

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: September 14, 2022 PLACE: City Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting

PRESENT: Jeff Brown, Chairman; Payson Whitney; Abigail Hammett; Jason Cohen; 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 7/13/2022 Planning Board meeting.

Abigail Hammett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

CASE PENDING

560 PLEASANT STREET: BDPF Pleasant Street Owner LLC – Special Permit/Site Plan Review

Ted Saraceno, Saracen Properties, I would like to thank all the team members, Watertown Community, staff, and City Council, helping with this important project.

John Amodio, IBI, Landscape Architect, we will encourage biking and walking towards the river. We are proposing street entrances with additional trees. A sign to welcome pedestrian and bicycles will be placed and gathering space provided. It will be a multiuse site with furniture to encourage people to rest in the area. The pedestrian and vehicle confrontation will be minimized, 97% of the proposed open space will be open to public. A long-term planting program will add trees, 34 existing trees will be preserved, 97 will be removed and native trees will be planted. Images presented tonight are showing characteristics of the site similar to Arsenal Yards site. Bicycle parking for 70 bikes is provided, including a repair station used by the public as well. We are proposing 3 types of lighting near the walkways to minimize effect on neighbors. Some poles are 25 feet tall, 14 ft high along pedestrian zones. Fencing around trees to be preserved. We are taking every opportunity to improve the site.

Rob Nagi, VHB, a typical traffic study is presented and was provided to the staff. We are recognizing congestion in the area. We will work with the city, we have considered transport routes and number of projects in the area and what this project will generate when doing the traffic report. This project will generate less traffic than Russo did. The area is already congested, and we also have to consider traffic coming from Newton, Waltham, etc. Proposed traffic signals will address some of the movements, we are proposing signalized intersection at the Paramount Place. Bridge Street corridor is already congested, transportation system upgrades are proposed. We will provide \$150,000 in implementation funds and TDM plan. We will join the bus shuttle service, information will be shared with employees, and transport report provided. The garage originally placed on the side will be moved to No-name Street. Emergency vehicles will use on site route.

Nick Skoly, VHB, all existing utilities and utility poles will be removed and new provided. We will work with neighboring companies. Water line will be fed from existing mains, increased by 10,000 gal/day. We are working with DPW. The proposed system is a huge improvement of the site.

Chris Roller, there are 3 buildings on the site, 4 stories high, with considerable amount of mechanical equipment. Some is enclosed in the penthouse, some has to be placed outside. Office space is facing Pleasant Street, 6 story parking garage is in the rear. 90% of the solar panels are on the garage. Retail building is small lab building is combination of glass panels, the garage is all concrete.

Gideon Schreiber, there are 4 criteria for Special Permit and 10 criteria for Site Plan Review. Proposed project is in keeping with the Zoning Ordinance. The Petitioner is proposing a 4 story Lab/R&D office building, 1 story retail building and 6 level parking structure and reduced number of parking spaces. All previous approvals for the site will be removed. A community meeting was on June 6, 2022, staff received number of comments. This type of use and location is appropriate as per Comprehensive Plan. There is a desire for more commercial use in this district. The site is 4.83 acres, the retail use is proposed for the second lot. Lab uses and open space flows into the adjacent site. Improvements will benefit the neighborhood. The previous use had a nighttime component. Staff suggests condition to regulate large scale vehicles. Petitioner will be providing sidewalk on their property as well as multiuse path for bicycles and pedestrians. Substantial modification of the original plans is proposed. The review by the city departments is satisfactory, all utilities are underground and utility poles will be removed. The ten criteria for special permit review are met. Many existing trees will be removed but more sustainable trees will be planted. Landscaped area on the property will be available for public use. The proposed project was reviewed by David Gamble and some changes were made based on his comments. We are looking into Public Arts Masterplan recommendations. Petitioner will apply for LEED Gold certification, exceeding the city requirement, the project will submit LEED checklist showing a strong commitment to sustainability. The LEED documentation must be updated at the time of building permit and during construction. Requirements for safety, noise, air pollution are conditionally met. Staff recommends conditional approval of the project with conditions in the staff report.

Jeff Brown, there are many conditions attached to this project, there is no mention of timeline.

Linda H, Repton Place, Pleasant Street is very noisy, we have to keep the windows shut, it is difficult already. I am worried about the demo of the existing structures and construction that is coming. Previously the Russo's trucks kept us up.

Ted Saraceno, the construction will start in the spring. There will be no construction at night only during business hours 7am to 4pm, we will be responsive to our neighbors.

Emily Izzo, District D City Councilor, I am here to advocate for the residents, we need to have strong rodent plan. Bridge Street is used by vehicles coming from Newton and Watertown.

Connie Henry, Buick Street, I applaud this project. 95 trees are a lot to lose, it should be replaced with mature trees that need to be well maintained.

Curtis Whitney, this is a great new development in a district that was set up long ago. This project will provide access to the river.

Nora, Rutland St, this is a great opportunity to provide access to the river. I am concerned with the additional traffic, this is a gateway to the Turnpike, adding more congestion. More people working here will bring more traffic. Additional projects such as the Galen Street will generate more traffic also.

Nick Grimaldi, this is a good project for this community. Saracen is partnering with good contractor. I have lived in Watertown for 7 years, I am ready to purchase home in this city.

Libby Shaw, Trees for Watertown, Saracen is responsible, not all native trees are suitable for this environment. Some trees might be too close, there is no mention of irrigation. The specifications guarantee the trees for 1 year only, longer period is needed.

Suzanne Bruegg, I have lived here my entire life, this development is too close to the neighborhood.

Jason Cohen, this was a nice presentation, I like the landscape, the buildings make nice composition. Retail space is tucked in the back, it would be preferable on the street side. Is there a mezzanine inside of the penthouse? Does the mechanical equipment penthouse have to be 25 feet tall? I am not inclined to approve 25 ft screen on top of 65 feet high building.

Chris Roller, we work hard to have the penthouse as small as possible, screening will help.

Ted Saraceno, we are committed to tenants who need this height. This is extremely important to success of this project, it is the industry standard.

Janet Buck, this was an excellent presentation. There was nothing about tenant signage?

Ted Saraceno, we do not have a tenant yet, we will come back for signage approval.

Payson Whitney, I support the lab space but we need to be careful. The building is very close to Pleasant Street, River works is not as close the entire length of the building. The design does not fit with the neighborhood. There is only 10 feet of grass between the building and the sidewalk, how can you plant large trees? Visual appeal of the buildings affected the view, the height of 65 plus 25 ft? It is just a grey box, Pleasant Street deserves better!

Abigail Hammett, greenery on terraces will help, we have lots of vehicular access and lab buildings already. The plaza is connected to shadow parking area. One wall of the structures could be considered for Public Arts project.

Ted Saraceno, this is a great looking building, we will simplify with various nice materials.

Joyce, Main Street, we deal with traffic daily, intersections have difficult visibility, a mirror can be added.

Joan Gumbleton, 32 Falmouth Road, will this company participate in the shuttle? Retail café/bakery might create more noise. Bio tech industry is taking over the area, could this building be converted into an office space? Who owns No Name Street, maybe it could be called Russo's Street.

Ted Saraceno, we heard some interesting comments, we need to decide if we want the Board vote tonight or ask for continuance to address the concerns.

Bill York, Atty, we appreciate the positive comments. We would prefer if the Board vote with conditions.

Jason Cohen, I am concerned with the 25 ft height of the penthouse. Can you carve out the height from space on the floor below. Or you can show that it's not possible.

Janet Buck motioned to continue the petition to the next meeting of the Planning Board
Payson Whitney seconded the petition. VOTE: 5-0 In Favor

CASE PENDING

148 Waltham Street: The Nordblom Company – Special Permit/Site Plan Review

Todd Fremont-Smith, Senior Vice President, the 2.6-acre site is the former Stirritt Lumber with 3 vacant buildings. We are proposing to raze the existing structure and construct a 2-story 67,000 s.f. structure to be used for office, science, and technology type of uses, 33,500 s.f. footprint, with a 15 ft penthouse for the mechanical equipment.

Bill Gisness, SGA Architects, the proposed building is oriented onto Waltham Street with parking in the rear. Curb cut on Waltham Street will be removed a new one on Green River provided. We are proposing 20 indoor parking spaces and 20 outside, a bike room with lockers and showers will be provided. A 73.5% of the lot surface is impervious. Mix of materials will make the building more interesting. The main focus of the building design is making it visually smaller and to address the design guidelines and standards. Height of the roof line varies, the building is 39' high where 55' is allowed. We are proposing brick façade, not reflective glass, and metal with wood feeling. Horizontal panels for the mechanical equipment, facing Waltham Street. We will maintain wider beds for tree planting to protect landscaping from truck traffic and snow removal. Solar panels will be placed on the roof.

Jeff Dirk, VHB, we are providing full impact traffic study with focus on the neighborhood. We had traffic counts from 2019 that we compared to 2020. COVID adjustment are standard, 2019 are existing conditions which is the starting point. There will not be significant impact, some intersections have high impact. Improvement program will focus on cut through streets. Two bus lines access the area, we will try to enhance the connectivity. The data is based on 70% auto use. TDM program has incentives for employees to participate, we hope to have 60% achievement. We will provide charge stations for electrical vehicles. We will \$150,000 to implement study recommendations plus additional \$100,000. We will provide speed control on Waltham Street at two locations.

Carl Frushour, Landscape Architect, robust landscape for the site was proposed originally but more ideas came out of the community process, buffering trees, low maintenance and sustainable landscape. We will build a public park on Waltham Street with sitting areas, three entry points into the park, shaded tree areas with tables & chairs, extra bike racks.

Abigail Hammett, the ground floor has 24 high ceilings, trend to reduce the height, I am concerned with the building materials. Could the height and materials be adjusted. Office and labs will be separate.

Todd Fremont-Smith, these heights are standard, we do not know who the tenant will be.

Jeff Brown, plans are just diagrams, they do not show on the elevations.

Bill Gisness, we are trying to give variety to the façade, horizontal and vertical sections. We need flexibility for the tenants, we do not have their layout yet.

Janet Buck, the previous presentation was showing 25 ft penthouse, this one is showing much lower 15' height for mechanical equipment.

Bill Gisness, this building is much smaller, less equipment is needed, 15 feet is sufficient.

Payson Whitney, it is preferable to keep the height down, its visually more appealing. This building looks more like a school or library. The traffic impact will be reduced.

Jason Cohen, David Gamble letter id dated May 5, we would like to see the first design. I appreciate that the petitioner is not going all the way to setback and as a result and we will get little park. This proposal fits better into the neighborhood.

Emily Izzo, Representative Lawn stated that the City should take the property by eminent domain. This is a residential neighborhood across from Bemis Park. The project will have negative impact on the residents who will have to deal with this project for years to come.

Sue Jenkins, Rutland St, this is a neighborhood not a place for a lab. Evans Street has speed bumps, people stopped using it. We need to have rodent control.

....., Buick St, this is a residential area, I would rather see the building in the back and parking in the front.

Gideon Schreiber, this zone does not allow front yard parking.

Paul, 441 Waltham St, we put up with Stirritt lumber and their trucks for a long time. This structure will be twice as high as my house. Other buildings are setback, laws can be changed. This does not belong in this area.

Mark LeClair, Rutland St, this is not the right project for this residential neighborhood. There is nothing like that in the area. I am concerned with noise, if permitted it should be regulated. There is not enough distance between this site and the residents.

Joan Gumbleton, 32 Falmouth Rd, this is a large building, kids might congregate in the rear at night, will there be enough lights? Recycling center will share Green River Way, cars will line up, would the entrance be wide enough? How many employees will be in the building? Will the lights affect the residents?

John Airasian, Councilor At Large, Main Street, I share the neighborhood concerns. My kids and I spend lots of time in Bemis Park, the parking evaluation is needed.

....., it will take away from the neighborhood. Plumbing supplies is much smaller business. Considerations should be given what it will do to our lifestyle. Cars are already flying between Waltham and Mai Streets. 350 cars will be brought into the neighborhood.

....., there are no pictures showing how this building fit with the abutting structures. I am concerned with the shadow impact. The city has missed many opportunities, we all contribute to CPC. I am concerned with lighting impact and lots of hazardous materials that are used in labs.

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Gideon Schreiber, shadow study is provided and is available online. The building has 16 to 56 feet setbacks. The property is in PSCD district, residential use is not allowed.

Janet Buck motioned that the Planning Board approve the request for Special Permit/Site Plan Review under Section 9.05 based upon the finding that the proposed project meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance under §9.03, subject to conditions set forth in the staff report.

Jason Cohen seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting at 10:50 pm.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 10:50 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 9/14/2022 available in the DCD&P office.

