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CAPE COD
COMMISSION

Minutes
Springhill Suites by Marriott (TR14017) Hearing
May 26, 2015
Falmouth Public Library, Hermann Foundation Room
300 Main Street, Falmouth, Massachusetts

Subcommittee Members Present: Ernest Virgilio (Chair), Mary Pat Flynn, John D. Harris, John McCormack, Jr., Richard Roy, and Royden Richardson (Alternate)

Commission Staff Present: Atty. Jonathon Idman (Chief Regulatory Officer), Garry Meus (Planner II), Atty. Elizabeth Perry (Regulatory Officer II) and Jeffrey Ribeiro (Regulatory Officer II)

Others Present: Atty. Kevin Eriksen (Counsel, Falmouth Hospitality LLC), Julianna Hoch (Project Architect, JD LaGrasse and Associates), Joseph Peznola (Project Engineer, Hancock Associates), and Robert Walker (Principal, Falmouth Hospitality LLC)

Minutes Summary

The Cape Cod Commission (Commission) Springhill Suites by Marriott Subcommittee (Subcommittee) held a hearing to review a proposal by Falmouth Hospitality LLC to construct a 110-room hotel as a Development of Regional Impact (DRI). The Subcommittee was presented the project by the applicant, reviewed the staff report, and took public testimony.

Documents Used/Received

1. Springhill Suites by Marriott Limited DRI Scoping Decision, dated 1/22/2015
2. Springhill Suites by Marriott Limited DRI Staff Report, dated 5/19/2015
3. Submittal by Jane Abbott, dated 5/26/2015
4. Submittal by Matthew Gould, dated 5/26/2015
5. Submittal by Ed Kirk, undated

Hearing Opened

Ernest Virgilio, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:33pm. He asked the subcommittee to introduce themselves, and they did so. Mr. Virgilio then asked Cape Cod Commission staff in

attendance to introduce themselves, and they did so. Mr. Virgilio asked John McCormack, Jr. to read the hearing notice, and he did so.

Mr. Virgilio asked for the list of those who had signed in and would like to provide public testimony. Jonathon Idman, Chief Regulatory Officer, stated that staff would collect the signatures prior to the beginning of the public testimony portion of the hearing and provide them to Mr. Virgilio as Chair. Mr. Virgilio stated that because of the large number of people who would like to speak he would hold individual comments to a time limit.

Mr. Virgilio asked the applicant to present the project.

Attorney Kevin Eriksen introduced the 556 Main Street project team, consisting of Joseph Peznola, project engineer; Julianna Hoch, project architect; and Robert Walker, principal of Falmouth Hospitality LLC. Mr. Eriksen described the project site, stating that it is located within a business redevelopment zone. He then asked Mr. Peznola to further discuss the site.

Mr. Peznola stated that he did an existing conditions plan for the project and stated the site's location in relation to its abutters. He stated that the commercial portion of the site was 2.03 acres and also includes 3 Lantern Lane, a residential house that is to remain on the site. He said all of the commercial structures on site are to be raised. He described the structures on site, and stated that Lantern Lane runs through the center of the site. He said that last summer the applicant received approval from the Falmouth Planning Board to discontinue the portion of Lantern Lane that runs through the site. He stated that they will be modifying the topography of the site to address drainage issues. He said the plan is to build the hotel in two parts, with the main building on the right that contains the services and reception areas. He said Ms. Hoch would go into further detail about building design. He stated that there will be parking under the building on the left. He stated that the portion on the left has two stories above parking and the portion on the right has one-and-a-half stories above. He described the landscaping and other site improvements proposed. He then turned over the presentation to Ms. Hoch, project architect.

Ms. Hoch introduced herself and began by describing the building. She stated the hotel was split into two buildings with a pedestrian bridge connecting the upper level. She said the building was brought to the street to define the building edge and enhance the pedestrian experience. She stated that the building was consistent with other multi-story buildings in the area. She said the building incorporates façade variation, roof plane variation, upper-floor porches, and other building features that are consistent with the village setting. She stated that the rhythm and scale of the windows is consistent with the residential character of the building, while the larger windows and patio at the front of the easterly building help enliven the streetscape. She said landscape improvements would utilize native plants and provide buffers to parking. She stated that the material finishes are man-made but meant to resemble natural materials. She said the connecting bridge is set back from Main Street and utilizes a contemporary glass design that reduces mass through its transparency.

Ms. Hoch stated that other amenities include decorative fencing, planting, decorative paving, public benches, and bike racks. She said the primary drop-off for vehicles is set off of Main Street. She stated that the narrowest parking area is adjacent to Main Street and is well

screened. She stated that the ground floor of the hotel contains the public spaces of the hotel, including a lounge that, while only for use by the hotel guests, will engage those walking by. She said the upper two levels contain all of the guest rooms.

Ms. Hoch stated that the project was designed in light of Commission regulations, including the Regional Policy Plan, and its technical bulletins related to design. She restated that the project meets these requirements by furthering the village center nature of the area through narrow buildings, keeping parking away from the front of the building, and reinforcing the pedestrian zone.

Mr. Virgilio asked Jeffrey Ribeiro, Cape Cod Commission Regulatory Officer, to present the staff report. He gave an overview of the DRI Scoping decision that was issued, and then went over the contents of the staff report. His PowerPoint presentation is attached hereto. Mr. Ribeiro turned the hearing back over to Mr. Virgilio as Chair.

Mr. Virgilio invited comments from the subcommittee. Mr. McCormack stated that he neglected to read one line of the hearing notice concerning how the project materials can be viewed, and he then read that line. Mary Pat Flynn, Barnstable County Commissioner representative, asked for clarification on the use of the "lounge" mentioned during the applicant's presentation. Ms. Hoch replied that the lounge is a space, inclusive of the front patio, for hotel guests only and would host breakfast for guests and could be rented for functions. There were no other comments or questions from the subcommittee.

Mr. Virgilio then asked for comments from federal officials, and there were none. He then asked for comments from state officials, and there were none. He then asked for comments from local officials. Susan Moran, Falmouth Selectman, asked about the applicant's traffic analysis. Mr. Idman responded that the project used ITE Trip Generation numbers, not actual counts. Ms. Moran asked further if there is a pending traffic study of Main Street by the Commission. Mr. Idman stated that any planning exercise would not bear on a regulatory matter. Ms. Moran asked if there is to be parking across the street. Mr. Idman stated that some of the parking was located on-site, and the applicant intends to use a second site for additional shared parking, as allowed under the Falmouth Zoning By-law. Mr. Virgilio asked for additional comment from public officials, and there was none.

Mr. Virgilio then asked for comments from the public, starting with those who signed in.

Public Comment

Jill Neubauer stated that the building was not well designed, and said it would not be a visual asset to the Town of Falmouth. She said the design is insensitive to abutting properties.

Alison Leschen stated that the traffic assessment is flawed because the trip generation is not accurate. She said the Commission should require a full traffic study that uses actual counts. She said the hotel would have a significant traffic impact on Lantern Lane.

Deborah Siegel stated that the Commission instructed the applicant how to apply for Limited DRI review. She said it seems the process has been eased for the applicant. She said the traffic assessment is flawed.

Jane Abbott stated that she understood the Business Redevelopment zoning change approved at town meeting was to provide additional residential units and retail storefronts. She said the hotel would have a negative effect on existing businesses in downtown Falmouth. She also submitted her comments in writing.

Richard Payne stated he took issue with the square footages used within the application. He said he did not understand the numbers in the application. He stated that he does not agree with the numbers used in the traffic assessment.

Dan Webb stated he supports economic development but is concerned about the traffic impact from this project. He said Main Street is very congested. He says that actual traffic counts should be used.

Gerard Smith stated that the Commission should require actual traffic counts.

Patricia Gadsby of the Falmouth Farmers' Market said the market had to be moved because of congestion. She said the design was not appropriate for Falmouth. She said the patio would not engage with the public because it would not be open to them. She said the proposed building was too large to abut Lantern Lane.

Carmina di Luna said she the hotel was too big and an imposition on the neighborhood. She said recent development in Falmouth has not added to the character of the town. She said the hotel development will have a negative impact on the neighbors.

Leslie McDonald said she has concerns that the review process began last July without notification to the public. She said there should be a copy of the paperwork available in Falmouth. Mr. Idman replied that a copy of the application should have been filed locally with the planning department. Ms. McDonald said thousands of homes would be affected by the traffic from the hotel.

Brian Ridgeway said that the jobs generated by this project will produce below-average wages, as substantiated by the application materials.

Nancy Hayward stated that the project's review is incomprehensible to the local residents. She said the project is not consistent with what she thought the Business Redevelopment zoning would result in. She said the project is not suited to this location and the nearby residential streets.

Marjolijn Elmhirst said she is concerned about traffic on Main Street. She said the proposed building does not fit with Falmouth's village character. She said she did not want the development.

Matthew Gould submitted a written letter and said that the access to Main Street from Lantern Lane will be too narrow. He said this hotel would negatively affect local “Mom and Pop” hotels in town. He said his property values would be adversely affected. He also submitted his comments in writing.

Mary Berry stated that there are traffic problems on Main Street. She said she is concerned about pedestrian traffic that will be generated by the project.

Dave Wagner stated that there was a lot of opposition to the project, and he said he is opposed to the corporate ownership of the hotel. He said the project would cause traffic problems. He said there were other places that the hotel should be located. He said the hotel would not pay a living wage.

Cliff Northern said he agrees with the preceding comments.

Carla Thomas said the project is a grave mistake. She said the traffic assessment is inaccurate.

Melissa Waringer said the subcommittee had been “sold a bill of goods” and that they should “verify the facts.”

Scott Lindell said he did not think pedestrians were considered in the traffic study. He said the traffic assessment calls into question the credibility of the Cape Cod Commission. He said a full traffic study needs to be performed. He asked if there was a needs assessment done, because he said many hotels are struggling.

Alexandra Lancaster stated the project would make using downtown more difficult, and she said the project was not in keeping with the character of the town.

Ed Kirk stated that he is an attorney representing abutters. He held up a visual of the site plan and renderings of the rear of the building. He said the project would have a negative effect on his clients and the residential neighborhood on Lantern Lane. He said the specialty retail center is not an appropriate ITE use code, and a full traffic study should be performed. He submitted the site plan and renderings for the record.

Liam Obrien stated that the corporate hotel will have a negative effect on local businesses.

Denise Bacchus said she would like to know more about nitrogen mitigation.

Andy Garber said that the buildings were neither ugly nor pretty, but she said the glass elevated walkway is inappropriate for Cape Cod. She said she is unhappy with the review process.

Robert Dugan said the project is too dense for the location. He said there are traffic problems in the area. He said the glass elevated walkway is inappropriate and should be deleted from the proposal. He said the landscaping is inadequate. He said he was unhappy with the file review process, and that the file should be available locally. He said large trees on the site should be preserved.

Peg Roubouchard stated that there are traffic problems on Nye Road, and this project would make conditions less safe for children. She said noise from people walking in front of her house is disruptive.

Rebecca Moffett, Falmouth Selectman, asked if other locations had been considered. She stated the residents provided good comments. She stated that no one endorsed the project at the hearing.

Keith Schweigel stated that there were problems with the review process. He said the project would negatively affect traffic. He said the project is not consistent with the Falmouth Local Comprehensive Plan. He said the staff of the Commission helped the developer.

Susan Clemens said the project was not wanted by the residents of Falmouth.

Bertha Mansen stated that the hotel will not have a significant impact on traffic in the area. She said the community needs the jobs this project will provide.

Continuance

Mr. Virgilio asked the subcommittee for any further comments. There were none.

A member of the public asked what the next hearing would entail. Mr. Virgilio said it was a continued hearing. Mr. Idman said the subcommittee could discuss benefits and detriments of the project, hear a response from the applicant, and take further comment from the public. He also suggested the subcommittee could instruct the applicant if there is anything they would like them to present.

Mr. Eriksen said Falmouth Hospitality LLC was not a large corporation. He said access to Lantern Lane would be preserved. He said he would clarify other comments.

Richard Roy moved to continue the hearing to the Lawrence School auditorium, located at 113 Lakeview Avenue, on June 16, 2015 at 6:30pm. Mr. McCormack seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Virgilio adjourned the hearing at 9:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernest Virgilio, Chair, Springhill Suites by Marriott Subcommittee

Date