DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting of February 16, 2021

**The DRC meeting was held via Zoom**

# Members Present

**🗸** Larry McEwen, Co-chair ****, Business Assn.

**🗸** John Landis, Co-Chair **🗸**Richard Snowden, TT&P

**🗸** Steve Gendler, LUPZC

**🗸**Jean McCoubrey, LUPZC **🗸** Jan Albaum, Streetscape Committee

**🗸**Patricia Cove, HDAC **🗸** Tony Banks, VP Physical (interim)

**🗸**Kathi Clayton, CHCA President

##### Others Attending

Sanjiv Jain, owner 8612 Germantown

Anne McNally and Joe Pié, owners McNally’s

Stewart Graham, neighboring property owner

Richard Snowden, owner of properties in 8600 block of Germantown

Representatives from the CH Conservancy and the HDAC

Zachery Frankel, owner 10 Bethlehem Pike

Max Frankel, owner 10 Bethlehem Pike

Carl Primavera, attorney for 10 Bethlehem Pike and 30 W. Highland Ave.

Sergio Coscia, architect Coscia+Moos Architecture

Jessica Vitale, architect Coscia+Moos Architecture

Neighbors of 10 Bethlehem Pike

Henry O’Reilly, owner 30 W. Highland Ave.

Larry McEwen, architect 30 W. Highland Ave

Neighbors of 30 W. Highland

Other interested Community members

Joyce Lenhardt, LUPZC

Anne McNiff, Director CHCA

Celeste Hardester, Development Review Facilitator

Melissa Nash, recorder

The meeting was opened by John Landis, co-chair, at 7:07 pm. Agenda items include 10 Bethlehem Pike with no vote, 8612 Germantown Avenue for feedback and 30 West Highland Ave. 30 West will include the presentation, committee reports, reactions by committees and public response. The end will be a motion by the committee. Minutes approval will be moved to the end of the meeting.

**10 Bethlehem Pike**

•Presentation: Sergio Coscia and Jessica Vitale of Coscia+Moos Architecutre are the architects for this project. There has been no filing with L&I. This is an as-of-right project. John Landis noted that this is not as-of-right without L&I approval. S Coscia noted the property is zoned CMX-2. The project will have affordable housing and a green roof to qualify for bonuses including height and number of units. It is anticipated that there will be 34 units. A site plan was shown. The ground floor will be all commercial. The building is set back from the church and the corner. Due to the slope on the site the commercial is sunk down slightly at the corner. There will be no studios; it will be all one and two bedroom units. There will be some terraces and a green roof. All mechanicals will be on the roof. The building will be lower than the church steeple, 45’ feet in height. It will be brick with a stone base. There will be no windows on the side yard facing Summit Street. Balconies will be located on the rear façade. In the 55’ high scheme, much is the same. The plaza is larger but not sunken. The rear has parking under the building – 9 spaces. The building is taller but steps back from the street. Windows could be added to the Summit side. And there would be more material variety. There will be a garden space in the front.

•Committee Discussion: J Landis noted that if a variance is needed, criteria for consideration would include the negative effects on the adjacent properties, negative effect on surrounding properties, and positive effects on the community. Patricia Cove asked if they would be open to combining the two schemes. It was asked if the facades and fenestration were set in stone. Could it be made more in keeping with the neighborhood. Steve Gendler asked why 34 units instead of 20. The 34 unit scheme is best for financial return and is the max allowed as-of-right. Parking is not required. J McCoubrey problems of congestion on the streets, neighbors access to light and air. Existing curb cuts will be eliminated. There will be one in the rear. The bonus height allows taller floor-to-floor height in the commercial, which will attract a better client.

•Audience Discussion: A neighbor asked about preservation of the cemetery. There are no issues with the cemetery in this construction. Another neighbor asked what constituted affordable housing. They will contribute to the city fund and will get offsets. Zach Frankel noted that this fund contributes to affordable units in the city. There will be no affordable units in this property. Another neighbor asked how the project will benefit the current residents of the area. She noted that commercial units in other developments of this sort remain vacant. The retail is not pre-leased, it was answered that the higher ceiling opens the retail to a wider range of rentals. It was again asked how this benefits the community with congestion, parking. Another neighbor expressed concern that the massive structure is out of whack with the neighborhood with an area of 3-4 story buildings with setbacks. With 9 parking spaces for 34 units, residents and shopper for this building will park on Summit. The building does not look like Chestnut Hill. It was responded that there is brick and stone up and down the Avenue and Bethlehem Pike. It was noted that the cemetery floods. Other questions included how the flood plain is to be managed, how is the privacy of the adjacent neighbors and the sunlight of the neighbors to be protected. The aesthetics in general are not positive. It was answered that the green roof helps with storm water. Mark Keintz noted that although the zoning does not require on-site parking, there will be many cars for the 34 units. Zoning requires 3 spaces for reach 10 units. Glenn Falso asked S Coscia about sun/shadow studies and suggested greater setbacks on the third and fourth floors are needed. He also suggested exploring underground parking. It was noted that the site was too small for underground or auto parking structures. G Falso noted that he can refer engineers to him. Joyce Leonhard noted that 3 spaces for 10 units was feasible for downtown but not for Chestnut Hill. Landscape buffers are needed for neighbors. It was asked of the developers that emails be supplied for communications.

**8614 Germantown Ave**

• Comments on this project: Neighbors of the project were in attendance including Stewart Graham, Anne McNally and Meg McNally. It was stated that there were inconsistencies in the approval of this project. The property is located at a packed intersection. Concerns include parking, hours of operation, and trash/recycling It was noted that there are other vacant spaces on the hill that could accommodate this use. Richard Snowden also noted a problem with notification, which came late. Using the community parking lot for dumpsters and recycling is not appropriate. There will be increased parking and foot traffic. It was suggested that Sanjiv Jain, R Snowden, A McNally get together to resolve problems. Joe Pié suggested taking DRC out of the picture. The owners can answer problems in a document. Near neighbors were not notified in a timely manner. The letters that were received late were postmarked from Charlotte, NC. The process was glossed over. CHCA approved the project. It has not gone to ZBA. J Landis suggested that the DRC reconsider this matter at the March 16 meeting. The Board could reconsider at the March 25 meeting. The ZBA hearing is scheduled for March 24. Tom Farnoly owner of 22 Hilltop (building in parking area) needs more info. J Lenhardt suggested passing this to the Board for re-consideration. Kathi Clayton will take this up with the board. S Jain stated that he appreciates the concerns and will meet with the involved parties.

**30 West Highland Ave**

•Presentation: Henry O’Reilly introduced himself as the owner of the property. He is a long time resident of Chestnut Hill as is his wife. He is the third generation in the business which was begun in 1954 and was located on this site in 1971. The project will include 8 townhouses along a garden walk. Larry McEwen described the project. The zoning is CA-1 and CMX-1 and abuts RSA-1. With remapping the property will be CA-1. Along Germantown Avenue the zoning will be CMX-2.5. The project will meet the dimensional standards for CA-1. The hardship is that there is no zoning to support the residential use. Benefits to the community include an appropriate use of the site with residential use, more trees and planting will be installed, runoff will be better controlled, wildlife will improve and there will be more eyes on the street. The refusal stated that residential use is not allowed in this zoning and there would be 2 buildings on the site, which requires a special exception. Six of the units are in CA-1. The property is near to train stations and bus lines. The area of the property is 18,000 sq ft. If it were zoned RSA-1, 8.3 units would be allowed. The site is too small for a mixed use development. It is difficult to add additional opening in the existing building. The project will be entered by a driveway on the west. Units 7 and 8 will use the alley for exiting. The driveway and walkways will have pervious paving. Coverage will be decreased from 83% to 60%. Trees will be planted. The façade on Highland will be stepped back on the third floor. The side of unit 8 facing the existing house on highland has the wall stepped back. Titration beds will reduce storm water runoff. Streetscape building heights were compared. Materials for the project include schist, Roman brick, metal panels, and metal framed windows. There will be a bench in the street side garden and a historical photo of the existing building on a plaque. The pilot houses will not be visible. There are porches on the sides and gardens along the walkway. Various views of the project were shown. The color of the brick was questioned. There is no change from previous version. Trash will be managed by an HOA or placed on the street. Richard Snowden noted that the project requires sacrificing the old. And he expressed concern for the neighbors at 42-44.

• Committee Reports: Streetscape noted that there should be no external signage. External lighting would be for safety. There should be lanterns or other similar fixtures on the garden walls. Internal lighting will be designed to create no spillage on the sidewalk or nearby residences. Twelve mature trees will be planted. It should be verified that the existing street tree is not a heritage tree. The brick color is similar to nearby buildings. HDAC was sorry to see the old building go. There were concerns about the lack of engagement with Highland and the massive size. HDAC was not convinced that the old building had to go, which sets a precedent. HDAC recommended forming a sub-committee to reach agreement with other RCOs regarding the issues of this project. LUPZC held a special meeting, which was well-attended. The motion was approved 4-1 with provisos as stated in its motion:

It was moved that the LUPZC support the request for variances for 30 West Highland as it is currently configured with the provisos that the configuration of the top floor of the Highland façade be investigated to push it back from the current plane and that attention be paid to the massing of the top floor of unit 8 on the Highland to provide relief to the houses on West Highland.

The opposing vote was based on the importance of the existing building and the need for adaptive use. Re-use, even of a utilitarian, work-a-day vernacular structure was preferred. It was reiterated that there is a dimensional hardship.

• Committee Comments: The residential use is positive. There were compliments to the design. Concerns are about the massing, visibility and the relation to the twins on the block. There is also a concern about the sun/shade effect on neighbors. The traffic in the alley is a problem, curb cuts and the duration of construction. The protocols for site management should be in the deed. H O’Reilly and L McEwen responded that they have tried to be good neighbors. They did look at re-purposing the building. They have reached out first to near neighbors and then to all neighbors. They are asking for ran open mind. A time frame needs to be set for sub-committee work. The city’s system has been a problem. They tried to work with the LUPZC suggestions. Steve Gendler noted that it is not possible to convert all old buildings. This one is too small. The FAR of 1.5 is not very high

• Neighbor Comments/Questions: Tim Breslin canvassed neighbors. Most are against the project and just learned about it. 64 of 65 are against it in its current form. Jeff Krieger has asked about sun/shade studies. These have been done and will be shown to him. Randy Williams noted that he supports P Cove’s problem with the demolition. He asked if the front of the building could be retained and more built behind it. Gail Marshal is concerned about trash and parking. She asked about specific benefits to the community. H O’Reilly has been part of the community all of his life. This is the best use of the site. He plans to live there. Gail Marshall noted that the number of units and the extras add to the expense. H O’Reilly noted that he has tried to add amenities. The new project is too monolithic. Denis Lucy also agreed with P Cove’s desire to save the existing building. Matt Millan stated that he is disappointed with the project. The scale is too tall on Highland. The third floor needs greater setback The Highland façade needs more work. He also noted that there are bad sight lines at the alley. A greater community benefit could be the creation of a pocket park. L McEwen noted that units 1-6 do not use the alley. Ross Pilling asked about a title search for the alley. He also asked about percolation tests. There could be rock near the surface. The project will have too much traffic, especially with the adjoining lot and the lot across the street. More attention to hardship is needed. There is no front yard like other buildings on the block. Carolyn Simons noted that she is not struck by the old building and that the new is a great design. Mark Keintz noted that parking and traffic are problems.

•Committee Action: J Landis asked for a motion. P Cove moved that a subcommittee be established to continue the dialog with the owner and architect. The motion was seconded. In discussion, it was suggested that neighbors be included in the sub-committee. S Gendler suggested limiting discussion to consideration of this design. This was thought to be too restrictive. L McEwen and H O’Reilly asked for neighbors to be included and that a defined time frame be set. This should be resolved by the March Board meeting. Their ZBA appointment is April 28. P Cove accepted these suggestions. J McCoubrey asked about progress reports. The sub-committee work should be reported to the Board. The motion was restated:

It was moved that a subcommittee be established to continue the dialog with the owner and architect regarding the proposed project. The subcommittee should include neighbors and members of the CHCA committees and the HDAC/CH Conservancy. It should reach a conclusion by the March 25 CHCA Board meeting Progress reports should be presented to the committees. The final repost will be presented to the CHCA Board.

The motion was passed. The committee make up was discussed. The sub-committee should include Henry O’Reilly and Larry McEwen. There should be 3 reps from the HDAC and 3 from LUPZC. There should be 3 neighbors. Members should be identified by Friday. Names of members should be sent to Anne McNiff .

**Minutes**

• It was moved that the January minutes be approved as submitted. The motion was seconded. The minutes were approved.

**Adjournment**

• The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 PM.