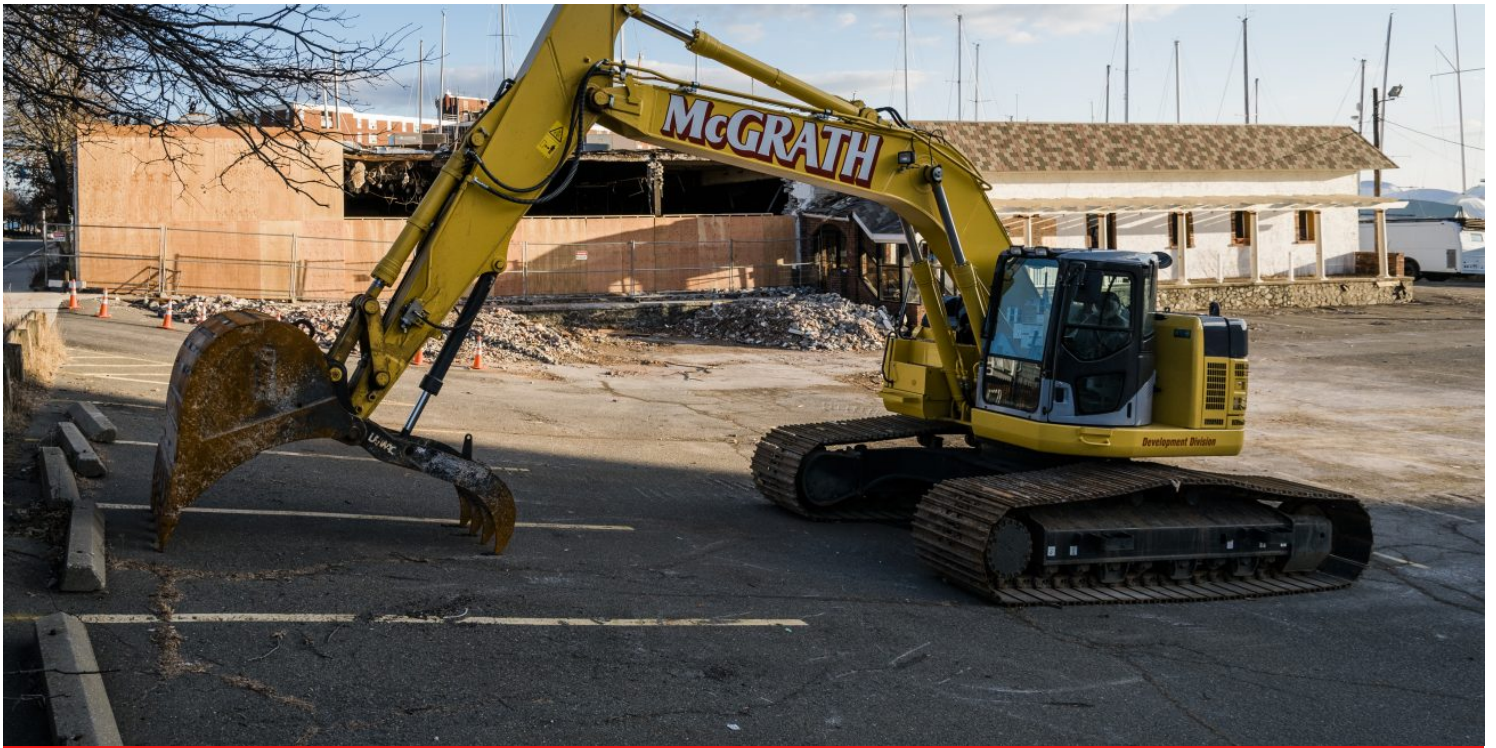


LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, NEWS

PORTHOLE DEVELOPMENT PLANS DELAYED IN LYNN, MORE CONDOS PLANNED FOR NEARBY SITE

BY GAYLA CAWLEY | January 15, 2020



Demolition of the former Porthole Pub has been placed on hold due to its close proximity to the Lynn Yacht Club and the boats that are housed on their property over the winter. (Spenser Hasak)

LYNN — Developer Patrick McGrath is planning to break ground on a \$23 million, 80-unit condominium project on a Blossom Street site shortly, but his plans for the former Porthole Restaurant have hit a snag.

A groundbreaking for the \$35 million redevelopment of the Porthole site into 74 luxury condominiums was initially slated for this past fall. But McGrath said the remainder of demolition at 98 Lynnway, which started in late November, has been pushed back until the spring.

The issue, McGrath said, is that boats from the adjacent Lynn Yacht Club are resting next to the building and impeding demolition.

“(With the way the building was) constructed, it was too dangerous to tear the building down,” said McGrath. “They’re going to move the boats in the spring and then we can take the building down safely.”

In addition, McGrath said he’s still going through the permitting process, which should take another four to six months. Because the site is located on the waterfront, he needs to go through Chapter 91 licensing, which is the Commonwealth’s primary tool to protect and promote public use of its waterways. McGrath also needs additional state and local approval.

McGrath said he was also putting off the completion of a final design for the project, coined Harbor98, until the City Council rezoned the waterfront district where the property is located. With the zoning relief approved last month, he can now build up to eight stories, rather than the five stories he would have otherwise been limited to, he said.

Now, design plans have been completed and he said he’s been getting significant interest in the property, where he plans to live as well. McGrath has said the “high-end” condos, which will each have views of Boston, the harbor and ocean, would be the “first of its kind.” There’s no other building like it on the North Shore, he said.

The luxury condominiums will have all of the amenities that similar buildings in Boston offer, for about a third of the price, he said. The units, which will include a mix of one-, two-, or three-bedroom condos, and penthouse suites, would sell from \$600,000 to \$2 million, McGrath said.

Nearby, on Blossom Street, McGrath will soon break ground on a five-story, 80-unit condominium building. The first floor will be for parking and the top floors will consist of mostly one-bedroom condos, which will sell for about \$300,000, he said.

McGrath is in the process of applying for a demolition permit to tear down the site’s vacant building, which formerly housed a transmission business, and he anticipates construction will begin shortly after it’s razed. Design plans for the new complex are expected to be completed within the next two weeks, he said.

His plans for a residential development on the site marks a major shift from McGrath’s initial proposal to build a six-story storage facility at 164 Blossom St., which was rejected by the Zoning Board of Appeals last April.

The City Council had offered unanimous support for the proposed 100,000 square-foot storage facility, but Mayor Thomas M. McGee opposed the project, saying at the time that it didn’t fit into the city’s vision for its waterfront.

“The mayor didn’t want it,” said McGrath. “It wasn’t in his vision so we just backed off and we’re going to do residential.”

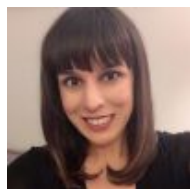
Unlike his initial proposal, where McGrath needed to seek a variance from the ZBA, the property’s zoning allows for a residential development, he said. Although he said he’s trying to avoid having to appear before the board, he anticipates its members will be more supportive of a plan for residential units.

McGrath said he decided to stick with the site because of its desirable location next to the ferry terminal, commuter rail, and bus line. In addition, the site is right off of Route 1A.

City Council President Darren Cyr said he's in favor of the change in plans.

"I'm happy that the lot is being developed," said Cyr. "Pat McGrath realized that the value of it is residential rather than a storage facility. I think the neighborhood is going to be happy with it."

McGee could not be reached for comment.



Gayla Cawley

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