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ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

October 16, 2023

The Architectural Design Review Board held a Regular Meeting on Monday, October 16, 2023 at 6:00pm at the Stonington Board of Education Administration Building, 40 Field St, Pawcatuck. Attending were Chairman Michael McKinley and members, Breck Perkins, Leslie Driscoll, Christopher Delaney, and Alternate Elizabeth Brummund. Also present was Town Planner, Clifton Iler. Member Mark Comeau was absent.

The meeting was called to order at 6:06pm.

**ADRB 23-07** – Review of an Affordable Housing Project submitted pursuant to C.G.S. 8-30g. Proposal consists of 113 single-family housing units and associated site improvements. Properties located at 207, 215 & an unaddressed parcel on Liberty St., Pawcatuck. Assessor's Map 16, Block 4, Lots 12, 12A & 13. Zone LS-5. Applicant & Property Owner – Fair Housing of Connecticut, LLC.

Sergio Cherenzia introduced the project and the project team on behalf of the applicant. The project will consist of 113 single-family townhomes and associated site improvements pursuant to C.G.S. 8-30g. The project will follow a homeownership model instead of other recent 8-30g application which have been primarily rentals. Mr. Cherenzia noted that they are planning to meet with the other relevant boards and commissions over the next month and will revise based on comments received tonight and into the future.

Mr. Cherenzia introduced Dominick Celtruda, Landscape Architect, who described the site. The former site of the Rosalini's development will be cleared and graded to support the new development. Given the constraints of the site, the Utility Plan impacted a lot of the potential landscaped elements. A grassed lawn area will surround the site and serve as the backyards of the interior townhomes. There will be visual buffers via foliage on the north and south sides of the site. The southern side will also include a retaining wall. The Board requested updated sections showing the dwelling units along the retaining wall and in other graded areas. The Board also requested the pedestrian area to be defined as the plan shows the front doors opening directly into the drive aisles.

Mr. Cherenzia introduced Paul Azzinaro, Architect, to describe the proposed townhomes. Mr. Azzinaro stated that the creativity in design was stifled by the density of the site and the cost of construction. Varied roofing layouts and traditional colonial-style massing help break up the units. There was no plan to change the colors of the individual units themselves, but to create different levels using different materials, as shown in the plans. The Board asked whether a three- or four-story scheme was considered for construction instead of the townhome model. Mr. Azzinaro stated that between the cost of construction and site layout, it was not feasible to pursue other design schemes.

Gene Arganese, Property Owner, introduced himself and shared his vision for the property – an affordable homeownership model to meet the growing needs in the region. The project will include 34 affordable units (30%); 50% at 80% AMI; 50% at 60% AMI. He stated that the cost of construction, in addition to the required elements for the project, would require the Town and the developer to compromise on certain design features.

The Board made the following comments about the project:

- Mr. McKinley: Redesigning the site to a three- or four-story scheme, even partially, would allow for more green space in the project, which is currently missing.
- Mr. Perkins: The building massing is detrimental to the site and serves no good purpose.
- Ms. Driscoll: There is no sense of place in this community. The site and the layout are claustrophobic. There should be green space and a redesigned building layout.
- Ms. Brummund: There is no place for children, no common green space, and no landscaping on site.
- Mr. Delaney: The proposal does not fit a true single-family site layout. The “backyard” is non-existent and no resident will use them. The landscaping plan should be revised to include for trees and shrubs, and to shield views of and from Liberty Street. Vertical landscaping elements, traffic calming, and breaking up the alleyways should be considered.

Mr. McKinley opened the floor to discussion from attending members of the public. The following questions and concerns were captured:

- Sacrificing the quality of life for increasing density is not desired.
- There are no pedestrian areas.
- Due to the lack of landscaping, there will be significant heat stress on the site, creating an urban heat island effect during warmer months.
- The Town desperately needs affordable housing and while this project helps, it does so at the sacrifice of the quality of life of those who would live there.
- The proposed parking layout is dangerous and assumes perfection from all residents. There’s no place for guest parking and no place for pedestrians to walk around unless in the roadway.
- The State’s 8-30g model promotes affordable housing regardless of bad design, thereby allowing projects like this to move forward.
- There is no outside connection with nearby schools, sidewalks, and community. This project is closed off like a prison.

Following the discussion, the Board provided the applicant with the following directions on creating a revised site plan:

- There should be more green space for the residents/community members.
- The landscaping plan should be elevated to include more variety in between units and along Liberty Street.
- The building massing and building layout should be revised to address the repetitive linear configuration.
- The site plan should include a sidewalk or a delineated pedestrian space.
- The plan set should include various sections and elevations depending upon the grade/topography.

**Stonington Zoning Regulations Rewrite – Phase One** – Mr. Iler updated the Board that the public hearing for Phase One would be on Tuesday, October 17, 2023.

**Election of Officers** – Mr. Perkins nominated Mr. Delaney for the vacant Vice Chair position; seconded by Mr. McKinley; voted 4/0/0.

**September 11, 2023 Minutes** – Mr. Perkins made the motion to approve as written; seconded by Mr. McKinley; voted 4/0/0.

Mr. McKinley made the motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Perkins; voted 4/0/0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:07pm.

Respectfully Submitted By:

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Clifton J. Iler, AICP  
Town Planner