

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: October 12, 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

Payson Whitney motioned to approve Minutes of 9/14/2022 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, this is an extension of proposal presented at the Planning Board meeting on 9/14/2022. Based on comments at that time changes are presented tonight.

John Amodio, IBI, Landscape Architect, this is a response to comments from the last meeting. Open space is an important component of this design, 100% will be open to the public, friendly to all uses. Primary activity area is placed next to Paramount Place. Asphalt will be reduced and replaced with grass Crete. Only small box trucks vehicles will be used for maintenance. Fire trucks will have full access. Trees proposed are Acer Rubrum Armstrong Maple, which is narrow and taller than the 1 story retail building. There is an opportunity for art on the site, same as at the Arsenal Yards project. All along Paramount Place corridor, more visible. Variety of types can be used.

Jason Cohen, is there a commitment by the developer to the Public Art?

Abigail Hammett, the public is concern with so many labs being build.

Gideon Schreiber, the developer will be meeting with Public Art Planner Liz Helfer.

Ted Saraceno, we will make the building look good.

Chris Roller, Architectural Team, there were many questions about the size/height of the penthouse, could it be made smaller? We can reduce the height by 3', from 25' to 22'. We have prepared a summary of similar projects that were recently built in Watertown, many have 25' penthouse for the mechanical equipment. Our building is slightly different but future clients might need more space for their equipment. The front of the penthouse is now 22', the middle would be 25'. It is a 2 level penthouse, the middle would be 25' to house the taller equipment. The roof area is covered with solar panels, the equipment cannot be moved on the roof. The view from Pleasant Street will show the difference between the 25' and 22' height of the penthouse.

Jeff Brown, is the design of the penthouse as big as needed or is it design for future tenants?

Chris Roller, some of the space is empty but ready for future tenants. Lower 4 stories are 66' plus the 22' penthouse. We have received comments about the colors of the materials at the last meeting, we are now proposing different color of the penthouse, corrugated and perforated metal.

Paul Pavone, joining meeting online, Labors International Union, we hope that the developer will give the job opportunity to local residents.

John Laberdini, joining meeting online, Main Street, I have worked for Russo's for many years. I am in support of this project.

Jeff Brown closed the public hearing at 7:40 PM.

Payson Whitney, I appreciate what the developer is doing, everyone is missing Russo's. I live next to the Arsenal Yards, the penthouse on Building 2 is huge. Zoning Ordinance should change to include the penthouse in the height of the entire building. Crossroads on the Charles is up to the sidewalk, Old Mills is close to the sidewalk as well, but its not as high. This structure is very high, we are setting precedent, it is too close to the road. This building will loom over you, I like this project, but it is too high. Relation of the proposed building is one of the criteria, it needs to be pushed from the road.

Ted Saraceno, we have done study, this is a wedding cake design of the building. The size of the building has been reduced by 20,000 s.f., the building is placed in the right place, would the 3' reduction make a difference?

Chris Roller, the parking garage design has to have certain dimensions.

Jason Cohen, the 3' could make a difference.

Ted Saraceno, there is never a perfect project, but this is like a swiss watch, tolerance is limited. We can slide the building 3' back before it starts to fall apart.

Gideon Schreiber, 3' would make a difference, the setback in residential area is 15', 13' would make a difference.

Abigail Hammett, 13' would allow for more landscape, it would change the feel of the building. Greenery on the terrace is also helpful. Class A tenants want the penthouse space, it comes with the type of the tenant. Anything that can be done to soften the perforated panels would be helpful.

John Airasian, City Councilor, we are proposing narrow strip of lawn and shrubs.

Bill York, we can work with the staff.

Ted Saraceno, we want to make the building design fit in. We will meet with the staff and look at different option.

Jason Cohen, I am more conflicted with this project. The penthouse is still an issue, Zoning Ordinance said that Special Permit over 15' can be approved by the Planning Board at their discretion. Modern technology requires more space. The table shows all the lab project approved so far. There is a flexibility to allow more height, but the height and front setback are maxed out for this project. It will loom over Pleasant Street. I do not like the the Zoning Ordinance is now written. I like the landscaping And appreciate the effort.

Ted Saraceno, the life science buildings have penthouses for the mechanical equipment, we will have world class tenant. We have challenged the design team. Business is dominated by mature companies that need space for growth. It will be good for Watertown as well.

Janet Buck, I like to thank the developer team for being responsive to Board comments. I would also like to speak to the residents. Planning Board has limitations, we are here to enforce the Zoning Ordinance. We can negotiate improvements. We appreciate the amenities that the project will bring to the city. I urge everyone to review the Zoning Ordinance, we cannot make changes on the spot.

Abigail Hammett, I would encourage the developer to make some public amenities, to provide additional amenities to the residents.

Ted Saraceno, there will be food and beverage retail space, breakfast lunch and dinner, etc. We will do our best to make the retail available to the public.

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 & 9.05, subject to conditions set forth in the staff report and additional condition that the building be shifted 3 feet further south with additional plantings and tree canopy plantings along the frontage.

Abigail Hammett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

OTHER

Gideon Schreiber, please note that we have provided a link to the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting at 8:15 pm.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:15 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 10/12/2022 available in the DCD&P office.