

**Hybrid Public Meeting – 40 Quidi Vidi Road**  
**Zoom & Foran Greene Room – St. John's City Hall**  
**Monday, October 30, 2023 – 7:00 pm**

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**Present:**     **Facilitator**  
Marie Ryan

**City of St. John's**  
Ken O'Brien, Chief Municipal Planner  
Ann Marie Cashin, Planner III  
Lindsay Church, Planner III, Urban Design & Heritage

**Proponents**

Stacey Howse, Executive Director, First Light  
Breannah Flynn, Business Operations Director, First Light  
Chris Woodford, Woodford Architects  
Kathy Oke, Woodford Architects

There were approximately 40 participants in person and online, in addition to the representatives from First Light, Woodford Architects and City Staff.

**CALL TO ORDER AND BACKGROUND PRESENTATIONS**

Ms. Marie Ryan, Independent Facilitator, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and outlined some housekeeping items.

Ms. Ryan noted she is an independent facilitator and is not responsible to write the report from this meeting or make any recommendations, but to facilitate and Chair the meeting.

The purpose of this meeting is to provide members of the public the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments on the proposal for 40 Quidi Vidi Road. The City staff will present on the application and then if the proponents will be present and answer questions at that time.

Ms. Ryan also noted that this meeting is being recorded for assistance in preparing the final report. The report will be presented to City Council at a future meeting.

The report will not include the names or addresses of people in attendance.

## **PURPOSE OF MEETING**

The process for the hybrid meeting was outlined with the following points highlighted:

- To ask a question, those participation by Zoom were asked to use the raise hand feature, and, when called upon unmute yourself and you can ask your question.
- Prefer to indicate if you have a question versus using the chat room for questions.

The Land Acknowledgement was read aloud.

### **Background and Current Status**

Ms. Ann Marie Cashin, Planner III, outlined that the purpose of this Public Meeting is for a rezoning application for 40 Quidi Vidi Road.

The property is currently zoned R3 for the majority of the property and a portion is zoned open space. The intent is only for the portion of the property that the building is on to be rezoned to Residential Mixed to accommodate the proposed development. The map sent out to area residents, only includes the property owned by the applicant. Not the City's intent to mislead by not including the land that was proposed for the access, but used the property boundary that is the general template used.

First Light has asked to expand the existing building to be their headquarters, include offices, a clinic and a gymnasium. The building will provide community space, update their office space and have programming and amenities for the entire community.

Within the R3 Zone only office could be considered and therefore rezoning is required.

Within the residential mix zone, office and clinic are permitted uses and a place of assembly is a discretionary use, the lot standards are at the discretion of Council.

The neighbourhood is primarily R3 and a small section of the parking lot is within the open space zone and that is not being look at for changes.

When evaluating a rezoning request Staff look at the surrounding neighbourhood and uses. It is primarily houses and as this is an existing larger building the extension is similar to historic uses of this site and why the residential mix zone is proposed. It is also the zone that is not too commercialized, so should the building change to a different use in the future, it is not a commercial general zone it is a residential mix and has a variety of housing types and less intense of commercial or institutional office uses.

The site plan shows a proposed extension at the front of the building, the parking lot is to remain the same and there is proposed to be a driveway exit out to Cavell Avenue, passing through one side of Cavell Park.

The reason for this added driveway exit, is due to the extension at the front of the building, the existing entrance is becoming narrower, eliminating the area where a driver entering the site can wait while drivers exit the site using the narrow driveway. This increases the chance for head-on conflicts between drivers entering and existing the parking lot. The existing driveway is too narrow for two-way traffic. The goal when applications are evaluated is to ensure the safety of the entire community, not just for the site users but for the surrounding properties and passing traffic as well.

The applicants were advised that since two-way traffic is not possible, another exit would be required. This is what was proposed and evaluated.

The Applicant has also requested parking relief under the City's Development Regulations, which require 78 parking spaces. They are asking for relief for 50 spaces. The applicants are working on a shared-parking agreement with an adjacent property owner which will alleviate some of the need for parking. The City's evaluation of the application also includes looking at the land uses and the users of the property, and the demand for parking may be less for this applicant.

The property is within Heritage Area 3 and subject to the heritage design standards. In light of this modern renovation, the applicants have requested an exemption from Council. The application was initially reviewed by the Built Heritage Experts Panel (BHEP) and they have not given any immediate concerns on the request, but it will go back to the BHEP for formal recommendation when Council decides whether to proceed with the rezoning or not.

Ms. Cashin also commented on the existing driveway access and why it cannot be grandfathered in, noting that the entrance way is being reduced in size, there is a change in use for the property, and pedestrian access to the building is also changing. The current driveway will be too narrow for two-way traffic, thereby the need for the additional exit.

Ms. Cashin invited any comments on this proposal can be sent to the City Clerk or through the St. John's Engage Page. Comments and submissions will be accepted until Friday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Ms. Cashin also reviewed the next steps in this process include a report being prepared from this public meeting that will be presented to Council with all submissions and comments, and then Council will decide to adopt or reject the amendment.

#### **PRESENTATION BY THE DEVELOPER**

- Stacey Howse, Executive Director of First Light
- Breanna Flynn, Business Operations Director

Executive director Stacey Howse began the presentation, providing an overview of the project proposed and some background on First Light, the St. John's Friendship Centre, noting that they have been providing services within the city for forty years.

### **First Light's Mission:**

- To serve the urban Indigenous and non-Indigenous community alike by providing programs and services rooted in the revitalization, strengthening and celebration of Indigenous cultures and languages in the spirit of trust, respect and friendship.
- \$7.1 million annual operating budget
- Six properties
- 80+ Employees

Their goal is to be a good neighbour, and the organization is very happy and excited for the plans for the Quidi Vidi Road location and want the space to bring life to the neighbourhood. First Light enjoys the space and the nearby Cavell Park and know that there are concerns regarding the new development. First Light invites all to come and enjoy the space and the programs.

First Light staff have spoken to most of the neighbours and they are in support of this proposal to have the community centre in this location. Safety is the number one priority and First Light is following the advice of experts on this and truly believe the benefit of this community centre will outweigh the concerns. Business Operations Director, Breanna Flynn, provided an overview of the project for the Quidi Vidi Road development.

### **Project Overview – 40 Quidi Vidi Road Development:**

- This development will allow First Light to optimize the facility to deliver programs and services and are not looking to increase the volume of the programs except the community clinic.
- Current programming has informed the proposed design.
- Enhancing the green space on the site
- This is to be a space the neighbourhood can enjoy
  - Continued participation in regular programming and special events
  - Continued parking lot use on evenings, weekends and holidays. Many members use public transit and taxis to drop member to the building, so that reduces the need for parking
  - Quarterly neighbourhood feasts
  - Meeting space available for neighbourhood

### **Special Events - Assembly space usage:**

- National Indigenous Peoples Day – June 21, approximately 150 people
- National Day of Truth and Reconciliation – September 30 – approximately 70 people
- Spirit Song Festival – November 20-25 – approximately 50 people at any one time
- Community Christmas Party – December 2 – approximately 120 people

### **Concerns of Parking and Traffic:**

- An agreement is in place with the nearby Miller Centre to use their parking lot during evenings, weekends and holidays for special events

- Working on a revised agreement with the Miller Centre who has offered access to permitted spaces during daytime hours
- The new driveway is not an option that was decided lightly, do not want to remove green space
- Want the building and amenities as accessible as possible, and need a safe way for exiting the building

## COMMENTS & QUESTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Members attending in person and online were offered the opportunity to ask questions to the proponent or City Staff on this proposal. Many comments from residents present at the meeting, and those joining virtually, were very supportive of First Light, their work, their programming and the plans for the community centre, gymnasium and clinics.

There were several areas of concern raised, and they included:

- **Dangerous to have the proposed driveway exiting onto Cavell Avenue**
  - Noise, fumes, increased traffic are hazards to children and residents of Cavell Avenue
  - Safety of residents needs to be protected
  - Hazards with traffic coming into the greenspace area of the park with children playing, families using the space, etc.
  - Snow clearing and snow storage will be an issue for Cavell Avenue
  - Not improving safety by moving the traffic onto Cavell Avenue, as the road is not perpendicular to Quidi Vidi Road; the intersection is problematic
  - A very accident-prone intersection Cavell Avenue-Quidi Vidi Road
  - Have to go far into the intersection in order to see if there are vehicles coming in order to exit from Cavell Avenue.
  - On Cavell Avenue in the winter months with snow congestion, it is often the case that vehicles are more towards the middle of the road due to nowhere to put snow. If this is the exit route used, how will emergency vehicles get through the road? First Light vehicles, busses and other vehicles as well?
  - Other issues that will have to be dealt with on Cavell Avenue include moving telephone poles, and community mailboxes
  - In the proposal, Cavell Avenue is the only option, what are the options that were declined? What are the alternatives? Would like to see those documents.
- **Parking Relief / Lack of Appropriate Parking**
  - Turning a small patch of land from 20 parking spaces to 54
  - There is not enough parking now in this area, and there will never be enough parking. Residents on St. Joseph's Lane experience people parking in their driveways and blocking off their driveways. The building needs 78 parking spots but they are asking for parking relief for less.

- In the winter, the parking lot will have less parking spaces available due to snow storage
- According to the report, it is possible that angle parking spaces could also be added to the park, this would pose more of a hazard to users of the park
- Could First Light consider the installation of a parking garage in their plans?
- **Loss of greenspace, playground area, Community Garden on Cavell Avenue**
  - Wetland and trees in the greenspace area could potentially be impacted
  - Birds, wildlife, loss of more greenspace in the City if this proposal is approved
  - This is an urban core, houses don't have yards, this is a common space
  - Green spaces are very important to mental health
  - If this is to proceed, a barrier will have to be installed to keep those using the park safe from traffic
  - Using greenspace in this way could be precedent setting with the City
  - Community Garden is used for food insecurity by those who use it, some people depend on it for food
  - The Park is named after Nurse Cavell who treated the injured during the First World War. What consultation was held with the armed forces that represent them and how do they feel about taking away the park named after someone who took care of wounded soldiers for so long
- **Alternate route to this proposed exit/traffic issues/traffic studies conducted?**
  - This proposal for the new exit will create more traffic issues
  - Why does it have to be one-way?
  - Go around the back of the building?
  - Sight lines at the intersection are currently a hazard, could be made worse
  - What conversations have been had with the Premier Suites nearby? All that separates their properties from the First Light parking lot is a curb. Using that route through the parking lot and out onto St. Joseph's Lane seems like a safer and simpler way to exit the parking lot than via Cavell Park and Avenue.
  - Speed bumps were installed permanently on Quidi Vidi Road, but they do not slow vehicles
  - What traffic studies were done to determine this decision?
  - Were there any 'boots on the ground' looking at this area to determine this or was it done by satellite imagery only?
  - It has always been a narrow driveway, why can't it remain so?
  - Is more traffic anticipated for this neighborhood with the new building and services?
  - Traffic will increase due to the hours of operation, the hours are beyond 9:00-5:00, moving traffic 18 hours a day already, do not have answers about the taxi and delivery situation, where are they going to drop things off?
  - First Light does not want this driveway, but the City says it has to be installed. A resident cannot change a window without the City's permission. The City is not

playing by their own rules. The City can let First Light do what they need to do, without having to force them to put in this road that no one wants

- **Size of the development / building design, lack of public consultation**
  - Did not get the opportunity to see the terms of reference, feels things are glossed over. Hopes to hear more from the Architect, the building is too big for the site and overwhelms Quidi Vidi Road. The expansion is four storeys and towers over the existing building. This will shadow the neighbourhood, and it was noted that there are problems with the shadowing in the Land Use Report
  - No issues with the facility but it is too big for this location, it does not fit in this neighbourhood, there has to be a solution without destroying the park and putting up this monster of a building.
  - Why wasn't the community consulted on this?
  - Someone did not do their due diligence on what the plan is versus what was sent out. Residents didn't know about the change to the road
  - The staff's explanation is not credible that people would be asked to consider this amendment and rezoning question, without information being available to residents
  - Glass-use on the building, what will be the impact on the building with low-flying helicopters passing over, need to reconsider that design, as it could be a hazard if all that glass cracks or breaks
  - Photo illustrations of the new building seen from the road are misleading
  - Do more public outreach and consider other alternatives, that would be an opportunity to strengthen the community versus weaken the community. Don't change things about the park that people hold dear.
- **Upgrades to current infrastructure**
  - This is not just a renovation, but a redevelopment of the site, and in many cases where there is a substantial redevelopment, the City compels the developer to upgrade the infrastructure as well. Some of this redevelopment should include upgrading the infrastructure.
  - Does First Light pay taxes to the City?
- **Does the City own the land in question where the driveway exit is planned, or is it owned by Eastern Health?**
  - **Staff response:** Ownership is being confirmed, but it is thought that Cavell Park is owned by the Province, as the records are quite old. The Province is agreeable to either give the City the land and then have an agreement with First Light or have an agreement with First Light. The Province is involved and aware of this request.

- **Adjacent property** – it was a part of the Church, who owns it? Why is it not a part of the development proposal?
  - First Light responded that the building is owned and operated by First Light.

A Petition, signed by 19 residents, opposed to the construction of this potential hazardous driveway through Cavell Park was presented to staff at the Public Meeting for circulation to Council.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Ms. Ryan concluded the meeting by adding that she was heartened by the words of welcome to First Light by the area residents, and that the residents should be proud of themselves for being so welcoming.

Ms. Ryan thanked the residents who came to the meeting in person as well as those joining virtually for the very informative and courteous discussion.

Ms. Ryan encouraged feedback or questions to be sent to the City Clerk's office so that they are presented to Council and the proponent will be able to respond.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.