

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: November 9, 2020 PLACE: Virtual Meeting TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting

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

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Janet Buck motioned to approve Minutes of March 11, 2020 Planning Board meeting.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

CASES PENDING

- **90 School Street; Robert & Sandra MacKerron – Special Permit & Special Permit Finding**

Ken Leitner, Atty, this is a request convert a 2-family house into a 3-family. The house is now nonconforming and is located in NB district where 3-family is allowed. There is a commercial property across the street. The petitioner would like to bring the property into conformity. The project meets all the criteria for Special Permit Finding. There are existing 6 parking spaces, which would be changed into 4 on one side and 2 spaces will be accessed from School Street. Attic space will be increased to incorporate conforming stairs, bathroom and laundry room. One dormer is placed in the rear, modest in size and roof will be placed over stairway leading to the basement. Bulkhead will be relocated and landscaping added. This proposal is appropriate use for this neighborhood, there will be no substantial detriment. House will be taken into conformity.

Larry Field, Special Permit relief is sought to convert the 2-family house into 3 family, and Special Permit Finding to increase pre-existing 3rd story. This is an appropriate request, the NB property is very close to I-2 zone, and many commercial properties are surrounding this lot. The biggest issue is change in parking, 4 spaces will be accessed from Cypress Street, 2 from School Street. There are no significant changes, no substantially more detrimental than the existing nonconforming use. The changes will make the property more usable and is consistent with the neighborhood. Staff recommends approval of the petition.

Gideon Schreiber, there is an existing curb cut on School Street.

Janet Buck, this is a great use that is keeping up with the neighborhood and will improve the property.

Jeff Brown, is this a new owner?

Ken Leitner, the house will consist of 3 apartments for 3 family members.

Janet Buck motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit under Section 5.01(b) to convert a 2-family dwelling to a 3-family dwelling 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

Janet Buck motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit Finding under Section 4.06(a) to increase preexisting 3rd story 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

- **46 Kondazian Street; Konway LLC – Special Permit**

Janet Buck motioned to continue the above petition to the December Planning Board meeting
Jason Cohen seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0 In Favor

- **48 North Beacon Street; Sira Naturals, Inc. - Special Permit & Special Permit Finding**

Stephen Winnick, Atty, this is a request for Special Permit under Sections 5.01(5) to allow Adult Use Marijuana establishment and Medical Marijuana Treatment Center in LB zone, Section 6.01(f) reduction of parking spaces, and Special Permit Finding under Section 4.06(a) to allow parking spaces closer to the building on east, west and north side of the building. The building consists of flower shop and limo service. The site is comprised of 2 lots totaling 11,278 s.f. Portion of the existing building will be demolished and the remaining portion will be renovated. The petitioner will occupy less than 4,000 s.f., significant state and local approval were received. The petitioner was required to hold outreach community meeting that was held in September and well attended by Town Council members, neighbors and Watertown residents. The petitioner also held preliminary meetings with staff in all departments. Concerns were addressed and changes were made. The preservation of the building is substantial. The petitioner does not own the building yet.

Jay Youmans, Sira Naturals was founded in 2013, we have over 200 employees, we operate in Milford, Needham, Somerville and Boston. We have received demolition delay waive from the Historical Commission in July 2020. We have also received Town Council approval in October 2020. We have exceeded all local and state standards and notified via certified mail all abutters within 500 feet. We have received broad public support of the proposed design. Neighbors are concerned with loitering and violent crime and impact on their property values. We will implement local hiring preference, will work with the police department. There will be no consumption on site or in the vicinity. We will eliminate sale of single pre-rolls. We are proposing quarterly meetings within the area and provide continued feedback. There is a 3% fee for the host city, we are committed to Watertown. We have received support from Town Council, State Representative John Lawn, Steve Tolman and Police Chief Michael Lawn. The LB zone has been commercial district since 1945, there are other large projects in the area, the property is located less than ¼ mile from Watertown Square

Tom Scott, Architect, the new design will provide connection to Arsenal Street. The buffer and setbacks to the neighbors will increase. Glass and architecture of the building will be maintained. The façade and original features will be rejuvenated. New elements will be added using modern materials. Main entrance will be on the side of the building that connects Arsenal and North Beacon Street. Door located on Arsenal Street will only be used by employees and for deliveries. Bicycle spaces and sufficient parking will be provided.

Hugh Hahn, VHB, some non-conformances will be eliminated, limo building will be removed, and area converted into parking. Existing curb cuts on Arsenal and North Beacon Streets will be reduced. We are proposing one way traffic flow, ADA access will be provided. We will have 17 parking spaces, 8 for employees, 11 are required. The lot will be resurfaced and sidewalk will be replaced. Water run-off will

be reduced and retained on site. New landscaping including new trees on Arsenal Street will be provided. We have met with planning staff and DPW and changes were made.

Chelsea Bouchard, VHB Transportation Consultant, a TDM plan was developed, the project exceeds Town measures. We will provide Blue Bike membership for employees. Several bus routes are nearby. The traffic generated by this project will be minor.

Jay Youmans, this is an appropriate location for the proposed use. Site will be modernized, it has an easy access to existing bus routes. There will be no adverse effect on the neighborhood. There will be no hazard to vehicles or pedestrian. The site needs investment to be revitalized and accessibility to be improved. This use will provide new revenues and employment for the Town.

Payson Whitney, this is a comprehensive application, why is the main entrance from the parking lot instead of Arsenal or North Beacon Streets? Are there any concerns regarding left turn onto Arsenal Street?

Gideon Schreiber, the main concern was with existing on North Beacon Street because of the bicycle lane.

Jay Youmans, the entrance from the parking lot is to allow security staff roaming the area and sidewalks to make sure that there is no loitering or consumption on site. We are providing Blue Bike station on the site. The proposed opening day is August 2021. This use is still controversial, we want to have all approvals in place before purchase of the property.

Janet Buck, the presentation was very thorough, the proposal is a major improvement of the site.

Jason Cohen, this is a very thorough proposal and solid presentation, the property needed to be renovated. The pass through to Arsenal Street is welcomed. How many customers will visit at one time? The letters of support look the same. Petition of people in support would be preferable.

Jay Youmans, there will be 8 registers inside, allowing 20 customers at one time. We are providing long term bike storage near the main entrance.

Gideon Schreiber, staff report has been written recommending approval. Letter from DPW was provided. Conditions for granting of the relief have been met, the staff is recommending final approval.

Lisa Feltner, District B Town Councilor, the trees are placed near the driveway and we are concerned with clear view when exiting. Many residents attended the community meetings, neighbors are in support of the proposal.

Gideon Schreiber, the canopy of the trees is above 7' which should be enough to provide clear view.

Janet Buck motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit under Section 5.01.5(l) Adult Use Marijuana Establishment & Special Permit Finding under Section 4.06(a) for continuance of existing nonconformity 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

- **202-204 Arsenal Street; Cresset/WS Venture LLC - Special Permit/Site Plan Review**

Ed Nardi, Cresset Development, we have owned the site since 2008. We are asking to Amend the existing Special Permit/Site Plan Review to convert ground floor retail to Lab/R&D, to construct new 88,572 s.f. Lab and R&D building with a retail component and associated parking with reduced and shadow parking. The 7.2 acre property will change to Lab building only. Major improvements have been made. There is a significant benefit to the Town between retail and Lab. Efforts to use the retail space continued for 5 years, we have met with over 200 retailers but were unsuccessful. After Roche Brothers preferred Arsenal Yards, decision was made to convert to Lab/R&D space. There is a growing Lab cluster in Watertown, this site will be for smaller companies.

John Sullivan, Architect, this is an exciting vision for the site. This will tie the area together, major transformation. The proposed Lab use is the right use for the site. This is a perfect opportunity for this vacant site which will void the empty space between 2 residential developments.

Kristen Brown, Traffic Engineer, there will be 121 trips during peak hours which is only minor increase. Lab generates less traffic than retail. The petitioner is a member of TMA, there will be outside transportation coordinator. Two bike lanes will be created and additional on street parking spaces will be provided. Blue Bike station will be installed.

Erik Bednarek, VHB, we have submitted lighting plan, pedestrian mobility will be enhanced. Eland and Gable are trying to improve landscaping along Arsenal Street. The site will be ADA accessible, we are proposing raised planter walls with benches. We will create green open space with attractive water feature. We are proposing enhancement of the area by creating plaza with raised planters, etc.

John Sullivan, there will be 3 levels of Lab space and 2 levels of parking, some underneath the building responsive to the scale of Arsenal Street. Bicycle parking will be placed in the rear of parking area. Solar panel array will be placed on the roof. We have received many comments from neighbors, we will be mindful of shadow cast which will be compact in the spring and worse in the winter. We will provide safe environment at night, low lights and fixtures are on sensors. Watertown has rich industrial history, some reference will be included and used with modern elements. Terracotta will be used, the design of the building will obscure the view of Gable parking garage.

Jeff Brown, why are you providing so much parking, Lab space needs less?

Ed Nardi, this site has less parking than other similar projects.

Gideon Schreiber, departmental review was not completed, no staff report provided, it will be presented tonight as well as comments. The petition will be continued to the next meeting.

Janet Buck, I am not 100% satisfied with this design, it is much too simplistic, some horizontal materials should be included. What are the materials on the bottom of the building?

John Sullivan, horizontal elements made the building look long, new materials are more noticeable.

Jason Cohen, the presentation was great explaining the history of the last 12 years. I am concerned with the architecture, what materials will be used? What is the Gables rain garden park shown on the plans?

John Sullivan, there will be variety of width of the terracotta materials.

Ed Nardi, the garden is a public park accessible by Birch Street.

Payson Whitney, I like the building design, it will be a signature building on Arsenal Street. We do not need more retail space. We are now seeing lots of Lab space. We need to be concerned with the height of the building, it seems to be taller than the abutting residential structures, and it should be addressed. Watertown now has big cluster of Lab space, how much can this town take, how much capacity do we have?

Ed Nardi, Boston market has 4.3 million s.f. of Lab space. This is a fairly small project, it is appropriate for this site.

John Labadini, I grew up on Beechwood Ave, there have been big changes in the last 10 years. I welcome this design, I prefer Lab space to supermarket. Lots of thought went into this project by the developer and staff.

Lisa Feltner, District B Councilor, there is no access to the Gables Rain Park, sidewalk needs to be repaired. How successful will be planting in dark area. I am concerned with lighting impact on neighbors along Arsenal Street and in the rear. Grocery store would be beneficial to the community, will the landscape area be for employees only? Concerns regarding the size, noise etc. were expressed at the community meeting. Can the petitioner offer parking for residents who will lose parking? Has David Gamble review the new design of the project?

Ed Nardi, we want to have successful plantings, the retail was 28' high, and this proposal is 45' high. Coffee shop can be used by neighbors as well, not just for tenants. This is a community space. We will provide safe lighting.

Gideon Schreiber, the staff suggested that the petition will be continued to the next Board meeting, but the Board can add conditions. The deadline for the 12/9 meeting is tomorrow, many new projects are coming.

Janet Buck motioned to continue the petition to the 12/9/20 meeting and placing it first on the agenda.

Jason Cohen seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

OTHER BUSINESS

PLANNING BOARD REPORTS

The Planning Board determined that 1-2 family petitions will go directly to the Zoning Board of Appeals for their decision.

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting at 10:25 pm.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 10:25 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 11/9/2020 available in the DCD&P office.