

Technical Review Group (TRG)
Tuesday, March 17, 2020
Town Council Chambers
NOTES OF MEETING

TRG members present:

Michael Behrendt, Town Planner
James Bubar, Planning Board Representative
Audrey Cline, Building Official (via telephone)
Dave Kurz, Police Chief
Mike Lynch, Public Works Director
Christine Soutter, Economic Development Director
April Talon, Town Engineer

Applicants present:

Doug Clark
Zachary Smith, architect

Doug Clark presented the project. He said the Foundation for Civic Democracy will occupy the second floor. This is a perfect location for them. Their goal is to build 46 projects around the country. All would be in college towns. They want to engage people in nonpartisan ways. Mr. Clark has been working on the project for a year. He was inspired by the B. Dennis Charrette. The corner tower is based on the clocktower on the cover of that plan.

The third and fourth floors would be condominiums. They don't plan to sell units not but could in the future. They don't intend to rent to undergraduate students. They can require that occupants have income. He looked at doing senior housing but wants to recolonize Durham. He wants to have diversity including staff members from UNH. He has done lots of market research.

Zachary Smith said there will be 13 parking spaces in the basement, one for each residential unit. The opening from Pettee Brook Lane in the rear is the same as existing. Mr. Clark said some of the parking will be under the sidewalk. In exchange for permission to use this area he would redo the park and relocate the parking spaces to the curb. He said he spoke with Todd Selig about doing this. Michael said he likes the idea if it is workable. Allowing use of the underground space would not cost the Town anything and it would be great to have the park and parking area redesigned.

April said they need information from the 2018 plans if there is a survey of the site. [It is not included with those plans.]

Christine asked if test pits have been taken. Mr. Clark said they have taken borings on all sides. There is about 12 feet clear in the front and 6 feet clear in the rear.

Michael said if Ballard Street is abandoned, he believes the lots would be okay as they would be grandfathered. The subdivision was approved with that frontage but the Town could take action now if it desired. James asked about the encroachment. Michael said he did not believe there would be a zoning issue since there are no required setbacks in the Central Business District. The applicant would need approval from the Town Council and probably an easement for use of that Town land.

Mike said there are water, sewer, and gas lines under the sidewalk in front of the building. April said the Town would need clearance of at least 10 feet on both sides of those lines. She said it is unfortunate that this tall building would be adjacent to the one-story Aroma Joe's building. Mr. Clark said there are no plans now to redevelop that building that he knows of.

Michael asked about extending the parking on the side toward Aroma Joe's instead of under Town property. Mr. Smith said it would be too close to the foundation for that building.

Michael said the issue of taxation will need to be addressed if Democracy House is a nonprofit. Christine said the taxes might be based on a certain percentage.

Mr. Clark said the building would be set up as condominiums with Democracy House being one unit. Mr. Smith said they would rent out the office space until they grew into it. Mr. Clark said this would be the first project like this for Democracy House in this format. They are now in Cambridge, MA. Mr. Smith said the third and fourth floors would be almost the same. Michael asked about units being 2 bedrooms + since the zone allows only two-bedroom units. Mr. Clark said those units would be 2 bedrooms plus an office. The office would be small and not have a closet.

Mr. Clark said having the fifth floor would add a lot of value. Christine asked what happens if the building is sold. Mr. Clark said they are proposing a nonresidential use on the fifth floor, not a residential use.

Michael asked if there is any part of the front tower that goes over the lot line. Mr. Smith said he did not believe so.

James asked how many floors the ladder truck can accommodate. He said it was a sharp-looking building. He likes modern designs. Mr. Clark said we will see how the Fire Department accesses the building. Chief Kurz checked with the Fire Department which said their truck can serve eight to ten stories.

Mr. Clark said there would be seven outdoor parking spaces.

Chief Kurz said he likes the design. It is a nice statement at this location. For the garage he suggested including a motion detector and a video system for the hallways. If this were a student complex we would discourage providing parking but parking will be needed for other residents. Many will probably have two cars. He said the only available overnight parking for a fee is the Depot Road lot. Mr. Clark said he will rent other spaces from private owners

nearby. Chief Kurz said restaurant parking should work out given the time of day.

Mike said he likes the building. It is critical to retain some of the trees in the park. Mr. Clark said they would keep the larger ones by Main Street. He will show a conceptual plan for the park to the Town. Mike said the water line is on Ballard Street and will need to be moved. It cannot be 12" from the foundation wall.

Mike asked about parking in the rear. He said a traffic analysis would be needed. In the past, drivers would come through the alley and exit in front onto Main Street. Now they will need to exit at Pettee Brook Lane. He questioned the sight distance there with the curve. Chief Kurz said the speed limit on Pettee Brook is 25 miles per hour. Cars are not going real fast there. Mike said the site will be more active now.

Mr. Clark said they would lose 2 parking spaces in the parking area but gain 2 at the curb.

Mike said they don't want to lose the banner over Pettee Brook Lane. UNH pays rent to the Town for the banner. The pole is on the subject lot. Attaching the banner by a new cable to the building instead of a pole was discussed.

Mr. Clark said they are hiring Mike Sievert to do the site plan including the stormwater.

April said they need to discuss the utility connection fee early so there are no surprises. There will be a few for the increase in volume from the present site. She suggested Mike Sievert put together some information soon for her to look at since it could be a large amount.

April said regarding drainage there is no room to do anything on site and Mr. Clark may need to mitigate the drainage impacts somewhere off site.

Michael suggested looking at the question of the utilities and cost of moving them early. He said this cost would have to be borne by the applicant.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Behrendt, Durham Town Planner/TRG Chair