

Dianne Boisvert

From: Jack Santos <iam@jacksantos.com>
Sent: March 03, 2021 3:55 PM
To: Dianne Boisvert; Dianne Boisvert; Katelyn E. Sullivan
Subject: [Ext]Comments re: Institution for Savings Special Permit

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To the City of Newburyport Planning Board:

Having attended many of the IfS special permit meetings, as well as Historic Commission meetings, I want to enter in my comments for the record, as the board considers its decision.

I respectfully suggest that It is not the planning board's responsibility to protect the bank's branding - and the view of the 1871 building up State street is all about branding.

As we have heard time and time again over the past year, It is in the historic commission's, and the planning board's, purview to make its recommendations and decisions based on context and streetscape transition.

Although I believe the bank has been sincere in trying to reduce the mass and placement of the addition, it will never, from both a historical siting and streetscape point of view, be as appropriate as a building that fronts on State Street - versus a building that does not blend in with the historic residential streetscape to the rear of the lot.

The fact is that there used to be a building on the corner of Prospect and State - so there is historical precedent.

It is also obvious that the rules the bank now wants to follow (to not impede the view of the architecturally unique and historic 1871 building) would have prevented the bank from building the 1871 building in the first place, had those same rules been applied in 1871 (since the 1871 building overwhelms and impedes the view of the pre existing and historic Dalton House).

Although I applaud the bank for its effort, I encourage the board to listen to the recommendation of the historic commission, and consider the siting, and potential frontage on State street.

--

Jack Santos
10 Spring Street
Newburyport, MA

603.674.7454
iam@jacksantos.com

March 14, 2021

Bonnie Sontag, Chair
Planning Board
City of Newburyport
City Hall
60 Pleasant Street
Newburyport, MA 01950

RE: DOD Special Permit, 93 State Street

Dear Chair and Members of the Board,

I have followed the application and permitting process for 93 State Street from a distance; as a long-time customer of the Institution for Savings, as a trained historic preservationist, and as a former city official with an abiding admiration of Newburyport's historic character, I write to express my support for the application.

From my review of the materials available on the City's web site, it appears the local Historical Commission's advice to the Planning Board is incongruous with two professional opinions offered by Dr. Judy Selwyn and William Young. I am familiar with both Dr. Selwyn's and Mr. Young's work, and read each of their opinions closely. From my perspective, I believe the Planning Board has more than sufficient evidence before it to determine this application worthy of being granted a special permit pursuant to the Downtown Overlay District. (In addition, and as an aside, I believe it would be detrimental, from a preservation standpoint, to encourage the addition to be placed closer to State Street).

The Institution has made exemplary efforts, from its first submission dated over a year ago to present day, to design an addition that is respectful of and compatible with the architecture of its 1870 original structure, while also considerate of the residential surroundings of its neighbors. I hope the Planning Board will approve this special permit forthwith.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Colbert Puff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and a long, sweeping underline.

Nancy Colbert Puff, M.S.

Dianne Boisvert

From: John J Maher <jjmaher@mit.edu>
Sent: March 15, 2021 1:25 PM
To: Dianne Boisvert
Cc: rlodge@newburyportnews.com
Subject: [Ext]Institute For Savings - Parking Garage

Importance: High

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Hi Planning Board,

I would like to voice my opposition again regarding the planned construction of a parking garage at the Institute of Savings Bank. I am a resident of Otis Place and concerned that the IFS has not listened to the opposition of this construction project by neighbors and residents. The planned parking garage continues to be too big and the cosmetic changes are not acceptable.

I find it troubling that in the last year we were able to develop a vaccine for a world-wide pandemic, but the IFS can't revise their project to a scale that is acceptable to the residents of Newburyport.

Sincerely,

John J. Maher
10 Otis Place
Newburyport, MA 01950
978-255-1523

Dianne Boisvert

Subject: FW: [Ext]Re: [Ext]Comments re. 93 State St. application to PB - one more thing...

From: Glenn Richards [<mailto:glennprichards@comcast.net>]
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 9:14 AM
To: Katelyn E. Sullivan; Dianne Boisvert
Cc: Bonnie Sontag
Subject: [Ext]Comments re. 93 State St. application to Planning Board, 17 March 2021

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Hi Katelyn, Dianne;

Please distribute or post this comment as appropriate, thanks!

- Glenn

To Bonnie Sontag, Chair, Newburyport Planning Board

I would like to present the following comments regarding the review of the proposed project at 93 State St. with the hope that the Planning Board will find this information useful in making its determinations.

In her memo to the board of March 10, 2021, Atty. Mead states her impression that the view of the NHC is that the Secretary's Standards require "an addition which is smaller in footprint or volume than the existing structure," and that the Newburyport Historical Commission's efforts to make "a comparison of volume, new to old," is "misplaced under the standards."

Further, she makes the statement that the SOI "standards are about proportion and not dimension." Notwithstanding the contradiction with the previous argument (that size comparisons are irrelevant), the statement doesn't make any logical sense: what does "proportion" mean if not a comparison of one thing to another? In their presentation, the applicant makes several comparisons, such as eave and ridge heights. Needless to say, these comparisons were made using dimensions; of course they are - how else to make them? Perhaps the applicant feels that the only comparisons to be considered are those which present a relatively favorable view of the proposal. But facts cannot be ignored simply because they are inconvenient.

I suspect the Board is already aware of it, but I'll include this again, from the Secretary's standards (from the section "New Exterior Additions and Related New Construction", SOI Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties):

A new addition must preserve the building's historic character, form, significant materials, and features. It must be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and design of the historic building while differentiated from the historic building...

The clear reference to the need to compare "massing, size and scale" in addition to design, flatly contradicts the applicants argument that such comparisons are out of bounds, or "misplaced."

The NHC has never argued that a proposed addition must be smaller than the historic building; rather, our position has always been about proportionality and the relationship to **both** the historic building **and** the

neighboring structures. We placed more emphasis on the overall mass (size) rather than on a few selected dimensions selected to present the most favorable comparison. We did this because, putting aside architectural design, overall mass is the characteristic that has the greatest overall impact on the viewer; certainly far greater than "ridge height," which in the case of the historic building is hardly even visible. The height issues have already been addressed in the most recent report of the NHC, so I will focus here on the issue of massing, the relevance of which is beyond question.

The board needs to be aware that in terms of overall volume or massing, the proposed addition is nearly 250% the size of the historic structure. It's also about 150% larger if you include the area of the 1980s addition, but that comparison is irrelevant because that "addition" is neither historic nor does it 'read' as part of the historic structure: it is actually a separate building, some 6-8 feet away and connected only by an enclosed bridge. This may be an "inconvenient truth" for the applicant, which may explain the strenuous objections to any discussion of massing, and persistent misdirection away from unfavorable comparisons.

Another example of misdirection is found on page 2 of Atty. Mead's memo, which states that "the Prospect Street facade of the existing build is 147 linear feet. Whereas the proposed addition along Prospect is 87.5 linear feet." However, the memo does not mention that the 147 feet represents the length from the front portico of the historic building to the *rear of the 1980s addition*, including the 'bridge' connector. Neither is it mentioned that the 87.5 foot facade proposed for Prospect St. is roughly 25% shorter than the proposed facade on the opposite side, toward Garden St. According to the assessor's information, the historic building is only about 65 feet on each side; a bit more if you include the portico.

Please note that my calculations are approximate, but as truthful and accurate as I could achieve using the applicant's drawings, submitted electronically. I would have preferred to be more precise, but the applicant's drawings omit several important dimensions, and using the drawing's scale for dimensions is almost impossible on a computer screen. (For example, the plan view on page 43 gives the overall length of the Prospect St., side, but not the Garden St. side.)

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn Richards

March 14, 2021

Newburyport Planning Board

Attn: Bonnie Sontag, Chairperson

60 Pleasant Street

Newburyport, MA 01950

Re: New IFS Plan; March 17, 2021 Hearing; 93 State Street; IFS DOD Special Permit and Site Plan Review Application.

Chairperson Sontag:

I write to you in advance of the March 17th hearing on the above application in the hope that this will be the last such hearing held on this matter. I commend the Planning Board and the Historic Commission for their thorough and detailed analysis and deliberations throughout this process. Your board's patience and independent review of such a controversial project is reassuring. Frankly, it shows that government can work and that in spite of the prominence of a particular applicant they will be held to the standards prescribed in the ordinances.

That said, the latest plan submitted by Institution for Savings is simply a reversion back to its pattern of making aesthetic changes and passing them off as substantial. There is no doubt that the plans submitted and reviewed during the February 17th meeting constituted a substantial change from what had been previously submitted. Most particularly because it was the first meaningful reduction in size and increase in setbacks. That said, it really is too little done too late in the process to congratulate the IFS on this. While the plans represent an improvement they are really fractional reductions which do not come close to making the addition "subordinate" to the existing historic building as required by the DOD. Indeed, the NHC in its supplemental report stated:

The latest plans reflect significant and laudable efforts to reduce the impression of size, scale and/or "massing," as compared to the three prior designs. Sadly, the fact (versus the appearance) of excessive mass remains: the eave height of the proposed building – the characteristic with the most influence on the impression of height, in our opinion – remains unchanged, and the footprint is much larger than the historic building. Also, in reverting to a more commercial architectural design of brick and stone, the proposed building is more dissonant with its immediate setting than the prior design. For these reasons, the commission finds that the proposed design does not conform to the

Secretary's Standards, and therefore cannot recommend that a Special Permit be granted. (emphasis added).

During the February 17th hearing many board members (Elizabeth Delisle, MJ Verde, Rick Taintor, Leah McGavern, Gardner) continued to express concerns about scale and massing that have been consistently expressed throughout this process. Many of these members stated that the proposal was only subordinate when viewed from State Street. A letter submitted by Patricia Peknik of the Historical Commission dated February 16th underscores the relatively minor reduction the bank has made. She notes that the proposal is close to double the size of the historic structure:

Because the ratio of the new proposed to existing volume above grade is 235,600 cubic feet/109,260 cubic feet = 2.1, and the proposed addition is therefore over twice the existing volume (mass) of the historic building, the proposed addition's height and massing will put it out of scale, proportion, and harmony with both the subject historic building and the neighboring context buildings on Prospect, Otis, and Garden. Although the NHC fully acknowledges that a building "slightly larger" has been contemplated by the Standards, the Commission deemed the proposed addition substantially and significantly larger, at 2.1, not "slightly larger."(emphasis added)

The most recent iteration of plans intentionally fail to address critical issue. The new plans focus on the façade and the windows. The bank has drawn a line in the sand on the subordination issue and contends that it already complies. The implication being: "We aren't making it any smaller." Fair enough. Given this, I cannot see any reason the Planning Board would not now vote on this matter where this issue has – by the bank's own actions – reached an end result.

Sincerely,

Mark Griffin

4 Otis Place

Newburyport, MA

Dianne Boisvert

From: Margie Larzelere <marglarzelere@gmail.com>
Sent: March 15, 2021 11:27 AM
To: Dianne Boisvert
Subject: [Ext]INSTITUTION FOR SAVINGS ADDITION

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To: Newburyport Planning Board
Date: March 15, 2021
From: Margaret Larzelere, 20 Prospect St, Newburyport, MA

Over the course of the past 14 months listening to your board's meetings and those of the Historical Commission concerning the many proposals that the Institution for Savings Bank has presented for their desired expansion, I have wondered why you haven't requested the Bank to explain their reluctance to use the front end of their property right on State St. as the site for this addition.

Joe Morgan of the Historical Commission on March 10, 2021, succinctly laid out why it would be a "win/win" for the Bank and the City to utilize the corner of State and Prospect instead of the back of their parking lot which impacts the historic neighborhoods on Prospect and Otis Place. One only has to look at the design of the Public Library directly across the street to see how an addition can be added to a historical building, and do it beautifully.

I urge you to conduct a vote at your March 17th meeting, denying the current plan outright, urging a shift to the front of the Institution for Savings property as the site for any future expansion.

Thank you for your many hours of thought on this subject.
Sincerely,
Margaret Larzelere

Dianne Boisvert

From: Stephen DeGuglielmo <stephend@fd-cpa.com>
Sent: March 16, 2021 11:45 AM
To: Dianne Boisvert; mclancy@institutionforsavings.com
Subject: [Ext]Support of IFS construction project

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Hi Diane

My office is located very close to the IFS proposed expansion project. I have reviewed the proposed plan and I am in favor of the project as it is currently presented. It will greatly enhance the downtown area.

Thank you,

Steve DeGuglielmo CPA

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Steve DeGuglielmo CPA
Fritz DeGuglielmo LLC
Certified Public Accountants & Business Advisors
8 Essex Street
Newburyport, MA 01950
Tel: 978-462-2161
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Dianne Boisvert

From: Rick Pollak <rpollak2@yahoo.com>
Sent: March 16, 2021 11:25 AM
To: Dianne Boisvert; glennprichards@comcast.net; Dianne Boisvert; Katelyn E. Sullivan; Andrew Port
Subject: [Ext]Opposed - Institution For savings 3/11/2021 Plan

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Bonnie Sontag, Planning Board Chair, Office of Planning and Development

c/o planning@cityofnewburyport.com

Glen Richards, Newburyport Historical Commission

c/o kesullivan@cityofnewburyport.com

Andrew Port, Planning Director

c/o aport@cityofnewburyport.com

Reference: Public Hearing for Special Permit(s) made by the Institution for Savings in Newburyport for property located at 93 State Street/ Assessor's Map and parcel 14-40. 1. Site Plan Review (2020-SPR-02), 2. ITIF Special Permit (2020-SP-01), 3. DOD Special Permit (2020-SP-09)

Dear Ms. Sontag, Mr. Richards and Mr. Port:

As an abutter of the proposed Institution for Savings Bank, we would again like to state our opinion of this most recent plan filed on 3/11/2021. We have sent a number of letters concerning the effects of this new structure on our property and the neighborhood. We continue to have the same main objection that the structure is too massive, too tall and does not fit into the historic neighborhood. This recent design does not address the "massive" concerns that are and have been the issue thru out the many reviews by the neighborhood, historical commission, and planning board. I don't see how the massive issue has been addressed. As we have said before if this present plan was presented to the neighborhood a year ago our comments would have been same. In appearance this structure does not fit into the historical character that Newburyport tries to maintain and certainly does not belong in a neighborhood setting. To summarize with the several plans that have been presented, not one changes our objections, too big, too tall, too massive, and too close.

Again as previously stated, it is disheartening to know that our neighbor, Institution for Savings, has so little regard for the area that they reside and for the neighbors that live around them. As a long time bank doing business in Newburyport, it would seem that the management would be more concerned about the effect that this plan would have on the nature of the city and direct surroundings. Has the IFS ever replied to the suggestion of placing the structure on state street where the clock town presently sits?

Please confirm receipt of this message and its addition to the public record.

Richard and Mary Pollak, owners
1,3,5,7 Garden St, Newburyport

March 13, 2021

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Planning Board:

As former leaders of this City, we speak as one in asking you to support the Institution for Savings' plans to renovate and expand its main office at 93 State Street. We think this plan not only meets the zoning requirements of the commercial district where it is located but is also in the best interests of the City of Newburyport.

Newburyport is unique. It has rich history, access to the river and ocean, and strong character. What it also has is a unique diversity in its populace: a mixture of young and old, affluent and working class. Nowhere is that truer than within the downtown business district. Condos sit atop coffee shops. Retail and restaurants abut residential homes. And yes, banks share blocks with multi- and single-family homes. This is our city and we love its uniqueness.

This city was founded on the concept of urban living: homes and businesses existing together. In fact, realtors will tell you that most people buy homes adjacent to the downtown intentionally –they WANT to be able to walk to shops, restaurants, the post office, public library and the bank. Accordingly, these same businesses should not be penalized and prevented from reasonable, zoned expansion that would allow them to continue to thrive.

In our respective terms as mayor, we worked intimately with the City's boards and commissions and are familiar with the requirements of the Downtown Overlay District (DOD). This ordinance was enacted in part because City leaders recognized that the reuse and rehabilitation of historic structures was far more desirable than demolishing and rebuilding, and therefore should be encouraged. Moreover, it recognized the criticality of preserving the 'unique land use pattern, and architectural, cultural, economic and cultural character of the buildings, structures and lots, both individually and as a group, that are located in downtown Newburyport.'"

What is being proposed by the Bank is entirely consistent with the historic zoning and land use patterns in the DOD. Throughout the DOD there are multiple examples of commercial buildings adjacent to residential neighborhoods that have thrived: Prince Place, Titcomb Street, Washington Street, Harris Street, Middle Street. The public library. City Hall. The police station. And the list goes on. These examples exist in various parts of the City, but specifically they exist in the DOD.

Our history is rich not just because of our physical buildings but also because of our people, culture and businesses. The Institution for Savings has grown its footprint beyond Newburyport in the last decade but has never forgotten its deep roots here. In fact, its bylaws state that its headquarters will ALWAYS remain here in Newburyport. It has been a generous and steadfast steward of our schools, our non-profits, our arts and culture, and so much more. There are few people here who have not been positively affected by the Bank's goodwill. That cannot, and should not, be discounted.

Bank representatives in our opinion have shown an incredible level of due diligence throughout the 13 months they have come before you and have been responsive to your suggestions and requests, resulting in no less than seven different plans. Being a prudent planning board member requires you to become informed and use common sense, fairness and objectivity towards all that comes before you. Most important, it requires each of you to look at the data and determine if a proposal balances the public good with private rights and interests. In this instance we strongly believe the proposed plan strikes that balance and we urge you to approve it.

Sincerely,

Byron J. Matthews, former Mayor, 1968-1978
6 Carleton Drive, Newburyport

John F. Moak, former Mayor, 2006-2010
170 Beach Road, #26, Salisbury

Dianne Boisvert

From: pelwald@comcast.net
Sent: March 16, 2021 11:59 AM
To: Dianne Boisvert; Tom Barbara Pelsue
Subject: [Ext]A letter in opposition to the current proposed IFS addition

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Dear Planning Board,

I would like to again express my opposition to the proposed expansion of the Institution for Savings. This is the third letter I have written to you about this subject over the past year.

The bank has only proposed cosmetic changes over the last 14 months, even though the Historical Committee and your Planning Board have given them much meaningful input on multiple occasions.

This project simply remains too large and the dense massing will adversely impact the historic neighborhoods on Prospect Street, Otis Place and Garden Street.

No one negates the fact that the Institution for Savings is a generous supporter of many community organizations. But that fact is separate from and should not impact this decision. They could easily move this project to run along State Street as has been suggested on numerous occasions by multiple entities.

Please do not let this project move forward with this current proposal.

Sincerely,

Barbara Oswald
158 State Street
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dianne Boisvert

From: Claire Papanastasiou <claire.p.claire@gmail.com>
Sent: March 16, 2021 11:54 AM
To: Dianne Boisvert
Cc: Andrew Port
Subject: [Ext]

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Dear Chair Sontag and Planning Board members,

I yet again write to voice my opposition to the Institution for Savings' expansion along Prospect Street and Otis Place. It's been nearly 14 months, and we continue to debate the issue of size. While the bank has made cosmetic changes for the better, it has neglected to address the main issue: Size. Given the proposed footprint, height and impact on the already-tight neighborhood, the design is flawed. The bank would like to fit a square peg into a round hole. The addition -- as it is currently proposed -- simply does not work in this location. It's clear that the bank will continue to ignore the Planning Board's and the Historical Commission's guidance. In addition to voicing my opposition to the project, I request that the Planning Board vote on the expansion at the March 17 meeting so we can move forward. This has gone on long enough, and no substantive progress has been made. Please bring this matter to a conclusion.

Thank you.

Claire

--

Claire Papanastasiou
4 Otis Place, Newburyport MA
617.416.3377
claire.p.claire@gmail.com

Dianne Boisvert

From: paula renda <paularend24@comcast.net>
Sent: March 16, 2021 2:04 PM
To: Dianne Boisvert
Subject: [Ext]Institute for Savings Building Proposal

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To Whom It May Concern:

Since last January, I have diligently and faithfully followed every plan and meeting regarding the proposal by the Institution for Savings. This has not been easy as I am remotely teaching my students all day. The last thing I want to do is jump on the computer again for many hours. Still, I have never missed one meeting and I have shared my thoughts nearly every time despite my nervousness.

Keeping Newburyport the quaint city we all love is near and dear to my heart. Our neighborhood, with tightly squeezed houses, narrow streets, and a web of wires is congested beyond capacity. This is our sanctuary, a place we are proud to call our home. We take great pride and spend lots of money keeping our historic homes looking nice. For more than a year now, all virtually, we have fought to be heard in the matter of the proposal of the Institution for Savings.

I must express my continued concern for the Institution's proposal even with all the changes. The proposed building is too massive with a continuous blockade of brick along Prospect Street which despite the "shadow study" will create a cloud of darkness over the area, especially in the winter months when the lighting is so important to mental health and the solar heating of our homes. I know because my house gets little or no sun in the winter being right next to my neighbors.

I want to compliment both the Planning Board and the Historical Commission for their open minds, continued questioning, and amazing expertise in this matter. You always seem to find the exact words I am looking for to express your concerns and doubts in regard to this building. Thank you for your continued partnership with our neighborhood. Our concerns are your concerns.

Sincerely,

Paula A. Renda
16 Otis Place
Newburyport, MA

Dianne Boisvert

From: Colleen Turner <turnstyler@gmail.com>
Sent: March 16, 2021 2:16 PM
To: Dianne Boisvert
Subject: [Ext]RE: Vote No on Institution for Savings Proposed Site Plan

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Dear Planning Board:

This Wednesday, March 17, 2021, will mark 13+ months of the IFS trying to shove their proposed two-story parking garage down the collective throats of not only the concerned neighbors and abutters living on Prospect Street, Otis Place and Garden Street, but down the gullet of Downtown Newburyport as a whole.

I respect the firm and consistent way both the Historical Commission and, you, the Planning Board have tried to guide the bank to create a significantly smaller, more reasonable structure for their “much needed programs.”

Sadly, the numerous clear and direct suggestions from our city's volunteer boards have not resonated with the bank's leaders. In fact, every iteration continues to be an insult to everyone.

That the Institution for Savings thinks changing the facade or adding a bit more green space to an approximate 19,000-square-foot-ish structure in any way turns their pig's ear of a proposal into a silk purse is ridiculous.

Worse, the bank has tried to insist that they need this enormous space for important bank programs.

But in reality, the most important “program” this proposed monolith addresses has nothing to do with increased office space for existing or potential new employees or even supports a historical museum honoring all things IFS...nay, the only “program” that matters to the bank is the creation of a private, locked, two-story parking garage smack dab in the middle of one of Newburyport's most beautiful historic neighborhoods.

I respectfully request that the Planning Board please vote this Wednesday, March 17. Let's stop kicking the historical can down the street and make a stand...for we neighbors, for Newburyport, for good.

Colleen Turner Secino
15 Otis Place
Newburyport, MA 01950