

Jewelry District Association

Meeting February 13, 2018

MINUTES

V-P **Sharon Steele** opened the meeting at precisely 5:10 and asked for introductions around the room from attendees.

Then she introduced **Brian Gibb** from **Knead Donuts** who provided a selection of treats for the meeting. Knead Donuts opened in December 2016 at 32 Custom House St. They are about to open a branch on Elmgrove Ave. “where Bagels East used to be” (classic RI method of direction giving was roundly cheered).

Gibb: Does anyone know of a central information system that lists upcoming events and street closings in advance? Closings for charity walks, races and other events make it hard to run a business on weekends.

Police report **Lt. Aspinall:** Seems to have been a lot of PPAC traffic lately. And car break-ins... “JWU students leaving laptops in cars.” **Lt. O’Conner:** He got it right. Nothing big lately. We’re still working on pedestrian safety on Eddy St. It’s hectic early in the day, then again at 3:30. **Orenstein:** RIPTA has presented their transit plan there. Very narrow area, with buses every 5 minutes. **Dahlberg:** We have a regular group that meets on this. Now, as usage is going up at the garage, the situation seems to change from week to week. Children’s Museum **Deputy Director:** We appreciate all efforts to make pedestrians safe.

Steele introduced **Barnaby Evans**, Creator and Exec. Director of WaterFire. In a detailed and richly illustrated presentation, he took a comprehensive look at what rising sea levels could mean for Providence. He has been urging URI to look into the situation. In what he called a Capstone Project, he hopes to get RWU, URI, RISD and others to participate in long range planning. One projection is for a (9.6-foot rise in sea levels by the year 2100. With storm surges 30 times a year.

Interestingly, he said, Providence is in some ways better positioned than Boston or New York. But, while the narrowing of the Bay at the west end causes storm surges to climb as they move up the Bay to Providence, the hills can be linked with protective barriers relatively easily. The Hurricane Barrier proves this, though it may need to be raised in years to come. By contrast Boston and New York have complex, low lying surrounding areas extending for miles which will require extensive/expensive protections. A lively Question and Answer session followed.

Steele joined the attendees in their loud appreciation for this glimpse of our possible future. She then called on **Olin Thompson** for the next agenda item.

Thompson: We are all very interested in the proposal before the 195 Commission from the Fane Organization to build Hope Point Tower, a 40+ story apartment tower on Parcel 42. With its

prominent location and its scale, the project will have a major impact on the District. So, the JDA has developed an informal poll as a way to gauge public sentiment on the proposal.

He went through a slide presentation of the core facts of the proposal. (The presentation and a form to respond to the Poll are available under the “Projects Progress” tab on our home page: JewelryDistrict.org). The poll is being circulated to the Fox Point, College Hill, Downtown and other neighborhood associations, as well. **Doug Victor:** Please include the South Side association, too.

Key time-line date: The Fane Organization has 90 days from Feb 1. to request and receive a zoning variation from the City Council for the project to proceed.

Q. What is the current price of land in Providence? **McNally:** approximately \$7.00/sq. ft. So Fane’s half million sq. ft. is \$3.5 million. **Q.** What is present zoning height for the riverfront? **McNally:** about 130 feet with all available bonuses. **Steele:** Zoning specifies that height at river and allows higher structures up by I-95. **Brussat:** 195 guidelines were modeled on Capital Center’s: low buildings... but everybody came up with proposals for tall buildings. **McNally:** With regard to the park, the exact size is still up in the air; design thinking is that it may be a little too big.

McNally: Regarding the hotel on Parcel 1A on the east side, it is a “use permitted as of right”. The major regulatory hurdle is with the CRMC. **Thompson:** Fendettis propose a 5-story, 65 x 100 ft., \$10 million, 40% labor. They are contesting the amount of setback required. Also at issue is the State Historic and Preservation Comm. requirement to preserve the gangway “ground to sky”. Site is also on the PPS 10 most endangered list.

Q. Will survey results be posted. **Thompson:** Yes, as soon as we have results, we’ll present them at a regular monthly meeting and post them on website.

Steele: Thank you all for sticking with us through this great discussion. Don’t forget to take pastry on your way out.

Meeting adjourned at 7:13

submitted by Lewis D. Dana