

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: November 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; Gary Shaw; Janet Buck
Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Board; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Janet Buck motioned to approve Minutes of the 10/10/2019 Planning Board meeting.
Payson Whitney seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0 In favor

PUBLIC HEARING

ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

William York, Atty, representing the owner of 70, 78, 84-86, 88 Galen Street, requesting to amend the Zoning Map by removing the above parcels from the Limited Business District into the I-2 (Industrial Zoning District in keeping with the abutting properties to make it consistent with 2015 Comprehensive Plan. Right now 87% of the land is industrial, 17% Limited Business. The range of uses in I-2 is broader than what the area was originally zoned, less focused on heavy industry and more business oriented.

Michael Wang, Architect, we have worked with the Town on the 2015 Master Plan which is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. This is a challenging site, parcels are underutilized. The area is gateway to Watertown Square and the whole Town. It is an ideal location to mixed uses, it will create a new urban square, capitalize on transit oriented development. It will develop unifying character to land uses and buildings along the corridor, allow for higher density. The total parcel is approximately 5 acres, currently 4.16 are in I-2, 0.87 acres in LB, and there is no usable open space. The properties are blighted, not a pedestrian friendly environment and no usable open space. This is an opportunity to create a new park and we are proposing park on the corner of Galen & Water Street. Up to 40% of open space will be provided, there is a potential for roof garden. The site will accommodate targeted development, redefine important gateway, provide new urban square, and enhance pedestrian streetscape and connection to Charles River. It will create opportunity for improved access to the MBTA yard, it will allow development of a prominent street with desired uses.

William York, we have met with DPW and the superintendent Jerry Mee, the realignment of Water Street is very positive, the easterly side of Galen Street will widen. The proposed rezoning will give opportunity to follow the vision for the site and eliminate curb cuts.

Janet Buck, we are not looking at specific site plan, just considering zoning change. The cuts are not to the River, they are to Nonantum Road.

Gideon Schreiber, a memo regarding the proposed change was prepared by the staff. This is an opportunity to have some commercial and retail use along the frontage of Galen Street. The range of uses allowed in the I-2 today is broader than when the area was originally zoned. Realignment of Water Street and interaction with the MBTA site is also positive. Staff is in support of the proposal.

Gary Shaw, we do not know what is the specific proposal for the site, how will it affect the traffic, we do not know about the implications. We are only being told that it will be lab and office space. We need to know about the implication of the project on the Town and traffic in the area. We are not getting the answers that we are looking for.

Gideon Schreiber, they came to us with the parcel, it is an opportunity to look at it from more cohesive way. This proposal is about zoning not about specific project, we asked them not to focus on specific project.

William York, the comprehensive plan created a vision, changes are driven by private industry. The development will fulfill the Watertown vision as outlined in the 2011 Strategic Framework for Economic Development and the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. The developer took the risk assembling the parcels, creation of the site, realignment of the buildings, and removing curb cuts on Galen Street, retail presence, uses catering to commuters. It will provide balance of buildings, office, R&D and open space. Galen Street is a gateway to the Town but it does not feel like one now.

Jason Cohen, this is not about specific project, this is a petition for a zoning amendment. How do we know that the developer will follow up on what is being proposed?

William York, we work with DPW, we will have to come back in front of the Boards with the proposed development. The proposed park is critical to the enhancement of the gateway.

Payson Whitney, Limited Business zone is very limited, I-2 zone allows more flexibility. This is not a very good gateway. Transportation will be huge issue, traffic is already a problem. We see many vacant storefronts in the Town already.

Gary Shaw, I want to support this change, but the developer is asking for carte blanche. I have a hard time recommending this to the Town Council. I need more information in order to support this zoning change.

Michael Wang, we could do 400,000 s.f. of development by right now but it would not be of the best quality.

William York, the zoning amendment will allow for better project. It will get rid of curb cuts, access the site from Water Street not Galen Street.

Jodie Zussman, Boston Development Group, we are long term property holders, we have owned 20 Water Street for over 20 years and purchased the car dealership. We are looking to put 2 parks in the area. This proposal would be great benefit to the Town as well.

Gideon Schreiber, there are differences between I-2 and LB, it will provide additional 30,000 s.f.. This is not about specific project, this is about zoning. It is conceptual concept, review by all departments will follow. This creation will require more open space, more height will allow more open space. The maximum height in LB is 40 feet, in I-2 55 ft.

Len Holt, I grew up on the Southside, this developer is looking for better development lot. I don't want to see Galen Street become full of high-rises. The traffic is not any better, where are some new restaurants?

John Laberdini, 99 Main Street, let's not blame this team for the Galen Street traffic. What is being proposed is better than what is there now. It will provide more pleasing look. This developer has a good reputation in Newton, I am confident that they will be good neighbors.

Ruth Rapaport, 28 Hunt Street, many fatalities have happened at the intersection of Nonantum and Water Street. What will happen with 51 Water Street, will it be demolished? We are not urban, we are still suburban

Lisa Feltner, District B Councilor, I have mixed emotions, best intentions are good, this planning has not been done in public. We do not have neighborhood planning, there are no guarantees. This is a very large project that needs different approach than small projects. The Town Council should weigh in on public spaces. You don't just change zoning without input from the community, public should be more involved in the process, we should all benefit from this. This team is asking too much.

William York, 83% of the site is already in I-2, this is a public meeting that is part of the process. After tonight it will proceed to the Town Council. We will show you how we can make this area better. This is following clear vision of the Comprehensive plan. Only 13% of the site requires the zoning change, we follow appropriate process for zoning amendment.

Jeff Brown closed the public hearing at 8:15 PM.

Gary Shaw, can we vote tonight and ask the Town Council for further information. We don't know the implications of this zoning amendment. I want to support this but I cannot as it is now. It's negligent not to care about the impact.

Janet Buck, I do not agree.

Gideon Schreiber, you cannot direct the Town Council to ask the developer to provide more information to the Planning Board.

Jason Cohen, there are 5 Town Councilors present tonight, there are many steps before the amendment is approved.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board recommend to the Town Council approval of the requested Zoning Map Amendment as submitted.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-1 In favor
Gary Shaw opposed

CASES PENDING

- **99-101 Lexington Street;** Michael P. McDade – **Special Permit Finding**

Janet Buck motioned to continue the above petition to the next meeting of the Planning Board

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

- **53 Columbia Street;** Ryan Wilson – **Special Permit Finding**

Diane Pauro, Rebel Builders, this is a proposal to expand existing house for a growing family. It is a simple project, adding 2 dormers to provide more balance.

Brian Wilson, owner, 10 year resident, we have a one child and expect second one in February. This is our forever house. Our neighbors are in full support.

Gideon Schreiber, this property is a 2-1/2 story brick house with an existing sunroom. The petitioner is proposing to build second story on top of the sunroom to create master bedroom. Gable roof with dormers will be less impactful, with an addition in the rear. The proposed addition will not be more detrimental with minimal impact on the neighbors. Staff recommends approval.

Jason Cohen, the 2 story side will be very close to the abutter, only 5 feet to the neighbor. The higher ridge would be preferable.

Diane Pauro, we have tried to incorporate the style. We want to minimize the impact on the neighborhood. Addition will have paneling.

Jason Cohen motioned that the Planning Board recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit Finding based upon the finding that it does meet the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions in the staff report with additional condition that the two-story with gable design be presented to the ZBA.

Janet Buck seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In Favor

CASES PENDING

- **650 Pleasant Street;** Arranta Bio, Ian Baird, Cambridge; Kevin McDonald – **Special Permit**

Hugh Hahn, VHB, this is a request for a Special Permit to demolish a single story building and replace with a 2 story office space.

Mark Bamforth, president of Arranta Bio, we manufacture products for process development, clinical tryouts with patients for microbiome therapies. We have 150 employees, half of patients are local. We receive support from local companies. We are proposing solar panels on the roof of the building, connection to the bike path. We are making safe innovative products that help in major disease areas. We are proposing attractive safe space for our employees and products. Lab and manufacturing will be in the rear. There are 4 levels of safety in this process, this company is at level 2.

Andy Hazelton, Architect, the existing building will be demolished. This is a very simple proposal, the corner element is curtain wall, large areas of glass are proposed for ground floor. Mechanical equipment will be placed on the roof with a façade. Parking area is proposed on east side. We are proposing high performance window system. Visitor entrance is on the east, employee entrance on west. A simple office space on second story. After being on the site for several months, the owners will review the parking, and if not needed some of the spaces will be converted to open space. A 200 foot setback from the Charles River is subject to Conservation Commission approval. The owner would like to widen the rear, subject to DCR approval.

Gideon Schreiber, the proposal is over 4,000 s.f., Special Permit criteria has been met, the petitioner is willing to improve the site. This is an appropriate location for such a use, there will be no adverse effect and no nuisance. Adequate facilities will be provided. The petitioner has been very responsive, 10 criteria for SPR have been met, and existing trees will be saved. David Gamble participated in the developer's conference, screening could be used in a more interesting way. This project will benefit the Charles River corridor. Utility services will improve, very detailed check list was submitted. The project is compliant with new solar requirements for the addition. Short term bike rack is provided. There are no concerns from DPW, curb cuts have been improved. Final lighting review will be done by the staff. The petitioner is committed to Transportation Demand Management for the site. Conservation Commission will review before final approval. Staff recommends conditional approval.

Payson Whitney, this project will improve the streetscape on Pleasant Street. Will they have to come back for Conservation Commission final approval? The transient level of people on site will allow for less parking. If the shadow parking spaces are not needed, will they have to come back?

Gideon Schreiber, Conservation Commission will have control of the site, there are no issues. Additional condition regarding the parking will be added as part of the TDM.

Mark Bamforth, with this approval, the spaces should be able to convert to landscape.

Janet Buck, this project will greatly improve Pleasant Street streetscape.

Jeff Brown, there are many different colors, are they final?

Andy Hazelton, we do not have final plans, there might be some minor changes in the future. We will keep the colors mute and change the logo colors. These plans are months old, now being reconsidered, some issues with the work station space is being discussed.

Payson Whitney, if changes are made to the design, the petitioner has to come back to the Board.

Gideon Schreiber, if there are alternatives proposed by the petitioner, they need to ask the Board if final review by staff is acceptable.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board approve the petition for Special Permit under Sections 5.01(c)(e) & 6.01(h) to construct approximately 15,700 s.f. 2-story addition to be used as office, based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report with additional condition #16 that the current parking areas identified as future shadow parking can be converted to landscaping, when determined by the petitioner that they are not necessary for tenant leasing

Jason Cohen seconded the motion.

Vote: 5 -0 In Favor

OTHER

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting and public hearings at 9:35 PM.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:35 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 11/13/2019 which is available in the DCDP office.