

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: October 20, 2016 PLACE: Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:05 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Meeting

PRESENT: John Hawes (Chair), Gary Shaw; Jeff Brown, Janet Buck, Fergal Brennock
Steve Magoon, Director/Assistant Town Manager; Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the
Planning Board; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner

CASES PENDING

- **485 & 615 Arsenal Street; BP Arsenal Group LLC – Master Plan Special Permit**

Steve Magoon, this is the second Master Plan process. A significant level of detail are building locations, massing, uses, circulation. It is not so focused on the architecture of the building or site design. This is an opportunity for the Town to consider a discretionary Special Permit. If approved, site plans for each portion of the site would be reviewed, with more detail, it is not a discretionary permit review. Site plans can be conditioned, but not denied. Due to one Planning Board member's planned absence, a Special Planning Board meeting has been added on November 29, 2016. This project will be continued to be heard again on November 29, 2016. There is no staff report at this time and the Planning Board will not make recommendation tonight.

Bill McQuillan, BP Arsenal Group, the project is tailor-made per the Comprehensive Plan and a capstone to recent developments in Watertown's East End. East End has seen many projects recently, new hotel on Arsenal Street, LINX office, etc. This project was reviewed by town staff and neighbors. This project will transform the area. It will increase real estate taxes for this property. We are excited to be here and the project construction will start in the spring.

Eric Brown, architect, addressed the existing conditions and used a series of slides shown on the public access TVs to describe the site plan changes, demolition, and new construction on the property.

Tom Wilder, Wilder Companies, discussed the retail development plan for the site. He addressed how to compete in the current marketplace. Confluence between bricks and mortar retailers, who are in a special place, and who also have an internet presence. Concept of place-making. Special but also functional. The design is very thoughtful and will provide access to the community. The Mall will be very attractive to merchants, it needs to be very special.

Mark Eclipse, PCA, we are trying to create a great space, Design Guidelines were very helpful. Place-making is key, because it gives people a desire to be at this place. This is about things that happen at this place, and translate that into a physical place. There is an ideal height to width ratio the buildings and pedestrian areas. Building will be set back from Arsenal Street. Façade treatment will be historically correct.

Chris Jones, Carol Johnson Landscape Architects, we will take cues from the surroundings, the open space and character of the existing buildings. Inspiration from the buildings and machinery of the Arsenal on the Charles. The landscape will celebrate the historic buildings. The green from the park will float into the site. The desire to create strong view corridors and connections to the Charles River, people will be drawn to the site. There will be areas for gathering and for cars, creating successful environment. The materials have not yet been selected.

Mark Eclipse, PCA, existing addition will be demolished. Simulations of the "after" construction concepts together with photos of the existing conditions, to illustrate the proposed architecture, exterior treatments, step backs, etc. were shown. We are proposing improvements to the Arsenal Park area to have a great place to connect to.

Jeff Heidelberg, Boylston Properties, addressed project demolition and phasing. Updates provided to the Board on October 11, 2016. They all relate to proposed Building B. Added parking to Building B is based on extremely high costs for underground parking. Also relate to further discussions with the

Town's Design consultant, and Town staff. We are proposing a change to connection to Arsenal Park. Better design would be to put the shared bike path on grade level on the West side of Building B. Two video simulations were shown.

David Gamble, Gamble Associates, the Town's Design consultant, gave a report on the project. The proposed project will rebuild part of the Town and plugs a gap on Arsenal Street. People are looking for "authentic" experiences. Addition of housing is appropriate, it will create an opportunity for people to linger, and create shared parking. Big picture conformance with the Design Guidelines has been achieved. Good mix of preservation and new construction. Appropriate response in an historic context is to make any new buildings clearly new. Height and density is much denser than what is there now, but it's appropriate. Arsenal Street is a very wide street, and can handle a concentrated development, and a taller structure. The unintended consequence of the Design Guidelines is that the desire was to break down massing, and introduce different materials. If this is done in a campus, it can become overwhelming. Architectural expression may benefit in this case from architectural restraint. Relationship of the park to Arsenal Street – connection should be greener, and more civic in scale. Suggested a canopy of trees, and raingardens. We need to make sure that the signage reinforces the idea of a campus setting, with respect for the retailers' need to brand themselves.

Fergal Brennock, asked a series of discrete questions:

- Question: Existing Building A: Can the interior structure be exposed, such as the red brick and steel beams?
- Response: There will be locations where this is not possible, due to insulation requirements due to LEED Silver certifiable. Walls are double-wide brick, but they need insulation. Will try to find ways to expose the interior steel.
- Comment: Landscaping should include more of the historic elements of the Arsenal: Steel, black wrought iron. Include as part of the landscaping furniture.
- Comment: View #4 is confusing (Court Street – Before). This is scheduled to be a view of the second story cinema on the existing Home Depot building. Proposed View is taken further back, so it's confusing.
- Response: Acknowledged that the Proposed View is taken further back, and only provides a small view of the Home Depot building with the second floor cinema.
- Comment: The new park idea. Need to work with the Town on the design and maintenance. Need to deal with the cost of maintenance.
- Question: Thought about the retailing model. Concept in downtown Boston – short term leasing of space? Pop-up store?
- Response: Petitioner has been considering the pop-up model.
- Question: Like commitment to the replacement of the blocked up windows in existing buildings.
- Response: Proposed storefronts on Buildings A and E; the renderings show opening up of now-blocked windows.
- Question: Parking garages. What is the residential versus public parking split? Is it barrier control? How will potential backups of cars seeking to park be handled?
- Response: Barrier control only for residential. Residential is underground in Buildings B, C and D. If parking is relocated to upper floors of buildings, then there will be barrier control as cars move up seeking parking.
- Comment: Give some thought to the naming of internal private "streets." A lot of history on the site. Commend the Petitioner on the temporary landscaping.

John Hawes, Buildings C and D have below-grade parking. How to get there? Through Building B?

- Response: Yes, access would be via Building B, and this parking is all residential.

Jeff Brown, size of the overall program. How many housing units? Why isn't it a different number than the one proposed? What about the phasing program? Is the Petitioner committed to the entire development plan? First take on the Site Plan is not adequate. Need a fully rendered Site Plan. Also need to consider the context beyond the site, such as the large parking lot across the street. Arsenal Park is not part of this project, yet the Petitioner is showing it as an integral component of the project, and totally redeveloped. Building G causes him hesitation in terms of overall height. How will access to Home Depot be affected? What is proposed on top of Building E – Activity on the roof seems to be out of context with the rest of the operation. The Board has received a lot of materials to digest. And, Building A is almost hidden until it's in the plaza.

- Response: 503 housing units. The calculation of the number of proposed housing units is a combination of what makes sense for Building D screening – a six story building looks good. And, what the shadowing impacts would be of a taller or shorter building. Building F has residential on top, so as to take advantage of views of the Charles River and park space. The residential gets informed by the site design. Once this is figured out, it drives how many units can fit in the space.
- Response: Absolutely. The Petitioner is committed to the entire development plan.
- Response: Correct that Boylston Properties does not own Arsenal Park. Interested in pursuing a dialogue in the Park. Maintenance would be part of this consideration. Renderings are a loose interpretation of what may be there in the future. Need to discuss this with a variety of stakeholders.

Steve Magoon: Arsenal Park is Town-owned. The Town is working to set up a Committee to work through the design and other issues.

- Response: A fair percentage of the Home Depot customers access the site by the Arlington Street light. Have a signed agreement with Home Depot that will address this. As the part of Building A is removed, it will become easier to get to Home Depot.
- Response: The new construction on top of Building E is a cinema. Project includes 1,180 linear feet of the roof. Acknowledge the roof shape and historic roof line, although the orange roof is not historic. Believe the proposed design is acceptable, but acknowledge also it will be the subject of review, including design review.
- Response: That 1980's addition that is being removed is about half of the existing building. Acknowledge that its presence will be changed, but suggest that it will be better in the proposed condition. Building A is special. Want people to come into the site, and Building A has the most depth, in terms of a 10,000-15,000 square foot new retailer. This will draw people into the site.

John Hawes, working on the Home Depot property. Assume that work is agreed upon. Will the approval process be complicated, based on approvals by the Planning Board in one case and the Zoning Board of Appeals in the other?

- Response: Two weeks ago, Home Depot was before the Zoning Board of Appeals and received an amendment to its Special Permit to match its Site Plan to the Master Plan being discussed by the Planning Board tonight.

Janet Buck, I agree strongly with David Gamble's comments. Site Plan and circulation is done well. The parking not obvious driving down Arsenal Street. Need to simplify the path of cars, visa vie the path of pedestrians. Need to find ways of discouraging cars from driving between Buildings B and C at the right-in/right-out because that comes into a Plaza with heavy pedestrian use. Signage and wayfinding is very important. Not questioning the proposed off-peak shared use of the parking lot fields, but rather where the vehicles should go. In the garage, will the Proponent have signage that will advise those seeking parking spaces of where in the garage spaces will be available? Proposed cinema needs more architectural review. Met with Planning staff and provided a sketch of some potential ideas. Looking at a variety of different concepts. Agree with David Gamble that the color and

materials palette is too broad. Visited Assembly Square, as it seemed like a good example. Struck by the richness of the buildings in that development. Want for Watertown to look at least as good as Assembly Square. The screening seemed very artistic, and there appeared to be a high attention to detail. The green space in this project could be "greener." The connection to the Charles River could benefit from a tree canopy. Question for the Planning Board or staff – Site Plan Review and each phase. At what point can the Board get assurances that there won't be a wide range of palette given that each phase may only have a few structure in it? Propose to conduct a feasibility for solar – status of the solar review? Comment that Watertown is poised to gain a lot from the project. Observed over the years that the value of the place as a social gathering spot for disabled and the senior citizens. This will be disrupted by the proposed project and redesign.

- Response: Primary parking would be in Building B. Parking for other retailers in part of Building F. Showed rendering of the proposed project, and described access points for vehicles. Noted the work being done in concert with Home Depot to create a separated parking field, allowing a better connection to the traffic signal. Amount of use of the right-in and right-out is already pretty low. Foresee that it will continue to be low use.
- Response: Reached an agreement with Home Depot via the proposed cinema. Complimentary use of the Home Depot parking field.
- Response: Yes, the project will include signage in the garage informing drivers of open parking spots on other floors.
- Response: Wrote a letter about the proposed cinema. Interesting idea, sliding the box South. Problem is that the retailers under the cinema in the slid concept become hidden, and begin to lose brand recognition. Approach to the design was to respect the historic building so the eaves of the building read through. Exact design will probably become simpler, but have been making a conscious effort to respect the building.
- Response: Design in this case is a two-step process. Focused on building design. Look forward to the opportunity to get into design building by building. Want to break up the massing and balance other aspects of the project.

Steve Magoon, phases could be conditioned at the Master Plan stage, if it can be done in a way to do so for a multi-phase project. Could also consider conditions at the first phase of more in-depth review, when the Planning Board has a better sense of the color and materials palette.

- Response: Initial investigations indicate that Building A is the best candidate for solar, on the South side. Issue is that the existing roof can't really handle the loading – particularly possible uplift – because it was constructed of concrete panels, and the attachments isn't secure enough. Next phase is feasibility – other attachment opportunities to allow solar on that building.
- Response: Suggest the connections to the open space will create opportunities for social gathering 9 months out of the year.

John Hawes, raised the same point that Member Buck has raised about disruption to the historical gathering space for senior citizens and others as the Mall concept is redesigned. Good to have a conversation about it, but suspect the design is set. Was hoping to see more connectivity in and to Building A, but that does not seem apparent. Also respect the work that the Petitioner is doing to address other aspects of the Design Guidelines and other requirements.

Gary Shaw, initial reaction to design is positive. What about the phases and the overall project timeline? Comment that taking 8-10 cars out of the central parking lot would allow for a more creative design. Intrigued by the proposed connection to Greenough Boulevard. Where does that stand with the Department of Conservation and Recreation? Bike or pedestrian connections to Greenough Boulevard? How to exit from Harvard Vanguard site post-development? Would like to know more about the proposed list of materials.

- Response: The Mall is operating now, and the current businesses need to stay in business. This is the reason why so much is happening at once, because it lessens the overall time of impact. Phase 1 is demolition. Hope that Phase 2 will start (construction) around September, 2017. Sequencing for each building will be dependent on tenants. Acknowledge that parking is a primary need, so garage buildings will likely happen first. Hope to have new stores open for business in the fall of 2018. Have a 2020 date when they hope that everything would be complete.
- Response: Connection to Greenough Boulevard is very preliminary. Developer believes it is a positive aspect to the project, as a “relief valve” for additional traffic on Arsenal Street. Want to make sure this impacts traffic in a positive way. Only other relief valve in the Southerly direction is Talcott Avenue. This is also being explored in a very preliminary way. Hope to have more empirical numbers at following meetings.
- Response: On the rear of Building G is a multi-modal path that would get people down to Greenough Boulevard. Full design has not been fleshed out, but perhaps to a blinking light, with control for pedestrians and cyclists to cross.
- Response: The exit for Harvard Vanguard has to be maintained, and as of now, the design is to have it exit through the garage. Also an opportunity to go around the site and out. Going into the Arsenal Park lot feels pinched, because it is now by the chain-link fence by Marshall's. New design will be more welcoming.

John Hawes, also the historic way of exiting Arsenal Park.

- Response: Between David Gamble's comments and Mr. Shaw's comments, the exterior materials palette will be changed.

Jeff Brown, are the residential units for sale or rent?

- Response: Suggest there could be a mix of rental and homeownership units. Suggest the for-sale units would be a minority of the units, perhaps 3/4th rental and 1/4th for sale.

John Hawes, once you know this place, visitors will know where to park. I am concerned that the housing units don't have a lot of drop-off space planned in for this or for deliveries. Overall impression of the proposal is positive. Relationship of Building G to Building F seems problematic. I am concerned about units that in the space between G and F face North and a blank wall, that this is too squeezed, and should be thought out more. Entrance to Building G is also relatively hidden.

John Hawes, certain topics had and would not generally be discussed at this hearing, such as traffic. I ask that comments be addressed to architecture, site plan, site circulation, and design.

Nancy Hamett, 119 Riverside Street, I want to hear more about the process. What kinds of decisions can be made once the Master Plan is approved? What can the Planning Board approve or not change? What could not be conditioned or denied at the Site Plan review stage? Stormwater plan is key to the project. Should involve Conservation Commission review, and not generally subject to public review. Stormwater can affect the overall site plan design. This is a contaminated site, and there may be particular Best Management Practices that need to be implemented. This needs to be continually updated as construction proceeds, particularly underground investigation. This needs to be finished before the infiltration design, and what occurs if stormwater management design needs to be changed? Excited about the project, and would favor the cinema.

Steve Magoon, the Site Plan and Stormwater Management Plan have not been fully designed. I acknowledge that if some of those features change, and affect the positioning of planned buildings, then the overall plan would have to return to the Planning Board to amend the Master Plan. RMUD zoning allows for this, and describes what constitutes a “significant change” that would warrant an

amendment to the Master Plan. Looking at size, height, massing of buildings, site circulation, open space, landscaping in general. Site Plan review would include detailed engineering, details of the buildings, grading. The RMUD speaks to those things that are included in the Site Plan review, and what things constitute a significant enough change that the element would have to come back for further Planning Board review.

John Hawes, the Master Plan gives the developer confidence that certain aspects of the project will be held steady, but the Board has the ability to change things in the Master Plan if the developer requests it.

Gideon Schreiber, the Petitioner has submitted the site stormwater management plan. It is an aspect of the project review. The conditions will state the stormwater review, and what changes may be needed. The phasing process can accommodate changes to stormwater management that may come out of the demolition process.

Jeffrey Heidelberg, Boylston Properties, the Arsenal Project site was not a contaminated site. The Home Depot property has the Activity Use Limitation. The infiltration system is in front of Buildings E and G.

Payson Whitney, 475B Arsenal Street, I have submitted a comment letter for the record. I commend the Petitioner for the community engagement process. Vehicular connection to Greenough Boulevard a good idea, should be fully vetted. Noted ecological concerns. Does not support opening of Talcott Avenue to traffic. Changes at Building B and realignment of the bike path should be carried through to Arsenal Park entrance. Also, think carefully about the naming of internal streets. Strongly encouraged the Town to form the Committee to discuss uses of Arsenal Park before the end of 2016.

Bill McQuillan, BP Arsenal Group, said any construction related to Arsenal Park would not happen until Summer of 2018. As such, the Town and all involved have time to discuss the design of the Park.

Morina Sullivan, 45 Franklin Street, I am concerned with the proposed intersection at Greenough Boulevard. BP Arsenal Group/Boylston Properties had indicated at an August meeting that the DCR had proposed this intersection. It does not appear that DCR would proposed such a connection. I have contacted the DCR, and the DCR Director said BP Arsenal Group/Boylston Properties had proposed the connection. This was misleading, the indication is that the DCR had proposed the connection was to appear to quell the opposition. Greenough Boulevard is the jewel of Watertown. We need to preserve the intact tree canopy. The intersection would be intrusive and unsafe, given the overall traffic circulation pattern, roadway curve and other nearby intersections. Rather than create a "relief valve" for project traffic, change the development to fit the capacity of the roadway network.

Jonathon Bockian, Irving Street, I am concerned about the connection to Greenough Boulevard and the process. If Control Plans for the Master Plan are approved with this connection, then I suggest that the later Site Plan review could not remove this connection. I urge that until this connection is fully vetted that – traffic, intersection operations – drive not be part of the Master Plan Special Permit approval. If it does turn out to be a solution, it can be approved later.

Angie Kounelis, District A Town Councilor, I thank the Petitioner for the public process, open dialogue is refreshing. I acknowledge that something has to be done to improve the Arsenal Mall. I suggest, however, that the proposed development is massive. I am not certain Watertown can accommodate or withstand the proposed level of development. Constituents are very concerned about the development. Plans don't fully envision the magnitude of the project. An example of the size is the new Marriot Hotel. Renderings are very colorful and enjoyable, it is a city within Watertown. Watertown is a different scale

than the Assembly Square Mall. There will be cannoyizaiton of Arsenal Street. I understand the concept of the Master Plan. Once a 12-story building is allowed, it is then in place. The theater is perhaps the only amenity that many people will use. The open space will be for people who live there. Watertown is losing community space. The Arsenal Mall has long been used by the East End community as a gathering space, and as a space in the winter. Massive size of the development is particularly troubling. I understand that the property owner has rights, but the Town is entrusting historic buildings to the developer who need to be sensitive to the community. Gamble Associates wrote the *Comprehensive Plan*. Now critiquing developments as to whether they conform to the *Comprehensive Plan*. Believes this is a conflict of interest.

Robert Lauricella, 260 Mount Auburn Street, primary benefit to the Town is the tax benefit. No analysis of this from the Petitioner, nor the Planning Department. I suggest that this needs to be vetted before the development should be allowed to proceed.

John Hawes, the redevelopment would result in twice the amount of taxes paid than currently.

Bill McQuillan, BP Arsenal Group, the current taxes paid are approximately \$1.5 million, and once redeveloped, the estimate is that they would approach \$2.9 million.

Tony Palomba, Councilor At Large, we thank the Petitioner for Community Meetings. I reiterate concerns expressed by Mr. Bockian. Connection to Greenough Boulevard is too preliminary. Is it part of the Master Plan approval?

Steve Magoon, what's currently shown on the plans is a "potential vehicular connection." The Planning Board can disapprove this connection, or leave it in place as a concept, or express a desire for the connection.

Tony Palomba, Councilor At Large, given the range of possibilities, I would advocate to remove the connection as part of the Master Plan. It is not well developed yet, still just an idea. Needs more review. The height of the taller building has changed. I suggest that it be reduced to ten (10) stories. I want to thank the Boylston Properties for including Community Room in the new hotel. I hope for similar dedicated space in the proposed new development.

John Hawes, RMUD established a maximum height of 130 feet. It's up to the Planning Board to determine whether the building fits the zoning. 100 foot setback in the RMUD – would it affect the proposed Greenough Boulevard connection? I am concerned about the impact on the Greenough corridor.

Gideon Schreiber, the 100 foot setback speaks to structures, and the roadway link is not a structure.

Marilyn Petitio Devaney, Governor's Council, it is important to emphasize that when the Arsenal Mall was built, the contamination was not removed by the Army. I am concerned about the tall building. Ladder truck can only go up to 100 feet. I am not persuaded by the fact that the building will have sprinklers. I am concerned about the impact the proposed project will have on Town services, and Fire Department staff. Some Departmental staff are grant funded. Fire fighting in this project will be very difficult. Traffic on Mount Auburn Street and Arsenal Street will be exacerbated. I do not believe that the project will be able to be changed to address concerns and impacts.

Libby Shaw, Templeton Parkway, member of Trees for Watertown, there were many drawings showing trees and tree canopy. Paradigm problem – not reviewing green infrastructure with the same depth as the buildings and other hardscape infrastructure. We need to plan long term for the health of green

infrastructure. Tree pits are not adequate to plan for long-term health of the vegetation. Green infrastructure has to be included at the Master Plan concept. Some of the concept renderings don't represent the actual case, such as the trees planted close the buildings will not be in full sun, as shown in the conceptual "drive by." Design frontage on Arsenal Street to accommodate trees for their entire life cycle, and so they can thrive.

John Hawes, the Town Departmental review is still ongoing. I suggest that the scale and level of detail for building design would be more in depth. We are only looking at conceptual design at the Master Plan stage.

Steve Magoon, tree pit details and locations, or structural soils, should be looked at closely at Site Plan review. Building location and shading for trees are also important concerns.

John Hawes, building design and materials will be discussed in detail later, but the overall design intent is clear at this stage. Part of the Master Plan intent is to allow the Town to make rules so a developer can move ahead and the process is flexible. We are trying not to force a developer to create very in depth plans and then the Board rejects them.

Gary Shaw, a Master Plan is a conceptual statement about the project. If the Town and the developer want to look more closely at the greenscape, that's appropriate. Arsenal Street is a major roadway in Watertown, and its overall design is important. I suggest that the Petitioner and the Project Team want to carefully address the greenscape.

Gideon Schreiber, the review of the site circulation pattern would involve looking at roadway widths, and curbing. The Town Tree Warden would be involved in the review, including where existing and new materials are to be placed, and how they would affect the existing plantings.

Hannah Raykoff, 57 Spruce Street, this project was the first public meeting that I had attended. I thank the Petitioner for the care taken in the presentation, and the Planning Board for the care they seem to be taking in the review, as well as the Councilors for their comments. Would there be an opportunity to discuss the Transportation Demand Management program, and mode share in the later meeting?

John Hawes, transportation issues are not being reviewed tonight. That would be the topic of a later meeting.

Michelle Cokonow, 37 Paul Street, would the recent proposed changes to Section 5.07 Affordable Housing be applied to this project, including the proposal for a deeper subsidy for part of the set aside units?

Steve Magoon, once the Zoning Amendment has been advertised for public hearing, which the proposed changes to Section 5.07 has been, a project can't go forward that would be in conflict with that. Given this, the proposed changes to Section 5.07 will apply to this project.

Jeff Brown motioned to continue the Project to the next meeting of the Planning Board.
Gary Shaw seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0 In Favor.

Jeff Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:20 PM.
Fergal Brennock seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0 In Favor.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 10:20 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____
For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 10/20/16 which is available in the DCDP office.