

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: July 14, 2021 PLACE: Town Council Chamber 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

MEETING

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Janet Buck motioned to approve Minutes of 6/9/2021 Planning Board meeting as amended – See attached page 5.

Jason Cohen seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

Janet Buck motioned to approve Minutes of 6/14/2021 Planning Board meeting as amended.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

CASES PENDING

- **311 Arsenal Street; ARE_MA Region No.25, LLC – Amendment to Campus Master Plan**

Payson Whitney, as a direct abutter, I have disclosed financial interest under State ethics law to the Town Manager in writing, who approved my participation in this hearing. I have recused myself from any of my condo board's discussions on this matter.

Dante Angelucci, Alexandria Real Estate, we are proposing to preserve 24 more trees including 8 trees with larger caliber. Tonight, we will talk about Building 2 and site plan updates.

John Sullivan, we will address questions that came up at the June 14 meeting. The design of the building is very respectful. Previously a building was approved for the same area. This is a large single campus that is currently broken into separate sites. Kingsbury and Talcott Avenue are very important. Building 2 is near Building 131 surrounded by lots of pavement. Building massing will bring this area together. Important connection has been established, lobby of Building 2 is towards west. 1 and 2 Kingsbury Avenue are receiving additional space. We have created lots of transparency, plaza connection to green space, allowing pedestrians to connect to green space. This is the right area for this building. We are proposing contemporary materials following the Design Guidelines, easily distinguished from the existing campus. This is a more transparent building with wonderful details, industry inspired steel beams and angle elements with connection to south green. The building is complimentary to existing masonry structures.

Caroline Braga, Sasaki Associates, 24 more trees will be preserved, 81 more large trees provided. We are favoring native species, ecologically favored. Since the June 14 Planning Board meeting, we have added 3 more mature trees. We have visited the site with members of Trees for Watertown. South of Building 2, many trees will be preserved, utilities will be moved, and new trees will be added. Many existing trees are not native species. We will highlight native species of trees and shrubs, reduce open lawns and increase plantings.

Dante Angelucci, we have reached agreement with the Town to provide mitigation of \$10 million, plus additional \$5 million including Mossessian improvements, Arsenal Corridor, Arsenal Court, School

Street, Walnut Street, for a total of \$20 million. This is an extraordinary effort, our proposal should be adopted.

Gideon Schreiber, there are members of public participation in the meeting via ZOOM. Substantial number of details was provided at the last 2 meetings. Critical aspect is the Master Plan that was approved 5 years ago. This is an amendment with some significant changes. Originally smaller buildings were along the edge. As the mitigation package was updated, so was the staff report. It will be updated again as the part of decision. We have 4 volumes of control for final site plan approval. Staff report, condition #13 – Transportation Management Association (TMA), the final commitment letter from Alexandria was submitted to the Planning Board today. Some other sections of the report will be updated and more details incorporated. Additional conditions from DPW regarding improvements to water quality. Other conditions are standard, design guidelines need to be approved. Condition regarding the lighting shut-off after regular standard hours when tenant space is not occupied will be added. On-street parking will be monitored. Petitioner provided substantial number of details.

Payson Whitney, we have heard from abutting Arsenal condos expressing their concerns.

Dante Angelucci, we send light studies to the abutters, we will use smaller vehicles that will not have any impact. Shrubs will be placed west of the fence, letter sent to the property manager. A letter was sent to N.Beacon neighborhood but we have not received any response.

Payson Whitney, I like the new changes to the building but there is still lots of glass. We need to add condition regarding deliveries during construction. Dumpsters are uploaded at 10, 11 pm, we need to keep that service out of the neighborhood at night. Same for lights, they stay on during construction.

Gideon Schreiber, 7 am is the start time, it should not be happening at night. There is an Ordinance in place for Construction Management Plan. We have received substantial number of comments since the last hearing.

Dante Angelucci, we have a phone # available to call if there are any issues that we will be happy to address. Landscape procedures will be changed.

Catherine, 116 Barnard Ave, and article in NY Times addressed the importance of trees.

Libby Shaw, 73 Templeton Pkwy, the walk through the site was rewarding, it is very important for every development. 225 existing trees have been marked to be removed, it would have big impact on this area of Watertown. It will take years to replace it. To offset we can start planting in other areas of the Town. All future conversations with Alexandria must include the Tree Warden, trees are very important infrastructure.

Dante Angelucci, we are contributing \$20 million to Watertown for infrastructure. We have done a lot to mitigate. We have gone far beyond what any developer has done. Our buildings are most efficient in Massachusetts.

Caroline Braga, 225 trees will be removed and 359 new trees will be planted.

Elodia Thomas, how many residents are attending this meeting via ZOOM ?

Gideon Schreiber, 29 people are on Zoom, Board, staff and developer team are here in person.

Elodia Thomas, I appreciate what Dante Angelucci and Alexandria are doing for mitigation. \$20 million is investment, we need transparency. The new architecture is excellent. Alexandria cannot be responsible for our community. We had many meetings for this project, I want to support their efforts.

Marcia Ciro, 13 Bay Street, Alexandria and Dante Angelucci have been very responsive. I did not like the original plantings, many existing trees are not doing well. Adding native species will improve the site.

Janet Buck, compared to what we saw 5 years ago, this is a major improvement. Alexandria is receptive to the community, we appreciate that they are not following the original Master Plan. I am reluctant to vote tonight.

Gideon Schreiber, we have been working with Alexandria looking at the entire corridor. Current system is failing. Documents submitted to the Planning Board include mitigation of all sites, Arsenal Yards, Watertown Square and Arsenal corridor from Louise Street to DCR pass Arsenal Yards. We have applied for Mass Works program grant. Part of the original approval is project utility requirement, comprehensive stormwater system on and off site, Commanders Mansion, water main along Greenough Blvd. Also contributing to Watertown Square improvements. A letter from the developer that was signed off by DPW superintendent, was submitted today.

Jason Cohen, a coordinated campaign by Watertown residents was submitted to influence Planning Board decision. We need a cut off time 2 days prior to Planning Board meeting.

Gideon Schreiber, Ingrid Marchesano and Larry Field received many emails regarding the project until late this afternoon. We will see if there could be cut-off time. This is a private property not a public space. We have added Tree Warden condition but he cannot get involved.

Janet Buck, we do not expect for the Tree Warden to be involved on private property. The Board does not have the expertise, we need someone to look at it.

Gideon Schreiber, Laurel Schwab and I reviewed the trees. The new trees are better suited species. Some are planted very close to buildings, our staff is capable.

Jeff Brown, is this all Phase I ?

Jason Cohen, Building 2 has a structure on the fifth floor?

Dante Angelucci, the construction will happen all in the same time. Building 2 will have a roof garden.

Jason Cohen, the mitigation document is very substantial, I don't know what to compare it to. I feel that we might be holding this developer to higher standards. I am uncomfortable with the siding of Building 2. Original plan approved buildings in the same location.

Gideon Schreiber, Athena's Master Plan took several years and was based on zoning amendment. Alexandria 's is asking for amendment to the existing Master Plan. Older buildings on site will be preserved.

Jason Cohen, this is not appropriate space for Building 2. There is a nice tree line on Kingsbury Ave but the trees are not doing well. It is important that the new trees are better maintained and placed better. A report should be submitted on annual basis.

Dante Angelucci, we are already looking for an arborist who will take care of the trees. The landscape team has done a great job. We want to be partners with the Town.

Gideon Schreiber, there will be a tree management program for the site to ensure that the plantings will do well.

Elodia Thomas, you have to recognize the communities frustration, better transparency is needed. Planning Board should be more aggressive. I care about quality development. Alexandria has been willing to work with us.

Libby Shaw, we have no intention to overwhelm the Planning Board, we did the best we could. We are concerned about the site. We need certified arborist with experience.

Gideon Schreiber, Tree Warden is not staff to the Planning Board but we have conditions in the report that require his help.

Jason Cohen, I do not appreciate comments received in emails and during the meeting. People need to be more respectful to the Board and staff.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board approves the request to Amend the existing Master Plan and conditional approval of Buildings 1 & 2 as stated in the amended Staff report.

Jason Cohen seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In Favor

- **64 Pleasant Street; Berkeley Pleasant St LLC – Site Plan Review**

Esther Young, Project Manager, we have just received approval from Conservation Commission. We are proposing infrastructure upgrades for the site. We have asked for zoning amendment in March 2021 and received Town Council approval.

Kristen, SGA Architects, this site has an access to Watertown Square, bus routes and most importantly to Charles River. We will not change the building footprint. The structure is 100 years old. This will be the next step preserving the brick and doing small alterations.

Matt, Landscape Architect, everything shown in the photographs along the Charles River will be preserved. Our goal is to work within the context, we plan to preserve the concrete walls. There are multiple curb cuts along Pleasant Street that are challenging to pedestrians and bicycles. The parking layout is substandard and has an impact on the neighborhood. Access to the property is challenging. Proposed site plan is similar to existing conditions but we are making it more usable, circulation will be better, and the iconic streetscape along Pleasant Street will be preserved. We will provide better space for deliveries, circulation will be safer and improved. Parking on the site will be expanded, pervious and impervious surface will be balanced.

Zack Richards, Engineer/ Bohler, this is a great layout that was approved by the Fire Department. We have worked and will continue to work with DPW regarding stormwater. This project is categorized as redevelopment. We will meet all standard requirements. Operation and maintenance plan will be provided. All utility services are new.

Kirsten, we will upgrade the infrastructure, labs will be placed on the first floor, new entry will be at the same location. Bike storage and showers will be added. Office space will be located at the second level. The entry area will be at the same location with new transparent glass. We will preserve as much of the structure and view from Pleasant Street as possible.

Andrew, Vanesse Associates, we have received peer review comments today. There will be reduction in peak hours. We are close to Watertown Square, public transportation, bicycle facilities and the path along the River. TDM has been approved by the DCD&P staff. This project will join TMA. Employees will be encouraged to use the proposed Pleasant Street shuttle.

Larry Field, staff recommends conditional approval with 22 conditions as stated in the staff report. The footprint will be preserved. It is a challenging site, many new things cannot be done on this site. Interior lighting will be off when the building is not occupied. A non-asphalt surface material will be used now and in the future, preferable previous materials. Additional access point will be discussed and created with DCR. Comprehensive off-site mitigation plan will be provided by the petitioner that include installation of signs to maximize safety. All the conditions will be added to the decision.

Gideon Schreiber, 9 people are attending via ZOOM, none are attending in person.

Janet Buck, the structure is not listed in the historical list. Do we have any comments from the Watertown Historical Commission?

Payson Whitney, is there a lighting plan? Sound travels over water, will there be mechanical equipment on the roof?

Esther Young, we are trying to avoid visual impact by balancing roof equipment.

Jeff Brown, is the space for 1 or 2 tenants? The only outdoor space seems to be parking areas. Do you expect the parking lot to be full? Could some of the space be open to be used as a recreational space? Lab space has less need for parking.

Esther Young, we have coordinated the parking ratio. The site has been reorganized as a whole.

Jason Cohen, the site has a awkward layout, it is hard to repurpose.

Susan LaDue, sustainability memo discusses the building, but there is no increase in energy efficiency of the structure.

Gideon Schreiber, it is not required for this project. The site has substantial tree coverage. The petitioner is looking to be LEED certifiable. The space on the roof is limited.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board approved the Site Plan Review under Section 9.03.
Payson Whitney seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0 In Favor

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting at 9:45 pm.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:45 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 7/14/2021 available in the DCD&P office.