

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: July 13, 2022 PLACE: City Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Public Hearing

Regular Monthly Meeting

PRESENT: Jeff Brown, Chairman; Payson Whitney; Abigail Hammett; Janet Buck
Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Board; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner; Larry Field,
Senior Planner

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Janet Buck motioned to approve Minutes of 4/13/2022 Planning Board meeting.

Abigail Hammett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

PUBLIC HEARING

AMENDMENT TO THE WATERTOWN ZONING ORDINANCE

- **Sign Special Permit for Regional Mixed Use District (RMUD)**

Andrew Copelotti, Boylston Properties, we are proposing minor modification to provide better access and to allow for a second means of egress. Our team is here to address changes requested for the RMUD district. We have 5 tenants at 100 Forge which will be completed by the end of 2022.

Bill McQuillan, Boylston Properties, this is a very prominent building at the Arsenal Yards. We care about our tenants. We have spent over 900 million dollars on this project, Life Science buildings are very expensive to construct, we need a very clean and attractive structure that is visible. This development will bring Watertown on the map.

Adam Gross, Architect, we are very proud of the design of 100 Forge, the signage is clean and very elegant. It will be very powerful and will reflect Watertown and is precedent of other signs across the country. The signage will tie into the Arsenal Yards design but is not visible from Greenough Boulevard. We are proposing 10ft tall sign/letters.

Jeff Brown, that will be very visible. Watertown is not indication of the Arsenal Yards name. It will be visible from the Mass Turnpike. Identification from Arsenal Street might be needed.

Bill McQuillan with this large sign we are identifying Arsenal Yards.

Janet Buck, this sign is successful. A lot of signage is already happening from Arsenal Street, an existing signage is also on the sign. I drove on Greenough Boulevard, you cannot see the letters. Light potential is a concern, but this is not relevant to this design.

Payson Whitney, if a major company comes in in the future, they might want a large sign as well.

Adam Gross, this sign is very tasteful, we are not advertising a specific product.

Andrew Copelotti, the letters are 10 feet high and 18 inches deep.

Gideon Schreiber, the lighting is not on all night, this is just a concept.

Bill McQuillan, we have had several meetings with the Planning Staff, we are not asking for many such signs. This will be it, one such sign for the entire site. The Planning Board will make recommendation to the City Council.

Abigail Hammett, this is a request for a zoning amendment, the 10-foot setback is appropriate. It might change in the future. Planning Board is the special permit granting authority.

Andrew Copelotti, we would not object to future adjustments.

Bill York, Atty, the amendment was very carefully crafted. Any signage is subject to special permit review.

Larry Field, staff report recommends favorable vote. This is about a zoning amendment not a specific sign. Commercial signage provides identity, it will bring customers to Watertown. RMUD is appropriate location for such sign. It is different from other areas in the city. There is a specific limit, 100 feet up, there are very few places for such sign. Potentially a Watertown Mall might have such place. There are specific limits for height, setback, etc. It is the discretion of the Planning Board not to allow signs to be visible from Greenough Blvd. The setbacks will lessen the height impact of the sign. We have not received any comments regarding light pollution since this afternoon, all were forwarded to the Planning Board.

Libby Shaw, I am concerned about the lighted signage. They are very bright, it will impact birds, trees, etc. It should not be allowed until study is completed regarding wildlife.

Lisa Feltner, District B City Council, I have received 15 emails, I have asked people to send any comments to Ms. Marchesano. People stated that they were not notified, the hearing was advertised in Boston Globe. What are we giving up, when we look up, we will see this lighted sign. This is not about this specific sign, once the amendment gets approved, there will be more. It will be visible from the river. Does our consultant agree with this signage? I am not convinced that we are not opening the door for more. Arsenal Yards is one project, how will the City benefit? Is this the identity that Watertown want? Will this improve the quality of life in Watertown? This is a major impact, I am concerned with long term impact.

Gideon Schreiber, this request is for RMUD zone for sites that are over 2 acres and that have Master Plan. Another site would be the existing Watertown Mall but first they would have to submit design criteria. 100 Forge is over 100' high, the penthouse is not part of it. They are asking for this amendment because of Greenough Boulevard, this is the only property. This sign is not mounted to the mechanical penthouse. Roof top signs are not allowed.

Payson Whitney, some buildings have screen, this amendment does not reference building height.

Janet Buck motioned to recommend to the City Council to amend Section 7.07 to add new category that allows a special permit to be granted in the RMUD for a wall mounted or rooftop sign erected at an elevation exceeding 100 feet above the existing grade of the building and that the "is" in sub-paragraph b) be changed to "may be".

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor
Jason Cohen absent

OTHER

- **485 Arsenal Street**

Andrew Copelotti, Boylston Properties, during the construction of Hampton Inn, we were granted a temporary curb cut. We are now requesting that the curb cut becomes permanent with access into the Harvard Vanguard parking lot. We had several discussions with DPW, Police, etc. and they are in support.

Gideon Schreiber, the Police Department requested that there is a secondary access, it will be shared with Harvard Vanguard. The Planning Director Steve Magoon can make this small determination.

Lisa Feltner, I am happy to see this, people spend lots of time in circulation, everyone is in support of this request.

Payson Whitney, I live in this neighborhood. This is an opportunity for better signage, it needs to be more visible. Railing should be removed.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board approve the proposed modification to allow a curb cut to provide second access with access into the Harvard Vanguard parking lot.

Abigail Hammett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0

In favor

Jason Cohen absent

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting at 8:35 pm.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:35 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 4/13/2022 available in the DCD&P office.