

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: March 8, 2017 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:05 PM
PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting
PRESENT: John Hawes, Chairman; Jeff Brown; Janet Buck
Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner

CONTINUED CASES

101-103 Morse Street - SPR - ZBA-2017-02

Jeff Brown motioned to continue the above petition to the Planning Board's meeting on April 12, 2017.

Janet Buck seconded the motion.

Vote: 3-0 In favor.

CASES PENDING

101 Walnut Street; Vanesse Hangen Brustlin Inc. – Amendment to SP/V - ZBA-2017-04

William York, Atty, introduced the project team: Mr. Robert Dubinsky, Senior Vice President, and Mr. Jim Bosivert, Facilities manager. VHB, the Petitioner, had just recommitted to a new 14-year lease of the building in Watertown. The relief requested was de minimus. As part of remaining in Watertown, VHB is looking to add an internal mezzanine at the second level to better connect the building, and provide employee amenities. There are no exterior changes to the building or lot, with the exception of a small outdoor patio area proximate to the new employee café.

Robert Dubinsky, Senior Vice President for Corporate Resources, project leader, VHB started in 1979 and moved to Watertown in 1989. It now has 24 offices up and down the East Coast, amounting to 1,300 total employees. 101 Walnut Street has been the corporate headquarters for about 28 years. Building accounts for 300 employees. Senior Management team, HR, Legal and other key corporate functions are housed at 101 Walnut Street. Founders converted a then warehouse space in 1989. Expanded into the entire building at Walnut Street from 1990 to 2005. A video rendering of the proposed new café and meeting space, which would be created out of an existing interior space, was shown. Above the new café and meeting space would be a mezzanine, allowing more conference and office space on the upper floor. The upper floor office space allows existing employees to be relocated, to make way for the new café and training room. The mezzanine also provides an overlook of the café area, and allows space for a new stairway down to the café. New outdoor seating would be accessed through a door from the café "lobby," and would not take up any existing parking spaces. Revitalized space is part of corporate vision.

John Hawes, I have been in the building previously, the layout provided in this plan is a better layout with respect to the main entrance.

Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner, summarized the staff report, it is the prior permits in the 1980's and 1990's that require the Petitioner to return for Board review. Staff recommended changes to the prior approvals with respect to overall building size, and to bring the parking into conformance with the Zoning Ordinance. The four criteria for the proposed Special Permit have been met. Two conditions will be updated and clarified. Staff recommends conditional approval.

Janet Buck, questioned the location of the patio.. Mr. Devinsky explained the location.

Gideon Schreiber, the outdoor patio space is adjacent to the main entrance, which incidentally did not face either Walnut or Arsenal Streets. It is very small, and would be incorporated into the sidewalk.

Jeff Brown, VHB had owned the building in the past, and then sold it to the Davis Company. Does the company have an educational piece for clients, etc.? Would employees have to move out to complete the renovation?

Robert Dubinsky, explained the ownership history. It involved a sale, land swap, and other transactions, to create the site configuration that exists today. The key change was creating an Arsenal Street access in 2008-2009. Materials on the company, clients, and its history are available on the corporate website. Next is the presentation of design, renovation, and construction staging process.

Jeff Brown motioned to approve the amendment to the Special Permit/Variance #01-47SP/ASP/AVAR based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the Staff Report.

Janet Buck seconded the motion.

Vote: 3-0 In favor.

Jeff Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 PM.

Janet Buck seconded the motion.

Vote: 3-0 In favor.