

**CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
JUNE 20, 2024
DRAFT**

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Alden, Chair; Robert Mount, Vice-Chair; Cristin Gildea; Dylan Zwicky
ADMINISTRATION: Michael Giguere, City Planner; Chris Yuen, Community Development Director
OTHERS PRESENT: Greg Dixon, Gabe Handy

Mr. Yuen noted that this is a hybrid meeting, and that staff are present at the City offices to ensure public participation. While efforts will be made to accommodate remote public participants, in-person participation is the only legally mandated form of public participation. If there are technical difficulties the meeting may be paused and resumed later. A roll call of Planning Commissioners present remotely and in-person was taken.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Alden called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

2. ADDITIONS OR AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

None.

3. PUBLIC TO BE HEARD

None.

4. MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting – April 18, 2024

MOTION by DYLAN ZWICKY, SECOND by ROBERT MOUNT, to approve the minutes of April 18, with changes. The motion passed 4-0.

-On the third paragraph of page two, a quote attributed to Mr. Rabideau was changed to be attributed to Mr. Goltzman.

5. PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Alden swore in all individuals who intended to speak during this hearing under the following oath: “I hereby swear that the evidence I give in the cause under consideration shall be the whole truth, nothing but the truth under the pains and penalties of perjury”

a. Final site plan to construct a 4-story residential building with 39 units and parking at 227-229 Pearl Street in the MF/MU1 District, by Handy Hotels & Rentals LLC, owner.

Mr. Dixon said that this project was presented to the DRB under a previous owner and said that since that time it has been reconfigured to be closer to the neighboring building. Five more units have been added, there is no change to impervious surface. An updated landscaping plan and updates to the architectural plan are included in the final plan. Mr. Yuen said that the biggest changes to the project since conceptual design include the specification of colors and materials. There is now an awning over the entrance and two material types and colors on the side, both based on the DRB’s previous comments. The Tree Advisory Committee has asked that the Land Development Code (LDC) requirements for tree protection

be followed, and an arborist consulted if necessary. Mr. Mount said that the DRB received a request from an abutting property owner to maintain a tree straddling the property line. Mr. Dixon said that the tree would remain, and that most of the crown could stay intact. The contractors will do their best to avoid disturbing the roots. Mr. Alden encouraged the developer to follow the LDC language regarding tree protection and engaging an arborist. He said that moving the building was the largest thing that could be done to ensure the tree's survival. Ms. Gildea asked for more details about the neighbor's request, and Mr. Alden said that a fence will be run down the property line which he believes will address all her concerns. The project will provide as large of a fence as allowable under the LDC.

Mr. Alden reviewed the staff report, requesting that language on the property being in the Village Center District be removed. Mr. Yuen said that the principles of the district are being extended by the overlay district, but not the district itself. Mr. Alden said that the design is more modern than would be typically seen in the Village Center District but is in character with the area. Mr. Alden said that the applicant did well listening to DRB comments, and that the architectural façade is interesting. He asked for clarification on the building signage, which Mr. Dixon said would be a small plaque. Mr. Alden said that the elevator shaft is the plainest thing in the drawing and suggested including the plaque in this location. He said that this area is board and batten siding, while the rest of the siding materials are horizontal. He said that minor changes to the board and batten could result in a more attractive appearance. Ms. Gildea asked if the plaque would need a permit, Mr. Alden said no. Mr. Yuen said that if the plaque is on the architectural designs, it is considered a project element. Ms. Gildea agreed that the plaque would look good on the elevator shaft. Mr. Alden said that staff recommend approval of the 22-foot parking travel isle, all agreed.

Mr. Alden asked for more information on the waiver for a 16-foot light mounting height; Mr. Yuen said that this one foot higher than typically allowable. Mr. Dixon said that the pole heights make it difficult to stay under this height and create sufficient lighting. Mr. Alden said that the concrete bases are around two feet high and said that he is amenable to this waiver. Mr. Zwicky suggested that the Planning Commission review this figure. Mr. Alden said that the fifteen-foot buffer is robust, and he has no comments. Mr. Yuen said that the long-term bike parking is in the basement, which is not ideal but not against the LDC requirements. He said that he has asked the applicant to prove that a bike could fit in the elevator, and Mr. Alden said that the life safety code requires that a stretcher can fit inside. Mr. Alden said that e-bike batteries are a fire hazard, and that storage and charging spaces have additional requirements. He asked that the applicant check to ensure that the space is sufficient for these requirements. Mr. Alden said that the basement storage is acceptable for bikes. Mr. Handy asked if the bike rack could be moved if e-bike storage turns out to be an issue, Mr. Yuen said that a minor site plan amendment could be filed if the change was under a certain size. Mr. Alden said that the DRB would not need to approve it if it is in the existing footprint. Mr. Zwicky said that he would support reducing parking spots for e-bike storage.

ROBERT MOUNT made a motion, seconded by DYLAN ZWICKY, to close the public hearing. Motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Alden said that all DRB members agreed that the design review standards were met. All were amenable to the waiver for the parking access isle and the parking lot lighting height. The proposed bike parking and storage is acceptable as shown or in lieu of this under the building in the currently designated parking area. Mr. Alden said that he is amenable to staff approving this change administratively. Should the building architecture change, compatible architecture must be used in the bay and it will need to be

weather-resistant. All proposed conditions from staff are met. Mr. Alden suggested making a notation about the energy code applying and a certificate of design and construction compliance being provided to the City. Mr. Yuen said that this will be included but is a requirement of the state statute. Mr. Alden said that the LDC tree protection requirements should be followed, and that a detail sheet should include information on how to protect the tree.

JOHN ALDEN made a motion, seconded by DYLAN ZWICKY, to approve the project with the proposed and additional conditions. Motion passed 4-0.

6. OTHER DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD ITEMS

Mr. Alden introduced Mr. Giguere, the new City Planner. Mr. Yuen detailed updates for recently approved projects. He said that the City Council will be proceeding with re-appointments or new appointments for two DRB seats next week. Mr. Mount said that he would not be seeking re-appointment. Mr. Yuen said that the Crescent Connector is almost complete and will be finished at the end of the construction season. Ms. Gildea asked about the property next to KFC, noting that it was for sale. Mr. Yuen provided an update on the property, noting that the current owner does not want to develop it as previously presented to the DRB. Mr. Zwicky asked about the pocket park in front of Firebird, with Mr. Yuen stating that the department will move forward at a reduced scope of work. A flexible design will be included in case of future pedestrianization of Main Street.

7. ADJOURNMENT

ROBERT MOUNT made a motion, seconded by DYLAN ZWICKY, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Darby Mayville