

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: December 11, 2024 PLACE: City Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Public Hearing

PRESENT: Janet Buck, Chair; Payson Whitney; Rachael Sack (remote); Abigail Hammett; Jason Cohen; Sarah Scott - Alternate
Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Board; Gideon Schreiber, Planning Director; Larry Field, Planner

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Jason Cohen motioned to approve Minutes of 11/13/2024 meeting.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0 In Favor

Abigail Hammett recused from the hearing because her company is involved in the next project.

CASES PENDING

615 Arsenal Holding LLC, et al

Michela DeSantis, this is a request for an amendment to the Arsenal Yards Master Plan PB-2016-03

Mark Deschenes, Boylston Properties, this is a proposal to replace part of the Home Depot parking lot with additional commercial/lab/R&F life science building of approx. 170,000 s.f. with structured parking under it. 90% of the Arsenal Yards retail is occupied. It will make the Home Depot parking lot more efficient. Presently the Home Depot is a lease and this will allow them ownership. This proposal is to be build in the future. The attractiveness of the Arsenal Yards is highly desirable location. This is one of the best sites in Massachusetts, there are multiple opportunities for labs, amenities are provided for tenants who want to stay on the site. Space is now fully occupied, many tenants want to expand, develop roots in Watertown.

Michela DeSantis, Home Depot parcel is 10.5 acres, life science cluster to be added to Arsenal Yards, will replace underutilized parking space. Boylston Properties has been on the site since 2017, Home Depot parcel is not part of it. Site is located in RMUD district, very successful project, commercial, retail, apartments and hotel. 300 Forge is a site of potential life size building. We had developers meeting in September, proposing to come back in January, there is no change yet. This is an opportunity to create circulation to the Home Depot parking lot. Lot of thought went into improvements, it needs to work with the Home Depot connection to Arsenal Park, 100 Forge, 500 Forge, making it easier for truck to move. Emergency entrance is proposed on east area of the building.

Michael D'Angelo, Landscape Architect, there is landscape area at 100 Forge, pedestrian traffic experience at Forge Road and 100-300 Forge. We are proposing improvement of multiuse path. Drop off at 100 Forge, spot for emergency access. Handicap access will be provided. A massive step back, creating outdoor terraces.

Rob Zirkle, Architect, this is a beautiful project, pedestrian connectivity is shown 300 Forge provides nice contrast to 100 Forge. The mass of the building was moved back. We imagine possibility of interchange between companies. Massing is stepped back, creating outdoor terraces and point of contrast. Scale of 300 Forge is somewhere between 100 Forge and Building F. Bike and pedestrian access is separated, vehicular access on opposite site, 392 parking space will be provided.

Scott Thorton, Vanesse, assessment was made in coordination with the City and their peer review consultant. There are no significant issues. Equal trips with Master Plan projection, 0.3 and 3.3%

increase during peak hours. Counts were made during September 2024 when schools are in session. There are 2 lanes in each direction on Arsenal Street. 70 bus service on Arsenal Street plus the Arsenal shuttle. Future projection for next 7 years, 10% of vehicle trips public transit, 10% of vehicle trips will be public transport, 80% characterized as vehicle trips. TDM project will bring the numbers lower. Amenities are provided, bike parking, and promote ride sharing.

Steve Martorano, the project is LEED silver certifiable, specialized stretch energy code, stormwater management, heat island effect. On site EV charging stations, dark sky compliant lighting, new green roof area, energy star rated, planned energy system. 5,300 s.f. increase in open space, increased street canopy. Watertown requirements higher than the State. Arched chamber infiltration system. Brand new system stormwater infiltration.

Michela DeSantis, there is no staff report tonight. We have just received the review but we do not have response from DPW.

Gideon Schreiber, we have couple of attendees on zoom.

Nicole Gardner, City Councilor District A, I appreciate that attention is paid to some of the concerns, glass windows to ensure that they would not interfere. How do people access the pathway? How is the soil testing? Which trees are going to be removed, what will be the impact, which new spaces are being selected?

Mark Deschenes, extensive studies will be done prior to any construction. Some areas have been contaminated, the site has been tested, site is now much cleaner.

Michael D'Angelo, trees to be removed are in the parking area.

Janet Buck, the public hearing has been closed.

Jason Cohen, we have seen Boylston Properties many times over the years. The road between the parking lot and Condessa Road is dangerous. Timing of construction, preparation of this meeting after reviewing, etc I am confused about what to address now and what to leave for later – January?

Gideon Schreiber, this building is ready to be approved, enough information, significant details have been provided. Additional changes will be changed by building code. This is conceptional only. They are only requesting approval of the building, changes of materials will be addressed next time.

Jason Cohen, I will make comments about the building design.

Janet Buck, an extensive redevelopment of the Watertown Mall is happening as well, was any of that considered? Equipment will be placed on the roof, change to solar?

Michela DeSantis, 40,000 s.f. of roof area, study has not been done, we will produce appropriate study.

Payson Whitney, why was it not included in the original Master Plan. It was not owned by Arsenal Yards. Could the building be turned so that it would not stick out ? Could some curves be added, this is a very boxy design. This is an appropriate design, I am in support of the project.

Rachael Sack, I agree with Planning Board members comments, who will use the parking spaces. Will some of the EV charging stations be placed outside to be used by the public? Could the traffic flow at 500 Forge get improved? This is an opportunity to use the parking spaces more efficiently?

Sarah Scott, this is a great project, it could be even more improved. Study was done last year about trends, providing interesting data. Is there going to be edge between Home Depot and the rest of the site?

Mark Deschenes, the entire site is govern by easements, under the Master Agreement, they are 3 condominium sites.

Gideon Schreiber, there is important aspect for tenants and public. There are no city wide dog parks, part of Arsenal project. TDM plans still in discussion, even for people who are not driving.

Mark Deschenes, we have spend considerable time designing this building. We came back with all the buildings, we have the demand, adjustments will be made, changes will happened. We are working with Home Depot carefully planned, 130 feet wide building, building footprint is relatively set. Spaces in the back will become more support spaces. Home Depot spaces requirement is 9 feet wide, no compact size.

Jason Cohen, what is the width, does it include the Fire Department access? I like the rood line stepping down. It is an attractive building, the mechanical screening could be changed?

Payson Whitney motion to continue the 615 Arsenal Holding LLC to January 8, 2025 meeting of the Planning Board

Jason Cohen seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor