



TOWN OF WINCHESTER
MIDDLESEX COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
TOWN HALL
WINCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01890

Date: October 25, 2021

Virtual meeting via Zoom

Members Present: Jack LeMenager, Chair
Jon Carlisle
John Clemson
Janet Boswell
Emily Dowling
Michelle McCarthy

Members Absent: Bruce Hickey, Vice Chair

Also Present: Brian Szekely, Town Planner
Rachael Edmonston
Paul Soughley
Sally Dale

Center Business District petition: 10 Converse Place – CBD Special Permit and Site Plan Review

Chair Jack LeMenager briefly summarized the Sept. 27 discussion of the Historical Commission regarding 10 Converse Place. Chair LeMenager stated that the developer, Ian Gillespie, had provided a detailed and satisfactory explanation of the project. Noting that the Historical Commission was serving a purely advisory role, he added that the Planning Board was not under an obligation to enact any of the Historical Commission's recommendations regarding the project at 10 Converse Place.

Chair LeMenager asked the Commission if they would like benefit from a summary of Mr. Gillespie's presentation from the previous meeting. The Commission determined that a reiteration would not be necessary. Chair LeMenager opened the discussion to the Historical Commission for questions and comments.

Commissioner Janet Boswell began by noting her belief that the entire design of 10 Converse Place was in keeping with the materials and expectations of the Winchester Center Business District. She stated that she had received several comments from town residents who had felt that the efforts to make the balconies at the top of 10 Converse Place more private had diminished the

architectural allure of the top floors facing the pond. She noted that while she liked the plans, she felt that she needed to represent the feedback that she had received. She asked if there was a way to slightly redesign the building to accommodate these requests. She reiterated that her comment was merely feedback that she had received from others. Chair LeMenager noted that the design of the building did not concern the Historical Commission unless it related to the historic built environment or a historic resource.

Commissioner John Clemson asked if there would be retail activity on the Mt. Vernon Street side of the property. Paul Soughley, of Ad Meliora, representing the 10 Converse Place project team, answered that the retail section would be on the side of facing the pond. He noted that this decision was reached after discussions with the Planning Board. He stated that the developers could go either way but were deferring to the Planning Board's decision.

Commissioner Clemson acknowledged that the developers were reaching the end of the design process but stated that he disagreed with the Planning Board's decision to put the retail section on the pond side. Town Planner Brian Szekely stated that the Planning Board felt that the construction of a restaurant that overlooked and connected to the public space opening out to the water was important. Commissioner Clemson asked if there was a way to have retail space on both the street side and the side of the building that faced the pond. Mr. Szekely noted that the decision would go before a newly elected Planning Board, with four out of five new members.

Commissioner Clemson asked if it would be possible to waive parking restrictions to allow for retail space on both sides. Mr. Szekely noted that the property already had more than enough parking and that the number could be reduced to accommodate additional retail space. He noted that this reduction would be at the expense of the housing units, which were all currently allotted parking space. Commissioner Clemson acknowledged that his preference did not relate to historical preservation but felt that his suggestion would make the streetscape lively. Chair LeMenager said he understood Commissioner Clemson's perspective but stated that he was very impressed with the plans that they were shown in September, which presented the retail area overlooking the pond.

Mr. Soughley explained that the entrance of the building would be on the far-right front corner and confirmed that there would be a fitness center on the left front. Chair LeMenager asked if the windows in the fitness center would be clear and open to the street. Mr. Szekely answered that they would be clear. Commissioner Michelle McCarthy and Chair LeMenager expressed their enthusiasm for the plans.

Commissioner McCarthy asked about the timeline of the project. Mr. Soughley stated that occupancy could be in three years adding that the ideal timeline would see the contractors breaking ground in the fall of 2022, with occupancy two years later in the fall of 2024.

Commissioner McCarthy stated that while the change might be difficult for some residents in Winchester, she believed that the developers and architect did a very good job designing the property at 10 Converse Place.

Chair LeMenager noted that he had researched the architect, David Hacin's work, and was very impressed. He also noted that he was initially hesitant about the height of the proposed property, but realized that the current structure, known as the Winchester Laundry building, was the same height, as is the condo building at 11 Shore Road. As such, he was not concerned with the height of the building disrupting the look and feel of downtown Winchester.

Commissioner Boswell stated that the materials, particularly the red brick and the windows, matched the look and feel of downtown Winchester. She expressed her support for the plans.

Chair LeMenager stated that he was also in favor of the project, so long as the plans reflected those that had been submitted to the Historical Commission in September.

MOTION: The Winchester Historical Commission finds no adverse impact on a historical or cultural resource and recommends favorable action based on the plans submitted.

VOTED: 6-0 (1 absent).