

**Public Meeting – 9 Buchanan Street and 426 and 430 Water Street
Wednesday, July 24, 2019
Foran Greene Room, 4th floor, City Hall**

Present: **City of St. John's**
Cliff Johnston, Facilitator
Ken O'Brien, Chief Municipal Planner
Garrett Donaher, Manager of Transportation Engineering
Ann Marie Cashin, Planner III, Urban Design & Heritage
Maureen Harvey, Legislative Assistant

Proponents
John Steele, Steele Hotels
Ron Fougere, Architect on the Project
Sylvester Crocker
Rex Avery , Steele Hotels
Aaron Rhineland, Technical Advisor

There were approximately fourteen people in attendance including Deputy Mayor O'Leary, Councillors Jamieson and Hickman.

Residents in attendance included:

1. Peter Qunlan
2. Tyler Stapleton
3. Peter Jackson
4. Capt. Tony Brushett
5. Oliver Langdon
6. Larry Laite
7. Shaun Keefe
8. Dan Frampton
9. Caden ???? (illegible)

PURPOSE OF MEETING

The purpose of the meeting is to consider a rezoning application for 9 Buchanan Street, 426 and 430 Water Street to the Commercial Central Office (CCO) Zone for the purpose of a hotel and concert hall. An amendment to the St. John's Municipal Plan would be required.

A written submission was received from NL Historic Trust and is appended to this report.

CALL TO ORDER AND BACKGROUND PRESENTATIONS

Chair Cliff Johnston introduced himself and the head table. He advised he was present to facilitate the meeting, and to keep the process efficient, effective and respectful. He then invited the City's Planning Officials to speak about the proposed development which was followed by comments from the developer and feedback from the residents in attendance.

BACKGROUND – Presented by Ann Marie Cashin

Fougere Menchenton Architecture, on behalf of the property owner, Steele Hotels Limited, has applied for a rezoning to the Commercial Central Office (CCO) Zone in order to accommodate a hotel (approximately 9-storeys) and a concert hall (approximately 6-storeys). The property is currently zoned Commercial Central Mixed Use (CCM) Zone in which the maximum building height is 15m. A rezoning to the CCO Zone is required in order to accommodate the height of the proposed building. The proposed development would attach to the existing building at 115 George Street West (JAG Hotel).

The subject property is designated Commercial Downtown under the St. John's Municipal Plan, which does not require re-designation in order to rezone from the CCM Zone to the CCO Zone. Additional bulk and height may be permitted as a bonus in the areas outlined on Map III-2 to a maximum of ten storeys with a Floor Area Ratio of 6.0. If the development is to proceed as proposed, an amendment to Map III-2 is required to include 9 Buchanan Street, 426 and 430 Water Street as areas where height may exceed 4 storeys. Further, Section 3.3.4 of the Municipal Plan speaks to specific conditions for 430 Water Street. A text amendment to this section is required. Within the CCO Zone, hotel is a permitted use and General Assembly is a discretionary use

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Upon receiving the application, Council directed consideration of the amendment and set terms of reference for a Land Use Assessment Report. The Land Use Assessment Report has been prepared by the applicant and is available on the City's Website for public review. Prior to submitted the Land Use Assessment Report, the applicants did meet with the City's Built Heritage Experts Panel for comment on the design. Also, The Panel, staff and Council reviewed consideration of heritage designation of the building

previously or currently at this location and ultimately decided not to designate the buildings as they did not meet the city's designation criteria.

There is a portion of the building that will extend over the City owned land on Water Street and there will be a pedway over Buchanan Street to connect the existing JAG Hotel with the expansion. Both of these areas will require the sale of air rights, which have been approved by Council subject to rezoning and development approval.

There will be 68 indoor parking spots provided. For this development, the City requires 70 parking spots and therefore if this application proceeds, a request will be made to Council for parking relief of 2 parking spaces. Additionally, changes are proposed in the traffic pattern to make Springdale Street one-way from Water Street to George Street West and redirect Buchanan Street. The changes will improve sight lines on Springdale Street, allows for drop-off and pick-up of people from the vehicle passenger side on Buchanan Street where the hotel entrance will be located and improves the pedestrian realm.

One of the initial comments from the Built Heritage Experts Panel was that they did not want the building to turn it's back to Water Street. Council has also stated that the would like the Water Street side of the building to have a presence. In order to achieve this, the applicants have proposed a parkette on the City owned land. The land would remain in the City's possession, but agreements would be required for the applicant to develop and maintain the site. In order to ensure that the property is maintained as a green space, if this application proceeds, the City may rezone the green space area to the Open Space (O) Zone.

PRESENTATION BY PROPONENT – RON FOUGERE

Mr. Fougere presented detailed renderings of the proposed structure from various viewpoints and elevations. There were no comments or questions on Mr. Fougere's presentation.

DISCUSSION FROM THE FLOOR

Of the three people who spoke at the hearing, one was opposed and two were in favour,

The Chair acknowledged the concerns which have already been submitted in writing from the NL Historic Trust and invited comments from those in attendance.

This report highlights the points made without reference to the person responsible for making them. The Chair, however, did encourage those who wished to have their comments registered and accountable to a respective person or persons, to make a written submission which, would be appended to this report.

Tyler Stapleton – NL Historic Trust

- Concerns relate not only to the proposed design itself but also to the development review process that has been followed to this point. It appears as though the development is ready to go and only now having a public meeting.
- The proposed design sacrifices even more of our downtown to large-scale blocks, blank walls, and fake-windowed parking garages. These do not reflect the traditional character of downtown St. John's, which has historically been characterized by human-scale buildings; irregular, walkable blocks; and a variety of active street-level uses that provide "eyes on the street" and promote social and commercial vibrancy. As noted in the Envision St. John's Draft Municipal Plan (section 6.1.4), development should "Ensure that ground and lower levels of buildings contribute positively to the public realm and streetscape, and are designed at a pedestrian scale."
- There is concern about the process through which the development has already been reviewed. This proposal represents another instance in which Council has disregarded the recommendations of the Built Heritage Experts Panel. We urge Council to be guided by the Panel's expertise.
- The City appears to have met with project proponents for months before aspects of the proposal were made public, resulting in the demolition of the John Howard Society building – with a construction date of circa 1850, one of downtown's oldest structures – and the preemptive sale of public lane and air rights to the developer. Neither of these substantial decisions, ones that significantly and irrevocably altered the fabric of St. John's, was made with input from the public.
- There is the question of traffic, more specifically the redirection of Buchanan Street. The Manager of Transportation responded saying the changes of configuration is based on the proposed use of the site – entry on Buchanan will allow for drop off and pick up of people from the vehicle passenger side. Also, it improves sight lines from Springdale Street.

Peter Quinlan – 20 year resident of Downtown St. John's.

- Looks great....will be a great addition.
- Wishes the developer every measure of success.

Peter Jackson – Resident of Downtown St. John's

- Excited about the proposal.
- Would like to see more pedestrian access off the park area and Water Street. Suggested the allocation of some parking spaces to create pedestrian access and maybe retail on Water Street.
- Hoped there would have been more pedestrian access off the park area.
- Shares the thought of lost opportunity to retain heritage buildings when the JAG Hotel was constructed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It was noted that once the minutes of this meeting are prepared and combined with written submissions, the matter will be referred to Council at a regular meeting to be determined.

Ms. Cashin stated that because the proposed rezoning will require a Municipal Plan Amendment, Council will need to consider “in principle” and submit to the Province. Once reviewed, it will come back to Council for adoption at which time there will be a Public Hearing chaired by a Commissioner. Following that report the matter is brought before Council for final approval.

The Chair encouraged continued written submissions up until the August 1, 2019.

When questioned on the time this matter will be brought before Council, it was noted it will be included in the Regular Meeting agenda which will be published on the City's website. In addition, residents who wished to be notified of its inclusion on the agenda were offered an opportunity to submit their name and address to the City Clerk's Office.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned 7:49 pm.

Cliff Johnston
Chairperson/Facilitator



NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR
HISTORIC TRUST
— est 1966 —

July 23, 2019

Mayor Danny Breen
Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary
Councillors Burton, Collins, Froude, Hanlon, Hickman, Jamieson, Korab, Lane, and Stapleton
City of St. John's
P.O. Box 908
St. John's, NL A1C 5M2

Re: 9 Buchanan Street, 426 and 430 Water Street

Dear Mayor Breen, Deputy Mayor O'Leary, and Councillors Burton, Collins, Froude, Hanlon, Hickman, Jamieson, Korab, Lane, and Stapleton:

On behalf of the board and members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Historic Trust, we write to express concern regarding the proposed development at 9 Buchanan Street, 426 and 430 Water Street. Our concerns relate not only to the proposed design itself but also to the development review process that has been followed to this point.

The proposed design sacrifices even more of our downtown to large-scale blocks, blank walls, and fake-windowed parking garages. These do not reflect the traditional character of downtown St. John's, which has historically been characterized by human-scale buildings; irregular, walkable blocks; and a variety of active street-level uses that provide "eyes on the street" and promote social and commercial vibrancy. As noted in the Envision St. John's Draft Municipal Plan (section 6.1.4), development should "Ensure that ground and lower levels of buildings contribute positively to the public realm and streetscape, and are designed at a pedestrian scale."

Perhaps most significantly, we have concerns about the process through which the development has already been reviewed. This proposal represents another instance in which Council has disregarded the recommendations of the Built Heritage Experts Panel. We urge Council to be guided by the Panel's expertise.

The City appears to have met with project proponents for months before aspects of the proposal were made public, resulting in the demolition of the John Howard Society building – with a construction date of circa 1850, one of downtown's oldest structures – and the preemptive sale of public lane and air rights to the developer. Neither of these substantial decisions, ones that significantly and irrevocably altered the fabric of St. John's, was made with input from the public.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors
Newfoundland and Labrador Historic Trust

The Newfoundland and Labrador Historic Trust is dedicated to the preservation of the province's buildings and landscapes and their importance to communities.

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