

ENFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2021 - 7:00 PM
ENFIELD COUNCIL CHAMBERS – ENFIELD TOWN HALL
820 ENFIELD STREET, ENFIELD, CT 06082

Call to order

Chairman Tatoian called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Roll Call

Clerk Smyth called the roll. Present for the meeting were:

Chairman Richard Tatoian, Vice Chairman Raymond Gwozdz, Clerk Nancy Smyth, Commissioner Marie Troiano, Commissioner Linda Fallon (Alt) and Commissioner Lillian Troiano (Alt).

Absent: Commissioner Colleen Ann Reidy

Also Present from the Town of Enfield, Nicole Maruca, Zoning Enforcement Technician and Alexis Nai, Recording Secretary

Fire Evacuation Announcement

Chairman Tatoian read the fire evacuation announcement.

Approval of Minutes: July 28, 2021 –

Commissioner Smyth motioned to approve the minutes of July 28, 2021 with the noted corrections to remove Commissioner Reidy from attendance as duplicated as absent and remove the duplication of Georgienna's name in attendance. Commissioner Fallon seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Vote: (6-0-0)

Old Business

None

Reading of Legal Notice

N/A

Correspondence

Workshop – HDC Handbook

- a. To adopt the HDC Handbook – Chairman Tatoian noted the Commission will vote to accept the handbook and it will be published online. Chairman Tatoian questioned if the handbook needed to go through any additional approvals.

Ms. Maruca stated it did not need attorney approval or Council approval because they are guidelines. She also noted they will be printing the handbooks since they are receiving funding from the state to print them. She will be getting examples from vendors to select a printer.

Commissioner Gwozdz requested if a copy could go to the library.

Ms. Maruca confirmed they could send a copy to the library.

Commissioner Fallon motioned to adopt the HDC handbook. Commissioner Smyth seconded the motion. All were in favor

Vote: (6-0-0)

An informal discussion regarding the Felician Sister proposed project -

Attorney Carl Landolina - Fahey & Landolina LLC. Atty. Landolina stated their firm was engaged by The Felician sisters at 1297 Enfield Street.

Kristin Anderson introduced herself from The Community Builders. She noted they are a nationwide nonprofit developer of mixed housing units. They build and manage some of these units. The Felician Sisters have engaged us as their partner.

Atty. Landolina introduced Julie James from the Felician Services the social service arms of the Felician sisters and Stephanie White who is an engineer with Fuss & O'Neill as the project Engineers on this proposal.

Attorney Landolina stated they don't have an application that comes before you. The first 200 feet is within the district. They felt, this is a high visibility piece of property within the district and wanted to come and share their thoughts and their ideas and didn't want to start their project without the Historic District Commission being fully apprised of their plan. They appreciate the opportunity to do this.

The Felician Sisters used to have a membership of over 400 in Enfield. Many of the sisters lived on the property. There are currently about 24 or 25. It is slowly dwindling over time. The Felician sisters of North America wanted to continue their service as it ceases being used as a convent. They have an 8-10-year plan to reuse as residential use.

Tomorrow they are going before Planning and Zoning to apply for a special development district. So, they can have the flexibility to renovate or construct new housing units. They plan to renovate the St. Felix house closest to the little sisters of the poor building. It is currently vacant. They plan to add wings and about 50 units of senior housing.

Ms. James showed the commission the location where they plan to start the renovations.

Attorney Landolina stated that would be phase one of the projects, that they could not start unless they get approval to rezone the property.

Commissioner Marie Troiano questioned how many apartments there currently are on the property.

Ms. James stated there are 22 and they are market rate senior rentals.

Atty. Landolina stated that was done in 2009 as senior housing.

Commissioner Troiano questioned how many units would go into the new building.

Kristin Anderson responded the plan would be 50 units, 49 1 bedrooms, 1 studio and on the ground, floor would be amenities. There would be health services, wellness services, community gardens, ample space on each level. It would be independent living. They would have the market rate, St. Francis residence, more affordable rental to create a nice continuum of care.

Commissioner Lilian Troiano questioned if the building next to the main building was new construction.

Atty Landolina stated it was and that would have 50 units.

Commissioner Lilian Troiano questioned how many new construction units are being proposed.

Atty Landolina stated this is a concept so it could change over 10 years.

Commissioner Lillian Troiano stated she counted 14 new buildings

Commissioner Gwozdz noted even though it's outside of the district it will be visible from Enfield Street. He questioned if there are architectural plans to blend with the buildings.

Ms. White stated there is a big stand of existing vegetation. They are trying to tuck in new buildings, so they aren't visible to the street.

The height of the building will be in line to not take away from the existing buildings that are there. We want to make the design help highlight what is there. We've only made it as far as schematic designs before we dig into the details.

Ms. James noted the thing that the architects talked about is designs that really highlight the buildings hopefully these other buildings will fade in the background and blend in.

Ms. Anderson noted the reason they selected the firm was because they worked on a similar project in west Hartford and went through an extensive RFP for Architects who work in historic districts.

Chairman Tatoian confirmed they need to come back each time they want to erect a building and they are just going for zoning change tomorrow.

Chairman Tatoian questioned when the addition was put on the Thompson house, did that require a site plan and did that require a zone change?

Atty Landolina stated he did not think it did. HR33 is limited as to density.

Commissioner Gwozdz asked how many stories will the tallest building stand?

Ms. James stated phase one would be three stories facing Enfield and 4 stories in the back. As you move North the density drops to two stories.

Chairman Tatoian asked if there were any plans to renovate the large building?

Atty Landolina stated currently there are Felician sisters there. It is not 80% vacant yet as required by the regulations. The main goal is to allow the sisters to remain if they need or move them to new apartments if they so choose.

The numbers of Felician sisters are dropping all over the country there are about 700 in the US and they want to stay where they are from. It is unlikely many will choose to come to Enfield. We want to do everything to make this their home if they want it.

Commissioner Lillian Troiano questioned how they propose to exit from the south side of the property.

Ms. James stated all of that will be exiting on South Road. We would not be using any little sisters of the poor exits (emergency use only).

Chairman Tatoian confirmed the only egress to Enfield Street is from the school.

Commissioner Smyth questioned where they plan to put the parking.

Atty Landolina stated they will be scattered throughout the site. There will be three major entryways for each building. It would be disbursed around the buildings. No garages. We would like to come back again when we have something of interest to show you to keep you apprised of our progress. To show you what our thoughts are.

Ms. Anderson stated as we are conceptualizing, we are thinking about the school and seniors how do we create more space between the seniors and kids. One of the ideas was to move the play field from behind to the front but weren't sure if in the HDC would allow a play area in the front.

Chairman Tatoian stated if it were enclosed with shrubbery it would be beyond what we need to approve. If there were fencing or structures, it would need approval.

Ms. James stated we have a swing set back there that we could put behind shrubbery.

Chairman Tatoian stated we will have to investigate it when it comes up.

Commissioner Gwozdz stated this is a major spotlight for the district and the visibility from the street is paramount.

Ms. James stated we know that too, we don't want to change that, and we want to maintain that for the town and the sisters.

Commissioner Lillian Troiano questioned if the play area could go behind the buildings.

Ms. James noted we are looking to provide a play structure behind the apartments, but we are trying to keep the Montessori school separate from the housing.

Ms. Anderson noted right now drop off and pick up happens at the front of the Montessori school they are making sure that front is still used so that children don't have to go through the campus.

Commissioner Fallon questioned will this zone change mean the front perimeter be for buildings in front of Montessori? If you rezone it would be the entire parcel – logically you could put apartments overall front lawn.

Atty Landolina stated we understand the concern and will take that back to the team.

Commissioner Troiano stated they would still have to come to the HDC for approval.

Ms. James stated The Felician sisters aren't walking away from this. They are leasing the land from the buildings, so they have some level of control. The community builders are in this for the long haul as well.

Ms. Anderson noted one of the pieces that's a core part is onsite property management. A whole team maintains the property and contracts and local presence.

Ms. Maruca noted even with the condo associates we must get permission from their entire board and would need the sister's approval.

Commissioner Marie Troiano questioned is the plan for all the apartments to be market rate.

Ms. Anderson noted some market some lower. Some will be \$45k or less (fixed income). Even housing that the teachers that work at the Montessori school can afford. Providing opportunities for permanent rental housing or single family. It's a broad answer but they are looking at a mixed income community.

Ms. Anderson questioned whether it makes sense to have another exit to Enfield Street. Could it be tucked down? Requested the Commissions input.

Commissioner Gwozdz requested any pavement on the lawn would be avoidable.

Commissioner Fallon stated it's already difficult to get out of Enfield Street School and tough to get out of St. Joseph's residence.

The Commission addressed their concerns about the traffic for 300 units in that area and what will happen with that property once the Felician sisters leave or sell the property.

Nicole Maruca noted she will share the commissions concerns with Laurie Whitten.

The commission asked if they could right individual letters to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Ms. Maruca requested they email by 4 to add to the packets.

Enforcement

Commissioner Marie Troiano requested they change street signs to be historic street signs. She noted they did it on Hazard avenue and it looks nice. They could also add a topper which designates it. It would be a nice addition.

Ms. Maruca noted she will speak to talk to Nelson Tereso regarding Funding to see if there are any grants.

Commissioner Smyth stated at the stop light near post office house where they have lawn mowers in the front for sale, the whole back yard is full of lawn mowers. It used to be weekends now he's selling every day out front.

Ms. Maruca stated she will bring it up with the zoning enforcement officer.

Adjournment

Commissioner Fallon motioned to adjourn at 8:19 PM. Commissioner Gwozdz seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned.

Vote: (6-0-0)

Note: Next Historic District Commission meeting will be held on October 27, 2021 at 7PM.

By Richard Tatoian, Chairman

Questions on agenda may be directed to the Planning Office (860) 253-6355.

Files are available for review on the website: <https://www.enfield-ct.gov/648/Historic-District-Commission>