

**Meeting Minutes
State College Borough
Design Review Board
March 3, 2020**

The State College Borough Design Review Board (DRB) met on Tuesday, March 3, 2020 in the State College Municipal Building, 243 S. Allen Street. Chairman Laird Jones called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m.

Members Present

Laird Jones, Chairman; Michael Sanzotti, Vice-Chairman; and Richard Devon

Members Absent

Eric Boeldt and Veronica Iacobazzo

Others Present

Isabel Storey, Planner; Alan Sam, Arborist; Tony Fruchtl, PennTerra Engineering; Brian Duncan, Concord Hotels/ Developer; Nate Loeffelholz, Base⁴ Architects; Greg Weltheroth, Property Owner; LeeAnn Candor, resident; Scott Lang, resident; and Esther Matthews, Administrative Assistant

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Chairman Jones and seconded by Vice-Chairman Sanzotti to approve the February 18, 2020 minutes. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Chair Report

No report was given.

Public Hour - Hearing of Citizens

No comments or concerns were offered during the public hour.

Land Development Plans

Preliminary Plan - 1401 S Atherton St Mixed Use Building; South Atherton Real Estate I, LP, Applicant; CP2 and R2 Zoning Districts; PennTerra Engineering, Engineer; Base⁴, Architect

Mr. Fruchtl's presentation included:

- The proposed site comprised of five individual tax parcels, which would be replot into three parcels.
- The site was in between the existing Autoport building, which will remain, and an existing strip mall.
- There would be two points of access, both multidirectional and one will share access with the Talbot's strip mall.
- Required parking would be around the back the of the building.
- The existing residential house adjacent to the rear of the site would continue to have access via a shared agreement.
- The road access point connecting the site to the existing Autoport building shown on the plans is conceptual only, and this plan does not propose any further changes to the Autoport, but the applicants wanted to show there is the option to connect the hotel to that parcel in the future.
- It would be a four-story building, with eight apartments in the back – including one inclusionary housing unit, which allows them the fourth floor for the hotel.
- The landscaping plan includes some trees, with a dumpster area in the back.
- The stormwater system would be placed underground.

Mr. Loeffelholz's presentation:

- The proposed four-story Home2 Suites would be from Hilton and geared towards traveling families, teams and other large groups or people needing somewhere to stay for up to several days, but not quite an extended stay.
- Floor to floor ceiling height would be ten feet with 14-foot ceilings on the first floor.
- It would have a wood-framed structure with a concrete foundation.
- There would be eight total apartments, with two per floor, in the rear of the building.
- One of the two apartments on the ground level would be a fully accessible, ADA compliant unit, and the other would be able to be turned into an accessible unit if need be.
- Within the hotel portion of the building, there would also be seven accessible guest rooms of varying size and layout scattered throughout.
- The ground floor will also contain a gym, indoor pool, reception and breakfast area amenities.
- There would be keyed access to the apartments, in order to keep the apartments and hotel rooms separate.
- The hotel would contain some double queen rooms that include a fold out couch, which would be geared toward the visiting collegiate teams and large groups prevalent in this area.
- Stone would be placed along the base, with accents of blue and gray to have more of a Penn State color scheme.

- Translucent panels on the roof would enclose the Home2 logo, which would have a soft glow at night to help direct people there, but not create any light pollution.
- Windows would all be high efficiency and there would be can lights to light the outdoor walkways.
- There would be a patio with BBQ pits, picnic tables and a fireplace place to provide a hang-out spot for guests.

Comments:

- Dr. Devon asked how they planned on handling the flow of traffic out of the hotel, and if there would be a left turn onto South Atherton Street allowed. Mr. Fruchtl said a traffic study was underway to assess their access point options.
- Dr. Devon then inquired if the property owner owns all five parcels and Mr. Fruchtl said yes.
- Mr. Lang asked if the residential properties or any parts of this site have been rezoned, between now and 2016. Mr. Fruchtl replied no, nothing was rezoned, and the existing zoning is appropriate for the proposed use. Ms. Storey also reiterated nothing has been rezoned.
- Mr. Lang queried if areas of the one residential property are being changed when they replot the parcels. Mr. Fruchtl responded yes, a small portion would come off and be added to the parcel which the hotel would sit on.
- Ms. Candor asked if the inclusionary housing would remain forever as long as building exists, or if it would change after initial lease is up. Ms. Storey replied no, it would be inclusionary in perpetuity.
- Mr. Lang asked if the one inclusionary unit was the only credit they were seeking in order to get the additional floor or if there were other credits they would be applying for.
- Chairman Jones then asked if it would be legally possible in the future for them to change the proposal and not have the inclusionary housing, Ms. Storey replied it must remain. Mr. Duncan then reiterated the inclusionary unit is part of the stipulations allowing them to be able to add a fourth floor to the hotel.
- Chairman Jones also inquired if there would be any other credits or LEED certifications they would be pursuing, and Mr. Fruchtl said no.
- Chairman Jones asked if there would be any landscaping to act as a buffer between the different properties and around the dumpster. Mr. Fruchtl said yes, they would be adding fencing to enclose the dumpster.
- Mr. Lang suggested moving the dumpster so it was not on the same side as the adjacent residential properties, to which Mr. Sam noted the sanitation foreman would have to see if there were other feasible options for dumpster placement.
- Mr. Lang inquired if there would be height restrictions. Chairman Jones responded, saying height is restricted by zoning.

- Mr. Lang asked what the actual total height is allowed to be when including these types of units and Ms. Storey replied it depends on various factors.
- Mr. Lang then questioned why there exists a discrepancy then in building height, noting the plan shows the building to be 60-something feet high. Mr. Loeffelholz said the measurement he was referring to is to the top of the parapets, but the code means to the top of the roof deck. Chairman Jones then reiterated there could be things, such as an elevator shaft or ventilation units, which may bring the total building height up.
- Mr. Lang inquired about the building height as it related to the site elevation and where they were measuring from or how it was being calculated.
- Mr. Loeffelholz noted the site had a change in elevation, but the building would be consistent in elevation across the floor plan.
- Dr. Devon asked why they included the apartments, considering this town already has an abundance. Mr. Welteroth said they had a few different options, but ultimately the apartments were the best out of three options.
- Vice-Chairman Sanzotti asked if the apartments would be student-focused.
- Dr. Devon then suggested offering the apartments to staff. Mr. Duncan remarked they would be market driven, but the focus would not be student housing.
- Chairman Jones suggested marketing the apartments to seniors, who frequently have family visiting and would make use of the hotel. Mr. Duncan said they would be geared toward graduates and young professionals and would be set up to be move in ready, coming fully furnished, and include a designated office space.
- Dr. Devon asked if there would there be a restaurant in the hotel. Mr. Duncan replied no, there would not be any restaurants.
- Chairman Jones inquired if there would be an elevator for the apartments. Mr. Loeffelholz responded no, there would be stairs only on that end of the building due to the low occupancy.
- Dr. Devon queried about there being a service elevator. Mr. Loeffelholz replied yes.
- Chairman Jones asked how heating and cooling would be handled. Mr. Loeffelholz responded there would be two, six-ton units with a split system for the lobby.
- Chairman Jones and Vice-Chairman Sanzotti both asked if the condenser units would be placed on the roof or at ground level. Mr. Loeffelholz replied it would depend on their final heating and cooling system plan.
- Dr. Devon inquired if there would be screening to hide the mechanical units. Mr. Loeffelholz responded yes; they would have two options depending on where they place the condenser units.
- Dr. Devon queried if there would be a drop off area and Mr. Loeffelholz said yes, there would be a covered drop off area for guests which fits about two cars at a time.

- Chairman Jones inquired if a traffic circulation plan for football and/or event weekends was taken into consideration.
- Mr. Sam noted that the way it was set up for drop off, it might cause cars to back out onto South Atherton Street, a busy street and business route. Mr. Loeffelholz responded they could also loop back around and go the other way into the parking lot.
- Dr. Devon suggested adding a feeder lane to make the transition from the hotel onto South Atherton Street/ BUS SR-322 easier without needing the addition of traffic signal controls.
- Vice-Chairman Sanzotti suggested seeing more glass on the front of the lower level to be more inviting. Mr. Loeffelholz replied they added glass along the side and as much as possible on first floor as allowed.
- Chairman Jones recommended doing something like a mosaic to break up some of the solid blue sections. Mr. Loeffelholz and Mr. Duncan both said they would be looking into what they can do to draw some more attention to the entrance so it will be more inviting and more visible.
- Dr. Devon suggested raising the porte cochere and making the lobby and breakfast area two-stories high. He also asked if the building faced east. Mr. Loeffelholz said yes, which would mean a lot of direct sunlight in the morning hours to the front of the building, stating the single-story entrance and porte cochere canopy would shield the breakfast area from the harsh light.
- Mr. Duncan stated they were also looking into options for polycarbonate or glass panels on the canopy to let some more natural light filter in, but also so at night, people can see what's happening inside.
- Mr. Sam noted there were two large existing oak trees not shown in the plans, which they should include, stating he did not think it would block the Home2 sign. Mr. Loeffelholz said they were in favor of the trees.
- Vice-Chairman Sanzotti noted the building was essentially still a big box in a predominantly residential area, and not great looking as seen from the road. Mr. Duncan said they were going for a modern clean look, and unlike most of the other Home2 Suites being built across the US. This design has undulations and materials that have been specifically chosen to help tie the building into the neighborhood better.
- Mr. Sam remarked that the pigmy barberry is invasive and suggested a substitution. He also recommended the addition of further landscaping since they plan to remove some of the large trees that exist around the back side of the property.
- Ms. Candor also voiced her concern over the removal of these trees, which would provide more of a buffer between the residential properties along the back and the hotel, agreeing that the addition of landscaping would help with this.
- Dr. Devon brought up the appearance of the building again as seen from the road and suggested adding a mural(s).

- Chairman Jones suggested rounding off the one corner of the building adjacent to the entrance as well as adding some more glass. Mr. Loeffelholz responded that it is not a possibility as he is required to stay within Hilton's design parameters.

Official Reports and Correspondence

Borough Council

No report given.

Planning Commission

No report given.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Jones adjourned the meeting at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Esther Matthews, Administrative Assistant