

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: January 8, 2020 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting

PRESENT: Jeff Brown, Chairman; Janet Buck; Payson Whitney; Gary Shaw; Jason Cohen
Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Board; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner

CASES PENDING

- **18-20 Porter Street;** Olga Ban, Ramol Partners LLC – **Special Permit Finding**

Olga Ban, this is a 2-family house with 2 parking spaces. We are proposing to add 4 parking spaces in the rear.

Gideon Schreiber, the property has pre-existing nonconforming driveway. The petitioner is proposing to extend the driveway to provide additional parking in the rear which would result in increasing the nonconforming buffer from approx. 2 feet to 1 foot where 4 feet is required, providing 10 foot rear buffer. The extension of the driveway is not substantially more detrimental. Staff recommends approval with conditions.

Janet Buck, I am in favor of rear parking, but I am concerned with open space being lost, everything is paved, over paving the neighborhood.

Gary Shaw, the dimensional table is not complete. Does the project meet impervious requirements? We should not allow 2 foot strip where 4 foot is required.

Gideon Schreiber, the 4 foot strip is landscaped. Minimum open space requirement is 15%, condition about landscape will be added by the Planning Board.

Jason Cohen, there is no fence between the neighbors. Is there a letter of support from the neighbors?

Olga Ban, the neighbor is in support of the proposal. He also asked for us to clean his property and we did.

Payson Whitney, a similar case was before the Board recently, how are these cars getting in and out?

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit Finding under Section 4.06(a) to allow extension of the existing nonconforming driveway within the required 4 foot buffer based upon the finding that it does meet the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions in the staff report.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In Favor

- **23 Elm Street;** Brandon Banks, NSAJO Holdings Inc – **Amendment to Special Permit**

Michael Ross, Atty, Prince Lobel representing NSAJO Holdings, this is a request to amend a Special Permit ZBA-2017-03 to allow for the operation of a proposed Adult Use Marijuana Establishment at the site of the Medical Use Marijuana Establishment in Building 2 at 23 Elm Street. There are close to 4000 applications in Massachusetts. 30 dispensaries opened so far, 3 are proposed in Watertown. Many rules apply. Not many changes since it was first proposed. We will occupy 2,500 s.f. of Building 2. We have started the process in 2016, as of now the facility is not yet open. We will share the wall with another tenant, amended package was submitted tonight. Changes were made during the course of construction, minor changes were presented to building department. Originally the opening was proposed for March 2020. The parking analysis shows that 36 parking spaces are required for the site and that 51 are provided, showing surplus of 15. Our space requires 13 spaces and additional 9 spaces for a total of 22 spaces.

Gideon Schreiber, this is a request to amend previously approved Special Permit to add additional use to the site. Only few conditions had to be altered. The change is to allow Adult Use Marijuana to the previously approved Marijuana Treatment Center. The proposal would require parking modifications and shared use of the approximately 2,545 s.f. inside an existing 20,600 s.f. Building 2. Because of the nature of the building, rear location is appropriate, providing additional use in the same facility. There will be no nuisance or serious hazard to pedestrians. Police detail will be provided for opening day and daily review will follow. Previously approved large trash container will be removed and only small containers will be used. Control plans have been modified, condition #1 medical marijuana will be taken out, new conditions #19 & 20 added in reference to opening day strategy to be reviewed by Watertown Police.

Jason Cohen, what is the hold up on the opening of Medical Marijuana Treatment Center? Opening day strategy is very intriguing, what can we expect?

Michael Ross, you cannot open dispensary until cultivation site is open. We were ready since June 2019, everyone is asking for adult use. Some facilities make 70 million, other 11 mill. ID is required from clients. We do not know when the adult use starts, it could be 7 months, and it could be longer. There will be other dispensaries opening in the area, lot of appointments will be made by phone. There will be no use on site.

Gideon Schreiber, coordination will be made by the petitioner, Police Department and the Community Development & Planning office.

Payson Whitney, there were many concerns before, now I understand it better. If there is an August opening, it would be a very busy time.

Jeff Brown, it is a very depressing site, buildings need to be painted.

Angie Kounelis, 55 Keenan Street, District A Town Councilor, I was opposed to the original proposal for Medical Marijuana, and it is too close to residential area. I am opposed to this new proposal, this site is not appropriate location for such use. Many residents spoke against the use. Hopefully all safeguards will be in place when it opens.

Michael Ross, we are leasing the site which is now for sale. The lease is for 2.5 years, we would like to extend it.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Amendment to Special Permit ZBA-2017-03 to allow the approved Marijuana Treatment Center to also be permitted for Adult Use Marijuana based upon the finding that it does meet the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions in the staff report.

Jason Cohen seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In Favor

- **19 Coolidge Hill Road; 19 Coolidge Hill Owner LLC - Special Permit**

Paul Ferreira, Blue Hawk Investments, we have purchased the site 2 years ago, planning staff provided guidance for our design. We are proposing to build a 73,000 s.f. storage facility and number of amenities will be provided including landscaped park, public plaza, 1,000 s.f. indoor community space, off-site mitigation, for a total of \$750,000.

Eric Vogel, Director of Design & Construction, this is a sloped site on the bottom of Coolidge Hill Road and Arlington Street. Currently there is an old warehouse on site. Extensive study of what would be the most appropriate use for the site was conducted. This design will create open space. All dimensional requirements will be met. We have met with the Planning Staff and Town consultant

Gamble Associates regarding the building design, developing variations of building massing and types of materials chosen. The proposed structure is simple in its form, simple stacking of 5 floors. We are proposing aggressive solar system. The building will be 52 ft high on Arlington Street, we have tried to create combination of soft and hard surfaces, and landscape within the setbacks, sidewalks will be replaced. We are using simple materials and metal panel system in warm colors. Natural cedar slats, some extended to create pattern. Very quiet building will be created.

Gary Shaw, you need to show us what will be build, not something that will be changed. Same with colors, you need to present what will be done. If such changes are made, you would have to come back to the Board.

Paul Ferreira, self-storage facilities are in demand, minimal parking is required. Visitors of Fillipello Park can use our parking and bike parking spaces. Sidewalks will be reconstructed. This is a low density use of the site with minimal impact. Storm water contained within the site. There will be no shadow impact on the abutters. We will achieve LEED silver. Neighbors are in support for the project, we have a letter with 52 signatures of support.

Gideon Schreiber, this is a request for Special Permit with Site Plan Review to construct 73,738 s.f. building that would include 450 storage units, 1,000 s.f. of office space and 1,000 s.f. of community space. The petitioner will provide 18 parking spaces. The petitioner held community meeting on October 9, 2019, petition supporting the project was also submitted. The proposal is in keeping with Comprehensive Plan, the site is a vacant underutilized site. This is an appropriate type of use, pedestrian access will be improved. It is a low impact use, indoor community space will be provided. There will be substantial reduction of cars coming to the site, there will not be any impact on Watertown schools and minimal traffic impact. 13 standard parking spaces are required, 18 will be provided. There are 10 SPR criteria. 88% of the site is now impervious, it will be reduced to 77%. Design review was provided by Gamble Associates, some changes were suggested and incorporated. Benches will be provided along Arlington Street, TDM was approved by the Watertown Transportation Planner. Curbing, sidewalk and road improvements were approved by DPW. All utilities will be underground, trash bins inside the building. The building has very few windows, LEED certifiable commitment. Planted screening of parked vehicles will be provided. Series of conditions are with the staff report, two additional conditions #21 & #22.

#21 The Petitioner has committed to provide a 1,000 s.f. 'town-wide' amenity for exclusive and perpetual use by the community. The bathroom facilities are designed to be shared with the community space. Perpetual/DCDP

#22 **Loading.** All loading and unloading shall take place onsite and vehicle length shall be limited to no more than 35 feet.

Payson Whitney, I am in support of self-storage use. The design of the building is not yet complete, a wall facing Coolidge Hill Road too big, more step backs are needed. The building height does not add up, there is a 3.5 to 13.5 height difference. The Gamble Associates report focus is on Arlington Street view not Coolidge Hill Road. Some of the abutting homes will be in shadow virtually all day. The plans submitted tonight will become control documents, any changes, you have to come back.

Eric Vogel, we met with neighbors, shadows change from December to March.

Paul Ferreira, the building is tucked into the hillside, we have had substantial discussions with Gamble Associates and the staff. We want to satisfy the majority of the community, we have submitted 52 signatures in support. The community will benefit from this project.

Payson Whitney, the building does not have to be 52 feet, the maximum allowed by the Zoning Ordinance. The big mass of the building needs to change. We need to specify # of units.

Janet Buck, will there be any signage? The reaction to the building is positive. We are not seeing the same treatment on the south side of the building facing the Phillipello Park. Any discussion regarding the community space use, we do not want to see it empty.

Eric Vogel, we will identify the entrance to the community space and storage. Both will be on the Coolidge Hill Road side.

Gideon Schreiber, the discussion regarding the use of the space continues. The community space needs to have plan. It can be used as artist space, pop up, etc..

Gary Shaw, I am in favor of the project. What is the FAR? The scale of the wall on Coolidge Hill Road needs to be divided to make it more in scale with the neighborhood.

Paul Ferreira, site and materials are expensive, it is an expensive project. We have neighbors on Coolidge Hill Road, we think that they are in support of it.

Jason Cohen, I like the landscape and the materials, but I do not like the Coolidge Hill façade. The Arlington side looks much better. We do not want to encourage 250 feet long façade.

Jeff Brown, the units are all different sizes, all have solid walls. Attendant is present during working hours. We need to see cross section of the facility.

Marie, 14-16 Coolidge Hill Road, we are directly affected. We were presented 2 alternatives, high-rise or this, we chose the lesser of 2 evils. If the structure was lower, it would be preferable.

Eric, 36 Coolidge Hill Road, I like self-storage facility but 5 story is too high. Maybe the footprint can be increased and only 4 story.

Gideon Schreiber, as per the Zoning Ordinance, they would have to ask for a variance. There is no flexibility, the 4 criteria to be met, it is very difficult to get.

Jeff Brown, how does the developer decide what make the project viable – more units?

Paul Ferreira, we are now at a cost, each use has a special matrix. We think we can lease 100% of the structure within 18 months.

John Airasian, I was hoping that the Planning Board would approve the petition tonight. I am happy with this developer and proposal. The neighborhood is satisfied as well. All the projects in the area, Arsenal Yards, LINX, are causing traffic. This use will have minimal impact, it is a good use for the site.

Jason Cohen, we like the use, we just need to redesign the building

Angie Kounelis, 55 Keenan Street, District A Councilor, the use certainly has less impact, but as one abutter mentioned it was this or a high-rise. There are 2 proposals for this parcel, the self-storage or 40B. I have spent many hours going over the plans. The petitioner purchased the property after parking zoning amendment was approved. Is self-storage the best use for this property, what is this going to do to residential values in the area? I would not support 5 story building, 3 story building would be preferable. What are the hours of operation, what are the hours of the community space, how will it

work if needed at night? The decision is in the hands of the Boards.

Gideon Schreiber, the 40B is a separate project that will go directly to Zoning Board of Appeals.

Paul Ferreira, we did not deceive the Town. In the summer of 2018, we have presented the self-storage proposal to the Town and were not sure if it was accepted. We moved forward with housing, preparing 40B, in March/April 2019. We have new team members and started again thinking about the self-storage. We were not sure which way to go, this area does not need more traffic. The 40B petition was scheduled for the December 2019 meeting of ZBA and rescheduled to their 1/22/2020 meeting. It has now been withdrawn. We did not present to the neighbor housing or storage.

Angie Kounelis, when the Planning office submitted materials to the State and the petitioner appealed it. State determined that Watertown met the safe harbor criteria of 1.5%. Housing for this site is only allowed by means of 40B.

Jeff Brown, there are still issues to be addressed, the petitioner should come back at the next meeting.

Paul Ferreira, the issues are breaking the wall or reducing the height. We cannot reduce the building.

Jason Cohen, there are 5 Planning Board members who feel that the building is too high.

Janet Buck, not everyone will see the entire long façade, some will only see a section.

Jeff Brown, the proposed trees need to be more mature.

Janet Buck motioned to continue the petition to the next meeting to allow the petitioner to address the concerns of the Board.

Payson Whitney seconded the motions.

VOTE: 5-0 In Favor

OTHER

Representatives of the School Building Committee presented site plans for the Watertown Elementary School Building Project plans showing the site plan overalls, site circulation, parking for the Hosmer School, Cunniff School and Lowell School

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting at 10:15 PM.