



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Zoning Board of Appeals
Administration Building
149 Main Street
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Melissa M. Santucci Rozzi, Chairperson
David Ferris, Clerk
Christopher H. Heep, Member
John G. Gannon, Member
Kelly Donato, Member
Neeraj Chander, Alternate
Jason D. Cohen, Alternate

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Louise Civetti, Clerk to the ZBA

MINUTES

On Wednesday evening, March 22, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber on the second floor of the Administration Building, the Zoning Board of Appeals held a public hearing. In attendance: Melissa Santucci Rozzi, *Chair*; David Ferris, *Clerk*; Kelly Donato, *Member*; Christopher Heep, *Member*; John G. Gannon, *Member*; Jason Cohen, *Alternate Member*. *Absent: Neeraj Chander, Alternate Member*. Also Present: Gideon Schreiber, Sr. Planner; Louise Civetti, *Clerk to the ZBA*;

Chair Santucci Rozzi opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m., introduced the board members and staff, reviewed the agenda, and asked if anyone would like to make nominations for Chair of the Board. Member Ferris nominated Ms. Santucci Rozzi. Member Donato seconded. Voted 5-0 (no other nominations were stated). Chair Santucci Rozzi asked if there were any nominations for Clerk to the Board. Member Ferris asked if anyone would like to be nominated. No one spoke. Member Gannon nominated Mr. Ferris to be the Clerk to the Board. Member Heep seconded. Voted 5-0. The Chair will be Ms. Santucci Rozzi for another term and the Clerk will be Mr. Ferris for another term.

Chair Santucci Rozzi asked to table the minutes from January 2017 for review. There were no objections to her request.

Chair Santucci Rozzi reviewed the agenda, announcing the item under 'Other Business' would not be heard as the petitioner has decided not to move forward. The request for 101-103 Morse Street has been continued to the April agenda as it has not been heard by the Planning Board, as yet.

Chair Santucci Rozzi asked Member Ferris to read the legal notice for only other item on the agenda: 101 Walnut Street.

Member Ferris read the legal notice:

"Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB), 101 Walnut Street, Watertown, MA 02472, herein requests the Zoning Board of Appeals grant an Amendment to Special Permit/Variance, #01-47SP/ASP/AVAR, to modify Conditions and Control Plans, so as to expand an interior mezzanine at 101 Walnut Street, located in the Industrial-3 (I-3) Zoning District. ZBA-2017-04"

Attorney Bill York addressed the board, providing history of the building and the company that has been in Watertown for over 40 years. The reason for the relief is that VHB is the tenant to the building and millennials like to work in areas that are more vibrant and VHB has looked around and will now dress up a somewhat tired looking building and add an area for gathering.

Bob Dubinski, Senior Vice President, Corporate Resources, VHB. He has been with the company for 35 years. He is leading this renovation. He explained what VHB does and noted they have 24 offices on the east coast with 1300 employees and Watertown is their headquarters. They started in 1979 and purchased the building in 1989. They received a special permit to occupy the building at that time as part of the building was still an industrial use. They expanded in increments over time.

2015 was a big year – the property was sold and bought by the Davis Companies. They promoted a new CEO that was from Florida – they went through extensive criteria and chose to stay in Watertown due to the transit access, the walkability and the future of the Arsenal Street corridor. The new lease runs until 2030 and allows them to build out the entire space. One of the key ideas by the architect is the two-story mezzanine. The center of the building is where the mezzanine would be built – entirely within the structure. This improves their circulation within the building; it adds an access point; a row of offices that do not get light; a more compacted and efficient layout in the building. VHB is committed to Watertown. The condition, A1, is the modification that requires change. They are adding a small patio and overall, they are not changing parking – it continues to meet the requirements of zoning. They showed a 3-D video created by the architect. They are proud of the culture they have created and seek out the best and brightest.

Member Donato commented that the plans look great and exciting. She asked if the right and left of the patio will be greenspace. Mr. Dubinski said there is a non-compliant ramp there now and they are removing that to provide the patio.

Member Ferris commented that this looks like a good move for VHB. He suggested considerations of the charging stations. Mr. Dubinski said the wall that holds up the patio may need to be adjusted but they are not removing the charging stations. He added that a separate entry with covered bicycle storage and showers is also being planned but is not shown. Member Ferris asked if the portion of the ramp that is remaining is at a pitch that will need a railing. He suggested adding the railing on the drawing as it does not show on the rendering. He also suggested planter boxes to separate the area so you are not looking directly at the hood of a car.

Member Gannon worked with VHB on several projects in the past. He asked if 10% of the parking is used by other entities. Mr. Dubinski noted that the two-story portion of the building that faces Walnut Street is being renovated by the Davies Companies and renting them out. There are 286 spaces – which is over the required amount. The future tenants of the north end of the building will have around 55 spaces dedicated to them. They use a tag system now and a parking pass. They are transportation managers and are coming up with a plan to work for them. They will be looking to manage trips to and from the building as part of sustainability.

Member Cohen commented that the project is well done. He asked if there will be new signage at the patio side. Mr. Dubinski said they will keep the door where it is and will add signage to find the door. They are working with the landlord to upgrade the monument sign on the Arsenal Street side.

Member Ferris asked if the terrace will be big enough for the 300 employees. He asked if they would be taking 5-6 parking spaces to accommodate a larger terrace. Mr. Dubinski said the landlord is anticipating a denser tenant and they will require those spaces. The landlord is not in favor of losing parking. They are renovating the interior of the property and that is where their primary money is being spent. People use the grass area between the Lexus dealership and their building. Their backdoor empties onto that space and they use that area. Mr. Schreiber suggested that the parking lot be flexible so there could be a pop-up patio space in the summer and they need that space to store snow in the winter.

Chair Santucci Rozzi asked if the patio is taking green space yet their open space calculation is the same. Mr. Dubinski said there is an impervious sidewalk that exists there and they are replacing it with pervious pavers – it actually increases the open space a bit.

Dennis Duff, 33 Spruce Street, stated that the site is the old American Soda Company and he reminisced about the area. VHB has been a tremendous asset to the east end in helping move from the previous use to a non-polluting commercial space. He supports this.

Chair Santucci Rozzi closed the business meeting, noted the approval by the Planning Board and the Staff to convert from 94,500 to 96,960 s.f. with the small patio addition.

Member Ferris motioned to approve VHB's application for an amendment to the special permit/variance for interior renovations to the mezzanine and exterior adjustments for a terrace.

Member Heep seconded.

Members Ferris, Heep, Santucci Rozzi, Gannon and Donato voted in the affirmative (5-0). The motion passed.

Member Heep motioned to adjourn. Member Donato seconded. All in favor (5-0). The meeting ended at 7:45 p.m.
