

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: May 12, 2021 PLACE: Virtual Meeting TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting

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

REGULAR MEETING

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Janet Buck motioned to approve Minutes of April 14, 2021 Planning Board meeting.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

CASES CONTINUED

- **57-105 Coolidge Ave (99 Coolidge Ave); ARE-MA Region No.77, LLC – Special Permit Master Plan & Final Site Plan Review**

Katie Snyder, since the last month presentation we have had lot of discussion with representatives of Horizon East Community and the staff trying to work out their concerns. We have received an approval from DPW and full approval from Conservation Commission. We have addressed number of comments from the 4/14/21 meeting. Additional elevations were requested by PB staff, minor circulation adjustment were made. A major adjustment to setback the penthouse by 10'. New signal is proposed at Coolidge Avenue and Grove Street and pedestrian improvements are proposed. The developer is committed to all the changes.

David Manfredi, Architect, we are very conscious of relationship with our neighbors. 125 Coolidge Ave is 75' high, the main building is 5 story, 73 feet high, the mechanical penthouse is additional 25' but there is a significant change in topography. The building is designed to fit into the neighborhood. The parking garage is on the west end of the site, setback is larger than the 15' required to avoid buffer. The penthouse will house equipment only and will have 18' step back, originally 10'. The 45 degree study is not applicable in RMUD district. All sides of the building are treated with the same materials.

Katie Snyder, the major focus is on sustainability which exceeds Mass Energy code. We will remediate soil, solar panels will be placed on the building and the garage. There are 2 acres of open space including meditation garden and shared use path available to the public. Many great benefits to the Town.

Gideon Schreiber, this is a request for a Special Permit. There has been a substantial increase in life sciences in this area. 4 criteria for special permit have been met, staff recommends conditional approval. This type of use is appropriate for this site. Location of the garage and multiuse of pathway was approved by the CC. The area is a mix of residential and industrial uses. There will be an increase in landscape, 43,000 s.f. of solar panels to offset some of the energy use. This project will make the neighborhood better. The corridor has long history of environmental abuse, now there will be 2 acres of public space improvements which is a major benefit to the community. Sidewalks will be improved, pedestrian crossings added. A detailed peer review of the final design was submitted. Number of amenities were added, ten criteria for SPR were reviewed by the staff. Landscape is under the jurisdiction of CC. Standard conditions are in the staff report. Truck access is significantly

improved, amount of surface parking decreased. Blue bike station will be installed, TDM plan approved. Utility services are appropriate, standard conditions for trash removal 7am-7pm. 200 new trees will be added, LEED gold – staff recommends it be certified. All screening will be provided and could be modified when the final tenant is selected. All building code requirements have been met, emergency access met. Condition regarding minimizing interior lighting has been added. Staff recommends approval with conditions.

Jeff Brown, is the steel painted? Is the end of the parking garage sloping? This is a wonderful project, what is the timing?

Katie Snyder, if approved, the construction will start this summer to be completed in 2 years.

Janet Buck, it is a beautiful project, I am excited about the open space. How will be the green space maintained, pesticide free?

Payson Whitney, the 2-meeting process worked, it allowed the applicant to make adjustment. Who will be responsible for signalization? Should the vibration monitoring be added to condition 9A?

Gideon Schreiber, there are number of projects in the Arsenal corridor, including Arsenal on the Charles, Arsenal Yards, etc. Signalization will be part of the Master Plan.

Jason Cohen, I appreciate the effort to pull the penthouse back from 10' to 18'. Developer addressed comments from neighbors. The intersection will be improved. We have received a substantial letter from the neighbors today, it is challenging to absorb. I like this project, much better use than the existing one.

Al Gordon, Horizon East Community, we have only learned about the penthouse step back yesterday. We are concerned that this will compromise our negotiations with the developer. We did not see the staff report on the website.

Gideon Schreiber, the peer review has not been posted, staff report is in the case file. Penthouse is pushed back on both sides.

Libby Shaw, this is a great project. The good part of the existing wildlife habitat should be preserved. This project should concentrate on nature species.

Gideon Schreiber, the Conservation Commission approved the proposed planting plan. It is not for the Planning Board to decide.

Angie Kounelis, District A Councilor, I would like to thank the entire development team for working with Coolidge Ave neighborhood. I am disappointed that the Horizon East was not decided earlier regarding the penthouse step back.

Morris Trichon, we did not know about the studies until May 4, it takes time to write our document. More transparency is needed.

Gideon Schreiber, there is limited time for the reviews, that is why we have conditions in the staff report.

Arleyn Levve, I would like to compliment the development team on being approachable. How will the heavy construction traffic be monitored, the entrance is next to Horizon East?

Gideon Schreiber, construction management is not preview of the Planning Board. There are restrictions that will be managed by Building Department, DPW and the police.

Susan LaDue, how close is this project to being net0?

Katie Snyder, we are seeking LEED Gold. Preliminary analysis for the building will exceed Mass requirements. The improvements are significant.

Hal Shear, I am concerned with the access to the river, will there be a path? Are people going to be exposed to the soil behind this property?

Gideon Schreiber, this site will be cleaned by the developer. The clean up of the DCR site is not complete.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board approve the Master Plan Special Permit and Final Site Plan Review based upon the finding that the proposed project meets the criteria set forth under §9.03 and §5.18, §9.05, with the general purpose of the Ordinance outlined in §1.00 of the WZO, and §5.01.5 (c, e, j) for the use and construction of the lab/R&D building, and allowing for §4.10, increased height for rooftop mechanicals and screening increased height for rooftop mechanicals and screening, §4.11 (d) to allow an expanded build-to-line for the parking structure, §5.05(f) to allow increased contiguous walls, and §6.01(f)&(h) to allow shadow parking and reduced parking for office, with proposed conditions in the staff report.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In Favor

- **617 Arsenal Street** (aka 100 Forge Rd and/or 485 Arsenal Street) – BP Watertown Retail LLC – minor Amendment to the Master Plan Special Permit and Final Site Plan Review

Payson Whitney, as a direct abutter, I have submitted disclosure statement to the Town Manager and now I am able to participate in this case.

Andrew Capelotti, Boylston Properties, the property needs major structural repairs. Miller House is out of the building and couple of tenants remain. We are proposing to renovate the existing building, Mt.Auburn Hospital lease will expire in 2029, Town of Watertown lease will expire in 2023. We are proposing to add one more floor to allow lab and R&D uses in addition to existing office/commercial/retail uses, requesting relief from front, side, and rear setbacks of the existing structure. The project will modify the site plan, parking and add additional floor. The Phase I, July 2021 to July 2022, will renovate 32,000 s.f. and add 3rd floor, provide 62 bike parking spaces. Phase II, July 2023 to July 2024, will add additional space and parking.

Sandy Carroll, Jacobs Architect, the building was originally constructed as a warehouse with office space on second floor. Miller House, restaurant, occupied the space in the 90s. We are proposing new circulation and bike enclosed space. New sq.ft. will be added on top of Miller House area. We will re-clad the entire building that will now be used as life science space. Some unique elements will be added, grey and tan colors, insulated aluminum windows and balconies. Amenity space is proposed on the Greenough Blvd. side, full basement will be exposed.

Michael Giardina, Jacobs Lead Designer, entry will be relocated from Arsenal Street to Forge Road. The existing condition and the open space are very tight. We are proposing to use lighter colors on the building. The garage structure will be cleaned up. High performance concrete material will be used. Signage will be designed as part of the building. This is a very prominent corner coming from the bridge, will give identity to the building. Random balconies will be added on the Greenough side of the building.

Steve Woods, IBI Group, pedestrian activity to be tight into 100 Forge Road is very important. We are proposing path around the site and improvements of the pedestrian access. Existing landscape on the Greenough Blvd side will remain. Bike parking is located at the front door, we are proposing relocation of the bus stop.

Andrew Capelotti, there will be 35,000 of solar array over the existing parking garage, plus 6,000 s.f. plus 9,000 at the next phase. The solar coverage has been maximized generating 6,100 kWh. Mechanical equipment will be in the penthouse that will be screened.

Gideon Schreiber, this is a request for an Amendment to the Master Plan/SPR approval. The site and the building were included in the original Master Plan. One story will be added, it looks appropriate to have continuous façade. The staff recommends approval, this will be significant improvement. All requirements have been met. This is a significant gateway from Boston and Cambridge. The changes are minimal, design peer review was provided. In keeping with the existing mitigation for the entire site. Rode will be renamed Forge Road between Home Depot and this structure. We will participate in TDM plan for Arsenal Street corridor. New Blue Bike station installed on the site is heavily used. Site lighting will be minimized, we are complying with solar system requirements. Transformers will not be visible from Greenough Blvd, landscape will be approved by CC. All 10 Site Plan Requirements were met, standard condition for Lab space is included. The petitioner had 2 community meetings, questions about traffic, bikes, etc. have been answered. Staff recommends approval with conditions, based on the DPW, CC, etc. approvals.

Jason Cohen, this is an improvement over what is there now, could the same balconies that are on the Greenough Blvd be added on the Arsenal Street side ? The improved façade will not happen until Phase II.

Andrew Capelotti, I would not be completely truthful if I said that Phase II will happen. We are making commitment to other tenants and investors. Watertown is becoming Life Science destination. Change of glass and materials on Arsenal Street side will provide same effect.

Payson Whitney, this is a vast improvement to easterly gateway to Watertown. What is the space under the ramp? Will there be a long-term lane closure when the façade is constructed?

Janet Buck, my only concern is the appearance of short façade between Greenough/Arsenal. Landscaping needs to be added to cover the large amount of concrete.

Jeff Brown, how will visitors find the entrance? This project is enormous improvement over the existing building.

Andrew Capelotti, a loading dock will be placed under the ramp. We will try to minimize destruction. Landscaping will be added, we will reopen the building to get some air into the garage. This might be an opportunity to include public art, we will work with Public Art Committee. We will provide sign for Forge Road, we envisioned that this entrance will have tremendous amount of pedestrian and bike traffic.

Gideon Schreiber, if the retail part happens, there is a possibility of another entrance.

Angie Kounelis, District A Town Councilor, if the shuttle bus stops at this entrance, where would that be? Same for Uber, Lyft, visitor parking? A condition needs to be added regarding where to stop and park. This is also the main entrance for Home Depot. What is the status of the cars stored in the basement?

Andrew Capelotti, a second stop will be added on Forge Road, it will impact the traffic for a very short time. We will work with the shuttle provider. Other vehicles can do drop off/pick up inside the garage. There will be visitor parking spaces on the first floor of the garage. The cars in the basement will be removed.

Gideon Schreiber, shuttle bus stops will have to be approved by the planning staff.

Janet Buck, the height of the 1st floor garage might not work for the shuttle.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board based on the information submitted voted to conditionally approve the petition for a amendment to the Master Plan Special Permit and final Site Plan Approval, with a change to Condition 11, adding the item: Passenger pick-up/dropoff locations will be identified and approved with DCDP staff.

Jason Cohen seconded the motion

VOTE: 4-0 In Favor

OTHER BUSINESS

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting at 9:50 pm.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:50 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 5/12/2021 available in the DCD&P office.