

**DOCUMENT 34- MINUTES OF A HEARING HELD ON MAY 12, 2015 FOR A PETITION FROM ATTORNEY ROBERT HARB FOR APPLICANT ERIC V. DORMAN FOR A SPECIAL PERMIT TO BUILD 4-UNIT MULTIFAMILY DWELLING ON UNNUMBERED AUBURN STREET, FORMERLY KNOWN AS #69 TO BE SOLD AS CONDOMINIUMS**

**SUBJECT:** Document 34 - Petition from Attorney Robert Harb for applicant Eric V. Dorman requesting Special Permit to build a 4-unit multifamily dwelling on Unnumbered Auburn Street; formerly known at #69 to be sold as condominiums (vacant lot)

Present: President John Michitson, Councillor Robert Scatamacchia, Councillor Melinda Barrett, Councillor William Macek , Councillor William Ryan, Councillor Thomas Sullivan, Councillor Mary Ellen Daly O'Brien, Councillor Michael McGonagle, Councillor Colin LePage

City Clerk Linda Koutoulas: Petition has been received from Attorney Robert Harb for applicant Eric V. Dorman requesting a Special Permit to build a 4-unit multifamily dwelling on unnumbered Auburn Street, formerly known as #69 to be sold as condominiums (vacant lot). A Conditional favorable recommendation has been received from the Planning Board and Director William Pillsbury

President Michitson: I open the hearing.

My name is Attorney Robert Harb. I have offices at 17 West Street. I'm here with the applicant, Mr. Dorman and our surveyor Mr. Stapinski. You all have copies of the plans. This is a special permit application for a 4-unit dwelling to be sold as condominiums. I have submitted a brief in support of this and you will note in the brief a few years ago the Council had approved a 5-unit plan but it never got built. Mr. Dorman only bought this about a year and a half ago and starting after about a year, he and I and the surveyor have been working on this proposal. This is one of the few remaining empty lots. There used to be a building there. It burned down. Never was replaced. It's an acre infill lot. We are hoping to be able to improve the neighborhood by building a brand new 4-unit condominium. We downsized the unit to provide for parking in the rear where the prior plan didn't have that. Some of the neighbors had asked to make sure that we could accomplish that so we wouldn't perhaps take up more curb cuts and parking on the street. We went to Planning, and as was suggested by Madame Clerk, the Planning Board was unanimously was in favor of this. There were some conditions and letters from the Fire and the Water/Wastewater. The applicant is in agreement with all those letters and conditions put by the department heads. This application I believe will meet all the requirements of the special permit as I put it in my brief. It's a use that is allowed. We meet all the special permit requirements and conditions. It's desirable for the public to have an infill lot here instead of an empty lot. It won't impact the integrity of the area. The area is made up of housing. It's all housing and some are multiple family housing. It's really going to be an improvement. We are not going to cause any traffic or parking problems because we have parking in the rear. We have city sewer, city water and we are going to attend to whatever we need to do for a (inaudible) pump lift station is required. This certainly isn't a historical site. We would ask that the Council approve this special permit so that we can then move forward to go to the definitive plan with Planning as is a requirement of this multifamily use and proceed as Mr. Dorman would like to improve the area.

President Michitson: Thank you very much. Is there anyone else in favor that would like to speak? Is there anyone else in favor that would like to speak? Is there anyone opposed that would like to speak? Is there anyone opposed that would like to speak? I now close the hearing. Council what is your wish?

Councillor Macek: Move for approval of the special permit application.

Councillor Daly O'Brien: Second with discussion.

President Michitson: Motion by Councillor Macek, seconded by Councillor Daly O'Brien

Councillor Macek: I just wanted to ask. If I could ask Attorney Harb one question. There is a section on the plan that we received that says approved by the City of Haverhill Board of Appeals. Have you gone to the Board of Appeals?

Attorney Harb: We've gone to the Board of Appeals. We filed in November of 14 and received the Board's approval for any variance we needed from the zoning ordinance and we obtained them, similar to what the prior developer had done in the past. That was unanimous also.

Councillor Macek: Great, thank you. I just wanted to ask that. I also would like to state that I think this is an excellent project for that area. I'm familiar with the area and the lot in particular and I think it will be a nice addition to the neighborhood.

President Michitson: Councillor just for clarity, you did have the conditions rolled into the motion?

Councillor Macek: I haven't but I would have intended to do that at the appropriate time. I would like to have the approval including the proposed conditions and stipulations as cited in the letter from our Planning Director and also his recommendation to be part of the approval.

President Michitson There's a motion by Councillor Macek, seconded by Councillor Barrett. We do have some other Councillors that would like to speak.

Councillor Ryan: I want to join my colleague Councillor Macek in commending the developer and everyone involved. Steve and you for proposing and following thru with this project. I have no doubt you are going to have a unanimous vote on the City Council. It's very exciting that someone would go in and make this investment. Part of the reason this works is because you are putting 4 units together and when you figure the cost of construction now, and purchase of the land and all that, you can't do on one for two units, the numbers don't work. Four units, it's going to be marginal. I thank you for your courage and your belief in the City of Haverhill that we are going to do something to make the rest of Auburn Street look as good as the address that you have. I just want to deviate, talking on this, after this is done I am going to ask for a letter to go to the Mayor. One of the problems that we have as a community, is that we have no plan for our urban area. I've asked a number of people who build houses and develop, why don't you buy one of these multiples that are run down in the middle of the acre, up in the Mt. Washington area. And the answer is always it's so costly. Forget the cost of the building and the development, the fees along. If you want to build a single family home in Haverhill, I think it's \$11,000. You know there's no way to waive it. There's nobody to help you. You almost go in. You're like the enemy. You want to build a house in the acre, we are going to do everything we can to hold you up. We say it in a different way. We are not so up front. We just whack the fees, the inspections, you name it. We level everything on it. We have block grant monies available but we don't give a dime to that. There really is no plan. If somebody on the City Council or in the audience can tell me what the City's plan is for doing just what this gentleman is doing in the acre and the Mt. Washington area. I'd like to hear.

Councillor Sullivan: I too agree that this is a great proposal. It's a tough area but it's an area that certainly deserves new housing. Hopefully, it will spur on some renovation projects in some of the other housing in the area and I commend you for that. I am curious, what would be the sale price of these units?

Mr. Tucker: A realtor that I talked to anywhere from \$220K to \$250K. That's what a year ago when I bought it (inaudible)

Councillor Sullivan: \$220 to \$250. It sounds like it's in the ballpark. You'll have my support for this project. I look forward to more projects like this. I think the inner core of our city is key to the future of Haverhill. It's not just the outlying areas. It's not the developments that will come down the pike for single families. We need to take care of what we have. What you are doing on that street, if we could replicate that 100 times in the acre it would certainly bring the acre back to prominence. My family grew up in the acre so I know the history. I applaud you, thank you very much.

Councillor Daly O'Brien: In answer to my other Councillor, I think I know what they do with those fees because I think it just walked in and it's holding signs. I think that's what happens with all those fees. They are used in the city. I'm not sure but I am pretty sure that's what happens with all that money. I'm sure it's not going home with you is it Councillor, no. I feel this is such an important beginning for that part of the city and I think that it may be a catalyst to other people doing things over there; even if it's just improving property. You can't put a value on how a positive project can affect a section. Even if it's just one block of the city. I think it is going to add to our tax base which is always great. We are always looking to bring really good projects to Haverhill. I think it's just a positive situation. What I am most concerned about is, I wanted to see how you were going to do the exterior because I want it to be looking like it's part of Haverhill and part of that section of Haverhill. It looks to me, if you stick with what I am seeing here in the designs, that's what we are going to have. We are going to have something that fits in with the neighborhood and keeps up the character. Again, it goes back to, other people may revitalize some other properties in the area, you are enhancing that time of Haverhill when these houses were built and it's a beautiful era just like so many of our neighborhoods. I was really really happy to see that and I'm really pleased that I can vote yes for this tonight.

Councillor McGonagle: I think to Councillor Ryan's point, I think you can still make money and I believe that's what your developer is doing or he wouldn't be here or there'd be something wrong with him. I think that is available if you can buy the property right. I do believe the city has taken, after listening to the Mayor's address to the city, he has decided, along with taking some of the CDBG funding and putting that aside for first time home buyers, new home buyers to be able to afford, to help them buy into these areas that are supported with CDBG funds. I know with my work with Rebuilding Together, we go to a lot of these neighborhoods and there are programs that we try to help low-income families stay in these houses, keep them safe. Kind of spruce them up a bit and make them part of a neighborhood and make the neighborhood, revitalize the neighborhood a little bit. I think you will do well and I think more and more of that we are going to start seeing with the other good things that are happening in the city. I think we need to do more as Councilor Ryan had stated. We are aware of it. We are taking some steps and I was happy that the Mayor announced that as part of his address to the City of Haverhill. I am going to support this. I think it's great, I thank you. Let's hope it gets going. You looking to get going right away?

(inaudible)

President Michitson: This is an extraordinary proposal for the inner city and Haverhill. I think that is a great thing that the proposer has stepped forward on this. Putting owner-occupied condos in that particular part of town will help rebuild it. My personal opinion is that the future of the city really depends on what we do in those two neighborhoods, especially Washington Street, High Street as well as the acre. If we do have such a plan, this kind of proposal I think would be part of it. With that, Madame Clerk could you please call the roll.

Clerk Koutoulas: Councillor Scatamacchia-yes, Councillor Barrett-yes, Councillor Macek-yes, Councillor Ryan-yes, Councillor Sullivan-yes, Councillor Daly O'Brien-yes, Councillor McGonagle-yes, Councillor LePage-yes, President Michitson-yes. 9 yeas, 0 nays

President Michitson: That passes.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara S. Arthur  
Administrative Assistant to the City Council

May 19, 2015

**REASON FOR VOTE - DOCUMENT #34**

**Special Permit for Unnumbered Auburn Street formerly #69**

**In granting the special permit, those members voting in favor found that the application fulfills all of the general conditions contained in Chapter 255-80 (as applicable) of the Haverhill Zoning Ordinance.**

President Michitson: I voted in favor because it complies with all requirements of Chapter 255-80.

Councillor Scatamacchia: I voted in favor because it benefits the area.

Councillor Barrett: The requested use will not impair the integrity or character of the district or adjoining zones. The plans as presented provide for parking on the property as to minimize any negative impact on the neighborhood. The plan will improve an under-utilized vacant property.

Councillor Macek: I supported the Special Permit request as the project will infill a vacant lot with appropriately planned new housing that conforms with the City's zoning.

Councillor Ryan: I voted in favor because it is good for the city.

Councillor Sullivan: I voted in support of the Auburn Street condominium project because I believe it is an excellent project and will serve as a catalyst for further residential rebuilding and renovation projects in a needy inner city neighborhood of Haverhill.

Councillor Daly O'Brien: I voted yes for this special permit because it is a positive project for this section of the city; it is a re-utilization of a vacant lot, adds to the city tax base and maybe a catalyst for future re-vitalization of this area in the city.

Councillor McGonagle: I voted to support the Special Permit based upon the favorable recommendation from the Economic Development Director and the positive effect the project will have on the neighborhood.

Councillor LePage: I voted in favor of this special permit with the additional comments and conditions attached by City departments as it meets all of the general requirements for such use.