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August 27, 2016

Alison Steinfeld, Director
BROOKLINE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445

RE: 420 Harvard Street
Architectural Peer Review Report

Dear Alison:

I'm writing to provide you with a Peer Review Report in accordance with the proposal I submitted dated August 3, 2016. This report is formatted substantially in alignment with the summary of services included in your Scope of Work document that was included in our agreement, but I hope you will contact me if there is any additional information that you require in your consideration of 420 Harvard Street.

1. **Review of the Developer's Application, Plans, and Drawings (and other related documents)**
Documents reviewed (comments on documents contained in Section 5 below):

- Email from Jerry Katz to Polly Selkoe dated March 13, 2016.
- Letter from Brookline Housing Advisory Board to BOS dated March 15, 2016
- Letter from Brookline Board of Selectmen to David Hanifin (MHP) dated March 24, 2016.
- Drawing set "420 Harvard St…MHP Submission" dated April 29, 2016.
- JFK Crossing, Brookline, MA Zoning Board of Appeals Comprehensive Permit Application dated May, 2016 (16-section binder includes numerous documents that may be referred to in this Peer Review).
- Drawing set "420 Harvard Street" dated May 3, 2016 (included in the Comp Permit Application) consisting of aerial views of site, ground level photographs of nearby context, schematic floor plans (block diagrams), unit breakdown matrix, 4 aerial perspectives, and a Landscape Plan.
- Drawing set "420 Harvard Street, Revised Scheme-Access from Fuller" dated August 8, 2016, consisting of revised plans, elevations, site section, ramp section, axon views, and shadow studies.
- JFK Crossing ZBA Presentation by 420 Harvard Associates, LLC + Embarc dated June 27, 2016.
- Emails from Savikar Kanchanavanit to Maria Morelli dated June 28 and June 30, 2016.
- Email from Tom Gunning to Maria Morelli dated June 30, 2016.
- Email from Lynn Rosenberg to Maria Morelli dated July 12, 2016.
- 420 Harvard Street Local Concerns (slide show, not dated).
- Planning Board Design Analysis dated July 14, 2016.
- Letter from Ernest and Christine Adams to ZBA and Planning Board (not dated).
- Letter from Planning Board to ZBA dated July 16, 2016.
- Letter from Bernice Rose to Planning and Community Development Commission dated July 16, 2016.
- Letter from Quen Law to Maria Morelli dated July 18, 2016.
- Letter from Kent Mitchell to the ZBA dated July 18, 2016.
- Email from Hayley Greenberg to Maria Morelli dated July 18, 2016.
- Email from Mary Nickerson to Maria Morelli dated July 19, 2016.
- Email from Annette Pringle to Maria Morelli dated July 20, 2016.
- Email from Jacques Weissgerber to Maria Morelli dated July 20, 2016.

- Email from Charles Morgan to Mary Nickerson (cc: Maria Morelli) dated July 20, 2016.
- Email from George White to Charles Morgan (cc: Maria Morelli and others) dated July 20, 2016.
- Email from Judith Vandekay to Maria Morelli dated July 21, 2016.
- Email from Nancy and Fred Bennett to Maria Morelli dated July 21, 2016.
- Email from Michael Garon to Maria Morelli dated August 1, 2016.
- Email from Tom Gunning to Maria Morelli dated August 2, 2016.
- Email from Anita Johnson to Maria Morelli dated July August 3, 2016.
- Project Narrative prepared by Embarc (the project architect) dated August 22, 2016.
- Email from Tom Gunning to Town Planning staff dated August 23, 2016.
- Letter from Colm McMahon and Caroline Buckley dated August 28, 2016.
- Preliminary REVIT model of development.

(REFERENCE MATERIALS)

- Local 40B Review and Decision Guidelines published by MHP and Edith Netter, November 2005
- Handbook: Approach to Chapter 40B Design Reviews, prepared by The Cecil Group, Inc. for DHCD, MassDevelopment, MassHousig, and MHP, January, 2011

2. Initial Meeting at the site with the Developer's Design team and Representative of the Town

Members of the development team conducted a site walkthrough, followed up with a meeting at the Remax offices at 420 Harvard Street on the morning of August 11, 2016. Attending included Cliff Boehmer (Architectural Peer Reviewer), Maria Morelli (Brookline Department of Planning & Community Development), Victor Sheen (Oakgrove Residential, Inc.), and Jonathan Parkes.

Observations at the walkthrough included an overhead power service that traverses the site off of Fuller Street to a pole that appears to feed neighboring structures, the right of way that accesses the main site from Coolidge Street, fire damage at the neighboring retail establishment, and the street frontage along both Fuller and Coolidge Streets. Most of the discussion afterwards was focused at reviewing revised project drawings dated August 8, 2016. Major changes from the May 3 drawing set include the elimination of balconies, angling of the north elevation to broaden the view corridor from Coolidge Street through to Fuller, the elimination of the stepped elevation on the north side, the replacement of the mechanical parking system with a more conventional ramped access to the basement parking area, and the inclusion of the Coolidge Street single family home into the project (where there will reportedly be one or two 3-bedroom units).

In response to a request by the Peer Reviewer to see more 3-dimensional renderings-particularly from street level--the developer offered to share the preliminary Revit model that has been developed by Embarc, the project architect (a Dropbox link was emailed on August 22).

3. Conduct site visit and reconnaissance assessment of surrounding residential and nonresidential areas within one mile of the project site.

Harvard Street/Avenue is an approximately 2-mile stretch of road that runs between Cambridge Street in Boston, south/southeast to Washington Street in Brookline. It passes through several Brookline concentrated commercial areas, including Brookline Village, Coolidge Corner (Brookline's largest commercial area), JFK Crossing, and then into Boston where Commonwealth Avenue intersects, creating another concentrated commercial area. Generally, on Harvard Street in Brookline, between the more concentrated commercial zones, there are a variety of building types and uses, with some variation in scale and setback. Most prevalent are 1.0 story commercial uses, with little or no setback. There are a variety of 3-story, masonry apartment buildings with no setback, or with modest setbacks adequate for landscaping. Several large "historic" woodframe, former homes exist, generally with significant, landscaped setback. The street wall is periodically broken by parking lots, or atypical, most likely existing non-conforming uses (e.g., gas stations, supermarket with open field of parking along the street, etc.). Taller, civic or religious structures are set back from the street to compensate for their increased building height.

There is also some two-story commercial use, particularly within the Coolidge Corner area (retail on first level, other commercial use on the second floor). There appears to be very little mixed

residential/commercial development (i.e., most commercial buildings are 100% commercial, and most multi-family buildings are 100% residential). There is only one (two, counting the attic level of the S.S. Pierce Building, assuming it is residential), 4-story residential building with no setback from Harvard Street (south of Coolidge Corner at Vernon Street). One other 4-story residential building is just north of Coolidge Corner, but it is set back something like 12 to 15 feet from the sidewalk.

The tallest structure on the entire length of Harvard Street (with the possible exception of the bell-tower at St. Mary's) appears to be the Brookline Professional Building, a five story (parking at first level) commercial structure set back about 10 feet from the sidewalk. The entire length of Harvard Street is very pedestrian friendly, with fully-adequate-to-broad sidewalks, articulated by some street trees, activated by many commercial storefronts, and some outdoor dining opportunities. The length of Harvard Street is served by buses, and it crosses two Green Line train tracks (B and C), and dead ends in another (D).

So while there is a wide range of building types and scale along Harvard Street, there is a consistent attitude towards maintaining a pleasant streetscape. Larger civic/religious structures are set back with landscaping and/or extended entry zones (e.g., grand staircases), and smaller scale residential and commercial uses hold the sidewalk streetwall line, or are set back enough for modest landscaping. The two-block area along Harvard that frames the proposed development site is an unbroken stretch of single-story retail uses, all with a very strong horizontal expression at the cornice/parapet level, with a consistent storefront head height.

Generally, side streets that intersect Harvard are lined with one and two-family, 2.5 story woodframe homes, hip or gable roofs, with setbacks adequate for landscaping and creation of a semi-private outdoor zone. Interspersed among the small structures are numerous 3-story, typically masonry, flat-roof multi-family structures, with common entry vestibules that create the transition from street to private corridors and stairs. There is a 4-story masonry multifamily building on Fuller across from the intersection of Centre. This building is set back between 15 and 20 feet, and it includes a one story entry piece that brings the scale down to pedestrian level. This pattern of smaller woodframe homes mixed in with three story masonry multi-family buildings on side streets is very similar after passing into Boston onto Harvard Avenue.

4. Consult with the Applicant's design team, as appropriate.

As noted above, there was a meeting with the applicant's design team immediately following the August 11 site walkthrough. The peer reviewer has had no contact with the team since then (other than indirect contact through the Planning Department in order to gain access to the developer's Revit model).

5. Provide an oral presentation to the ZBA within approximately one month of the notice to proceed. Said presentation shall include comments and preliminary recommendations on the following:
(this report will be presented to a ZBA meeting on Tuesday, August 30, 2016)

a. Orientation of buildings in relation to each other, and to streets, parking areas, open space, and on-site amenities, and to solar access.

The proposal is to build a new six-story building that covers most of the Fuller/Harvard site with either building footprint, ramp structures down to the parking level, or surface parking spaces. The project has incorporated an existing home on Coolidge Street (which will reportedly house one or two 3-bedroom units), immediately adjacent to the retail use on the corner of Coolidge and Harvard. The development reportedly includes a total of 36 units (2@studio; 20@1-bedroom; 10@2-bedroom; 4@3-bedroom), 12 at-grade parking spaces, and 28 basement parking spaces. The originally submitted plan that indicated a mechanized parking system has been abandoned in favor of surface parking plus ramp-accessed basement spaces.

Between the historic home) and the new structure, spanning underground parking spaces, an open-to-the-air courtyard is proposed, along with an area designated for bicycle parking. There is an additional eight foot

wide open space proposed between the parking ramps and the property line along the southwest border ("project south") on Fuller that could provide some landscape buffering. There is an existing front yard associated with the existing home on Coolidge. No other on-site outdoor amenities are indicated.

A loading zone is proposed off of Coolidge, presumably shared with the retail use on the corner, along with two, tandem-style parking spaces. There is a right of way on the neighboring property that could provide pedestrian access to the new building site from Coolidge. Both Coolidge and Fuller are two-way streets.

Approximately half of the length of the building along Fuller Street is open at the ground level to accommodate surface parking and access to the ramps that connect the parking level to the street. The combined length of the curb cuts that access those elements is about 44 feet. It is not clear from the plans or elevations what material is employed to screen parked cars from view beyond the width of the parking area access (without screening or solid walls, that could add 18 feet to the open to view parking area). The residential lobby is off of Fuller Street, and commercial entry is depicted off of Harvard. The footprint of the existing structure on Harvard has been expanded to match the zero setback of the retail use to the west. A single, mature street tree is in front of the building, near the corner of Fuller.

b. Function, use and adequacy of open space and landscaped areas.

As noted above, open space is limited to a shared courtyard, a buffer zone to the south on Fuller, and the front yard at 49 Coolidge. It is not clear that the existing mature street tree on Harvard will survive the construction process or the pruning that would be required to shape the crown to the proposed new structure.

c. Use and treatment of natural resources.

This reviewer is not aware of any natural resources that are threatened by the proposed development.

d. Building design, massing and scale in relationship to the surrounding context and topography.

The "language" of the building is minimally depicted in the building elevations (very generic, not annotated), along with non-specific notes in the Project Narrative provided by the architect. The narrative cites "A combination of full height store front system…..large format stone veneer panels" at the first level, with levels two through five that "play off of the traditional Brookline vernacular with materials that will draw from the neighboring structures (various cladding, siding materials and color palette)." This reviewer could find no information regarding the sixth floor cladding (which is rendered differently than the main body on the elevations), nor any more specific information about the selection of materials on the other levels. Accordingly, it is difficult to comment on relationship to vernacular, etc. relative to materiality. In addition to missing information on typical floor designs, no elevator/stair penthouses or mechanical equipment screening are depicted in the elevations or the axonometric views that were provided.

The façade fenestration as seen in the elevations consists of simple, repeated patterns of what appear to be somewhat "oversized" fixed-over-projected windows. This pattern is carried across all floors two through five with virtually no variation in window types. There is no articulation in the main body of the façade that could accentuate important design elements (retail entry, resident entry, corner condition, vehicular access, etc.). The length of the façade along Fuller Street is approximately 110 feet long, with no articulation that could relate it to the scale of the existing residential development on the street (existing multi-family facades on Fuller are broken up with multiple entries, human scale detailing, etc.).

The sixth floor, "attic" level is set back something like five feet on all elevations, and the fenestration pattern is offset a little from the floor below. It is not clear how the horizontal banding at the division between first and second levels relates to adjacent and/or nearby retail uses. Same is true of what is proposed for storefront design (i.e., no street elevations showing context are provided). The end of the building that is propped up along Fuller lacks connection to the ground and appears precarious.

The new building's massing, and scale are radically and abruptly at variance with the surrounding context, both along Harvard and Fuller Streets. It is likely that the building if constructed as currently proposed would be the tallest structure anywhere on Harvard Street, all along its run through Brookline. It is the opinion of this reviewer that the height of the building (almost 64 feet to the main roof), as well as its unbroken length along Fuller Street, combined with zero front and side setbacks, puts it significantly outside of existing development patterns over the entire distance along Harvard Street/Avenue from Brookline Village to Cambridge Street in Boston.

While the site is arguably generally appropriate for residential development, the scale, massing, setbacks (and perhaps façade design) create a typology wholly outside of existing fabric. The impact of the streetscape will be significant, as will the degradation of privacy and access to natural light to the immediate neighbor on Fuller Street.

e. Side and rear elevations visible from the public street, public areas and from the vantage point of nearby residential neighborhoods.

The south elevation on Fuller street, assuming the presence of the tapered "view corridor," is between about 15 and 25 feet from the neighboring home, with five levels of apartments facing the neighbor. Two levels look directly across at the habitable floors of the home, and the three remaining floors either look at or over the neighbor's roof. In addition to the nearness of the six story massing, the 44-foot curb cut along Fuller Street is problematic. While it is arguable that the existing open parking area is of similar width, it is open to the sky, and there are only two lanes of car movement to monitor. The proposed curb cut accommodates two incoming, and two outgoing lanes (one of which is coming up a ramp towards the sidewalk), and the south end of the building is propped above, casting year-round afternoon shadows on the street, the surface parking spaces, and the ramp access to the basement parking. In addition to pedestrian issues on the sidewalk, developing a convincing building elevation that suitably "grounds" the building, screens parking spaces, and is supportive of existing development is challenging.

The west elevation of the building that will be visible from Harvard Street approaching is drawn with a high percentage of window area. Is this actually possible given the nearness to the adjacent property?

f. Pedestrian and vehicular circulation

The original submission included mechanized vehicular access to basement parking, supplemented by surface parking beneath the south end of the building. While the current plan that dispenses with the auto transfer area is easier to envision from a technical perspective, as noted above, the shift to a traditional ramp system combined with surface spaces creates other issues (related to the Fuller Street building elevation and the pedestrian environment). The question of the best parking solution is still open in this reviewer's mind.

g. Integration of buildings and site, including but not limited to preservation of existing tree cover

The site is currently fully occupied by a commercial use (virtually 100% impervious surfaces) and has one mature tree in front on public land. Consideration should be given to adding street trees along Harvard.

h. Exterior materials

No information available for review.

i. Energy efficiency

No information available for review. Brookline has adopted the energy Stretch Code, which will ensure a relatively high level of sustainability, at least from an operating perspective.

j. Exterior lighting

No information available for review. site.

k. Proposed landscape elements, planting materials, and planting design

No new landscape plan provided with revised scheme.

l. Feasibility of incorporating environmental and energy performance standards in the design, construction and operation of the buildings, such as standards required for LEED certification

No information that expresses the developer's desire to design and construct to a third-party-verifiable level is included in the application materials, beyond the Project Narrative that states "Specific attention will be placed on making this a 'sustainable' project, carefully selecting products from appliances through building components to achieve this level of sustainability."

m. Any other design-related considerations identified by the consultant in the course of its review

- Floor plans are limited to "fit plans" that box out the gross square footage of the units within the proposed overall footprint of the building. It is not possible to review conformance with some code requirements (for example, accessibility). Fit plans do not indicate locations/types of proposed Group 2 accessible units. Note that all units in elevator-fed buildings must be at a minimum, Group 1 units.
- It is possible that the Fire Department will have concerns about access to all elevations of the large buildings.
- How will trash be handled on the site?
- No rooftop elevator extension, penthouses, mechanical equipment screening, etc. are depicted in the submitted drawings. These elements need to be provided.
- During the initial meeting on August 11, the developer stated that there would not be stairway access to the roof. Is this realistic given the amount of mechanical equipment that will be there?
- Particularly given the scale of the proposed development and the extremely constrained site area available for layout, a Construction Management Plan should be submitted for review.
- Does the power company have an easement over the site for the overhead lines?
- Provision of on-site resident amenities should be considered (most likely made possible by diminishing the size of the retail space).
- The surface parking spaces under the Harvard Street building show accessible spaces that share a five-foot aisle. A van-accessible space must be provided that requires an eight-foot aisle.
- Traffic/parking analysis should be updated to reflect current plan (or to consider other options that mitigate some of the issues cited in this report).
- Stormwater plan needs to be adapted to new configuration.

n. Techniques to mitigate visual impact

- As discussed in detail above, the project is significantly out of conformance with existing development patterns along the entire length of Harvard Street/Avenue. At a minimum, to mitigate this problem, the relationship of building height to setback must be "re-calibrated", the best solution likely being to lower the overall height of the structure, and to create a strong alignment of the first floor retail reference roof/cornice line on Harvard. Another potential solution is to lose less height, but create a meaningful setback of the upper floors from Harvard and Fuller Street.
- The setback from the neighboring structure on Fuller should be increased to diminish privacy and access-to-light issues.
- Setback along Fuller Street should be increased, particularly given how narrow the right of way is.

I hope you will contact me to discuss this memo in detail, or to talk about issues that I have failed to cover. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Clifford Boehmer, AIA