 1   Volume III

 2   Pages 1-62

 3

 4   Brookline Zoning Board of Appeals Hearing

 5   1180 Boylston Street Comprehensive Permit Application

 6   Chestnut Hill Investments, LLC

 7   August 9, 2016, at 7:00 p.m.

 8   Brookline Town Hall

 9   333 Washington Street, 6th Floor

10   Brookline, Massachusetts 02445

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15   Reporter: Kristen C. Krakofsky

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  1   APPEARANCES

  2 Board Members:

  3 Johanna Schneider, Chair

  4 Jonathan Book

  5 Mark Zuroff

  6 Steven Chiumenti, Alternate

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  8 Town Staff:

  9 Alison Steinfeld, Planning Director

 10 Maria Morelli, Senior Planner

 11

 12 40B Consultant:

 13 Judi Barrett, Director of Municipal Services

 14 RKG Associates, Inc.

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 16 Applicant:

 17 Rachna Balakrishna, Chestnut Hill Investments, LLC

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 19 Peer Reviewer:

 20 Clifford J. Boehmer, Davis Square Architects

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 1 Members of the public:

 2 Diane Schweitzer, 13 Jefferson Road

 3 Julie Gross, 629 Hammond Street

 4 Karen

 5 Aleksandr Gerzon, 1164 Boylston Street

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 1   PROCEEDINGS:

 2   7:08 p.m.

 3   MR. SCHNEIDER: Okay. It's after 7:00, so we

 4 will get started. This is the August 9th ZBA meeting

 5 regarding 1180 Boylston. I thought -- actually, let me

 6 start with introductions for those of you who have not

 7 been here on this project yet. My name is Johanna

 8 Schneider. I'm the chair of this board. To my right

 9 is Jonathan Book, to my immediate left is Mark Zuroff,

10 and to my far left is Steve Chiumenti. We are the

11 board for this project.

12   I wanted to start by just giving you a

13 overview of where we are in this process. As many of

14 you may know, Brookline currently has four

15 comprehensive permit processes running concurrently at

16 this time, and at least three more are anticipated in

17 the near term. We are applying the same process to

18 each of these comprehensive permit applications. Even

19 though there are different members comprising each ZBA

20 panel, we're all following the same procedures and

21 basic schedule here.

22   And, again, as many of you know, we are

23 required to meet a 180-day statutory time limit on the

24 public hearings. Unless the developer agrees to an

 1 extension, there will be a maximum of 11 public

 2 hearings on each project. This is a very tight

 3 schedule, we know, due in large part to the high number

 4 of 40B projects that are pending in the town right now.

 5 We're doing the best we can and we appreciate that

 6 members of the public are coming and are participating

 7 actively in this process.

 8   Tonight's agenda, we are going to be hearing

 9 from our urban design peer reviewer who will present

10 his preliminary findings. We will then open the

11 meeting up to public input. After that, the ZBA is

12 going to discuss the proposal. What we're hoping to do

13 by the end of this meeting is to provide direction to

14 the developer as to what our concerns are and also to

15 request the developer meet with staff and consultants

16 to address those concerns.

17   What's going to happen after tonight is that,

18 using the guidance received from this board, the

19 planning and building department staff will meet with

20 the developer team. Staff will invite representatives

21 of the police and fire department, DPW, and other town

22 agencies as necessary. They will also involve peer

23 reviewers as appropriate in those meetings. This is an

24 interactive, iterative process. Staff is going to

 1 report back to the ZBA at public hearings and will seek

 2 further direction from the board at those meetings.

 3   Just a reminder to everybody involved in this

 4 process: Planning staff does not negotiate or make

 5 deals with the developer. That role is exclusively --

 6 exclusively belongs to the ZBA. We are the quasi-

 7 judicial agency of the Town of Brookline, and we are

 8 the ones who are responsible for ruling on the special

 9 permit applications.

10   With that -- those preliminary items out of

11 the way, I would like to ask Cliff Boehmer from Davis

12 Square Architects who's been engaged by the town to

13 provide an urban design peer review of this project.

14   MR. BOEHMER: Hi. I'd like to start by giving

15 a quick overview, just quickly run through the slides

16 because the report might be filled with a lot of jargon

17 and things, so I just want to make sure that people

18 know kind of what I'm focusing on.

19   So this is the -- what we're doing -- this is

20 an aerial view looking west on Route 9 on Boylston

21 Street and some of the things I'll mention in the

22 report. This is the site right here. This is Hammond

23 Street, Heath Street behind. These are the two

24 two-family homes that I talk about in the report. This

 1 is a six-family structure right on Boylston Street.

 2 It's raised up off of Boylston Street. It's something

 3 like five feet up. There's a stairway that leads up to

 4 the front-center entry of that building. Other things

 5 I mention in the report include this stretch of

 6 commercial buildings that are right on the street, the

 7 front right on the sidewalk.

 8   As I'll mention once I dig in, there's not a

 9 whole lot of coherent development on that part of

10 Route 9. You can see all kinds of areas where there's

11 parking directly on the street, where there are

12 street-tree barriers between parking. Further up

13 you're walking -- on the north side you're walking

14 right on parking. It's a real variety of attitudes

15 towards development on that part of the street.

16   So those are some of the things I'll talk

17 about. I'm only showing this western-looking view

18 because that actually has some of the more pertinent

19 issues, I think.

20   This is a direct plan view of the site. Here

21 it is. It's cuts this funny notch out of it. It does

22 round the corner onto Hammond Street. We talk a lot

23 about this commercial development. The proposal is to

24 bring the building virtually right up against the wall

 1 of that building. This is a six-family building. This

 2 is an existing structure that will be demolished to

 3 make way for the development.

 4   In the report I also mention that the homes on

 5 Heath Street have these -- what I -- I think I termed

 6 them the "outbuildings" in the back so that the rear

 7 wall of the actual residential piece of the home isn't

 8 directly on the lot line. I think that's probably most

 9 of the things I can mention in that view.

10   Here's the site plan. This is actually the

11 first-floor plan. And the idea of the building is it

12 occupies most of the site west to east all the way

13 across until you're about 20 feet away from the

14 property line.

15   There's a profile and plan of the six-family

16 building. The idea is that the parking is accessed --

17 all the parking is below the level we're looking at.

18 This is ground level. So there are four retail spaces

19 shown. I don't know if there has been a real

20 commitment as far as how many retail spaces there will

21 be, but this shows four spaces, individual exterior

22 entries into those retail spaces. There is a rear --

23 this is the residential lobby off of Hammond Street and

24 rear access -- rear corridor access that could get you

 1 into the back end of the commercial spaces.

 2   The parking system consists of a

 3 valet-operated car -- these are little car lifts,

 4 little elevators for cars that would be operated by a

 5 full-time 24/7 valet. The cars pull into one elevator

 6 or the other -- or the valet, I guess, would put them

 7 in one elevator or the other, take them down to the

 8 basement, and park the cars.

 9   Let's see what else I talk about here. So,

10 again, this is the distance between -- the distance

11 between the six-family building and the face of this

12 building is on the order of 25 feet, something like

13 that, in that direction. And it is up tight against

14 the property line in the back. There are these

15 outbuildings before you get to the rear of the actual

16 residential piece of the building.

17   Another part of this proposal is cutting into

18 the right of way on Hammond Street to create a drop-off

19 zone for -- that would be primarily for -- I would

20 imagine primarily for the commercial spaces. On the

21 other hand, it could be UPS deliveries, FedEx,

22 whatever, for the residential piece as well.

23   This is the basement plan, so this is where

24 the parking occurs. So those -- there are those two

 1 elevators that come down. At that point, it would be

 2 up to the human to take the car out and park cars. As

 3 you can see, they're not parked in a way that really

 4 could be managed by individuals going to get their own

 5 car. They clearly would have to -- the valet parks the

 6 cars in a combination of surface spaces and spaces --

 7 double-loaded stacker spaces. As you can see there --

 8 the sun's blocking a little bit -- but they're

 9 projecting that they can fit a total of 80 parking

10 spaces using this kind of system.

11   Typical floor plans. So it's a six-story

12 building, so floors three through five have -- sorry --

13 two through five have this floor plan. Now, during the

14 report I'll mention "idiosyncratic unit designs." All

15 I mean by that is that it's an interesting shape to fit

16 units into. So once -- you have lots of ins and outs,

17 as you can see. The units will be interesting. The

18 ones that are detailed work perfectly fine. I think I

19 mention that in the report.

20   But there really are no two units on a floor

21 plate that are the same. They're all different. The

22 development is all one-bedrooms and twos. You see

23 here, the ones are stacked along Boylston Street, the

24 twos wrap around the rest of the perimeter, elevator

 1 door, and two stairwells.

 2   The top floor is a little bit different. The

 3 top floor is set back a little bit from the top. We

 4 talk about that in the report, that little gesture.

 5 But the top floors in those units are a little bit

 6 smaller.

 7   And finally, this is the architect's

 8 rendering. The things I talk about in the report --

 9 and we can go back and look at this, obviously, if you

10 want to -- but the concept is about a vertical

11 expression at the corner. As you can see, the entire

12 first floor, not wholly, but is largely glazed, so a

13 very transparent first floor broken up by panels.

14 They're wood-planked panels. There are two

15 fenestration patterns in the main facade where you can

16 see that the windows are kind of misaligned in this

17 part of the facade. As you go around the corners in

18 both directions at the end, the east end and up Hammond

19 Street towards the south, it's a little more regular

20 pattern. Another gesture that's made on the building.

21 There's where that setback is of that level, and there

22 is an attic level that is articulated differently.

23 That's a different kind of glazing so that there is a

24 distinction up at the top of the fifth floor. That's

 1 the corners of the fifth floor, then the attic, sixth

 2 floor, is in those areas.

 3   So having said that, I think I'll back up to

 4 the site plan maybe. That may be the one that may be

 5 of the greatest interest.

 6   So I'm going to read through this like I did

 7 the last time I was here, but stop me if you do have

 8 any questions along the way. It's organized along --

 9 in the way that I was retained to do my report, so bear

10 with me.

11   We did have an initial meeting at the site

12 with the development design team, just a week ago

13 today, in fact. I was there, Alison was there, Maria

14 was there, the architect was there, and the owner was

15 there. The owner of the site was there. As the site

16 is rather small, it was possible to observe all of the

17 edge conditions, including the six-family structure to

18 the east, the broad sidewalk along Boylston Street with

19 extensive overhead electrical lines. We can talk about

20 that. There are actually some very large power lines

21 that run along the south side of Boylston.

22   Cars parked along Boylston Street -- there

23 were cars parked right along in that area on Boylston

24 Street facing east. It wasn't obvious to us whether

1 they were legally parked or not, and that comes up a

2 little bit later.

3   The adjacent two-story commercial structure to

4 the south on Hammond Street, and the two-,

5 two-and-a-half-story homes directly to the south on

6 Heath Street.

7   There appear to be about three mature trees at

8 the perimeter of the site, all of which would have to

9 be removed to facilitate the construction of the new

10 building.

11   The grade of the site, which is an interesting

12 factor, the grade of the site drops a few feet from the

13 adjacent commercial structure on Hammond to Boylston,

14 so in this direction. It appears to drop something

15 like two feet, maybe two and a half feet. I couldn't

16 tell perfectly. East to west, it's much flatter.

17   There's an eastbound -- the public

18 transportation is quite good, actually. There's an

19 eastbound number 60 bus stop just across Hammond, right

20 over there, and a westbound stop directly across on the

21 other side of Route 9. You get to the other side in

22 one of the crosswalks. The bus travels from Kenmore

23 Square to Chestnut Hill via Brookline Village and

24 Cypress Street. And, as you know, there's also an MBTA

1 stop.

2   There was some discussion during the

3 walk-through regarding the parking scheme that's been

4 proposed. In particular, is the valet style of parking

5 appropriate for retail shop visitors? The proponent

6 noted that the type of tenants that he's seeking are

7 not retail shops but the types of businesses where

8 customers have longer visits that could justify

9 waiting -- the associated waiting with the valet-style

10 parking.

11   For most of the duration of the site visit,

12 northbound cars on Hammond Street backed up the entire

13 length of the site, and this was at about noon on

14 Tuesday. This was pointed out to the proponent as a

15 reason why the loading area off of Hammond Street may

16 not be successful, assuming that it is feasible to get

17 permission from the town to encroach on the public

18 right of way. And again, just so we're clear about

19 that, that's that spot there, and as I was saying, the

20 traffic was backed up beyond that point.

21   It was also noted that there were cars parked

22 on Route 9 in front of the site immediately to the west

23 of where the proposed parking drive would be located.

24 There appeared to be a potential safety hazard both

1 pulling in and out of the drive as sight lines would be

2 blocked by the parked cars. That immediate area is

3 reportedly posted as a no-parking zone, which means

4 that ensuring the safety of vehicular entry and egress

5 at that location would require more stringent

6 enforcement, certainly, than what currently exists. So

7 what I'm -- there were cars parked here, and what we

8 talked about on the site was the potential difficulty

9 of looking down Route 9 to the west as you're pulling

10 out, looking beyond those cars, and the necessity of

11 blocking the sidewalk while you're doing that.

12   Another part of my charge was to look around

13 at the greater context nearby the site. As you know it

14 is located at the southeast corner. Maybe go I'll back

15 to the aerial view. The site is located at the

16 southeast corner of the very active intersection of

17 Boylston and Hammond Street. There are signalized

18 crosswalks that go in all directions at that location.

19   To the south of the site on Hammond, there's

20 an adjoining commercial structure with no side setback

21 or setback from the sidewalk. Beyond that point on

22 both sides of the street, there's mixed-scale

23 residential with various setbacks. There's a nearby

24 athletic facility, a cemetery, Pine Manor College is a

 1 little ways off, Beaver Country Day School. And

 2 further south and to the east is the Brookline Golf

 3 Club, and to the west, a little less than a mile from

 4 the site, is significant conservation land.

 5   Immediately north on Hammond is the Longwood

 6 Club, and a little more than a quarter mile is the

 7 Chestnut Hill MBTA stop. The area is predominantly

 8 low-density housing with the Chestnut Hill School less

 9 than a half mile away, and about a mile to the north is

10 the southern edge of the BC campus.

11   To the west on Route 9 on the north side over

12 here, to the west, there's a sidewalk that is alongside

13 about three-fourths of a mile of commercial structures

14 and parking lots all the way past the front of the

15 Shops at Chestnut Hill. Beyond that point continuing

16 west, there's mostly commercial development with some

17 small-scale housing mixed in. The commercial

18 development doesn't fully peter out until almost a

19 mile, about nine-tenths of a mile west of the site.

20   The south side of Route 9, which I mentioned

21 earlier, the project side of the thoroughfare moving

22 westward is different. For about four-tenths of a

23 mile, there's continuous commercial development

24 directly on the sidewalk that abuts the road as opposed

 1 to being set back by the width of the parking areas.

 2 There are very few street trees, but the sidewalk is

 3 continuous, broken only by side streets. There is a

 4 nonsignalized sidewalk about 850 feet from the site.

 5 And after about a quarter mile, this pattern gives way

 6 to commercial development set back something like 60

 7 feet. And that's just at the far end. So there is

 8 that kind of coherent stretch of commercial buildings

 9 before it starts pulling back from Route 9 and then

10 introducing parking in between the building and the

11 road again.

12   Eastward on Route 9 there is continuous -- in

13 the other direction, there is a continuous sidewalk

14 with a narrow planting strip, and I called it either a

15 bike or a parking lane. If there is no parking there,

16 it could be construed as a bike lane separating the

17 fast-moving traffic from pedestrians. There is no

18 guardrail at that location. There's a spotty

19 collection of street trees as well as some trees on

20 private property overhanging the sidewalk.

21   After passing a few small-scale multifamily

22 structures and nearby small commercial enterprises,

23 there's a nonsignalized crosswalk followed by another

24 one another 700 feet further on. The in- and outbound

1 lanes of the roadway are divided by a continuous steel

2 guardrail. The quality of the walkway is variable, but

3 it does continue past the Benevolent Association and on

4 to the healthcare facility, about eight-tenths of a

5 mile. And there is another signalized crosswalk once

6 you're about eight-tenths of a mile from the site.

7   The sidewalk -- the pedestrian walkway on the

8 north side of Route 9 to the east is variable. As on

9 the south side, there's no structured protection from

10 traffic and the walkway width varies with some

11 stretches somewhat overgrown with trees that are on

12 adjacent private property. After passing the Longwood

13 Club, there's no commercial development for a little

14 less than a mile just past the Brigham and Women's

15 facility on the south side.

16   So the conclusion, I guess, is most parties

17 would agree that there's no architecturally notable

18 structures within one mile of the site in either

19 direction on Route 9, nor would that stretch of

20 Boylston be considered pleasantly walkable, certainly

21 by modern streetscape planning standards. There's a

22 lot of traffic that's fast moving, air quality is bad,

23 and there's no physical protection afforded to

24 pedestrians. Other than major intersections and

 1 parking lots, the lighting is poor. Crossing Route 9

 2 at nonsignalized crosswalks is certainly less than

 3 optimal.

 4   By contrast, Hammond Street is a much more

 5 pleasant pedestrian environment, even though it's not

 6 lined with architecturally significant structures nor

 7 interspersed with consumer amenities like you find on

 8 Route 9. So I think the overall impression is we have

 9 a kind of little island here in that area immediately

10 close to Hammond Street.

11   As noted -- I'm on my next section -- we are

12 going to be meeting with the design team.

13   But I'll start with -- talk a little bit about

14 the orientation of the building. So the proposal is

15 for a single six-story mixed-use structure including

16 about 8,000 square feet of commercial use. Above that

17 in the five floors of 45 units of age-restricted

18 housing is proposed 15 one-bedrooms and 30

19 two-bedrooms. The footprint occupies about 11,250

20 square feet of the 14,626 square-foot site, about 77

21 percent.

22   Proposed setbacks from the lot lines are

23 variable: 5 foot 3 along most of the length along

24 Hammond, in that area; 2 foot 5 along Boylston -- you

1 see can that red broken line there -- 20 feet from the

2 neighbor to the east -- again, that's to the property

3 line, not to the building -- and approximately 6 feet

4 to the neighbor to the south, over in this area. There

5 is no usable open space in the current plan, and

6 landscaping appears to be limited to five street trees

7 that are proposed in the Hammond and Boylston Street

8 rights of way. You can see those there. There are the

9 five trees. There are no on-site amenities proposed,

10 indoor or outdoor, other than bike and car parking.

11   All the parking, as I noted before, is in the

12 basement level and consists of a combination of

13 valet-packed layers of floor spaces and stacker spaces

14 accessed from the car lifts operated by a 24-hour

15 manned service. They're accessed from that 20-foot --

16 wide -- I think the drive is actually 17 foot 6, so

17 there may have been an ambiguity in the materials -- on

18 the east side of the building that connects with the

19 eastbound lane of Route 9.

20   There is no loading dock indicated to serve

21 the commercial spaces, however a pull-off space that I

22 talked about before within the Hammond Street public

23 right of way is indicated on the site plan. Rear

24 loading for the four retail spaces -- I mentioned to

 1 you before already -- takes place from that pull-off

 2 space and/or the parking drive. You could also load

 3 from that side. But to get to that rear -- from here

 4 to get through to that rear loading area from the

 5 inside, you'd go through the residential lobby, the

 6 mail room. Bike parking is right there. All retail

 7 spaces, as I mentioned before, have direct access onto

 8 the sidewalk.

 9   Because the building lies to the north of its

10 neighbors on Heath Street -- so these are those 2

11 two-family homes -- there's no impact as far as direct

12 access to sunlight. Those buildings -- the sun is

13 predominantly from the south, so the shadows cast by

14 this building do not fall on the buildings to the

15 south. There is an impact on access to diffuse,

16 bright-sky light because of the height of the building

17 and its nearness to the southern property line of the

18 site.

19   This is mediated -- I mentioned that before

20 when we were looking at the photograph -- by the

21 presence of those out-buildings to the north side of

22 the two-family -- two Heath Street homes. So the

23 actual distance from the rear of the building to the

24 property line is on the -- to the actual residential

1 structure is about 25 feet.

2   The proposed setback from the new structure is

3 inconsistent in the submitted materials. I think I've

4 mentioned that already. The Site Plan Setbacks diagram

5 submitted in the materials indicates something like

6 6 feet, while the ground floor plan appears to be

7 virtually no setback. That's something that we can

8 square away when we meet them, I think.

9   The structure that suffers the most solar

10 impact is the six-family structure to the east

11 separated by a 20-foot setback from the property line

12 plus approximately 5 feet of additional setback on

13 their side of the property line. There were shadow

14 studies submitted, and they indicate pretty much

15 year-round impact on that neighbor, significantly

16 greater than the existing conditions. Right now there

17 is that lower-scale garage building that does have an

18 impact on the building, but not nearly as much.

19   Function, use, and adequacy of open space: As

20 noted, the only landscaped area is in the public right

21 of way, so street trees.

22   The building design, let me get to that. The

23 building is designed to hold the edge of the sidewalk

24 extending in a straight line along Boylston Street --

 1 that's the long elevation -- then curving around the

 2 Hammond Street corner ending by directly abutting the

 3 north elevation of the adjacent commercial building,

 4 which will lose -- I believe it would lose some of its

 5 north-facing fenestration. That building in this area

 6 has windows, but I think, actually, the building would

 7 encroach on at least one of those windows.

 8   The aesthetic of the facade treatment,

 9 including the material selection, is contemporary with

10 broad expanses of glass opening into the retail spaces

11 and the appearance of virtually floor-to-ceiling

12 glazing in the apartments. And you can see people

13 standing there. There's a horizontal banding at the

14 floor levels -- that's these guys -- with vertically

15 oriented wall panels and glazing systems spanning

16 between those bands.

17   Windows into the units appear to be a

18 combination of operable awning windows and fixed

19 panels, although it is a -- it's a little difficult to

20 reconcile this with the building elevations, but that

21 appears to be what's proposed. The types of windows

22 combined with the overall language expressed on the

23 elevations, particularly in the perspective rendering,

24 makes me -- to me it reads more like a commercial

 1 office building than a residential structure.

 2   However, as noted above, there really is no

 3 notable coherent architectural context along Route 9

 4 that this building could arguably perfectly fit into.

 5 There exists a wide variety of building types, scales,

 6 massing, setbacks, parking solutions, et cetera, that

 7 make this site somewhat independent of a clear,

 8 contextual imperative.

 9   Clues for inspiration, and some of the

10 constraints, include the adjacent six-family building

11 that's right over there, the left; the two-family homes

12 to the south; the large wall of the commercial

13 structure adjacent on Hammond; and, as important, the

14 bleak, wind swept, exposed streetscape on Route 9 and

15 Hammond. As was noted in the Board of Selectmen's

16 letter to MassHousing, this area of Route 9 warrants

17 revitalization.

18   Generally speaking, in this reviewer's

19 opinion, the building facade and massing make gestures

20 that are responsive to the site, including:

21   The first-floor retail spaces and residential

22 entry form a well-defined base for the structure and

23 engage the street with a largely transparent storefront

24 articulated with wood-plank screens.

1   The tallest section of the facade runs along

2 Boylston for about 40 percent of its length -- that's

3 this guy -- and wraps onto Hammond serving to -- the

4 architects here -- to celebrate the corner. Those were

5 the words of the design architect.

6   Other than the expanse of the corner piece,

7 the top floor is set back creating an overall

8 tripartite composition -- so that being the base, the

9 body, and the top -- that's generally proportionally

10 effective and does serve to cut down on the apparent

11 height of the building.

12   The fenestration pattern changes to that finer

13 grade pattern that I was talking about before from that

14 more random pattern at both of the facades along

15 Boylston and south along Hammond. This breaks up the

16 length of the facade, and it's a look that is a little

17 more compatible with structures beyond the footprint of

18 the building. So a more regularized type of glazing

19 pattern is more consistent with the other buildings

20 along Hammond.

21   The setback of the building matches the

22 commercial setbacks to the west on the other side of

23 Hammond Street and is increased at the residential

24 entry on Hammond. Again, I was talking about that

 1 little stretch of those buildings that have a

 2 consistent or a similar attitude towards engaging the

 3 sidewalk.

 4   Route 9 is a broad enough thoroughfare that

 5 the height of the building is not -- and this is just

 6 in and of itself -- the height of the building relative

 7 to Route 9 is not inappropriate.

 8   But having made these observations, while the

 9 apparent design intent of the building is generally on

10 the right trajectory, the fact remains that the

11 building is significantly larger than its immediate

12 neighbors and has minimal setbacks, except on the

13 eastern end, that serve to exacerbate its bulk and

14 impact on neighboring structures. And my suggestion is

15 mitigating these effects. I'll get to those shortly.

16   There was a question about the side and rear

17 elevations visible from the public street, public

18 areas, and the vantage point of the nearby residential

19 neighborhoods.

20   The proposed secondary east elevation --

21 that's down at this end -- in all likelihood would be

22 minimally visible for public streets, at least from

23 street level where it's largely blocked by the

24 neighboring six-family building. The highest parts of

1 the rear elevation -- so back over there -- that run

2 parallel to Heath Street will be visible above the

3 height of the neighboring structures as the site is

4 approached from the south onto Hammond Street.

5   As far as pedestrian and vehicular

6 circulation, pedestrian entry to the building occurs

7 into the retail spaces off of Route 9 and Hammond

8 Street. The residential entry and lobby is proposed

9 off of Hammond Street -- right over in that area -- at

10 the southern-most point of that facade.

11   This reviewer is concerned about the proposed

12 vehicular access to the building as well as the

13 mechanics of the parking system that relies on deep

14 stacking the vehicles and a 24/7 valet service.

15   Beyond the legitimate question of whether

16 shoppers or other forms of customers accessing the

17 commercial spaces would actually be bothered to take

18 advantage of the valet service, there are some safety

19 issues associated with the proposal. Most important is

20 the sight line problem that I mentioned before where

21 the cars are exiting the parking drive, both related to

22 their ability to look down the sidewalk and the

23 difficulty of looking west on Route 9 past parked cars

24 while straddling the sidewalk and blocking pedestrians.

1 While it may be possible to ban all parking in the

2 spaces immediately west of the parking drive, this

3 would require rigorous enforcement to succeed.

4   In addition, while difficult to quantify, the

5 neighbors have expressed concern about losing parking

6 spaces on Boylston Street as well as commercial

7 customers averse to the valet system taking up

8 available street spaces on the smaller roads.

9   And the reason I dwell on that point is that

10 the parking ratio that's represented with 80 spaces for

11 this number of units and that amount of retail space,

12 it's, in my opinion, somewhat a question, not

13 understanding, really, if that system would succeed so

14 they could ever really achieve that parking ratio.

15   It's also of concern that cars may queue

16 excessively, given the time lag associated with the

17 valet parking. That could block sidewalks, potentially

18 extending even out to Route 9. This reviewer doesn't

19 have enough information to comment on concerns related

20 to noises generated by the car lifts.

21   In addition to residential and commercial

22 parking concerns, the delivery needs of the commercial

23 spaces have been questionably addressed by a proposed

24 encroachment of the project into the Hammond Street

 1 right of way, specifically a drop-off zone near the

 2 residential lobby that would provide rear access into

 3 the tenant areas as well as easy access to the sidewalk

 4 that leads to front entries.

 5   The proposed drop-off seems unrealistic from a

 6 town approval perspective, but also potentially

 7 unworkable given the density of traffic at that corner

 8 combined with the presence of vehicles that may

 9 partially block traffic on Hammond Street while

10 delivering.

11   The proponent has pointed out that these

12 issues could be lessened by imposing time restrictions

13 on use of the zone. In order for this solution to

14 work, the time restrictions would have to be strictly

15 enforced. Drop off could more realistically, in my

16 opinion, occur at the parking drive. However, as

17 currently designed, it doesn't appear that there's

18 enough space for vehicles to turn around to re-enter

19 Boylston front first. So clearly, this is well out of

20 the way. If deliveries could happen back here, there

21 would have to be, I think, an accommodation for turning

22 vehicles around to go out face first.

23   The next section is the integration of

24 building and the site, including, but not limited to,

 1 the preservation of tree cover. As discussed above,

 2 the facade design and building massing takes clues from

 3 their surroundings in an attempt to better integrate

 4 into the site. However, in the opinion of this

 5 reviewer, the gestures that have been made don't go far

 6 enough to tie the building in and minimize impact on

 7 existing neighbors. And again, I'll go into a little

 8 more detail about that below.

 9   While there is very little existing

10 landscaping between the six-family home and the project

11 site right now, the submitted site plan doesn't provide

12 enough buffer on that border for more significant

13 screening that would be appropriate for a much larger

14 building. An existing mature tree that is at the

15 eastern property line at the sidewalk will likely have

16 to be removed with the installation of the parking

17 drive. Other smaller trees that appear to be within

18 the site will also have to be removed to allow for

19 construction. And again, there those five street trees

20 proposed on the site plan.

21   The exterior materials we talked about, the

22 language -- I mentioned the materials. It appears that

23 what's proposed is a composite rainscreen panel -- I

24 presume it's probably a dense, cementitious panel. I'm

 1 not sure about that. It is. Okay -- standing seam

 2 aluminum panels at the mechanical penthouse; aluminum

 3 windows, storefront, and curtainwall systems; and

 4 intermittent wood plank screens at the commercial level

 5 that I pointed out in the rendering.

 6   As far as energy efficiency, it's not really

 7 possible to ascertain in any level of detail from the

 8 submitted materials. The architectural narrative that

 9 was submitted notes energy-efficient appliances and

10 low-energy lighting fixtures. The application for the

11 project eligibility states that the project is designed

12 for energy efficiency with a goal of reducing its

13 overall energy consumption by 20 percent over the

14 baseline. Additionally, units will be supplied with

15 Energy Star rated lights and appliances and low-flow

16 plumbing fixtures.

17   To back up any of these goals stated in the

18 application materials, Brookline has adopted the energy

19 Stretch Code which will ensure a relatively high level

20 of sustainability, at least on the operating

21 perspective.

22   Lighting, I couldn't tell, from the materials,

23 anything about the exterior lighting.

24   We've already talked about the planting, the

 1 landscape elements.

 2   And once again, on the environmental side,

 3 there was a mention of compliance with Energy Star,

 4 which is a third-party rating organization.

 5   So what I'll do now is just give some other

 6 observations that fall a little bit outside of the

 7 prescribed job that I was hired to do. Under "Any

 8 other design-related considerations," I'll start with

 9 that.

10   The floor plans that are submitted only

11 include two relatively detailed unit floor plans -- you

12 saw that in those plans -- on floors two through five.

13 All other units are just blocked out with a gross

14 square footage. Given that each floor plate has nine

15 distinct unit plans owing to the odd shape of the

16 building, unit layouts will be idiosyncratic. As such,

17 it can make interesting units, but it's not really

18 possible to review conformance with some code

19 requirements, for example accessibility, in any level

20 of detail.

21   And along those lines, the locations, the

22 types, and the layouts of proposed Group 2 accessible

23 units -- these are fully accessible units -- are not

24 provided. Note that all units in an elevator-fed

 1 building must be Group 1 units, so kind of adaptable

 2 units.

 3   Building elevations along Hammond street that

 4 were submitted with the materials don't indicate the

 5 existing slope down to Boylston Street, which is

 6 important because presumably all the entries in --

 7 particularly in the retail spaces would be at grade,

 8 but we don't really see that slope indicated.

 9   There appear to be no resident amenities

10 included in the floor plans: no community room,

11 workout spaces, et cetera, so this could threaten the

12 marketability of the units.

13   The spaces allocated for bicycle parking seem

14 inadequate. It's a very small area.

15   The parking plans don't indicate -- this is

16 going back to the valet parking. The parking plans

17 don't indicate how accessible space requirements would

18 be accommodated given the valet parking scheme. If

19 disabled residents dropped their car off at the valet

20 in the parking drive, they would have to access the

21 elevator lobby by traveling about 150 feet through the

22 rear egress corridor, i.e. the back door of the

23 building. Alternatively, they could traverse the

24 public sidewalk for approximately 300 feet to enter the

 1 main lobby where the mail boxes are, et cetera.

 2   And I think, at a minimum in this

 3 circumstance, the Architectural Access Board would

 4 require a drop-off area within 100 feet of an

 5 accessible entry, presumably the same entry that all

 6 able-bodied residents would use. So I couldn't quite

 7 figure that -- how that would work.

 8   It appears that the fire department takes no

 9 issue with the building, at least at its current level

10 of development. Obviously there's a much, much deeper

11 development review that has to happen.

12   I'm asking the question: Is there a detailed

13 narrative describing how trash will be handled on the

14 site? It's not really indicated.

15   Given the intensive use of the site, what is

16 the plan for stormwater management?

17   While the number of proposed parking spaces is

18 generous -- it does show 80 spaces -- there's real

19 concern about the practicality of the proposed system

20 that includes mechanical stackers and at least one

21 full-time employee present on site 24/7 to manage them.

22   The question really is: Has the proponent

23 developed contingencies for the eventuality of parking

24 plans with fewer spaces and considered a means for

 1 mitigating a lower parking ratio, which you can do by

 2 lowering unit count but also considering subsidized

 3 T passes, membership to shared car services, et cetera.

 4   Also, has the developer drafted a construction

 5 management plan that describes the community impact

 6 during the construction period?

 7   Another question is: Has the proposed HVAC

 8 system -- the heating, ventilation, and air

 9 conditioning system -- been designed to deal with the

10 poor air quality that surrounds the site due to heavy

11 traffic on Route 9 as well as the stopped traffic on

12 Hammond Street, which really is a important

13 consideration. Multifamily buildings have to bring in

14 lots of fresh air, and that should be taken into

15 account.

16   Similarly, noise and vibration caused by heavy

17 traffic should be dealt with in the structural and

18 facade design.

19   Will the developer be responsible for town

20 road and sidewalk damage resulting from heavy trucking?

21   Because there is no open space on this site,

22 I'm wondering if a roof deck is possible to provide

23 useable outdoor space.

24   Another question is: Given the strong

1 possibility that the proposed drop-off zone in the

2 Hammond right of way may not be approveable, should a

3 time-restricted drop-off/loading zone be considered

4 between the existing commercial structure and the new

5 structure? I'm not convinced that could work either

6 because of the backup along Hammond. It may only be

7 possible if a turnaround area is provided. It may make

8 more sense for the commercial drop-off to be over on

9 this side in the parking drive, again, as I said

10 before, assuming you could develop a turnaround at that

11 end.

12   Another question I had was: How many parking

13 spaces can be provided if the lift/stacker system is

14 replaced by a more conventional ramp structure, and

15 perhaps limiting the stackers to the residential

16 parking and open-surface parking to the commercial

17 spaces? So if you arrange the ramp so that it

18 actually -- arrange the drive so it were actually a

19 ramp, is there a scheme that could double-load parking

20 with one end of it having stackers for the residents

21 and then spaces at the other end where people could

22 come and go without relying on the valet.

23   The environmental report notes that dewatering

24 will have to occur during construction with the need to

1 deal with any of the contaminants that you find in that

2 water. I couldn't find any materials on how far down

3 the water table is, and I'm imagining that if the

4 stackers were eliminated, it might help mitigate

5 encountering groundwater. A shallower basement also

6 means less engagement with the bedrock which is

7 reported to be between 2 and 13 feet below the surface.

8   Another question is: Are the potential issues

9 related to VOCs adequately addressed, because there are

10 some issues in the water.

11   And the last question is: What role does the

12 Mass Department of Transportation have in review of the

13 project? There is a new curb cut proposed, potentially

14 eliminating parking. There's a need to relocate a

15 traffic control box that exists on the corner.

16   And finally, going back to that mitigating

17 visual impacts. For this, we'll go to this drawing.

18 Increasing the setback, particularly on Boylston, in

19 combination with street trees and perhaps other

20 landscaping, would provide the opportunity for a

21 significantly more pleasant and protected pedestrian --

22 I called it "an oasis" as kind of an example for

23 development along this street, and would improve

24 visibility while exiting the parking drive. So the

 1 parking drive stays there. If the building is set back

 2 further, it will be a much safer exiting and provide a

 3 bigger buffer area between the building and Route 9.

 4   Consider using the existing grading of the

 5 site as it drops towards Boylston Street to create an

 6 intermediate patio level that provides some separation

 7 from the sidewalk which would be particularly effective

 8 if one of the tenant spaces were a coffee shop, a

 9 bakery, something on that order.

10   I think, as far as the building elevations and

11 massing in conjunction with increasing the setback,

12 creating a protective overhang at the top of the

13 commercial floor will improve the pedestrian zone and

14 bring the scale of the building down to human sale. It

15 will also make the building look less office-like and

16 read more mixed use.

17   To decrease the shadow impact on -- as I

18 noted, this is the neighbor that really suffers the

19 most shadow impact. To decrease the shadow impact on

20 the six-family structure, consider stepping back the

21 top two floors of the building at the east end, which

22 would result in the loss of four units but will

23 significantly mitigate the shadow impact on that

24 neighboring building. So I'm suggesting cutting out

1 that end of the building, which would really help the

2 neighbors a lot. It also will help to visually

3 integrate the building into the existing context and

4 easing the transition to the adjoining site.

5   Increasing the stepping back at the attic

6 level along with shortening the length of the tower

7 element along Boylston would help to decrease the

8 apparent height of the building. What I'm saying is,

9 if it is setback there and setback there, it would be

10 even more effective if it were set back further. And I

11 think probably diminishing the length of that tower

12 piece would help that.

13   And I think this is maybe the easiest

14 suggestion of all: I think it's possible to lose up to

15 6 feet in the overall height of the structure by

16 diminishing the commercial floor, which is now

17 indicated at 15 feet -- diminishing the height of the

18 commercial floor to 12 foot 6. And typical floors are

19 shown now as 10 foot 10. Diminish typical floors to 10

20 feet and you pick up about six feet, cutting the height

21 down by 6 feet of the building.

22   And my last comment was: Consider creating a

23 plantable buffer area on the east side of the building

24 between the parking drive and the parking lane, and

 1 that's another way of getting a landscape buffer that's

 2 more appropriate for the size of the building.

 3   So that's it.

 4   MS. SCHNEIDER: Thank you.

 5   Would the applicant like to say anything in

 6 response? Obviously, he's given a lot to think about

 7 and to talk about over the coming weeks and months, but

 8 if there's anything you'd like to address, I'd be happy

 9 to give you the opportunity to do that right now.

10   MS. BALAKRISHNA: At this time, we don't have

11 any specific comment. We'd like to thank Mr. Boehmer

12 for his thoughtful review and comments, and we look

13 forward to working with him. Thank you.

14   MS. SCHNEIDER: Thank you.

15   We're going to turn this over for some public

16 input now. For those of you who have been at these

17 meetings before, what I'm going to say is going to

18 sound familiar. We want to make sure that everybody

19 who wants to speak has the opportunity to do so. We

20 also want to make sure that everybody gets home at a

21 reasonable time.

22   So what I'm going to ask is to please try not

23 to repeat comments that your neighbors make. If

24 someone has stood up and articulated what you were

1 going to say, when it's your turn to stand up and say

2 it, please just say, I agree with what my neighbor

3 said.

4   I'm also going to ask that people try to limit

5 the duration of their comments to three to five

6 minutes. There aren't an awful lot of people here

7 tonight, so everyone should have the opportunity to

8 speak if they'd like. But again, there are lots of

9 opportunities for folks to comment either at this

10 hearing or at subsequent hearings. And also, many of

11 you have done a very good job of communicating with us

12 via the planning department by email, by letter, et

13 cetera. I can't say enough how helpful those comments

14 are. And to the intent that new things come up that

15 you have not already covered in your comments or

16 letters, please feel free to continue to submit written

17 comments.

18   So if there's anyone from the public who would

19 like to speak, I would ask you to please approach the

20 podium, and start by saying your name and your address

21 into the microphone, and please remember to speak

22 clearly and slowly so that our stenographer can capture

23 your comments.

24   MS. SCHWEITZER: Hi. My name is Diane

 1 Schweitzer, and I live at 13 Jefferson Road, have been

 2 there for 34 years. And over this period of time, I've

 3 seen a number of condominiums that have been

 4 constructed in this area, and the impact on the traffic

 5 has been enormous. The wait down Hammond Street can be

 6 extremely long to get to a light that then changes.

 7   There is a small little nursery somewhere

 8 located near us, and I see children are walking across

 9 Hammond Street on a regular basis, and I'm worried that

10 any further traffic is going to be a real serious

11 hazard.

12   The crossing is difficult, as it is on many

13 parts of Route 9, as noted. And I think adding extra

14 people to this area, and especially at this corner, is

15 asking for accidents, especially when you look at the

16 setback on the street. I like to walk down that

17 street, and it's very difficult as it is.

18   And I just want to say that there's no reason

19 for further building on that area, and I think that

20 building is totally ugly. It is really inappropriate

21 for our level. We are more of a town. We're not a

22 city. And that is hideous. I'm sorry. Thank you.

23   KAREN: Hi. My name is Karen, and I live at

24 Babcock. And I wanted to -- I was at an earlier

 1 meeting, so I apologize for being late, but I wanted to

 2 bring up the 1180 Beacon Street that you were talking

 3 about earlier.

 4   MS. SCHNEIDER: Yes. That's what this hearing

 5 is --

 6   KAREN: And I have a lot to say about

 7 1180 Beacon Street because, you know, where I live, we

 8 love our building, and it's a mixed-income building,

 9 and our landlord admits we are good tenants. We're

10 talking a little unusual.

11   But the thing is, we've been out-zoned,

12 out-placed. We have no community anymore. And, you

13 know, to make it that it's 55-plus at 1100 Beacon

14 Street when we're singles and we have no place to go

15 besides our building -- and we have lived across from

16 Brookline proper before we moved across the street. So

17 I hope that you can help us. Thank you.

18   MS. SCHNEIDER: Thank you for your comments.

19 Just to be clear, this is a project that's located at

20 1180 Boylston Street.

21   KAREN: Oh, okay. I thought there was another

22 one that was 1180 Beacon Street.

23   MS. SCHNEIDER: That's not what this hearing

24 is --

 1   KAREN: I'm sorry. I don't know.

 2   MS. SCHNEIDER: Is there anyone else who would

 3 like to give comments this evening?

 4   MS. GROSS: Hi. I'm Julie Gross. I live at

 5 629 Hammond Street, Hammondswood.

 6   You know, I think that this is -- the

 7 suggestions today are really a step in the right

 8 direction, and I want to reiterate the big traffic

 9 concern. And I won't repeat what I -- I agree that

10 that's -- one of the biggest concerns is the traffic.

11   And I think, you know, clearly there's going

12 to be a building here, so, you know, there's no point

13 in kind of saying that we can't -- we're not going to

14 have a building. But I think either further scaling it

15 down, the height, you know, the setback, the parking

16 situation, I think all of that is really moving in the

17 right direction. But there's still really a big

18 concern with the traffic, potential noise, air

19 pollution, and the impact on a lot of the abutters.

20   MS. SCHNEIDER: And I just want to say, we

21 will have a meeting coming up -- I don't think -- do we

22 know the date when we're going to be hearing traffic?

23   MS. STEINFELD: September 19th.

24   MS. SCHNEIDER: -- on September 19th. So this

1 meeting, as you saw, was sort of dedicated to the peer

2 review of urban design elements of the project. On

3 September 19th, we will be having a dedicated meeting

4 to talk about traffic.

5   MS. GROSS: Thank you.

6   MS. SCHNEIDER: Anyone else interested in

7 speaking tonight?

8   MR. GERZON: Hi. My name is Alexander Gerzon.

9 I'm resident of 1164 Boylston Street. I have a couple

10 of questions.

11   First question: I heard that there will be,

12 on the Hammond Street, for a little bit, a new school.

13 And I'm driving every day, Boylston Street. You don't

14 have parking. And you see a lot of kids from --

15 students from Pine Manor College. They walking from

16 Star Market, CVS, going through Boylston Street, and

17 going to college. It's very dangerous if, say, you're

18 going through heavy traffic or to driveway near our

19 house.

20   And nobody is talking about wintertime. When

21 they clean Route 9, we have pile up of the snow near

22 the house and we couldn't even walk to the

23 intersection. It's -- nobody clean this corner. If

24 it's clean, it's anyway dangerous because we can't park

1 anymore during the wintertime, so it's a very danger

2 situation. Thank you.

3   MS. SCHNEIDER: Thank you.

4   All right. Anyone else here who would like to

5 provide public comment this evening?

6   (No audible response.)

7   MS. SCHNEIDER: Okay. So the next thing that

8 we're going to do at tonight's meeting is the board is

9 going to have a discussion now to identify major issues

10 in the hopes of providing direction to the developer

11 for the next steps of the project, and it's our hope

12 that the developer will take this guidance to heart and

13 allow the project to progress in a constructive way.

14   The suggestions that I think we're going to be

15 making here tonight are drawn from the design peer

16 reviewer's recommendations, from the planning board's

17 input that was memorialized in a letter at the last

18 hearing, and Maria's comments at the last hearing, also

19 what we've heard from the public so far, and I think

20 our own observations about the proposal to date.

21   There will obviously be additional feedback as

22 the hearings go on, but I think, you know, moving

23 forward, it's important for you to understand what

24 we're thinking about the project right now.

1   I'm going to start with some very general

2 comments, and then I can drill down, but anyone should

3 feel free to kind of jump in.

4   From my own perspective, I think this is a

5 site that is, you know, ready for redevelopment.

6 Something needs to go there. It is open, it is

7 blighted, it is not a productive use, and I think that

8 it could be much improved by a redevelopment. And I

9 think that it is also a good site for mixed use.

10   I think the challenge, though, is -- I feel

11 like there's work to be done to make sure that the

12 neighbors to this site are not overly burdened by

13 whatever it is that ends up going there. And

14 particularly, I have some concerns about the design

15 that I'll get into in more detail, but I'm also really

16 concerned about the current plans for vehicular

17 circulation, for parking, and, in particular, that

18 loading zone on Hammond Street. I just don't see how

19 that works as currently proposed.

20   And that kind of -- does anyone else want to

21 jump in for general, 30,000 feet, or should I just go

22 through a laundry list?

23   I have a list too, but you can talk.

24   MR. BOOK: I mean, you were talking about

 1 parking. I can comment on that, or if you want to run

 2 through --

 3   MS. SCHNEIDER: I can run through -- I don't

 4 have -- they're big issues, but I don't have a lot of

 5 them.

 6   MR. CHIUMENTI: I do have a question,

 7 actually, and maybe -- I don't know if Maria or someone

 8 else can answer it, perhaps Mr. Boehmer.

 9   We keep mentioning that the way the servicing

10 of this building intrudes upon public ways would

11 require approval, and I'm curious, what exactly needs

12 to be done? For example, for a truck to park there, is

13 it illegal and we would need to resolve to ignore the

14 law? Or how do we make that legal? Does the town need

15 to change a rule? What actually legally needs to be

16 done -- is implicit in them doing this sort of thing?

17   MS. STEINFELD: Alison Steinfeld, planning

18 director.

19   It would require the town to relinquish its

20 property. That's -- the proposed cutout is on existing

21 town property.

22   MR. CHIUMENTI: Okay.

23   MR. ZUROFF: We don't have the power to do

24 that.

 1   MR. CHIUMENTI: I was going to say, the Groton

 2 case in 2008 was exactly that. A roadway to the

 3 development paralleled the road for about 90 feet and

 4 then entered the roadway. There was a small, narrow

 5 strip of land with tall grass that created a hazard

 6 because motorists driving down the driveway couldn't

 7 see traffic on the road. And it was, I think, 10 feet

 8 wide at the widest, and it was just the grass that was

 9 there and the property belonged to the town. Because

10 of the hazard, the zoning board rejected the project.

11   Basically, the Housing Appeals Committee said,

12 well, all they really need to do is let the developer

13 go cut the grass, and so they basically overruled the

14 zoning board.

15   The Supreme Judicial Court made it clear to

16 the Housing Appeals Committee that basically allowing

17 someone to go on someone else's property is granting an

18 easement, and we don't have the authority to do that

19 and neither does the Housing Appeals Committee.

20   This strikes me, frankly, as worse -- the

21 traffic mess that this thing creates -- worse than the

22 tall grass in Groton.

23   I do think, though, that Mr. Boehmer's

24 suggestions, if they were all acted on, I think are

 1 excellent and they would tend to mitigate this to a

 2 great extent. It would, of course, I think, lead

 3 inevitably to a much smaller building.

 4   MR. BOOK: So my view is that while -- I

 5 mean, I think this project has a lot of positive

 6 aspects. I actually think it's an attractive building.

 7 I actually like it from an aesthetic perspective.

 8   I do have concerns. I think that dropping the

 9 loading zone on Hammond Street -- it just needs to go

10 away. I don't see it as viable or feasible.

11   I would like to see some work done in terms of

12 eliminating the lifts and the valet parking.

13 Mr. Boehmer's suggestion of ramps and people

14 self-parking, I think that where he's going with that.

15 That seems more viable. And somewhere in there putting

16 in loading and unloading, and that way people who are

17 self-parking, they can go to the elevators and let

18 themselves into the building. So I think there needs

19 to be some investigation of the feasibility of doing

20 that.

21   I like the suggestions of somehow mitigating

22 the height, but my -- I'd like thought to be given to

23 bringing it down a little more drastically, like maybe

24 eliminating a floor. I don't see the context between

 1 this building and the surrounding buildings. It is

 2 still -- it's just too tall. And while I like the idea

 3 of reducing the ground floor level, reducing some

 4 height there, picking up some feet here and there, I'm

 5 thinking that maybe something a little bit more -- I

 6 don't want to say drastic, but more extensive in terms

 7 of bringing the height down. We should look at that,

 8 and there should be some thought given to that.

 9   Those are my -- I may have other things to

10 say, but those are my initial thoughts.

11   MS. SCHNEIDER: And I think this is intended

12 to be a discussion. I do want to pick up on what you

13 were saying about height. My concern about the height

14 and about the design of the building overall is that I

15 don't feel like the way it's currently designed it

16 really bridges that sort of distance between

17 commercial, retail, office, and residential.

18   Given the block that it's sitting on, this is

19 a very residential block. I know there's a few sort of

20 smaller stores along Hammond, but by and large, I think

21 of this as being different than the other side of

22 Hammond, which is clearly a little -- you know, a strip

23 of retail. This is not so much that. This has houses,

24 you know, one- and two-family houses and some very

1 small, modest, almost house-like setting retail space

2 which makes this block, to me, feel more residential

3 than across the street and certainly development that's

4 on the other side of Route 9.

5   So I would like to see the design of this

6 building be more reflective of the residential feel of

7 the other buildings on this block. And I don't know if

8 that's a materials issue. I don't know if that is -- I

9 think Mr. Boehmer had a suggestion about, you know,

10 putting in some sort of overhang of the ground level in

11 order to articulate the building massing, be breaking

12 it up a little bit. I do think that the way the corner

13 of the building -- I think tower element is what

14 Mr. Boehmer referenced -- referred to it as -- does

15 make it seem kind of taller and more imposing than

16 maybe the building actually is.

17   In terms of reducing the height, if the

18 building were designed differently and had a different

19 look and feel architecturally, the height might not

20 bother me, with the exception -- and I think this will

21 always bother me -- is the impact on the six-unit

22 building next door. I feel like something needs to be

23 done, either a wholesale elimination of a floor, as you

24 might want to see, or at least an elimination -- I

 1 think Mr. Boehmer said four units -- to get these

 2 people out of the shadow, to get them a little more

 3 light, to get them a little bit more air, some sort of

 4 recognition that these folks should not be bearing the

 5 entirety of the burden of the redevelopment of this

 6 site, which is sort of how it's feeling to me right

 7 now.

 8   And again, I would love to see maybe an

 9 alternative design that looked a little bit less like

10 an office building and a little more like a residential

11 building. Again, I think this is -- the site has a lot

12 of potential, and I do think it's very good location

13 for the proposed use. I just think it has to be done

14 in a different way.

15   MR. ZUROFF: Okay. I'm going to echo your

16 sentiment that this is a site that needs redevelopment.

17 Having grown up and lived in this area for a very long

18 time, I've seen this area evolve, but it still has a

19 neighborhood feel to it the way it's now constituted.

20 The block on Hammond Street is kind of a throwback.

21 It's nice to have that kind of residential and

22 commercial feel to it.

23   In particular, I don't like the loading zone

24 at all. The traffic at that light and the light

1 preceding it on Hammond Street is as bad an

2 intersection as there is in all of Brookline, short of

3 Coolidge Corner where that's expected. This is not

4 that kind of area. This is not Coolidge Corner. This

5 is still a residential area with commercial overtones

6 to it, like the school is not far from it. There are

7 two schools not far from it. Obviously there's a mall

8 across the street. So I don't understand how that can

9 possibly contribute at all to the neighborhood. It

10 does nothing but detract from the neighborhood.

11   And then to go further, the way that parking

12 is set up under the building to serve both the

13 residential and the commercial aspects of this

14 building, I don't see it as a good solution. In spite

15 of the fact that they say they can put 80 people -- 80

16 spaces in there, I think that that parking plan is not

17 a workable plan. I don't see it as an attraction to

18 the building. I don't see tenants being comfortable

19 dropping their car off and having to wait for it to be

20 picked up. If you have a guest coming in the evening

21 when there may be one car valet there, I can't see --

22 and Mr. Boehmer pointed out very well that if you're

23 handicapped, you have to go 300 feet to get to the

24 entrance to the building once you drop off your car.

 1 That's not attractive.

 2   MS. SCHNEIDER: Particularly, that this is 55

 3 and over.

 4   MR. ZUROFF: Well, I was going to get to the

 5 55 and over because I think that the idea that 55 and

 6 over is somehow a different class of people with

 7 different intensity of use -- I am over 55. I still

 8 drive. My wife has a car. We come and go just like

 9 regular people. We are not different. The fact that

10 55 and over is sort of a key word to this project, I

11 don't buy that. People 55 and over act like normal

12 people. Maybe if it were 75 and over, it would be

13 different. And I don't mean anything against

14 75-year-olds. But that does not change the use of the

15 building in any way, as far as I'm concerned.

16   Mr. Boehmer's suggestion about scaling back,

17 increasing the depths of the sidewalk, pushing back the

18 commercial units, lowering the building, scaling back

19 the building, not only for shadow impact for the

20 building to the east but to make the building more

21 accommodating to the neighborhood as opposed to making

22 the neighborhood accommodating to the building. Yes,

23 it needs redevelopment. It does not need to change the

24 neighborhood. The neighborhood should change this

 1 building design, as far as I can see. And so I would

 2 like to see it scaled back significantly, not only in

 3 terms of size and shape, but number of units.

 4   I don't think there's a drastic housing need

 5 in this particular area. I know we're addressing

 6 affordable housing here, but I would like to see this

 7 project significantly scaled down to make the

 8 public-space part of this, the sidewalks, more

 9 residential, more inviting to the public, pushing back

10 the entrances into the commercial spaces, maybe

11 having -- there's no open space in this building at

12 all. To not have a deck as part of this plan seems to

13 me completely ignoring the residents' needs. People 55

14 and over still like sunlight and like to be outside. I

15 would like to see a deck. I would like to see a

16 terrace plan.

17   That's my overview. I would like to see the

18 project move that way. We can deal with the specifics.

19 Hopefully the developer will address some of my

20 concerns that I think we share. So that's my overview.

21   MS. SCHNEIDER: Yeah. I just want to echo

22 your comments about the green space. I mean, this is

23 not a development where there's a park right across the

24 street or something like that. I mean, there are green

 1 areas, but it's a walk or a drive, quite frankly. And

 2 the fact that, you know, you're kind of plunking this

 3 big building with all of these residents on this corner

 4 and you're not giving them even a landscape -- much of

 5 a landscape buffer, you're not giving them a courtyard,

 6 you're not giving them a roof, you're not giving them

 7 any area. I think, again, it is importing a more urban

 8 feel to this site than is appropriate given the

 9 surrounding context.

10   MR. ZUROFF: I have nothing more to add. I

11 would like to see some response to what our concerns

12 are. Hopefully we will get that. But, you know,

13 again, I support the development of the site, but I

14 also support the preservation of this as a more

15 residential neighborhood. Commercial development is

16 welcome, but it has to be on the right scale.

17   MR. CHIUMENTI: As I say, I -- you focused

18 mostly on site design, which I think is appropriate

19 given the nature of the testimony here, and we'll hear

20 from the traffic report later. But I continue to think

21 that -- even from what we've heard, that, as designed

22 right now, this is an interesting exercise in a maximum

23 buildout, but, in fact, this building is a safety

24 menace in the way it's configured now, and I think we

 1 would be justified in rejecting this project outright.

 2   I think, though, if they take Mr. Boehmer's

 3 suggestions seriously and redo this project, I think

 4 inevitably, of course, it's going to be a much smaller

 5 building and I think it will address some of these

 6 inevitable traffic -- the traffic situation that arises

 7 here.

 8   Interestingly, as a gas station, it didn't

 9 really present these problems. The sight lines were

10 excellent, there was parking, you could get right off

11 the street. It's just ironic. We don't want to see a

12 gas station there, but, I mean, the gas station didn't

13 present safety problems.

14   MS. SCHNEIDER: Yeah. And I think, again,

15 clearly our discussion about traffic and circulation is

16 just beginning. But I think the peer review report did

17 raise an important issue that I'm not sure I had

18 focused enough on going into this in terms of, you

19 know, the problems with the cars being parked --

20 whether they're parked legally or illegally on Route 9

21 right now, who is going to enforce that, and is that

22 shifting the burden to the town to make sure that it's

23 safe enough for residents of this building to pull out?

24 That troubles me.

 1   And I think, you know, the ability of

 2 pedestrians -- again, I know that this is not a highly

 3 pedestrian-traveled area on Route 9, but nonetheless,

 4 there are real safety concerns about how cars are going

 5 to come in and out of that driveway on Route 9. I'm

 6 not sure the visibility, the way it's currently

 7 designed is adequate to protect the vehicles or

 8 pedestrians.

 9   MR. ZUROFF: Route 9 is a state highway, and

10 there is no parking allowed on the eastbound side of

11 Route 9 there. But with commercial spaces there, the

12 urge is going to be, I just want to run in for a

13 second. I have to pick up something or I have to drop

14 off something or I have to deliver something. That's

15 going to be a temptation, and it has to be enforced.

16 It's not a parking area. And I'm afraid that it's

17 going to happen and --

18   MR. CHIUMENTI: I would suspect you'd get

19 pressure from the commercial tenants too that wouldn't

20 tolerate that.

21   MS. SCHNEIDER: Yeah. I don't think we've

22 heard about this directly, but I think there was

23 reference to the fact that the applicant has suggested

24 that the tenants will be -- the commercial tenants will

 1 be of the kind where people -- it would be like a

 2 destination for them, and they won't mind valeting

 3 their car and they won't mind parking -- you know,

 4 whatever delays there might be in parking, whatever

 5 hassles there may be in parking.

 6   Obviously, you know, the space will be

 7 tenanted how the owner wants it to be, but I do feel

 8 like in some ways that kind of tenant is squandering an

 9 opportunity to bring some more neighborhood or

10 tenant -- some sort of amenity to the residents of that

11 building.

12   Otherwise, you know, the temptation to drive

13 your cars everywhere to run errands instead of going

14 down to the bakery in the lobby or going down to the

15 coffee shop in the lobby -- you know, making the

16 building a little bit more self-contained I think in

17 some way reduces the impact on the neighborhood.

18   By having some sort of big furniture store, a

19 mattress store, or a lighting store, or whatever, that

20 doesn't really serve the neighborhood. That doesn't

21 really serve the tenants of the building. You know, I

22 get it. It may be a viable use, and it may help the

23 parking plan a little bit, but I also think it's a

24 missed opportunity to, you know, give something back to

 1 the neighborhood in terms of the programming of this

 2 building.

 3   MR. ZUROFF: And amenities for the

 4 neighborhood.

 5   MS. SCHNEIDER: And amenities for the

 6 residents, even.

 7   Anything else? No.

 8   Okay. So we are going to continue this

 9 hearing to August 17th, which is next Wednesday. At

10 that meeting, we are going to have a report from staff

11 and from the developer, we are going to have a

12 stormwater and drainage report presented by the town

13 engineer, further discussion of the project. We will

14 have public input at that meeting as well, and we will

15 hopefully be in a position to provide further direction

16 to the applicant. And with that, we can wrap it up for

17 tonight.

18   (Proceedings adjourned at 8:27 p.m.)

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 1   I, Kristen C. Krakofsky, court reporter and

 2 notary public in and for the Commonwealth of

 3 Massachusetts, certify:

 4   That the foregoing proceedings were taken

 5 before me at the time and place herein set forth and

 6 that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript

 7 of my shorthand notes so taken.

 8   I further certify that I am not a relative

 9 or employee of any of the parties, nor am I

10 financially interested in the action.

11   I declare under penalty of perjury that the

12 foregoing is true and correct.

13   Dated this 19th day of August, 2016.

14

15 Kristen Krakofsky, Notary Public

16 My commission expires November 3, 2017.

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