabody Street building, and the Peabody Street Park will be part of their Ch. 91 requirement. The Parks and Recreation Department had comments and requested a final proposal with more detail when the time came. The bump-outs at Harbor Walk may have to be eliminated due to Chapter 91 requirements and that revisions have been included in their financing costs.

Public Comment:

Ms. Newhall-Smith stated that she received comment letters

- Jean McCollough of 51 Lafayette Street, dated December 7, 2021
- Fusun Tufanyazici of 51 Lafayette Street, dated December 8, 2021.

Sarah Nastasi, 51 Lafayette Street. The proposed building is beautiful, disappointed about the façade since they've maintained many facades where she is from in New York, so she hopes they can save it and she will follow their progress. Agreed that health care in the neighborhood will be a great asset, concerned with the parking, she purchased a Museum Place Garage space for \$1,500 a year but the streets were closed during Halloween, so she and many others couldn't access their parking spaces. The condition of the mall that is used by parking space owners is terrible and the city needs to work with the mall owner. The parking studies completed in March, were done without tourism as a factor. Many need a car to get to a grocery store and suggested a grocery store be included in the project. She suggested a way to make complaints about parking should be provided.

Jeff Cohen, Endicott Street. Current Chair of the Sustainability and Resiliency Committee until he becomes a City Councillor in 2022. Moving the urgent care center to this location would benefit the lower-income population in the community by being more accessible. Adding a grocery store has been considered and should be included. Believes the Engineering Department has been static on how to address adaptation and mitigation regarding resiliency and the climate crisis. The CDC on Peabody and Leavitt Street are using passive house design for resiliency and sustainability. He's very excited about this project and it can be an example of a resilient design downtown.

Lev McClain, 22 Albin Street. Agreed with comments regarding sustainability considerations. Maintaining the façade is important if possible but culvert repairs and raising the building above the flood plain is critical and there should be trade-offs regarding sustainability if in the long-term the façade can't be saved, and the building cannot withstand the climate change concerns to come.

No one else in the assembly wished to speak.

**VOTE:** Guarino made a motion continue the discussion to the next regular meeting on January 12, 2021. Seconded by: Nina-Soto.

Roll Call: Guarino, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

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**New / Old Business**

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

Mr. Daniel stated that the cooperation agreement to extend the dates regarding the crescent lot were approved by the City Council. They reached out to Secretary of Commonwealth Director of Registries to determine if they were interested in pursuing the property and they declined the opportunity, so the Registry of Deeds will not be relocated in the court buildings, and Winn and

pursue other tenants. The Purchase and Sale (P&S) agreement required two clarifications before it can be executed, and it references the agreements with DCAMM and the MBTA. They clarified with DCAMM regarding access of the buildings to let Winn and their consultants into the building one-day per week, and DCAMM as the owners must still sign off on items. Winn is coordinating with the legal counsel regarding moving forward with the MBTA. It has been determined that the stairway from Bridge Street to the crescent lot is part of the public road and is not MassDOT property. Winn is targeting April for their Planning Board application so they can begin to apply for historic tax credits. They continue to meet weekly with Winn and with DCAMM every other week. Mr. Rubin noted that while the progress is slow going, it is progressing.

2. SRA Meetings: Discussion of Remote, Hybrid, and In-Person Meetings.

Ms. Newhall-Smith noted that a decision must be made on the type of meetings to have between January and April, when Governor Baker's pandemic restrictions end. The Board agreed to stay remote until April, given the increased public participation, and everyone being able to see the presentation.

**VOTE:** Guarino made a motion to continue to remain remote until April. Seconded by: Nina-Soto.

Roll Call: Guarino, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

3. SRA Financials: The Board received and filed.

**Approval of Minutes**

1. November 10, 2021

**VOTE:** Guarino made a motion to approve the minutes of November 10, 2021, with Rubin's edits

Seconded by: Nina-Soto.

Roll Call: Guarino, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

**Adjournment**

**VOTE:** Guarino made a motion to adjourn.

Seconded by: Nina-Soto

Roll Call: Guarino, Nina-Soto, Rubin. 3-0 in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10PM.

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