

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: February 13, 2019 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM
PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting
PRESENT: Jeff Brown, Chairman; Payson Whitney; Jason Cohen; Janet Buck
Steve Magoon, Director DCD&P; Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Board; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Payson Whitney motioned to approve Minutes of the November 14, 2018 meeting.
Janet Buck seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0 In Favor

CASE PENDING

- **586 Pleasant Street; Ice Cold Now, Inc. – Amendment to Special Permit PB-2017-05**

Jonathan Chen, Ice Cold Now, we are proposing to operate a facility which will brew, chill and package coffee/tea for wholesale to deliver to local retailers or directly to consumers via internet.

Gideon Schreiber, the site that was previously used for storage, was recently redeveloped. It consists of 8 bays with an office above each. This is a lights industrial use that requires SP. Staff believes that this is appropriate use for the site. There will be no adverse effect on the neighborhood. The noise will be minimal. There will be no exterior alterations. The proposed project is consistent with the vision for the site. Staff recommends approval with standard conditions.

Jason Cohen, is new equipment added to the roof?

Resident, Repton Place, we are desperate for a coffee shop in the area, could that be added? Will there be additional truck traffic?

Jonathan Chen, there will not be any roof equipment. Retail is not allowed on the site. Only UPS trucks will be coming to the site. We use vans for our deliveries.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board approve the Amendment to Special Permit PB-2017-05 SP/Sr under Section 5.01(a)(1) based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, subject to conditions set forth in the staff report.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0 In Favor

- **122 Grant Avenue; Bonie Dirr – Special Permit Finding**

Bonie Dirr, this is a request to construct a rear addition and expand existing garage to allow handicap access to the house and to safely maneuver handicap vehicles.

Wayne Pelletier, Architect, the garage expansion is needed to allow wheelchair access and to allow handicap van lift. The expansion will increase the lot coverage from 28.1% to 28.8%. There will be no detriment to the neighborhood.

Gideon Schreiber, SPF is needed because this is a non-conforming house on a 9,104 s.f. lot located on a corner of Grant Avenue and Sparkill Street. The building coverage and front yard are non-conforming. The rear yard swimming pool has been removed which reduced the impervious coverage. The project also includes a second floor addition and relocated entry which are within the front yard setback.

Jason Cohen, this is a corner property, minimum square footage is added, the height of the structure is compliant.

Janet Buck, it is important to have homes that are handicapped accessible.

Janet Buck motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the petition for Special Permit Finding under Section 4.06(a) for an increase to the building coverage and for a second story addition within the non-conforming front yard setback based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report.

Jason Cohen seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0 In Favor

- **195 Mt.Auburn Street;** Clark Elefteriadis – Special Permit Finding

Clark Elefteriadis, my wife and I purchased the house in February 2016. We loved the house immediately, the main reason was to create Pilate studio. We have received an approval from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Unfortunately our abutting neighbor has appeal the decision stating that the space should be residential. Now after owning the property for 3 years, and the house being half empty, we have decided to convert to existing office space to additional 2 residential units. The house will now consist of 3 residential units and one office. There will be 6 parking and 1 shadow space which will allow us to keep the existing cherry tree. There have been many complaints and concerns from the neighbors and each has been addressed. This is a historic property on a corner lot of historic district. The new use will reduce parking requirement. We have addressed all the issues and hope to move forward.

Andy Rohas, Rohas Design of Boston, the 2 story addition was done years ago, new plan is showing the conversion to 2 units and additional windows. Code analysis were completed in November 2018. The basement unit will be 1,043 s.f., the first floor unit is almost the same, and each unit is single story.

Gideon Schreiber, the 11,543 s.f. property contains a 2.5-3 story Queen Anne/Colonial Revival Victorian house that was built around 1893. This proposal is to convert portion of the office space to 2 units. Substantial reduction of parking is now required, from 10 spaces to 7 spaces as required for 3 residential units. Shadow parking request would allow 6 spaces with 1 shadow in order not to lose the landscaping and existing cherry tree. The property is located on bus line with a bus stop directly in front of the house. The proposal is mixed use in a Victorian structure. This proposal is not substantially more detrimental and is consistent with other houses in this historic neighborhood. Staff recommends approval with conditions 1-7 in the staff report.

Steve Magoon, number of questions were raised by immediate abutter Jonathan Bloch. The Board should consider the application that is in front of them currently. The Planning Board will not address the legal issues, it will address change of use and make recommendation to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Payson Whitney, the application is very confusing, the information needs to be cleaned up. The parking spaces meet the dimensional requirements. We will focus on what is in front of the Board.

Jason Cohen, it is not entirely clear what is proposed, it is mixed with previous request for Pilate studio. Parking spaces dimensions are confusing. Do the changes to the house violate the Historic district requirements ?

Gideon Schreiber, same people will now use the spaces daily. An air condition pipe was installed without the Historic Commission approval. Today's changes will be taken to Historic District Commission to be clarified. No issues are outstanding, some of the previous items were not approved by the Historic District Commission.

Janet Buck, many of the legal comments go back to Zoning Board of Appeals to over 20 years ago. This Board consists of architects and engineers, not legal staff. We have the Zoning Board that provides directive for the intensive process. We need to look at this property and see what is the best for the Town as suggested by the Comprehensive Plan. This is the only Historic District in Watertown, it is important to preserve this image. I find that this residential use is 100% appropriate. The chance that this house will become single or even 2 family is very slim. The property is located on bus line, it is possible that a tenant will not have a car. It is my opinion that we should approve this proposal as appropriate use with the necessary conditions.

Jim Morris, Franklin Street, conversion from office to residential is listening to neighbors. One of the issues that is legal needs to be addressed. Second issue is the house, is the house big enough to accommodate 3 residential units and one business. Franklin Street is very narrow street, it cannot accommodate parking on both sides and two way traffic. People park on sidewalks, many leave their cars and take the bus, there is no enforcement of parking rules. This house will not be a single family, 4 units is not reasonable. There is a long history of neighbors being ignored, the concerns are legitimate.

Rena Baskin, 15 Franklin Street, I am glad that the space is converted to residential, but adding 2 more residences is too much. We get commuters who leave their cars and use the bus. One additional residence would be preferable, that would be 1 business and 2 residences. We have not been heard, there should be a compromise. This proposal will have adverse effect on the neighborhood. More people in the Historic District neighborhood will change the character.

Gideon Schreiber, they don't have to provide any parking because this is a Special Permit Finding.

Jonathan Bloch, 9 Franklin Street, I live next door to this house and I am against this proposal, but I am for the property space to change to residential. This is not appropriate use for the site, it will be a safety hazard for pedestrians and vehicles. I am confused about how many parking spaces are required for office space.

Gideon Schreiber, this site was original permitted for funeral home. It is a pre-existing site with limited parking. The 1996 plan showing 10 parking spaces is inaccurate. It was counting the basement storage area as well. The Board can decide that 1 parking space for each unit is adequate. 2,000 s.f. of the office space will be converted to 2 residential units. Stacked parking is allowed for 1-2 units.

Jonathan Bloch, the parking spaces are located next to my property. The number of spaces is totally misrepresented, the count does not affect the use of the property. The property has been vacant for 2 years, now there is one residential unit and one business, and there is still parking problem. Negotiations broke down because I am not in favor of two additional residential units, my proposal was one additional unit.

Jeff Brown, if the petitioner adds one unit only, it will leave substantial empty space. Is it possible to have?

Jonathan Bloch. If each unit is occupied by 2 people, they will have 2 cars, 2 spaces are needed.

Steve Magoon, if today was one unit to be converted to 3, it would not be allowed. This is Special Permit Finding to convert 2 business units to 2 residential units.

Jason Cohen, we can recommend that one unit has no parking

Payson Whitney, will the parking spaces be striped? Will there be a curb?

Andy Rohas, all spaces will be striped to allow for egress, a fence will be installed. The 2 units are over 2000 s.f., if only 1 unit, it would have to be at least 4 bedroom units that would have a bigger impact.

Janet Buck, more businesses will generate more traffic. We read every page of the abutter's objections. Majority had to do with legal issues, that is not what this Board is about. The company that occupied the space previously moved because they retired not because there was parking problem.

Jonathan Bloch, what are the criteria for granting of Special Permit Finding under Section 4.06(a)? Does the Board believe that this use will be less detrimental?

Steve Magoon, the proposed use is no more detrimental to the neighborhood then the existing non-conforming use. The case before the Planning Board is to convert two commercial spaces to 2 residential spaces.

Gideon Schreiber, this is a meeting of the Board, Jonathan Bloch cannot be taking the meeting over and asking these questions in this way. Planning Board needs to deliberate and make recommendation to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Janet Buck, 2 residential units will generate less traffic than the 2 commercial units. We are doing comparison.

Jeff Brown, this is the Boards judgement call. We are ready to vote.

Sarah Ryan, Paul Street, I know the area, increase in residential use will be detrimental to this neighborhood. One additional unit would be preferable. It is different when you live in the neighborhood, it is very tight. Density in Watertown is increasing, there are more people. The Boards decision will affect the whole Town.

Jason Cohen, there are only couple of people here, we have received many emails in the last 24 hours, all were written within the last 36 hours. It is not fair to the Board, it makes our position difficult. We do not appreciate when people state that the Board is not listening.

Steve Magoon, some comments came couple of hours before this meeting. It is now up to the Board. If the Board feels that they cannot make a decision, the petition can be continued. The Board will not deliberate about the legal issues, they will get addressed separately.

Gideon Schreiber, all the emails/letters submitted to the Planning staff and submitted to the Planning Board will be forwarded to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Staff is available to answer any questions.

Zayna Gold, petitioner, there is nothing that we can do that will make the abutter satisfied. I am asking the Board to keep open mind.

Janet Buck, I appreciate the parking problem, it needs to be addressed by proper channels. Don't take it out on the petitioner.

Jason Cohen, our vote is based on conversion from 2 commercial to 2 residential units and it being no more detrimental then the existing non-conforming use.

Payson Whitney, the application needs to be clarified.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the petition for Special Permit Finding under Section 4.06(a) to convert a portion of the previously approved office to two residential units and approval of an updated Site and Parking plan based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0 In Favor

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting and public hearings at 9:10 PM.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:10 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 2/13/2019 which is available in the DCDP office.