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MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 2, 2020

FROM: Cliff Boehmer

TO: Maria Morelli

CC:

RE: Comments on ZBA Charge to Developer

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PROJECT: 500 Harvard Street

PROJECT No.: 2020042

Maria: In anticipation of the ZBA hearing on 500 Harvard Street scheduled for this Wednesday, November 4, I am providing you with some preliminary comments on how the development team has reacted to the ZBA charge that was delivered to them at their last hearing on September 30, 2020.

As you know, we have participated in two virtual working sessions with the development team to discuss the ZBA's charge. My comments, that are appended in blue onto your summary of charges below, are based on review of the latest design materials that we discussed with the development team on Friday, October 23, as well as the project plans and SketchUp model that you and I received on Monday, October 26. I hope you will get back to me if you have any questions about any of my comments.

ZBA CHARGE

ZBA was very supportive of peer reviewer's dense report, which stated strongly that proposal is incongruous with surrounding context.

Setbacks, Bulk, Height

1. Harvard Setback / Harvard Street Wall was considered a top priority. Front yard setback should align with 514 Harvard to the North to maintain front yard development pattern among multifamily structures surrounding area. Include landscaping in front yard.
(Unanimous) The current proposal discussed during the October 23 Working Session and shown in documents received on October 26 aligns the first floor façade with the bay windows of the neighbor's building to the north. This is done through the creation of a setback arcade wide enough to create an accessible entry zone for the building residents. Above the arcade the first residential level remains in the same plane as the original proposal, with setbacks of varying degrees on the third through sixth levels, at varying distances away from 514. There is no longer a commercial use proposed for the entry level (it is now dedicated and "activated" by amenity space for the building residents). The new proposal incorporates a level of complexity in the massing and acknowledgement of the materiality and scale of 514 that even with most of the Harvard Street massing in the

original location, it is moving in a direction that makes a convincing case for context-driven design.

2. Articulation of massing was the other top priority. Building is incongruous with surrounding contexts. Massing needs to relate better to abutting residential neighborhood. Articulate monolithic volume either horizontally or vertically. Study optimal step-backs (especially at rear) and other articulation techniques to carve out volume and show how articulation relates to surrounding context. (Unanimous) The massing has been modified to provide both horizontal and vertical articulation. It is clear that there has been an attempt to make meaningful transitions from the neighbors to the north and west, increasing the height up to a full six-stories at the rounded corner of the building at Harvard Street.
3. Kenwood street edge has a language different from Harvard Street; setback would be different on Kenwood; two different front yards (Geller) Explore more of a residential presence on Kenwood (Schneider) A similar approach to scale and transition has been employed with the Kenwood neighbor as is suggested with the Harvard Street neighbor. While the deep arcade does not extend around to Kenwood, the garage entry appears to be set back further than the original plan. The full depth second floor turns the southwest corner, but floors three and floor are eroded with balconies (as is the case at those levels at the juncture with the Harvard Street neighbor). Floors five and six are set back from Kenwood close to the same distance as the garage entry. So while the “language” of the building is not similar to that of the small residences on Kenwood, the massing acknowledges its neighbors. There was discussion at the Working Session related to strategies for making a better connection with Kenwood through the use of more compatible façade materials at the entry level (for example, a natural wood look).
4. Height could remain at six stories but only if massing were sufficiently modulated (Schneider) Height in most of the structure remains at six stories, but significant modifications have been made (with loss of overall building volume) to create a better fit in the neighborhood.
5. Less focused on number of stories; more focused on meaningful articulation of massing. Still, not convinced a six-story building works on this small site. Lot is so small a six-story building would look out of scale. Yet, revision would need to be special for him to support six stories. (Geller) As noted in August 25 peer review letter, even with the significant modulation that is incorporated in the revised design, the building would be unprecedented as far as scale relative to its setback from Harvard Street. The developer has adopted a strategy that recognizes the structure’s prominence by building up to full height at the corner, at the same time attempting to engage 514 Harvard into the overall “composition.”
6. Poverman was the only member who suggested 4 - 4.5 stories. This reviewer believes that if the current strategy is pursued and further developed, it makes the case that a 6-story structure in this location is feasible.

7. Need to see elevator overruns and mechanical placement and screening revised plans. Must take into account how these elements contribute to overall scale of building. (Geller) [Not shown in the October 26 SketchUp model. No comments at this point.](#)

Parking

1. Could get behind zero parking on site. Six parking spaces takes up a lot of space for such little return. However, parking spaces would need to be converted to benefit the project, like more residential units and better articulation of massing. (Schneider) [Through the use of a different type of stacker mechanism and the elimination of commercial use on the first floor, the developer is proposing to provide additional parking spaces.](#)
2. Not prepared to give a charge on parking ratio. Worried that tenants will still bring cars and increase burden on limited parking supply. Needs to see what applicant does with revised architectural plans first. Also needs assurance that applicant agrees to assume costs to implement Transportation Board's mitigation proposal to offset impacts. (Geller) [No comments at this point.](#)
3. Poverman was conflicted about the lower parking ratio—not everyone can afford the luxury of not owning a car. Fewer units would increase parking ratio. [October 26 scheme indicates fewer units and more parking spaces.](#)

Style

1. Loft style doesn't work. [No comments.](#)
2. Don't use 455 Harvard as a reference model. [Current scheme does not resemble 455.](#)
3. Use quality building materials. [TBD, no comments at this point.](#)

Sustainability

Poverman wanted to know what sustainable building measures applicant is planning.

Staff Queries:

- What thought have you given to a fossil-fuel-free (all-electric building)? [No comments at this point.](#)
- In addition to enviro benefits, how might the use of heat pumps for heating-cooling and rooftop solar PV change the profile of the roof for the better? [No comments at this point.](#)

Outstanding components

1. Study impact of mechanicals on height [Must be incorporated into new model, including headhouse required for stairway access to roof.](#)
2. Provide narrative of foundation method that will be used (to understand site feasibility) [Was not provided in October 26 materials.](#)
3. Need preliminary building code analysis (especially of North façade) [Was not provided in October 26 materials.](#)

4. What are Stormwater plans and impact on municipal systems **Was not provided in October 26 materials.**
5. Staff will provide feedback on trash plan during working group sessions. **Was not discussed in working sessions in any level of detail, although current plans indicate a location for a trash room that makes sense as far as easy access to Harvard Street.**
6. Consult with AAB on accessible spaces—do they work with stackers. If no parking is provided, what are the implications for lack of handicapped spaces on site? **Revised parking plan appears to provide two accessible parking spaces.**
7. See Cliff Boehmer’s report for full list of outstanding issues. **Not fully addressed at this point.**