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APPROVED MINUTES

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF MARCH 02, 2016

SEBASTOPOL CITY HALL
CONFERENCE ROOM
7120 BODEGA AVENUE
4:00 P.M.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD:

The notice of the meeting was posted on February 25, 2016.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Luthin called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Ted Luthin, Chair
Lynn Deedler, Vice Chair
Cary Bush, Board Member
Christine Level, Board Member
Bill Shortridge, Board Member

Absent: Alexis Persinger, Board Member (excused)

Staff: Jonathan Atkinson, Assistant Planner
Rebecca Mansour, Planning Technician

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 20, 2016.

Board Member Bush amended the minutes.

Board Member Shortridge made a motion to approve the minutes as amended.

Vice Chair Deedler seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Luthin, Vice Chair Deedler and Board Members Bush and Shortridge

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: Board Member Level

4. PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATES:

Assistant Planner Atkinson provided the following updates:

- The City of Sebastopol will be commissioning a public art project for placement on City property, and has issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for artists, preferably with public art experience. Following the RFQ process, up to three artists will be selected to submit proposals, and then one will be selected for the project. May 16, 2016 is the deadline to respond to the RFQ. The RFQ is available for public review on the City's website on the home page.
- The Planning Commission and City Council have an upcoming joint meeting, which is scheduled for March 8th at the Youth Annex at 4:00 p.m. This meeting follows two previous joint meetings on January 12th and February 9th. The purpose of these meetings is to review each draft General Plan Element as recommended by the General Plan Advisory Committee, and to hear any public comment. The formal draft General Plan and Environmental Impact Report will be prepared for review following the meetings.

The Board asked questions of staff.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA:

Len Oaks, a resident of Sebastopol, commented:

- The City just approved an antenna for KOWS Community Radio.
- Expressed concern that the tower may not enhance and/or may further degrade reception by being placed at the approved site.
- The FCC has rules for how complaints may be lodged regarding sources of interference.
- Expressed a willingness to lodge said complaints should the new tower further degrade reception.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Luthin closed public comment.

6. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

Chair Luthin recused himself from Item 8A due to a proximity conflict.

Vice Chair Deedler commented:

- There are a number of things happening with the new Round Table Pizza that are not consistent with the Board's approval.
- Questioned the follow-through of staff when it comes to conditions of approval.

Chair Luthin asked staff to explain what recourse the City has, if any.

Assistant Planner Atkinson responded:

- Vice Chair Deedler brought up this same matter at a previous meeting.
- When the Board approved the application for Round Table Pizza, the suggested changes were recommendations, not requirements.
- The project architect heard the Board's recommendations and decided to go with the approved set of plans.

Chair Luthin commented:

- In the future, if we have hard and fast conditions of approval, we need to be clear in that.
- Alternatively, we can request a continuance so we can be sure that the changes are reflected.

The Board asked additional clarifying questions of staff.

Chair Luthin asked if the Board would be willing to discuss item 9A before 8A due to his proximity conflict.

Vice Chair Deedler commented that discussion item 9A was not pressing and requested to leave the items in the order on the agenda, as he had to leave early as well.

Chair Luthin suggested that the Board receive an introduction on Item 9A and then continue its discussion to a future meeting.

7. CONSENT CALENDER: None

9. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. PORTABLE SIGNS – This is a Design Review Board discussion, regarding portable signs in Sebastopol, and related Zoning Ordinance regulations.

Assistant Planner Atkinson presented the staff report.

The Board asked questions of staff.

Chair Luthin opened the Public Hearing.

Marsha Sue Lustig, a resident of Sebastopol, commented:

- It may be worthwhile to look into what other communities are doing.
- Noticed a nice a-frame sign that had blown into the middle of the street on her way to the meeting.
- Many cities have disallowed a-frame signs due to the costs of lawsuits relating to them.
- There are ways to affix a-frame signs to buildings.

Hearing nothing further, Chair Luthin, closed the Public Hearing.

Board Member Shortridge commented that a lot of times a-frame signs are redundant.

The Board agreed to continue this item to a future agenda.

Chair Luthin excused himself from the meeting at 4:20 P.M.

8. REGULAR AGENDA:

A. PRELIMINARY REVIEW – Hotel Sebastopol (Project 2016-08) – This is an application, submitted by Piazza Hospitality Group, requesting Design Review Board comments on a proposed mixed-use hotel at 6828 Depot Street and a parking structure at 6826 and 6824 Depot Street.

Assistant Planner Atkinson presented the staff report.

The Board asked questions of staff.

Vice Chair Deedler asked if the applicant wished to make a presentation.

The applicant gave a brief presentation and was available for questions.

The Board asked questions of staff and the applicant.

Vice Chair Deedler opened the Public Hearing.

Paul Fritz, 437 High Street, commented:

- Really likes the proposal and concept, generally speaking.
- Loves the Brown Street elevation, which he found to be engaging and interesting.
- Appreciates the breakdown of scale.
- Likes the materials a lot.
- Appreciates trying to set the buildings back off of Petaluma Avenue, and preservation of the sycamore trees. Questioned what that space would be used for and commented that, depending on the use, he may prefer a stronger edge.
- Served on the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC).
- The draft version of the General Plan includes a 50' height allowance for the Downtown Core zone.
- The proposal to have four stories with a height of 50' makes a lot of sense at the northeast corner.
- Appreciates stepping down.
- Would not be opposed, necessarily, to some three-story element on Petaluma Avenue.
- Liked the barn shape of the corner building but questioned the appropriateness of it for the proposed location.

Marsha Sue Lustig, a resident of Sebastopol, commented:

- Interested in the City retaining a legal right to construct above the parking structure.
- Really likes the Brown Street elevation.
- The architecture is very different, but it mostly works.
- Expressed being struck by the barn like structure on the corner.
 - Would rather see more stories there.
 - It is a really important location.
 - Seems like the roofline will be visible from the park.
- The use of some of the proposed materials can be seen in Healdsburg and they really work.
- The Petaluma Avenue elevation is not as strong as the Brown Street elevation.
- The site plan is fantastic.
- Like Mr. Fritz, she commented that the applicant might want to take another look at the barn shaped corner building, as it will be the most important corner.

Ms. Lustig comments continued:

- The City should secure a public use overlay for the areas that the applicants are saying are intended for public use.
- Has visited Hotel Healdsburg for meetings. It is a good space and works really well.

Ila Benavidez-Heaster, 7777 Bodega Avenue, commented:

- The project is lovely and has a lot of wonderful features.
- Expressed having a hard time because the project was such an embodiment of gentrification, rather than revitalization.
- Fascinating to look at the proposal.
- We do not need another restaurant.
- Would be thrilled if they turned one piece of it into a hostel. Doing so would help to bring a balance to the project.
- This location is a central hub for our town.
- This project needs to reflect our needs, not just 'Healdsburg'.
- Questioned if her comments would be heard.
- Thanked the Board for their time.

John Eder, a resident of Sebastopol and member of the Sebastopol City Council, commented:

- Spoke on the process, not the project.
- Referred to comments from Vice Chair Deedler on Round Table's deviation from the Board's.
- If the Board has specific guidance to the applicant, they should put that in very specific form, perhaps through findings, rather than just leaving them with vague, interpretable direction.
- Thanked the Board for their time.

The applicant responded that they were intending to provide 4-5 rooms with a hostel setup.

Ms. Benavidez-Heaster thanked the applicant for his response.

Hearing nothing further, Vice Chair Deedler closed the Public Hearing.

Vice Chair Deedler suggested that the Board discuss the following, in order of significance:

- Siting
- Variance
- Architecture
- Materials and colors
- Landscape

Vice Chair Deedler suggested that the parking garage be left out of their discussion because not enough detail had been provided.

The Board agreed.

Vice Chair Deedler asked for comments on siting.

Board Member Bush commented:

- Thanked the applicants for all of the work they had put into their proposal.
- Appreciates the proposal.

Board Member Bush comments continued:

- The first words that came to mind when reviewing this proposal were rhythm and eclecticism.
- The way the buildings are situated in form feels right and good.
- The buildings are in proportion to each other.
- As mentioned by Mr. Fritz, he was trying to understand the ambiguity of the sidewalk, landscape and circulation area along Petaluma Avenue.
- With regards to the requested variance, he expressed being anxious to see how the timing may find itself with regards to this application and adoption of the updated General Plan.
- This proposal integrates itself into the town in a quite sensitive way.
- Expressed being generally pleased with the siting, as proposed.

Board Member Level commented:

- Really likes this project.
- Sebastopol is a conglomeration of a bunch of different things.
- The juxtaposition of the buildings in their different forms with space in between them makes it feel like there are some smaller buildings with some smaller projects, even though it is actually one big project.
- This project is different, like Sebastopol.
- Likes the circulation through project.
- Likes the juxtaposition of the buildings and the circulation around them.
- Expressed being concerned about having a pool in a flood zone.
- It would be nice to see a landscape alternative if the pool was being reconsidered.

Board Member Shortridge commented:

- Loves the site.
- Likes the way it kind of mirrors Sebastopol.
- The proposal is really well thought out.
- Likes the green space and circulation.
- Likes the gradation in heights.
- An entryway to The Barlow is created on McKinley Street.
- It all works, site wise.
- Looks forward to more information on the parking garage.

Vice Chair Deedler commented:

- Appreciates the site.
- Believes the Petaluma Avenue frontage could be setback an additional 5' for the tree.
- Referred to Mr. Fritz's comment about questioning the need to set the buildings off of Petaluma Avenue back so far.
- The space off of Petaluma Avenue really serves the public.
- The setback creates a very gracious corridor with large trees on both sides of the street.
- Retaining the avenue of very large sycamore trees is a great benefit to the community.
- Appreciates the subtle way the applicants closed it in while leaving it very spacious.

Board Member Shortridge asked a question of the applicant.

Vice Chair Deedler commented that the applicants had unanimous approval from the board on siting.

Vice Chair Deedler asked for comments on the request for a variance.

Board Member Bush commented that he had no problem with a height of 50’.

Board Member Level commented that it seemed like granting a variance for the height may be a non-issue given the direction in the updated General Plan, which was currently in draft form.

Board Member Shortridge commented that he was fine with the requested height.

Vice Chair Deedler commented:

- Expressed being in agreement with the rest of the Board.
- The heights are just right.
- The Board is in support of the request.

Vice Chair Deedler asked for comments on architecture.

Board Member Bush commented:

- Design is art.
- There are many factors to consider.
- People also bring a sense of place to a building.
- It is hard to define exactly the architectural style without talking about it to people, in its context.
- Referred to comments from Ms. Benavidez-Heaster on gentrification and from Mr. Eder on giving very specific direction.
- Would want to keep the architecture eclectic.
- The various uses shape architecture as well.
- The forms and the architecture itself seem to really relate, both to the site and in general to each other.
- The applicant may want to consider strengthening the corner at Petaluma Avenue.
- The architecture has a sense of warmth.
- Appreciates having tied in the lumberyard site some.
- Good architecture.

Board Member Level commented:

- Likes the collection of different buildings.
- As a working design professional, she fully appreciates what goes into trying to put these buildings together.
- Given that this is preliminary, the applicants have to look into a lot of aspects that may revise the design.
- Title 24, and other codes that developers have to comply with, could create revisions as well.
- This is a good start.
- Likes all of the natural materials and hoped that it would become a budget reality in the end.
- Appreciates the attempt.
- Appreciates comments on gentrification and agreed that it seems to be happening in Sebastopol as well as everywhere in the County.

Board Member Level asked a clarifying question of the applicant.

Board Member Level comments continued:

- Appreciates gesture to include an affordable hostel component.

Board Member Shortridge commented:

- It is great that this project is happening.
- Loves the site, the flow, and the use of different materials.

Board Member Shortridge comments continued:

- Expressed a problem with the project being monotonous.
- The overall feeling when walking through Sebastopol is a sort of warm embrace.
- This project does not feel like a warm embrace, it feels more like a medical center.
- This does not feel like an inviting hotel.
- The reason the barn element does not really work is because there is not enough of it throughout the project.
- The dynamic and the diversity of the barn element is the most successful.
- This is a very cold and uninviting project.
- This could have been a terrific transition between the Downtown area and the more austere Barlow project.
- This project does not have any place in our downtown.
- There are a lot of great things about the architecture but it is being proposed in the wrong place.
- The project is too cold for such a prominent location in town.
- Sebastopol is a warm, inviting, eclectic and kooky little town.

Vice Chair Deedler commented:

- Expressed being generally in agreement with Board Member Shortridge.
- This is good architecture, but it is not appropriate for Sebastopol.
- The project does not relate to Main Street or Sebastopol in any way.
- This is a very modern design.
- There is a very stark difference between this project and Main Street.
- This project should tie together with Main Street more.
- The windows in this project are floor to ceiling. All of the windows, in all of the buildings along Main Street, are more or less 22" off the ground.
- These very tall windows are cold in practice; people do not like to be so fully exposed.
- There are some really great materials in this project that he liked.
- The project does not pick up materials, stucco for example, from our downtown.
- This is such an overwhelming project.
- This project does not work well with what Sebastopol has going on.
- The corner barn-like building at McKinley Street and Petaluma Avenue is a nice concept, but it does not work.
 - There is only one other building in Sebastopol that has gabling roofs and it is a total misfit.
 - The building should be a focal point, have its own identity, and be very attractive.
 - Unable to recognize the front door on either street in the elevations that were provided to the Board.
 - The building needs work.
- Had a number of lengthy notes that he would be passing along to the applicant outside of the meeting.

Board Member Bush commented:

- For 5 years he sat in a desk at 108 Petaluma Avenue, which is right across the street from this site.
- The building has a parapet on one side and a gable roof on the other.
- The original lumberyard site building has a gable roof as well, although it is currently patched with tarps.
- 108 Petaluma Avenue was noted as possibly one of the most modern buildings in Sebastopol.

- Even as a block building with glass that went floor to ceiling, it was a comfortable space and did not feel cold or inhospitable.
- To find really good architecture is to push the envelope and to invent something new.

Board Member Bush comments continued:

- Agreed that the materials make the building.
- A lot of the older buildings in Sebastopol were built as utilitarian, cheap, functional buildings with no architectural merit whatsoever.

Board Member Level comments continued:

- We should not be trying to continue that just for the sake of repeating what has been done in the past.
- Appreciates the intelligence, effort and thought that has gone into this project.
- Understands the preliminary nature of this proposal.
- Understands the need for some sort of uniformity for budget purposes.
- Applauds effort.
- Appreciates the risk that the applicants are taking.
- This is a big improvement.
- Urged the applicants to continue to develop this design and to return with more details including color and material samples.

Board Member Shortridge commented:

- Loves this project and that it is coming to Sebastopol.
- People live here because they love everything about Sebastopol.
- This project is as big as Main Street.
- This project is going to make a huge statement.
- If this project does not fit in aesthetically and emotionally it will take Sebastopol in the wrong direction.
- Loves everything about this proposal except for the austere quality of the buildings and the monotonous rooflines.
- To Board Member Level's point, he agreed that there are a lot of buildings in Sebastopol that are not of any architectural merit, however, they are part of the heart of Sebastopol and that applicant should be sensitive to that.

Vice Chair Deedler commented:

- There are a number of surveys that have been done asking people what they like about Sebastopol, why they moved here, why they want to live here.
- People love Main Street.
- This project needs to tie into Main Street.
- Deferred to the architect in bringing compatibility with Main Street to the project.

Vice Chair Deedler asked for comments on materials and colors.

Board Member Level commented:

- We do not have color samples or material samples at this stage so there is really nothing to comment on.
- Sees the general direction and does not have a problem with it.
- Declined to comment without specifics.

Board Member Shortridge commented:

- Likes what he sees.
- The mix of materials is great.

Board Member Shortridge asked clarifying questions of the applicant.

Board Member Shortridge commented:

- May have a problem with the weathering of some materials.
- Needs more details.

Vice Chair Deedler commented:

- Likes that a lot of really durable materials are being proposed.
- Doesn't like all of the slats. They seem narrow, weak and out of character.
- The colors are really nice.

Board Member Bush commented:

- Appreciates the permanence of using such durable materials.
- The wood is beautiful and nice.
- The proposal looks good.

Vice Chair Deedler asked for comments on landscaping.

Board Member Bush commented:

- There is not a whole lot there to review quite yet.
- The jog of the buildings presents a cool opportunity for what could happen.
- Interested in site drainage and onsite storm-water management.
- Likes how the oak trees, especially on McKinley Street, are being retained and preserved.
- Questioned the rehabilitation of trees along Petaluma Avenue in some aspects.
- Overall, some really interested spaces have been created.
- Interested in seeing how it develops over time.

Board Member Level commented:

- Reiterated her concern regarding having a pool in a flood zone.
- It would behoove you to get drought tolerant landscaping.
- Agreed that there was not much to look at quite yet.

Board Member Shortridge asked questions of the applicant.

Vice Chair Deedler commented:

- Referred to the site plan and suggested that the applicant omit about seven trees from their landscape plan because there's inadequate space to support attractive tree growth.
- The pool adds to the hardline modern sterility of the project.
- Suggested fishponds or other waterways within a garden instead.
- The applicant may want to consider a rooftop pool.

Board Member Shortridge asked questions of the applicant.

Vice Chair Deedler asked for brief closing comments.

Board Member Bush commented:

- Thanked the applicants for bringing this project to the Board.
- The proposal is incredible and brings a level of architecture to Sebastopol that has not been seen in quite a long time.
- Happy to see this project.

Board Member Level commented:

- Agreed with Board Member Bush.
- Appreciates effort so far.
- Eager to see further development with more detail.
- Thanked the applicants for bringing forward such a huge project.
- This is a bold move, but the applicants seem up to the task.

Board Member Shortridge commented:

- This is a great project.
- Thanked the applicants for bringing it forward.
- Wished more people would opt for preliminary design review as it ultimately helps save time.
- Noted that he may have sounded, but he expressed being very thrilled about this project and felt that it would be great for Sebastopol.
- Wished the aesthetic of the project fit in with Sebastopol a little bit more.
- This is a great opportunity to capture the eclectic nature of Sebastopol.
- Looks forward to seeing more.

Vice Chair Deedler expressed being in agreement with all that had been said.

The applicant stated that there was division amongst the Board and asked how they should proceed.

Vice Chair Deedler responded:

- Had lots of thoughts, which he would save for another time.
- The project is doable.

Board Member Shortridge responded:

- The project is absolutely doable.
- Material samples would help him a lot.

The applicant asked a question of staff.

Board Member Level commented:

- If we are comfortable with the massing and the bulk of the buildings, minor design tweaks with materials and details can come later.
- Encouraged the applicants to move forward.
- Suggested that Board Member Shortridge and Vice Chair Deedler give specific direction with regards to massing, the bulk of the buildings and the rooflines.

Board Member Shortridge commented:

- Suggested raising the windows off the ground some along Depot Street.

Vice Chair Deedler excused himself from the meeting at 6:07 p.m.

The applicant summarized what they had heard.

Board Member Shortridge commented:

- Likes the Petaluma Avenue elevation, however, it was kind of cold and did not really fit with Sebastopol.
- The issues he's raised are not necessarily a deal breaker.
- A change to the roofline could help, but if a green roof, it should be flat.

Board Member Shortridge comments continued:

- Expressed having an issue with the building at Depot Street and Brown Street. Suggested a shed or gable to help break up the roofline.

10.REPORTS FROM THE BOARD/STAFF: None

11. ADJOURNMENT: Board Member Shortridge adjourned the meeting of the Design Review Board at 6:15 P.M. to the next Design Review Board meeting to be held March 16, 2016 at 4:00 P.M., at the Sebastopol City Hall, 7120 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol, CA.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Jonathan Atkinson
Assistant Planner