

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: February 10, 2021 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 January 13, 2021 Planning Board meeting.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

CASES CONTINUED

- **23-29 Elm Street;** 23 Elm Street Property Owner LLC – **Special Permit/Site Plan Review**

Jeff Brown, we are revisiting the petition that was presented to the Board last month.

Steve Winnick, Atty, this is a proposal to construct a 3-story Research & Development Laboratory building with reduced parking. This is a second presentation in front of the Planning Board, we will address concerns expressed at the last hearing. We will also introduce the third partner of the project Johanness Fruehauf who is a Watertown resident. Our tech team is here tonight to any questions you might have. The site presents several challenges, located near wetlands. A Conservation Commission voted unanimously to approve the proposal. We have had several meetings with the planning staff since the last PB hearing.

Johanness Fruehauf, partner/physician, I have been helping scientists to build biotech companies, groups such as the Moderna. I am a CEO of couple of such companies. I am one of the owners of the Elm Street project, we help Biotech companies in early stages. Cambridge space is very expensive, Watertown is very attractive to such companies. We are developers, owners of building for biotech companies with 10-30 employees. Many new jobs have been created in the last 5 years making Watertown very attractive. We have Labs in many other cities.

Jim Burbach, Eng., as per DPW suggestions, some modifications were made to the original plans. Additional calculations were made, patio details provided, plant selection plan created, creating urban feel plaza. Planting board is showing different types of plans for the space.

Alan Westman, Architect, this is 78,000 s.f., 3-story structure with partially enclosed underground garage. We are proposing 13,000 s.f. of solar panels. East elevation has been revised, introducing new elements to the design as requested by the Planning Board. Owner would prefer glass on third floor. A material board that was reviewed by David Gamble, Town consultant, is presented tonight. Images of similar facades at another project are shown. Some outdoor parking spaces are accessed from the parking garage. A discussion followed regarding the proximity to the abutting hotel, the façade of the hotel is a blank wall.

Jeffrey Dirk, Vanasse Associates, we have been waiting for a peer review to be completed, it confirmed our analysis. There will be three improvements, Arsenal/Elm Street installation of traffic signals and pedestrian and bicycle access with rectangular rapid flashing beacons. The petitioner will contribute

\$25,000 for upgrade of the traffic signal interconnect cable.

Gideon Schreiber, staff reviewed the conditions and comments by our design consultant. Project met the criteria for Special Permit. We are in process of finalizing the transportation aspect of the project. Site Plan Review criteria was met. The site had 6.5% open space, the new proposal will have 28%. All requirements have been met including solar assessment. Detailed planting plan has been provided, some conditions have to be update prior to the ZBA hearing. Underground utilities and off site improvements are proposed. Parking management condition requires monitoring is part of the TDM. Loading area used for drop off only, not to be used for truck or car parking. Standard condition for Lab space in Watertown will be added. From the design perspective it is withing Design Guidelines. Open space has been addressed by the Conservation Commission.

Payson Whitney, I like the new design. I would prefer use of timers for interior lights. Is there any security during the night ?

Alan Westman, we will provide a security gate to get into the garage. Fence will also provide protection.

Janet Buck, this is a very positive change, will there be a future access to the stream? We understand that it is not part of this property.

Gideon Schreiber, details regarding the fence need to be added. The property abuts Williams Pond that is not open to the public. There might be a pedestrian access allowed in the future, including Elm/Arlington corridor to Coolidge Ave. If the Gimmet site wanted to open, there would be connection that would benefit this site also.

Jason Cohen, what type of materials are used for the rain screen panels? It would be nice to see some balcony space for tenants, this is a missed opportunity. More detailed landscape plan is necessary. The area next to the building is very narrow, how will the trucks navigate the space. I like the building design. This is a high profile site.

Andy, one of the earlier designs had terrace style on the third floor. Design has changed. We thought about roof space but that is needed for mechanical equipment. The project needs more enclosed space.

Jeff Brown, what color are the panels, the north side has lots of greenery. When will the construction start?

Alan Westman, the existing building is occupied. Construction will start in 2022 after the tenant lease expires.

Angie Kounelis, Town Councilor, this is a wonderful improvement from the existing buildings but the proposed building is too large for this site. Where is the visitor parking?

Jeffrey Dirk, the visitor parking will be located inside the garage.

Alan Westman, all tenant parking will be inside the garage, not specifically for visitors.

Angie Kounelis, how will the first-time visitors know? Overflow cannot be allowed in the neighborhood, some designation is needed. The petitioner stated there will be 150 employees but only 90 parking spaces will they all use public transportation? The area abutting the hotel is very close. Was there any communication from abutters? Will the pedestrian activated signal be hard wired or solar powered? This development will not create more traffic to require traffic signalization on Elm/Arlington intersection?

Jim Burbach, the hotel is very close to the property line, the properties are not parallel. The concrete retaining wall next to the garage is about 6" wide.

Dan Campagna, 147 Lexington St, Union Representative, I am asking the developer to utilize local contractors that use Union employees.

Janet Buck motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit/Site Plan Review under Sections 5.01.5(e) new construction of Lab, R&D building, 4.11(e) exceptions to side yard setbacks, 6.01(f) reduction in parking, 5.04,5.05 FAR of 1.68 increased build to line, 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: 3-0 In Favor Jason Cohen opposed

- **705 Mt.Auburn Street & 64 Grove Street;** Special Permit Amendment & Special Permit/Site Plan Review

Michael Rak, Spear Street Capitol, this is a unique opportunity to improve this obsolete site and transfer it to be ongoing economic engine.

David Manfredi, Architect, we are proposing to transfer this aging Class B office building to a Class A building. There is lot of black top on this site, we will transform it to a greener campus, that will connect 705 Mount Auburn Street and 64 Grove Street. Originally the 6-story building was occupied by Western Electric. It is a major presence along Mount Auburn Street. South east corner is occupied by a garage, originally open shed that we are proposing to demolish and build a new structure within the existing footprint. Goal is to restore the front area, add visitor parking, create a new green from door. We will increase the green space. In the last few years there have been many proposals for life science buildings. If placed on top of the building, majority of our equipment will be placed in the rear. Most of the panels on the roof of the existing garage. Historic landscape will be restored, outdoor space created, intersection on Grove Street rebuild. Pedestrian/bicycle path will be maintained, bicycle parking placed in the garage. Greenway down to Cottage Street, green buffer will be created next to School Lane.

Richard Hollworth, VHB, site is uniquely situated next to Watertown/Cambridge Greenway. The site is dominated by parking, 35% of paved area will be reduced. New pedestrian/bicycle connectivity will be improved, area will be designed to optimize parking. Existing parking in front will be eliminated and historic landscape restored. Semicircular drive-in front will have all pavement removed. Amenities for

the site will be provided. The Grove area will be provided for abutters and tenants. The significant reduction of pavement is proposed, buffer to School Lane increased. Connection to Watertown/Cambridge Greenway to Cottage Street proposed. We have recently met with DCR who are very supportive of this project. This is a significant improvement to the site.

David Manfredi, we will tear down the shed structure and replace it with a little larger building. The site will attract world class tenants. We want to compliment this historic building but not mimic it. We will replace the existing loading dock, and build 2 floors of utility space. Parking area will be narrowed from 80' to 60'. The new building will reflect the material palate, building brick and metal. The site slopes away from Mount Auburn Street. The original building has civic presence along Mount Street. Brick of the new building will compliment the existing building. We are proposing medium bronze metal panels and granite base. Shadow study has been provided. There will be no new construction at 64 Grove Street, we will restore the existing structure, repair the deteriorated façade and repair any existing damage.

Vinod Kilikiri, VHB, access to Mt.Auburn and Grove Streets will be modified. This is an existing use, circulation will be enhanced. Parking lot is very confusing. Shuttle bus operation to the site will continue. Access from Mt.Auburn Street to the Greenway. Signage will be provided to direct pedestrians and bicycles. Parking will be reduced by 140 spaces, there will be 108 bicycle space with lockers and showers. We will contribute \$100,000 for transportation improvements, relocate Grove Street curb cut. Wayfinding signage will be placed, tenants will be encouraged to use public transportation.

Richard Hollworth, new addition will require new water connections, gas main, and electrical services. There is a significant difference in grade, new ground water recharge system will be created, and natural water cycle restored.

David Manfredi, lounge space will coffee bar will be created celebrating the historic structure of the original building. We will provide significant amount of social space. Lounge area will look out into the outdoor space.

Gideon Schreiber, substantial amount of detail was presented by the petitioner. We will need two separate motions by the Planning Board because originally the votes were for 705 Mt.Auburn Street and 64 Grove Street, now is presented as 1 project. We have met several times with the petitioner, parking will be shared by both properties. 250 parking spaces are used by Mount Auburn hospital. Proposed solar system is substantially more than required. Staff report addresses both in the staff report with conditions. Staff recommends approval.

Jason Cohen, this project is about enhancing the site, how far can the public go into the building?

Janet Buck, plans are showing the Grove, is that public accessible?

Michael Rak, the public accessible area is near the Greenway. Inside space is for tenants only.

Payson Whitney, this is a signature building in the Town. What is the timing for this project and the Town's Mount Auburn Street reconstruction project? This is an opportunity to incorporate some green roof.

David Manfredi, there is a lot of roof space but tenants have their requirements also.

Jeff Brown, I have walked around the entire site today. The petitioner is proposing major improvements. Will the site have just 1-2 or multiple tenants?

Michael Rak, the site can accommodate both, single tenant and multiple. It is a very large building, scale is valued to allow for growth.

David Manfredi, the new building will have 2 floors of Lab space and another 2 floors for mechanical equipment. Floor to floor heights are less than 15 feet.

Jeff Brown, the trees are not as thickly placed now. 140 spaces will be taken off, 250 reserved for Mount Auburn hospital. When will the work start?

Michael Rak, the project will start late 2021/early 2020.

Angie Kounelis, Town Councilor, during the community meeting, a discussion started regarding the new building that will house the mechanical equipment. I hope that all effort will be made that there is no impact on residents. Are there access points onto School Lane or any other residential streets. I have major concerns about parking on residential streets. I have received photos of license plates of cars parked in the residential neighborhoods. This is a very congested neighborhood, employees do not like to park in the garage, it is more convenient to park on street.

David Manfredi, we have engaged a company that has done study on the project. We will make sure that we will comply with all requirements.

Gideon Schreiber, the proposed project has a very substantial updated program that will be following up all the guidance.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board recommends to the Zoning Board of Appeals conditional approval for **705 Mt.Auburn Street** of the Special Permit/Site Plan Review under Section 5.01.5(c.e) new construction office,lab,r&d, 4.10 additional height and rooftop mechanicals&screening, 5.05(f) contiguous facades in keeping with Design Guidelines, Special Permit Finding 4.06(a) alteration of non-conforming structure, 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 that the Planning Board recommends to the Zoning Board of Appeals conditional approval for **64 Grove Street** of the Special Permit/Site Plan Review under Section 5.01.5(c.e) new construction office,lab,r&d, 4.10 additional height and rooftop mechanicals&screening, 6.01(g) required parking at 705 Mt.Auburn Street, Special Permit Finding 4.06(a) alteration of non-conforming structure, 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

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting at 9:55 pm.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:55 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 2/10/2021 available in the DCD&P office.