



EAST PROVIDENCE WATERFRONT DISTRICT COMMISSION

Waterfront Commission Design Review Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, July 7, 2021 – 6:30 PM

A remote/virtual meeting was held in accordance with Governor Gina Raimondo's EXECUTIVE ORDER 20-46, JUNE 12, 2020, FORTY-SECOND SUPPLEMENTAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION - PUBLIC MEETINGS AND PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS, EXTENDED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER 21-72, JUNE 24, 2021, EXTENSION OF EXECUTIVE ORDERS.

Commissioners present via video and audio:

Luis Torrado, DRC Chair
David Sluter, DRC
David O'Connell, DRC
Daniel Borges, DRC
James Moran, EP Planning Dept/ DRC
Voting Members Absent:
Tim Conley, DRC

Other Commission Members Present

Steve Hardcastle, HP Chair
Peter Willey, HP
William Fazioli, HP
Manny Barrows, HP
Dominic Pontarelli
Rick Lawson
Kelly Owens, DEM

Staff present via video and audio:

Chris Martin, Executive Director
Amy Goins, UTR Legal Counsel

Sara Bradford, Landscape Architect

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- 1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS** The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM. The Chair then conducted a roll call to confirm quorum of voting members.

Roll Call: Luis Torrado, Chair
David O'Connell
Daniel Borges

David Sluter
James Moran

2. OLD BUSINESS

- A. VOTE:** The motion by Mr. Moran to approve the minutes of November 19, 2020 was seconded by Mr. Sluter and passed by a unanimous voice vote.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

VOTE: To send an advisory opinion to the Waterfront Commission regarding the design of the development at East Point—a development on three parcels totaling 27.11 acres and including 392 units. The development will provide a mix of residential dwelling types, including single family, duplex, townhome and apartment units.

Project: East Point

Applicant: Noble Development, LLC

Owner: W. Mark Russo, Esq., Special Master

Address: 300 & 0 Bourne Ave

Map/ Block/ Lot: Map 203, Block 1, Lot 4 & Map 303/ Block 13/ Lots 4 & 5

Zoning/ Acreage: Phillipsdale Sub-District

The applicant developer, Richard Baccari introduced their team and gave an overview of the proposed development. The development consists of two sides: the "Pond Side" which is on

Omega Pond and the “Coastal Side” which is on the Seekonk River. They are bisected by the P & W Railroad, which is an active railway. The roads that abut the properties are Roger Williams Ave and Bourne Ave. There are 392 proposed units, consisting of apartments & condominiums. One major step is to create a crossing over the railroad, which the applicant has been working on with the railroad company for the past six months.

The applicant Engineer, Lyn Small provided testimony on details of the civil engineering site plans. The site is over 27 acres, consisting of two development parcels separated by the P&W railroad: the Pond Side and Coastal Side. Access would be from Bourne and Roger Williams Aves. The main roadway would come from the existing curb cut off of Roger Williams Ave and would extend towards the railway and extend to the coastal feature on the west side of the Coastal Side. The Pond Side will consist of multi-family townhouse buildings and apartment buildings. There will be 144 units on the Pond Side. There will be a coastal greenway path along Omega Pond and there will be public parking areas. One revision made based on staff and peer comments is to add the kayak launch on the Pond Side and enhanced the public walking paths to promote circulation. The railway will have a pedestrian crossing over the railroad tracks at the same grade of the crossing. There are 248 units on the Coastal Side, consisting of a mix of apartments, single family, duplex units, 8 & 12 unit buildings and a few triplex units. The main roadway will be 30’ wide and lead to a public parking area and the publicly-accessible coastal greenway, which follows along the waterfront of the parcel. The drainage designs have met the design standards of state codes. The site provides a minimum of 2 spaces for each condo unit, and provides 1.5 spaces per apartment unit, which the applicant believes will be plenty based on previous development experience and the desire to increase permeable space. The utilities for the project will be sufficient from National Grid on both parcels and there will be water and sewer provided for the project.

The Commission requested Ms. Small to address the revisions made to the plan in response to comments given at the design workshop on May 20, 2021. Ms. Small noted that trash enclosures have been added across the sites to the multi-family units and apartment complexes. Another revision made was the addition of the kayak launch on Omega Pond. Ms. Small noted that the sidewalks were widened from 4’ to 5’ wide. Another revision made was to add granite curbing on all public roadways. Other revisions include adding more calculations for the drainage system. The Commission mentioned that another comment made and responded to was to create a connection to the waterfront from the southeast corner of the Coastal Side public walkway to the loop road between the condos and the large apartment building.

The Commission did note that a comment that hasn’t been responded to was the perpendicular parking on the Pond Side along the main road, adjacent to the townhouse units. There were safety concerns over vehicles backing into a main road and the applicant was asked to work to modify the parking area and find other places to put the parking or work to make the existing configuration safer. The applicant responded that it hadn’t been changed on the plans yet due to there also being a need to increase the landscaped/ permeable surface. They are working on a solution and will present that to the Commission at a later date.

The applicant Landscape Architect, Kevin Alverson, testified on the landscape plans for the site, including the addition of more shade and evergreen trees; incorporation of the accessible kayak launch and an overlook of Omega Pond and the railroad trestle; adding an at-grade, contiguous sidewalk from the Pond Side to the Coastal Side across the railroad; increase in landscape area at the loss of parking spots; addition of bike racks throughout; improvement of the buffer area between the railroad and the rear of the car barns on the Pond Side by adding more trees and possibly a mowed public access path through coastal native vegetation—which is a conceptual idea at this point; the public parking area on the Coastal Side will have an overlook and an accessible walkway to a lower overlook on the river; granite block benches along the coastal greenway; sculptural sites and historical interpretive signage; two secondary access connections to the coastal greenway on the Coastal Side; increasing the separation between the public access points and the units adjacent; finalizing fencing and vegetative buffering around the dumpster enclosures; lighting cohesion has been improved by redesigning the lighting types, which were submitted by the lighting designer.

The Commission asked about more detail on the sidewalk over the railway. The applicant indicated that the sidewalk would be at-grade across the tracks and then pick up again on the other side. The Commission asked if there was an opportunity to add more shade trees to the southwest corner of the Coastal Side. The applicant indicated that due to the existing drainage system and desire to keep the area open for views, there were no shade trees considered for this area. The Commission asked if the requested increase in spacing between lights from 100' to 300' would create dark areas. The applicant indicated that 300' would be the max distance and due to staggering across the street and many lights will be closer than that and they believe there will be sufficient lighting for the development. The Commission commented that the previously discussed comment with backing into the main road likely won't be much of an issue due to low traffic flow. There could be a way to split the difference and take some of the parking from that area and re-distribute while maintaining some for the townhouses in the area. The Commission also mentioned that comments submitted by DPW staff were not fully responded to. They request that those are responded to prior to final design. In addition, they mentioned that the existing utility design does not meet City design requirements with the roads being public. There was a request to coordinate and review final utility design, based on TIF requirements.

Christina Carlson, Architect from Union Studios provided testimony on the revision that was made to the two central multi-family units on the Coastal Side of the project. Ms. Carlson showed that they have changed the configuration of the southernmost building to rotate it 90 degrees to the right so that the longer edge is facing the street and the parking is brought off of the street. This was in response to Glen Fontecchio's comments that the previous iteration of the building did not match the strong edge of the apartment building on the east side of the road and not defining the street well. The reconfiguration also adds a shared elevator in between the buildings and create a U-shaped courtyard to make them more marketable. This reconfiguration hasn't been finalized and redesigned from a civil engineering standpoint yet, but the team will work on that. The applicant will engineer the reconfiguration and submit for administrative approval. Ms. Carlson also discussed the changes made per comments from the Commission and illustrated that the architecture is now shown in a more cohesive way through changes in material and matching details and context.

Mr. Baccari noted that there are not additional renderings of the large apartment building on the Coastal Side that was presented at the May 20th, 2021 meeting due to lack of time. The applicant hopes to be able to bring back the design of all of the apartment buildings on both the Coastal and Pond sides later for DRC review and approval.

Public testimony was given by Preston Halperin, abutter and owner at the adjacent Phillipsdale Landing. He expressed concern over the possibility of construction vehicles using the easement on the northeast corner of the Coastal Side of the development as the only access point until the railroad crossing is finished. He mentioned that he is working with Mr. Baccari on this issue. He also mentioned that the northwest corner of the Pond Side could be used for National Grid to bring in high pressure gas to Phillipsdale Landing and would work with Mr. Baccari on the hope to bring HPG to Phillipsdale and this project.

On a motion from Mr. Sluter seconded by Mr. O'Connell, the Design Review Committee voted 5-0 to send a positive advisory opinion to the Waterfront Commission to approve the development at East Point based on the findings in the applicant's application and architectural plan set dated June 21, 2021, applicant's testimony, the Executive Director's July 2021 memo, comments from City staff and consultants, public comment and the finding that the project is in conformance with the reviewing criteria set forth in section 19-477 of the East Providence Zoning Ordinance and the purposes of Article IX, "Waterfront Special Development Districts" regulations of the East Providence Zoning Ordinance, subject to the following conditions:

1. The applicant will complete all interior roadway construction, both public and private, subject to the approval of the East Providence Departments of Public Works and Engineering.
2. The applicant will receive final approval and necessary permits/ assents from the Coastal Resource Management Council (CRMC) and any other relevant state permitting agencies, if required.
3. The applicant will identify the pre-qualification services and on-going certification needed for the provided on-site ten percent affordable housing.
4. The Applicant will utilize a condominium/homeowner's association agreement satisfactory to the Commission for review and approval that will include at least the following: affordable housing; maintenance of landscaping, streets, stormwater basins, and utilities; trash removal; public access; open space; and CRMC- and Commission-required easements. The agreement will also not hold the City of East Providence accountable for maintenance unless previously agreed upon.
5. The Applicant's licensed architects will confer with the Commission's architectural and landscape architectural consultants as well as the DRC's designated member and the Waterfront Commission Executive Director in the preparation of preliminary and final architectural plans for the proposed apartment buildings on the River and Pond Parcels. The Applicant will submit the architecture plans to the Commission's architectural and landscape architectural consultants and the DRC designee for review. The plans for the final architectural design will be referred to the DRC for final approval.

6. The applicant shall make the canoe/ kayak launch on Omega Pond easily accessible by emergency services and be able to support the launching of emergency equipment when needed.
7. The East Providence Fire Department requires the applicant to provide a fire department service delivery concurrency evaluation.
8. The applicant shall submit a plan for coordination and moving of the existing Osprey Nest on the Pond Parcel, near the kayak/ canoe launch prior to construction.
9. The options for changing the back-out parking along the main road on the Pond Parcel be further explored by the applicant and submitted for review to the Executive Director and DRC.
10. DPW Comments?

Present and voting Design Review Committee Members on the Executive Director's draft resolution and amendments as discussed:

Mr. Sluter – Aye

Mr. O'Connell – Aye

Chairman Torrado – Aye

Not present: Mr. Conley

Mr. Moran – Aye

Mr. Borges – Aye

4. VOTE: ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. O'Connell, seconded by Mr. Moran to adjourn. On voice vote the Design Review Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

CHRIS MARTIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR