Design Review Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, September 12, 2022
7:30 p.m.

Board Members:
Mark Gluesing, Board Chair (P)
Bob Dermody, Board Member (P)
Chad Reilly, Board Member (P)
Len Karan, Board Member (P)
Deborah Robinson, Board Member (P)
Susan Opton, Board Member (P)
Elisa Litchman, Administrative Specialist, Planning & Community Development (P)

Applicants & Attendees:
1. Tom Taricano and Steve Schwede, FastSigns representing Scott Moldoff Financial Services located at 36 Chestnut Street and applying for signage.
2. Chuck Bomely, Plan B Retail representing Roche Brothers Markets located at 377 Chestnut Street and applying for signage, façade work and general site changes, and James Sperber, Roche Brothers Markets.
3. Eric Weyant, Stantec representing 557 Highland Avenue LLC, the Bulfinch Companies owner of 557 Highland Avenue and applying for site plan review, Robert Schlager the Bulfinch Companies,

Chair Gluesing called the meeting to order on September 12, 2022, at 7:30 p.m.

Chair Gluesing notified attendees of new public meeting orders issued by the governor of Massachusetts.

Agenda Item 1:
Tom Taricano and Steve Schwede, FastSigns representing Scott Moldoff Financial Services located at 36 Chestnut Street and applying for signage.

The Board found the signage well done. The sign is a non-illuminated raised letters individually mounted. The information in the application noted different colors for the lettering, white and black.
Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Ms. Robinson, it was voted to approve the sign, as amended [black, acrylic letters]. Susan Opton – aye; Deborah Robinson – aye; Bob Dermody – aye; Len Karan – aye; Chad Reilly – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 2:
Chuck Bomely, Plan B Retail representing Roche Brothers Markets located at 377 Chestnut Street and applying for signage, façade work and general site changes.

Chair Gluesing explained that the Board reviewed façade changes in the Business District. The Board will conduct a façade review this evening for this applicant. This item is also being reviewed by the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. The Board will send a memo to both boards regarding its discussion on the façade and site plan changes proposed. He explained that, additionally, one 32 s.f. sign is approved by the bylaws, but the applicant is requesting additional signs, which will require a special permit. The signage will be reviewed in a separate application.

Chuck Bomely explained that the proposal is to completely redo the façade of the building by replacing the masonry, the storefront, and the glazing and materials. The building will be closed during the construction period. The proposed second floor mezzanine area will be relocated to the front of the building. This will replace an old, out of code mezzanine on the back of the building, with less square footage than the existing. A new main entrance will be located on the front side of the building. Roche Brothers is trying to make a branding statement with the design of the façade, to gain a consistent look of the stores in the chain. While similar to other facades, Roche Brothers specifies each façade to the building and location. This location looks to use warm, natural colors. Existing articulated brick on the left side will remain, while the concrete block on the right side will be painted a relatively dark color.

In response to a question from Chair Gluesing, Mr. Bomely stated that the intention is to relocate the main entrance toward the front of the lot.

Mr. Reilly stated that he believes the proposal is tasteful and well-done. Mr. Karan agreed that this is a huge upgrade to this storefront area. Ms. Opton also agreed and stated that she likes the new orientation.

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody regarding the height of the proposed building versus the new building, Mr. Bomely stated that there two are relatively similar. The proposed building has a height of 26' plus a 30" screening element above. The existing building is 28'.

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody regarding materials for an area on the plan that supports the canopy, Mr. Bomely stated that some of the material is shiplap Hardie Board, and the grill is a solid, metallic material. The awning/canopy is a wood plank, to imitate a 2" tongue and groove material. The awning will have downlights.

In response to a question from Ms. Robinson regarding the glazing, Mr. Bomely stated that this will be clear glass.

In response to a question from Chair Gluesing regarding any additional building lighting, Mr. Bomely stated that there will be some new cut off screened lighting to light up the emergency exits and to add onto the site lighting.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Ms. Robinson, it was voted to approve the façade changes, as submitted. Susan Opton – aye; Deborah Robinson – aye; Bob

Dermody – aye; Len Karan – aye; Chad Reilly – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 6-0.

Mr. Bomely stated that he submitted a traffic study from an engineer indicating improvements to safety from the proposal. There are currently three curb cuts onto Chestnut Street, but this is proposed to be reduced to one curb cut, with a redesign of the front access area. The parking count will be almost identical and will exceed what it required. A pedestrian walk path from Chestnut Street is proposed. There will be approximately six times the amount of green space from what is existing. The plan proposes for roof drainage to enter a subsurface tank for recharge. Site lighting will be replaced, with 25' height fixtures, located as close to the interior as possible. There will be 100% cut off from these lights at the property line. A bike rack is included on the plan, along with accessible parking. The rear and side receiving areas are proposed to be the same. Emergency vehicles will have complete access and the Fire Chief's review of this came back favorably.

In response to a question from Chair Gluesing, Mr. Bomely stated that all islands will be landscaped, except for one near the truck docks. A landscape plan and planting schedule was submitted to the ZBA. Chair Gluesing asked that these be sent to the Board for its record.

Mr. Reilly stated that reducing and narrowing the number of curb cuts will be safer but may lead to a more congested traffic pattern. He noted that there are two accessible parking spaces located around the corner from the entrance, and typically accessible parking spaces exit straight onto a walkway of some sort. Mr. Bomely stated that he could explore bringing one of the accessible spaces to the front of the building.

Mr. Reilly explained that it is difficult to comment on the berm and landscaping without a plan to review. There is a lot of impervious space on the site. If the parking is in excess of what is required, there could be consideration of moving some of this to pervious areas. Mr. Bomely noted that every parking space is essential for this busy business. Roche Brothers leases space from the VFW for employee parking.

Mr. Reilly stated that, typically, a photometric plan is submitted to the Board. Mr. Bomely stated that he would send this along with the landscape plans.

In response to a question from Mr. Reilly, Mr. Bomely stated that hatch mark lines leading into the entrance area on the plan are a combination of painted and stamped asphalt for the pedestrian walkway. There is no curb between this area and the vehicles. Mr. Reilly stated that the space seems tight, with multiple functions vying for the same space, pedestrians, parked cars, and driving cars.

Ms. Opton stated that there are one or two parking spaces on the plan that seem impossible or unsafe to access and exit. She stated that the current parking lot is not pleasant to look at and encouraged extra landscaping for the site.

Mr. Bomely explained that every island that does not have a light pole will have a tree, ground cover plants, decorative grasses, and other hardy plants. If an island does contain a light pole, it will contain all of those same plantings, except for a tree.

Mr. Dermody expressed concern regarding the space in front of the future pickup lockers. Mr. Bomely stated that this is strictly a future element, and the exact size is not yet known.

Mr. Dermody expressed concern regarding queuing issues for the three parking spaces shown on the left side of the lot.

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody, Mr. Bomely stated that the striped islands will be slightly elevated with a stamped texture.

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody regarding a change to the building footprint, Mr. Bomely stated that the only change is to square off the front two diagonal corners, allowing for approximately 36 additional square feet.

Ms. Robinson noted that requirements for the handicapped access aisle to be 5' wide and immediately adjacent to the parking space. Mr. Bomely acknowledged this.

In response to a question from Ms. Robinson, Mr. Bomely explained that no stall spaces for shopping carts are indicated on the plan. Employees typically walk carts out and back into the building.

Mr. Robinson also expressed concern regarding the three parking spaces located to the left side of the plan. Mr. Bomely stated that these could be signed for compact cars.

In response to a question from Ms. Robinson regarding if the applicant will seek a variance to not meet the landscape requirements in parking area, Mr. Bomely stated that the applicant will seek a special permit.

Mr. Reilly again expressed concern regarding the pedestrian walkway as proposed. He suggested a more defined walk with separation from vehicles.

Chair Gluesing stated that he believes smaller light posts would be better for this site and asked that the applicant look into smaller scale posts than 25'. Mr. Bomely stated that this would likely lead to additional poles.

Chair Gluesing stated that he will draft memo and send it to the ZBA.
The Board had a preliminary discussion of the signage.
Mr. Bomely explained that the signage proposed deals with Roche Brothers branding with an emphasis placed on the front sign. The existing front, main sign is 150 s.f. The overall main sign proposed, with the Roche Brothers name and logo, is proposed to be a total of 71 s.f. The other two signs, for the redemption area and Chestnut Street, are 17 s.f. and 13 s.f.

Mr. Reilly stated that he likes the graphic element on the main sign, those it seems larger than needs to be. He stated that the graphic element on the redemption side entrance seems unnecessary. The Fire Department will want the street address listed somewhere on a sign or on the door. The lettering could potentially be reduced on the Chestnut Street sign, so that the street number can be added. The redemption sign lettering size should match.

Mr. Dermody agreed that the smaller red “R” logo on the main sign could be reduced to give more negative space. The larger “R” logo on far right of the building works well to break up the large brick wall. The black stenciled “R” on the redemption sign could be reduced or eliminated. He agreed that the Chestnut Street sign should include a street number, depending on comments from the Fire Department. Mr. Bomely explained that another Roche Brothers will be proposed at Sudbury Farms. The Chestnut Street sign is proposed as a secondary location identifier. The intention will be to place the street number in the glass of the transom above the door or in the door itself.

Ms. Robinson stated that she agrees that there is too much signage on the site. She suggested that the redemption and Chestnut street information be placed in the glass above the doors in these locations, in order to eliminate some of the signage and bring more focus to the main sign.

Chair Gluesing agreed that the lettering and signage for the redemption and Chestnut Street signs should be reduced. He suggested reducing the illuminated sign so there is more negative space as the sign moves toward the panels. He noted that the applicant can submit applications for the signs and those signs requiring special permits for a future hearing date.

<u>Agenda Item 3:</u>
Eric Weyant, Stantec representing 557 Highland Avenue LLC, the Bulfinch Companies owner of 557 Highland Avenue and applying for site plan review

Robert Schlager stated that façade revisions have been made to the plan. Part of these deal with a setback request from the Planning Board, using a curb line instead of the property line to measure the building setback.

Eric Weyant explained that the updates are a result of meeting with the Board, Planning Board, community, and Town staff and departments. The line that generates the setback for the massing has been changed from the site property line to the curb edge. The proposed buildings on the site include a five-story north building, a three-story south building, and a connecting atrium of two stories. The site entrance is off a new intersection at Wingate, leading to a free-standing garage. There is also one story of below grade parking proposed under the buildings. The massing of the south building along Highland Ave has been angled back to be similar to the north building, and approximately a third of the frontage along Highland Ave has been pulled away from the corner. The bump out will be treated as a one-story retail pavilion, approximately 10,000 s.f. A previously proposed jogging/fitness trail around the perimeter of the site will also now be used for emergency access. This will be used as a public amenity area along Gould Street, with a series of pickleball courts, an open lawn space, a pergola shade structure, and a handful of surface spaces that could be used for retail.

Eric Joseph explained that the amended landscape plan looks to increase the density of plantings, especially along the perimeter of the site. The proposed fitness pathway has been pulled away from Highland Ave, to increase the landscape buffer between these two areas. The 8' walkway proposed along Gould St has been widened to 18' for multiuse, and raised crosswalks are now proposed for improved pedestrian safety.

Mr. Weyant explained that the new plan looks to terrace the five-story expression of the north building down to a three-story area toward Gould St. The intention is to soften the massing for both buildings. Some articulation has been added to the architectural pilasters in front of the structural columns for the precast garage. The two-story atrium is the front door to the entire project. The loading area has been relocated from where it was originally shown, around the corner onto a service drive, allowing for a more active user of the original space.

Mr. Weyant stated that one of the Board's previous suggestions was to change the coloration of the rooftop area; this has been softened to a dove-gray color. He explained that the proposal is for a formed GFRC façade to be installed in a panelized manner. A sheet product GFRC material is also being explored to allow for different textures. All of the architectural pilasters are now proposed to have 3-dimensional quality, to create more texture and shadow. On the open bays of the garage, local flora and fauna will be used to inspire the graphic design across the fabric banners.

In response to a question from Mr. Dermody regarding how much of garage will have screening for light, Mr. Schlager stated that lights will be mounted in the center of the trusses and shielded by 18" of concrete. All lights will be on a motion sensor, with a variety of dimming options. The fabric banners disguise anything inside the garage.

Ms. Opton stated that the proposal has lovely landscaping and speaks to both local flora and fauna. She asked about the use of the pin oak along the street and pedestrian path as these are low-branching trees and drop acorns in the fall. and could be difficult for maintenance purposes and running/walking. Mr. Joseph explained that this species was suggested as an accent feature by the Town horticulturalist. Mr. Schlager stated that the applicant is happy to reconsider species options.

Ms. Opton stated that she likes the pickleball courts and no-mow lawn areas. She asked about a fence around the courts. Mr. Schlager stated that this will be a vinyl-coated chain-link fence in a color acceptable to the Board. This will eventually be screened with landscaping. Ms. Opton noted that the meadow areas proposed could look messy if not planted properly.

Mr. Reilly suggested bike parking near the pickleball courts and green space areas. He noted that the retail area is somewhat secluded and difficult to access by car. Mr. Schlager stated that the primary purpose for the retail area is ancillary as amenity space for the complex. The intention is to attract a family-oriented restaurant to sustain the office building employees, and others visiting the site. A liquor license will not be sought. The type of tenants to be sought include those that will be dependent upon office users, such as a dry cleaner, podiatrist, dentist, etc. It is yet unclear exactly which tenants will be interested in this area. The one story below ground parking will include EV charging stations.

In response to a question from Mr. Reilly regarding the garage, Mr. Weyant stated that the garage has structural precast members running horizontally. All of the verticals are architectural precast which are veneered in front. The intention was to warm up the garage and bring it closer of coloration of the actual buildings.

Chair Gluesing stated that he does not have a problem with the amended design, though he would like to see the building closer to the corner for some additional massing. Mr. Schlager stated that the site slopes approximately 30' from Gould St, front-to-back. The site is mostly dictated by zoning and the layout as proposed. He noted that a balcony area is proposed on the three-story building off the glass wall.

Mr. Dermody suggested some larger trees along the corner that the building has been pulled back from. Mr. Reilly agreed that more screening in this area could allow it to be more of an outdoor exercise/usable space for the tenants of this section of the building.

Mr. Schlager asked about the paving material for the fitness path. He explained that the path is designed to accommodate H-20 loading, such as for a Fire truck. The current thought is toward brick pavers. Ms. Opton stated that there are some permeable gravel solutions with binders. Mr. Schlager stated that the current proposal is for 10' of Gravel-Lok in the center, with 5' of pavers on either side.

It was noted that the applicant will next be before the Planning Board on October 3rd. Chair Gluesing stated that a memo will be drafted prior to that meeting.

Minutes:
Minutes of 6/27/2022, 7/25/2022 and 8/8/2022 meetings.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Chair Gluesing, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes of June 27, 2022. Bob Dermody – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 2-0.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Reilly and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes of July 25, 2022. Susan Opton – aye; Deborah Robinson – aye; Len Karan – aye; and Chad Reilly – aye; Motion passed 4-0.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Mr. Reilly, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes of August 8, 2022. Bob Dermody – aye; Chad Reilly – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 3-0.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Ms. Opton, it was voted to adjourn at 9:30 p.m. Susan Opton – aye; Deborah Robinson – aye; Bob Dermody – aye; Len Karan – aye; Chad Reilly – aye; and Chair Gluesing -aye. Motion passed 6-0.

Next Public Meeting – October 3, 2022 at 7:30pm via Zoom Webinar