



CITY OF WATERTOWN
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
WATERTOWN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
149 MAIN STREET
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

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David Ferris, Clerk
Christopher H. Heep, Member
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MINUTES

On Wednesday evening, May 24, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber of the Administration Building, the Zoning Board of Appeals held a public hearing. The meeting and public hearing were conducted in a 'hybrid' format with options for public participation both in-person and via remote means, in accordance with applicable law.

In attendance: Melissa SantucciRozzi, *Chairperson*; David Ferris, *Member*; Michael Brangwynne, *Member*; Christopher Heep, *Member*; Gregory Girard, *Alternate Member*. Also present: Gideon Schreiber, *Assistant Director of Planning*; Larry Field, *Sr. Planner*; Sameena Pirani, *Zoning Clerk*; Antonio Mancini, *Zoning Enforcement Officer*.

Chairperson SantucciRozzi opened the meeting. She noted the Board Members in attendance and introduced the staff.

Staff made an announcement explaining how the meeting and methods of participation for the public could be accessed remotely.

The Chairperson outlined the agenda for the meeting, announcing the cases in the order in which they would be taken.

Item #1: Administrative Chairperson SantucciRozzi requested a motion to approve the Minutes from the meeting on April 26, 2023. The Motion to approve the minutes was made by Member Ferris and seconded by Alternate Member Girard. Motion was passed (5-0), with Member Ferris, Alternate Member Girard, Member Brangwynne, Chair SantucciRozzi and Member Heep voting in favor.

Item #2: 90 School St:

Member Ferris read the legal notice.

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90 School St- Robert and Sandra Mackerron- Special Permit under § 5.01 (d) to convert the existing two-family to a three-family by converting the basement living space to a third unit. Special Permit Finding § 4.06 (a) for relief from § 5.04 to allow the construction of a dormer on the third floor, increasing pre-existing non-conforming half-story. Neighborhood Business District. ZBA 2023-03."

Attorney Kenneth Leitner representing the owners and petitioners Robert and Sandra Mackerron detailed the scope of the project and the nature of relief being sought. The property was in the NB zoning district, which permits three-families by special permit. It was surrounded by different zoning districts which allow different land use. A petition had been filed previously and changes had been made to the plans to improve it.

Attorney Leiter addressed the different criteria for a special permit. The proposed plans would not adversely affect the neighborhood as the increase in density was appropriate for this neighborhood-- there were other three-families surrounding it and the building footprint would remain the same. While the height of the existing structure was non-conforming, the new dormer would not add additional height. The site also had adequate parking space, allowing room for 6 cars in two driveways. The half story calculation would increase from 53% over 7 feet to 60% with the proposed dormer. However, this would not be more detrimental to the neighborhood.

Upon the conclusion of his presentation, Chair opened discussion to the Board. Member Brangwynne had no questions. Member Heap asked about the number and location of the parking spaces. Attorney explained that the driveway on Cypress Street would have room for four cars (2 stacks of tandem spaces), while the driveway on School Street would allow 2 cars with tandem parking.

Member Ferris asked about the location of the egress windows for the basement unit. He confirmed if the front window well on School St would be modified for egress and if the window well outside Proposed Bedroom 1 on drawing A 1.2 was an existing egress window. He asked why the new driveway off of School St was not paved. He also noticed that some siding on a portion of the house was patched and confirmed that all siding would be matched.

Member Girard noted the 33 feet curb cut on Cypress St. Attorney Leitner explained that it would be brought to conformity as part of the conditions for approval of the petition.

Chair SantucciRozzi confirmed if the concerns with the previous proposal had been addressed. Attorney Leitner explained the changes that had been made, including the internal stairway to the third story that dispelled concerns about its use as a four-family, and increased FAR concerns with the previous proposal. She also asked if the basement was ready. Attorney confirmed that it was currently a shell.

Staff announced that an abutter had indicated their approval of the project.

Following the resolution of the Board's questions and the public hearing, separate motions were made for the special permit for the conversion from the existing two-family to a three-family use and special permit finding for the half story addition within non-conforming setback. Both motions were made by Member Ferris and seconded by Member Brangwynne. Both motions were approved unanimously (5-0)

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with Alternate Member Girard, Member Ferris, Member Brangwynne, Member Heep and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor. Petition was approved with conditions.

Item #2:61 Bigelow Ave:

Member Ferris read the legal notice

[61 Bigelow Ave](#)-Gilbert F. Bortone-Appeal of the Determination by the Zoning Enforcement Officer (ZEO) in accordance with §9.19, where such determination was made on March 15, 2023 to deny a request to demolish the existing structure and issue a building permit for a steel frame structure to be used for the previous Light Industry use in the T-Zone. **ZBA 2023-04**

Attorney Richard LeClair representing the petitioner Gilbert Bortone stated his understanding of the relevant permitting history. He said that his client was granted a use variance for the property to use for light industry. The business fabricated ducts for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. A second variance was granted to expand the building to its current size. The petitioner submitted a building permit application to take down the existing building to construct a new slightly smaller building within its existing footprint which was denied. He also said that the appeal was not to whether the application was complete but to the zoning determination. The petitioners are appealing this determination because of the variances that had previously been granted to them.

Attorney noted that there had been no expiration time for the variances allowed then. Addressing the allegation that the existing structure and use have been abandoned, attorney stated that while they no longer have their offices at that location the petitioner, as shown in the affidavit, continues to use the inside of the building, to disassemble and assemble materials that are transported to this location. He added that to abandon a use, one needs to have the intent to abandon its use. The petitioners have not intended to abandon its use. Based on this incorrect conclusion and that they have a valid variance they wish to appeal the determination and apply for a building permit to reconstruct the building.

He admitted that the existing building is old--having lived its "useful life" -- and is in need of replacement. They plan to keep the use of the building, pursuant to the use variance that was previously granted.

At the conclusion of his presentation, Chair SantucciRozzi invited staff to provide any comments or information in addition to what had already been submitted.

Attorney LeClair asked if he could receive a copy of the Memo from the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

Staff reiterated that staff recommended denial of the appeal on the grounds already stated. The proposed construction was not protected by Chapter 40 A or the Watertown Zoning Ordinance and noted that the existing structure and use have been abandoned.

Chair opened discussion to the board.

Responding to Member Girard's question, Attorney LeClair acknowledged the Building Permit Application was incomplete. He said it did not comply with the Building Code and that the Petitioner was not appealing that. He was aware that a complete application would need to be submitted.

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Member Girard also asked if the two reasons for denial of the appeal were conjoined or separate. Attorney LeClair stated that he did not think they were separate. He added that the first issue was not relevant because they had a use variance for the use. Furthermore, they did not intend to abandon it, given that the building was still used to disassemble and sometimes assemble components of the equipment inside the premises.

Staff clarified that the owners had submitted an application to rebuild the structure within the same footprint by right. Based on the two separate grounds for denial, the application to rebuild the structure by right was denied. Since zoning relief could be sought, this is contrary to the suggestion that the building was not allowed at all.

Staff also explained that a second variance to build an addition within rear and side setbacks had been allowed subsequent to the use variance. Consequently, there were two variances on record for the address.

Member Ferris stated that based on his observations when visiting the site earlier this week, it was hard to believe that the building was in use. He asked how the building was being used and how frequently. Attorney LeClair explained that the building was used on a weekly basis, and more than that at times. He also explained the nature of work done on the premises.

Member Ferris expressed his skepticism over this claim, given the boarded windows and debris all over the property. He asked if other properties by the owner were in the same condition. Attorney LeClair agreed with his observations about the appearance of the building. He stated that this provided the rationale for rebuilding. He added that despite its dilapidated condition, the building was functional and used on a regular basis.

Member Brangwynne asked Attorney LeClair to clarify whether any part of the building was pre-existing/non-conforming. LeClair said that a portion was built before the enactment of any zoning ordinance. He agreed with Member Brangwynne that this “portion” was the entire structure except the addition. However, Attorney LeClair added that they were looking to exercise their current variance to rebuild the structure. He explained that when the building was altered with a variance the building was protected by the variance and not by its being built before zoning.

In response to a question from Member Heep seeking clarification on the scope and implications of the variances, staff summarized the permitting history. A use variance to change the use from a “pool hall” to a light industry use had been granted for the original building which predated zoning. There was no variance for the building at that time. Because the property included a two family (later demolished), limited hours of operation for the business and access from the front only was granted. Later there was a second variance to build an addition that was within rear and side setbacks was granted. This addition was for interior storage.

Chair recognized the challenges of addressing abandonment in a non-conforming structure with a use variance, later adding that it was hard to prove. However, she clarified that the variance was limited to the portion of the addition and not the entire structure. Hence the proposed construction was not

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protected by Chapter 40A section 6. The petitioner was not entitled to rebuild the structure by right and would need to come before the Board to seek relief.

Chair SantucciRozzi said there were two separate issues: use and the structure. With respect to use, SantucciRozzi said there was a use variance and felt the Board would be hard pressed to talk about abandonment with a use variance. With respect to structure, SantucciRozzi said that receiving a variance for an addition does not mean you have a variance for everything that is there. Rebuilding a commercial structure is not accorded the same protection under Chapter 40A, she said, and the Petitioner is not entitled to rebuild that structure by right.

Attorney LeClair asked if the Board's decision could be clear about its grounds.

Chair opened the meeting for public comments.

Elodia Thomas(67 Marion Road) commented on the appearance of the building and stated that if she were an abutter she would be horrified by it.

Claudia Dwyer (64 Bigelow Av) who has lived across from B & G Sheet Metal for many decades also commented on the appearance of the building stating that the building was completely uninhabitable— she said that it was hard to believe how anyone could be using it on a weekly basis. She has not witnessed such activity. The building was a blight even before it was abandoned 2 years ago. The property has been an “embarrassment” to the neighborhood, especially the neighbors who live in the apartments across the street.

Chair clarified that the concerns regarding the state of the property could be submitted to the Zoning Enforcement Officer and would be disseminated and addressed by the appropriate authorities.

Charles Fortunato (57 Bigelow Av) stated that he was a direct abutter to the property. For the record he added that extreme care must be taken if the building were demolished, adequate measures taken to address the rodent and black mold issues that are apparent.

Chair said that the condition of the property was not acceptable to the city, and this message should be relayed to the client for his attention. She said that whether these conditions are addressed would be part of future deliberations by the Board on any petition for zoning relief.

Angeline Kounelis (55 Keenan Stree), former City Counselor, attending remotely reported that there had been “a lengthy history of communications with this parcel.” Previous comments made by Ms. Dwyer and Mr Fortunato had been submitted to the Board of Health and to the Planning staff and should be on file. She also added that the fire department marked the building so that in case of a fire, it would not be entered because of unsafe conditions. The present condition of the property should not get further blighted, out of consideration for its neighbors in the immediate area.

Attorney LeClair asked if the details of the decision could be recorded to inform next steps in replacing the building with another that maintains its use. He recognized the challenges of doing so, given its location in the T zone.

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Following the resolution of the Board's questions and the public hearing, a motion was made by Member Ferris to deny the appeal and Member Girard seconded the motion. Member Heep said he wanted to modify the motion and Girard withdrew his second to allow this request. Heep asked the motion be modified to read as follows: that the appeal be denied and determination of the Zoning Enforcement Officer upheld for the reasons outlined in the May 19, 2023 memo, including and without limitation, on the basis that:

- 1) The prior variances granted on the property do not authorize the reconstruction of the pre-existing/non-conforming structure; and
- 2) Chapter 40A, Section 6, does not authorize the reconstruction of a commercial structure of this type.

The motion, as modified, was approved unanimously (5-0) with Alternate Member Girard, Member Ferris, Member Brangwynne, Member Heep and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

[104 Main St.](#) -O'Connor Capital Partners LLC/ O'Connor Management LLC- Special Permit with Site Plan Review to redevelop five lots (with addresses of 104 and 116-126 Main Street, 2 Cross Street, 53 Pleasant Street, and a vacant lot at the corner of Cross Street and Pleasant Street) into a new mixed-use development. Project will include approximately 6,201 sq.ft. of first floor commercial/retail space along Main St. with 143 apartment units and 5 townhome units, and a two-level parking garage with 154 spaces, and 2 handicap surface spaces. Pursuant to §5.01 (k)(2) mixed use development; § 4.10 additional height and rooftop features; § 5.05(f) increased length of contiguous facade and building length in keeping with Design Guidelines; §6.01 (e & f) shared parking and reduced parking with encouragement of alternative modes of transportation; subject to §5.07 Affordable Housing Requirements; § 4.06 (a) alteration, change, extension of non-conforming use and structure and § 9.12 all in accordance with §9.03 through §9.05. Central Business (CB) Zoning District. **ZBA-2023-02.**

Brett Buehrer thanked the Board for giving his team the opportunity to present their project. He introduced himself and his firm. He lived at 414 Sixth Avenue Pelham New York. He was a Senior Vice President with O'Connor Management, a real estate management and development firm based in New York. The company had been in business since 1983. Established by Jerry O'Connor, a native of Boston, the company was presently run by his sons Bill and John O'Connor. They maintained strong business and family ties in the greater Boston community.

He also expressed his gratitude to the city staff, the Planning Board, their consultants, and community for their input in the process. The interactive process had been a positive experience for them, and they hoped to reinvigorate Main Street and Watertown Square with this development. He introduced the members of the team that would be presenting, Nancy Ludwig and Matt Marotta from ICON, Jeffrey

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Dirk from Vai their traffic consultants (participating on Zoom), Shane Michniewicz and Hugh Hahn from Vhb, Ian Ramey from Copley Wolff Design Group and Bill York from Gilman McLaughlin & Hanrahan. The project embraced sustainable transit-oriented development, public art, invigorating retail on Main Street and affordable housing, all issues that had been expressed in the process and that had emerged because of the input received from the team.

Upon concluding his presentation, Buehrer invited architect Nancy Ludwig to detail the project. She outlined the project stating that the project would return commercial space to Main St. In addition to retail, they were proposing 143 rental units of which 21 would be affordable, 5 three-bedroom townhouses of which 1 would be affordable, resident amenities throughout the site which would include a dog park, as well as amenity spaces throughout the site. They would also be providing 156 parking spaces with 4 EV charging stations and plenty of bike parking. New building codes and stretch codes will be embraced to create a sustainable project that would be all electric. She listed the smart growth and sustainable design strategies that they would be adopting; photovoltaic arrays to the extent possible, reduction of water use, limited /Low flow plumbing fixtures, energy star appliances to name a few.

In describing the locus plan, Ludwig described how the area was walkable, surrounded by different types of buildings that included the currently under construction 166 Main St residential project, and neighboring church. She also shared pictures of the site as it currently looked, paved 100% behind the Main St elevation and Cross St with its rowhouses architecture. These apartment buildings, built for worker housing many years ago, would be preserved with the creation of 5 three-bedroom townhouses.

Ludwig went on to describe how the building really connected between a Main St elevation that would incorporate retail at its ground floor and a Pleasant St elevation stepping down to four stories along the back of the sidewalk there. She pointed out the entrance to the building as it projected forward from the main bar of the building, highly visible whether one approached it off of Main Street through the green space or entered in a car from Pleasant St. Overall the building would increase open space with 39% devoted to it, getting rid of all the surface parking. In describing the setbacks, she noted that not only had care been taken to observe the 10 foot or more setbacks from the side yards but also set the volume back from the street edges.

In describing the site plan, Ludwig pointed out the significant drops in grading—Essentially a 21-foot drop from north to south that had been taken advantage of to mass the building. Along the through block connection, where the art walk was located, the façade was stepped back for the space to be used for outdoor dining. Both the front and rear of the townhouse block would be landscaped as it connected with the entry courtyard. In addition to these green spaces there would also be green space on the upper roofs where the buildings were stepping back.

Briefly going over the utility plan, Ludwig stated that these would be brought from both Main St and Pleasant St. These could be discussed further if needed.

Ludwig detailed the architecture of the building. She explained that the Main St elevation particularly with its stepping back was in context with some of the taller buildings including the one that was

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currently under construction on Main St. and those that had existed along Main St. The taller floors had been purposefully set back—the top floor was held back more than 40 feet from the street—it would not be visible to a person looking up from the street level because of being tucked back. Similarly on Pleasant St there would be a 4-story volume; the roof terrace wound up on top of that building so that the height was limited to the center of the site.

Also detailed was the parking plan; there would be two levels of parking, one access from Pleasant St and the other from the courtyard, not being interconnected.

Ludwig displayed the upper-level plans with their bedroom configurations, consisting of 1,2- and 3-bedroom units and a roof plan which would allow space for mechanicals, which would be situated on the middle of the roof where photovoltaic equipment would be located.

Discussing the imagery, Ludwig explained how effort had been made to incorporate the imagery of the surrounding masonry buildings, regular rhythm of bays and windows and projecting volumes along Main Street. Perspectives looking at Main Street, that showed the 3-story masonry, along with the changing materials on upper levels, the breaking up of the volume around the left corner of the building allowing a 15-foot-wide opening that became the portal for the art walk and also a place for outdoor dining as it was continued from Main St. Also described were the changes made to this area based on the recommendations of the Planning Board resulting in broader store fronts at the commercial corner, in turn leading up to the entry way. Other perspectives shared included the west side elevations, Cross St view, corner at Cross and Pleasant with the existing townhouses, pointing out to the single-color simplification of the façade at the upper level as suggested by the Planning Board, the entry way with its projecting volume to provide a real sense of entry as one pulled in from either side. She also went over the material palette that included metal shingles on the dormer elements and on the volume that was over the retail at the corner of Main Street, the casement windows that complement the scale and form of the building. The presentation concluded with a brief discussion of the shadow studies. It was stated that the building had an ideal orientation for shadows. In the spring, in March, the shadows got long in the evening, but they were on the street and not hitting the buildings across the way. In summertime, the shadows were minimal. Fall was similar to March. In December, there would be long shadows cast across Main Street in the late afternoon.

Upon the conclusion of her presentation, she invited Jeffrey Dirk (attending remotely), representing Vai, (the transportation consultants for the project) to provide the traffic analysis. He stated that a full transportation impact assessment was prepared for the project, similar to other assessments prepared for the city. The general location of the site was ideal from the standpoint of pedestrians, bicycles and access to public transportation. Hence all these modes were reviewed as they served the project site; Given the extensive number of studies done within the city they had an opportunity to study and identify changes in traffic fluctuations that have occurred not only due to seasonality but also due to the pandemic.

Summarizing the results of their study, Dirk stated that the net increase in traffic as a result of the project was really not significant. Aware that there were backups, they did not just look at motorist delays but also examined the extent of the queuing that occurred from the Watertown Square area and

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how the project would impact the queuing. Along with their peer review consultants they concluded that the project would not result in an increase in delays of any more than 5 seconds at any intersection over what was there today. Also, the project would not increase the number of vehicles that were backed up at any intersection by more than 2 vehicles. He acknowledged that this area was in a high crash location both for motor vehicles as well as pedestrians and bicycles. Hence improvements and studies to address these concerns had been proposed. He also described the improvements to sight lines, particularly relating to the retaining wall along the driveway coming out on Pleasant St, that had been incorporated into the project site plans.

Also, part of his presentation included a slide demonstrating the extensive network of interconnected sidewalk facilities that currently existed in the area, the bus stops and bus routes that were accessible within walking distance from the site, highlighting the fact that this was highly walkable, highly bikeable and superiorly accessed from public transportation.

Dirk also described the traffic characteristics of the project site, showing that there was no net change during the morning peak hour to an increase of about 15 vehicles during the evening peak hours. He also added that the current assessments assumed that the post office would stay in this location and would generate the same amount of traffic.

Dirk shared recommendations serving as guidelines for site access.

He also explained additional recommendations that they had worked on with city staff and their review consultants to address existing conditions as they related to transportation infrastructure and safety. Included in these was the recommendation to undertake a pedestrian safety and mobility study. Based on the outcome of that study, they would be undertaking actual construction of those improvements along the site's frontage, ensuring that all these amenities were in place and completed to ensure pedestrian usage and safety. A \$100,000 contribution to the Street Light Improvement Program would also be made to ensure that the project fitted into the existing infrastructure and the offsite pieces that related to the project frontage were also in place. Also detailed were other offsite improvements including contributions to improve project connectivity ultimately connecting it to the Charles River Greenway, signage at the Galen Street/Nonantum Road/Watertown St intersection, wayfinding signs on the preferred route to access the Charles River Greenway, the Watertown Community Path and location of the bike parking and a construction management plan.

Dirk also described the comprehensive TDM Program consisting of incentives both financial as well as structural to encourage residents and employees of commercial space to use alternative modes of transportation. The most important of these was the guaranteed ride home program that would be provided as part of the membership in the TMA.

Following the conclusion of the presentation, the Chair announced that she would do a round of comments from the board members, open it to the public and then circle back to the board.

Member Girard asked if the courtyard on the right (pg 14 of presentation) was for public use or for residents of the facility. Ludwig confirmed that both the upper-level courtyards were resident amenities.

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He also pointed out some inconsistencies in the numbers indicating the retail space. He asked what figure was used for the TIA. Dirk confirmed that 5520 SF was the measure used. This was updated to 6201 SF in the table. Buehrer explained that at the time of the Planning Board meeting additional setbacks were allowed to become 6197 SF and so the figures were adjusted to reflect this. Dirk explained that the update for the transportation assessment was about 6100 SF and that was what was reflected in the table presented. This was different from the report that was submitted. He explained that there was a response to comments letter dated January 25 that included the updated transportation numbers as they related to the project. This was reflected in the presentation tonight (pg 42 of the presentation).

Member Girard commended the art walk. He asked if the parking for retail would be accessed from Pleasant St. Ludwig explained that there were two entries, one from Pleasant St, one from the courtyard. Buehrer clarified that there would be a shared parking agreement. The parking garage behind the retail had been modified to allow access from the garage to the retail space. Commercial Tenants could vary in how they wished to provide public access. Member Girard suggested wayfinding signage to make sure people understood the opportunities to park and were not circulating around idling and parking in alternative places. Buehrer confirmed that there would be wayfinding language and commitments in their transportation program.

Member Girard noted that some 10-12 current parking spaces were utilized by customers of Watertown Savings Bank customers. He asked what arrangements had been made for the bank once the parking spaces were gone. Buehrer clarified that there was no long-term commitment to parking outside of this development with other properties. Member Girard asked if Watertown Savings Bank employees or customers utilized these parking spaces. Buehrer stated that there were no lease agreements associated as they related to the site.

Member Girard noted that traffic generation was a big concern for the public and residents of Watertown. He asked Mr. Dirk what he meant by “operating conditions as they are today?” In response, Dirk explained that operating conditions as they existed today would study motorist delays and most importantly vehicle queuing as they exist at the present time and how these would be impacted by the project. Using the existing measures of traffic volumes, motorist delays and backup queuing that happen at intersections, and adjusting these to account for additional drivers and new projects that were in the pipeline for the next 7 years provided the analysis for comparison to determine project impact on traffic.

Detailing the calculation of these numbers, Dirk announced a correction in the traffic count cited earlier. The adjusted figures due to the increase in retail square footage would result in about 2 to 5 additional vehicles during the peak hours- one hour period.

In response to Member Girard’s questions about the calculation and accuracy of these figures, Dirk described the methodology and standards used to generate and analyze this data. He stated that the same process had been used to estimate these additional 2 to 5 trips as that used for the proposed project, using the Institute of Transportation engineers’ numbers and adjusting them for walking trips and biking trips in the way they had done before. Member Girard commended the use of ITE numbers. Additionally, he asked if their models were reflective of conditions in Watertown. Dirk admitted that the

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ITE database that they started with was suburban. The reason for not using urban numbers was that they may vary with the number of bus lines, frequency of service and capacity of those lines which in turn would be different throughout the city. Dirk also explained how they were using the census specific data in the project site to adjust the ITE numbers within the context of Watertown Square. Dirk added that in addition to these adjustments and considerations, the city held them to a traffic monitoring program. If the numbers were not in compliance with the city's requirements, additional TDM measures that reduce single occupancy vehicle use were required.

Referring to the TDM measures, Member Girard commended them for being clear and well-intended. He asked additional questions related to their ability to deliver them. How many buildings that they currently manage had an onsite TDM coordinator? Buehrer clarified that this was not a full-time position. It was a responsibility most likely performed by the property manager for the building. Following up with that response, Member Girard asked how many of his current property managers had TDM responsibilities. Buehrer stated that this was their first one. While they had developments in other cities, each with their unique requirements, this was their first with a TDM Program and they were willing to learn from the experience.

Continuing his comments and questions about the TDM program, Member Girard recognized that its success would depend on the accuracy of the data collected and its implementation. He asked about their plans and procedures in place to ensure that. Dirk explained the data collection process, which included the measurement of the volume of traffic entering and exiting the garage and entering and exiting the pickup and drop off area. Bicycle parking demands, pedestrians entering and exiting the entrances to the project, both the commercial and residential would be monitored separately. Surveys of both the residents and employees of the project would be undertaken. The data collected would be published compared to the matrix mentioned earlier, and subsequently evaluated. Based on that corrective actions would be proposed. This would occur over a two-year period. Member Girard asked if Vai would be under contract with O'Connor to provide those services for two years. Buehrer added that until the project was approved nobody would be under contract for two years. Member Girard asked if retaining Vai for this purpose be made a condition for approval. He also hoped to see someone take a leadership role in collecting the data and reporting it accurately, applying best practices both as the building operators and traffic engineers. Buehrer expressed their commitment to provide such services, adding that they had a history of being very committed in the communities they worked in.

In response to Member Girard's suggestion to incorporate technology (transportation-oriented apps) to implement the TDM program, Buehrer expressed their commitment to use technology to better serve and inform their tenants.

Member Girard also asked if the monthly transportation benefit to new residents that sign a 12-month lease be extended to 3 months to allow time to inculcate and establish new behavior patterns. Buehrer stated that he would be happy to make that commitment.

Member Ferris stated that it was refreshing to see housing and retail both being offered in Watertown Square. Addressing staff, he asked about the required setbacks from property lines for such projects.

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Staff explained that 100% coverage was allowed in the Central Business District. Architect Ludwig clarified that the building code did mandate a 10 ft setback to allow windows for fire separation. Staff added that when all or a portion of a separate parcel is completely residential there is a ten-foot setback. Along Main St, Pleasant St and Cross St there was no such requirement.

Member Ferris sought clarification on the relationship between the quantity of parking and the number of units. And if there was room to increase parking for residents if the need arose. Staff explained that there was some flexibility through the zoning ordinance to allow shared parking of uses with peak user demands at different times. Staff detailed the parking requirements for different uses; The parking requirements for commercial use varied with the use—for a restaurant it would be based on the number of seats, for retail it would be by square footage.

Member Ferris also clarified that the retail component would not include the post office. Buehrer explained their extensive efforts to engage the post office. Given that no agreement had been reached, it was difficult to answer this question.

Referring to Sheet A-101 on the 05/17/2023 drawing set, Member Ferris noted how small the first-floor plan was in terms of space dedicated to residential building versus parking. He expressed concern over the very limited space available on the first floor for deliveries of packages. He asked if there would be a 24-hour concierge. He also asked how package delivery would be handled on the first floor. Would this lead to expansion of the first-floor residential space at the expense of parking in the future? He recognized that the second-floor plan allowed for amenity space directly across from the elevators.

Buehrer explained that service and delivery for trucks would be allowed on the lower level of the garage, and they had worked hard with the city to come up with this plan to prevent backing activities on Pleasant St. Move-ins, garbage and large retail deliveries would be handled at this loading dock. There was a service elevator in close proximity to facilitate movement of furniture in and out of the building. He explained that daily packages for the residents would come in from the front. In other buildings that they managed, they had created an access point for the package delivery companies to be able to go into the rooms and place the packages in designated areas for the residents. Residents were notified of the package delivery and came down to collect it. It was anticipated that the same procedures would be followed in this building. Buehrer admitted that they had not done all their program planning for this as they did not know their building envelope till the site plan was approved.

As Member Ferris reiterated his concerns about the lack of adequate space for accommodating the large volume of package deliveries for the residents, Ludwig acknowledged his concerns, stating that this was a struggle for many residential buildings. The package concierge systems had their pros and cons. This was something that would need to get worked out with management. She also proposed the idea of providing a stairway leading up to the floor above that would offer more extensive resident services, leaving the first-floor space for office use etc.

Member Ferris further explained his concerns about the limited space. He wondered if the current set up would make the lobby a welcoming and secure space, especially for someone walking in late at night. Should the project move forward this would need to be addressed. The nature of his concerns was more

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from a wondering if they would be looking to reduce parking in the future to accommodate the package deliveries. Ludwig added that in a lot of the buildings they were designing, the package delivery set up to become a social space. Overall, this was something that would need to get worked out with management. Both Ludwig and Ferris agreed that this was not an ideal layout.

Member Ferris also asked if the petitioners were comfortable with the depth of retail at 40 feet, bringing this up to address his concerns about the need to reduce parking spaces in the future to accommodate the need for more retail space. Ludwig answered in the affirmative, while also acknowledging the challenges. Buehrer admitted that these numbers had been revised to allow additional depth for retail.

In response to Member Ferris's questions about retail deliveries, Buehrer outlined the process, stating that smaller deliveries could use the rear access door within the retail leading to the garage. Larger deliveries would use the loading dock and the provided electric carts.

Member Ferris also expressed his concern about the proximity of the building on Pleasant Street given that it would be on the edge of the sidewalk and that 50% of the parking as well as loading would be taking place on that side. Such proximity to the sidewalk was not typical of Pleasant St—in other developments usually there was more of a setback allowed with or without landscaping. He hoped that there would be some kind of notifier appropriate for an urban setting. Buehrer stated their commitment to put in enunciators at the lower-level entrance for that reason.

Member Ferris expressed his approval of the massing of the building, with 3 stories in the front on Main St, with multiple step backs and confirmed that there would be terraces and balconies for the units along Main St. The same would be on the fifth floor as it overlooked Main Street. This was confirmed by the team.

Questioning the mechanicals on the building top, Member Ferris asked about their location, if they would be screened and hidden not only from street level but also higher levels as seen from neighboring buildings. Ludwig confirmed that there would be a potential for screening where it was deemed necessary. Further responding to his questions, she explained that with an all-electric building they would have unitized heat pumps. While these may vary in size, they would be strategically placed, mostly at the center of the roof. Member Ferris also expressed the need to understand further where projections in the wall to accommodate exhaust components in each unit would be located.

Ludwig explained the location of the wood look siding in response to Member Ferris questions. It would be on the base of the projecting entry piece. He also asked for clarification on the other types of siding. Referring to the material on the upper level, Ludwig explained that the material and color change on the upper level had been done in response to suggestions by the Planning Board. Based on that it would be a panel with a batten, a vertical component, a change from the horizontal originally proposed.

Member Ferris also noted the artistic licenses used in some of the renderings to exaggerate the step backs. He also acknowledged that the demising plans were very general at this point. However, if the project were to move forward, he asked that the outline of the plans and their future renderings be accurately reflected.

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Member Heep asked about the vehicular circulation in the project. He confirmed that there were two points of access, both of which were on Pleasant St. Was there a distinction between the two in terms of functionality and use? Buehrer explained that this was part of the TDM Plan and the parking service required separate fees and prices would vary. Further details were still to be determined. Retail would likely use the upper level through the parking court.

Member Heep asked about the zoning relief requested related to height. This was detailed by Attorney York who also explained the criteria for granting additional height, listing the public amenities (affordable housing, preservation of the structure, creation of the pass through) that are being provided as part of the project, highlighting the reduction in scale achieved by the stepbacks at various levels and the preservation of the historic houses along Cross St where the entire area could be built along the front of the property. The FAR proposed was 2.5 where 4.0 was allowed.

Member Heep noted that despite efforts to step back the upper levels of the building to the center core, looking at the renderings, it appeared that they were still significantly visible from the Town Hall and the library. He asked if the upper levels could be recessed even further than they were.

Member Heep also asked for clarification on the relief requesting a change to a non-conforming use and structure. Staff explained that this request related to the 2 Cross Street building. It did not comply because it was all residential on the first floor and they were proposing to maintain this use with no changes to the exterior.

Member Heep asked about the other options that had been explored by the developers to develop this site. Buehrer explained how the historical importance of this type of rowhousing was conveyed by the city and led them to preserve it and build around it.

Member Heep also asked if any efforts had been made to incorporate the parcel at the corner of Main St and Cross St and if there was a concern on how future development of this space might impact them if a similar project were proposed on that property. Buehrer explained that he did not know if they would have the same requirements. From a retail perspective keeping the 10 ft residential setback between the two properties would not be the best. There might be other limitations as well.

Member Brangwynne confirmed if 3 parking spaces would be reserved for car sharing. Staff added that this was a requirement in their ordinance.

Member Brangwynne asked about the material palette of the building and if the building materials would provide the detail and richness as was being depicted.

Member Brangwynne asked about the nature and number of the retail spaces. Buehrer did not know the answer to the question. The envelope was built with flexibility in many different ways and it would depend on the final demand. Giving the space for outdoor seating as shown in the plan it was likely that some kind of food service would be located in that area. However, no commitment was made to this. He also clarified that obtaining a license for alcohol would be the tenants responsibility.

Member Brangwynne asked about the signs at Galen for no left turn. Dirk clarified that they would be overhead LED signs that would enhance compliance.

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Member Brangwynne also asked if the retail parking would be paid parking. Buehrer explained that that was yet to be determined.

Chair Santuccirozzi asked several questions; She asked if the petitioner had developed any residential properties; Where have they developed and managed these properties?

Chair asked how much of the existing property was nonresidential; Dirk reported that in the traffic study there were 14 multifamily units, 14935 SF of retail space and 9,906 SF of office space. Based on these calculations she concluded that a total of about 25000 SF of nonresidential space would be going down to about 6,000 SF.

Chair confirmed that the garage floors were not interconnected.

Chair also confirmed if the retail spaces would be all electric and how the exhaust components would be accommodated. Buehrer responded that it would be vented from the side. Ludwig described their plans for that stating that these components were typically tucked into some odd corner of a unit that stacked up. The other option would be to have a sandwich type operation. Chair stated that they would like to encourage restaurants in this area, similar to what currently exists and not having that opportunity would impact her opinion. This type of use could be accommodated as the project moved forward.

Chair asked how the trailer type vehicles serving restaurants would be accommodated in the space provided, given that they would not fit in the garage. Buehrer replied that the loading dock would be used for this. She expressed her skepticism about the loading dock being able to fit those vehicles. Engineer consultants confirmed that these were typical dimensions and met the standards. Buehrer explained that this option was provided because of the inability to create any kind of delivery access on Main Street. From the loading dock, deliveries would be made to the respective locations via an electric cart.

Buehrer explained the location of the trash recycling for retail. Chair noted its distance from the retail. Buehrer rationalized it because of the lack of options on Main Street.

Chair also expressed her concerns on the lighting plan, confirming that there was none on the property line.

Chair also asked about the size of the open space; how much was on the ground and accessible to the public. She clarified on the nature of this space, whether or not it was landscaped.

Chair expressed her disapproval of the sixth story, noting that despite the stepbacks, the entire elevation was visible from Cross St. and from different parts of the Square. She commended the 3-story frontage on Main St, but recognized that the project had almost 3 fronts and the height on Cross St needed to be re-examined.

Related to parking, Chair confirmed that parking for the row houses would also be in the garage. She questioned the adequacy of the spaces. Chair acknowledged her concern for the success of retail, given parking, the proposed depth of the spaces allowed for retail, and absence of a basement. In her view failure of the retail area would be failure of the building itself. It was the petitioner's responsibility to

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provide an attractive place and she was disappointed by what had been proposed for it. In response, the Buehrer traced back their extensive experience as a retail investment company with retail throughout the country and beyond. Chair stated that the needs of Watertown were different from the other places they had developed, and it would be their responsibility to provide attractive retail that would lend itself to the type of uses they would like to see in this community. She felt that people in this community would like to see vibrant retail that was open at night, that would revitalize the area.

Chair also stated that the public amenities were lacking in the project. Affordable housing was a Zoning requirement, and she would not describe that as a public amenity. In her view amenities were above and beyond what was typically required that would make the property stand out and attractive not only to the residents but also the public.

Chair asked if Attorney York could detail the Zoning relief with respect to height. Included in his presentation was the projects consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, the nature of relief sought for height, the criteria for additional height and how these criteria were met by the project,

Upon request from Attorney York Buehrer detailed the public amenities of the project, including the public plaza with the public art walk, quality of materials and design going into this plaza, transportation amenities for the public such as the electric charging and ride sharing opportunities, contributions to the street lighting program, the wayfinding signage.

At the conclusion of this presentation, Chair opened the discussion to the public.

Tim Waylin, 37 Murtle St, stated that he traversed Main St, Pleasant St and Cross St with regularity. He expressed his support for the project, particularly the addition of new housing to Watertown Square which was much needed in the area to not make it the “automobile crossroad” that it was today. Housing would benefit not only the proposed retail but also what exists. He was disappointed by the existing vacancies in retail and felt that the proposed project would be a catalyst for redevelopment of the Square. He stated that he was “okay” with the height, given that the project had been thoroughly reviewed and approved by the Planning Board and the petitioners had been responsive to the comments and feedback from the public, staff and Planning Board. He commended the inclusion of public open space, saw himself using it in the future and appreciated the opportunities for much needed public art that it provided. He thanked the Board for allowing him to offer his comments and for their fine comments over the course of the evening.

Jamie Gordan, 84 Fitchburg Street, stated that she had about a 15-minute walk to the Square which she did almost daily. Her son attended Russel Preschool. She was sad to see the loss of business in the neighborhood and believed that the project would boost both housing and retail, providing opportunities for “creative retail.” The Quebrada Bakery was in an old gas station with no basement yet drew many from the neighborhood. She felt that the developers had demonstrated a great deal of thoughtfulness in designing flexibility in terms of the retail space. She also stated that the “height was not an issue for her.” The renderings demonstrated the absence of visibility of the sixth floor from the library. The increased height was allowing an increase in housing which was much needed and would hopefully stabilize the prices. She particularly appreciated the affordable housing component.

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Joshua Rosmarin, 29 Ashland St spoke in favor of the project. He was excited to see the opportunity for mixed-use development in Watertown Square. He particularly favored the opportunity to purchase the townhouses, increase in the number of 3-bedroom units, at the request of the Planning Board, which would bring families to the area, amenities such as the park, library etc. He looked forward to the new dining opportunities, bookstores etc. that this project would bring. Having this height allowed the density that was critical to the project.

Rita Colafella, 56 Cuba St, spoke in favor of the project. She felt that the height request was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the increased height would meet the need for more housing. The new retail would revitalize the City and bring businesses back to it. —making it a destination place and not a “pass through to Boston and other places... adding more housing and height may be the catalyst that we need.”

Rebecca Freedman, 48 Edgecliff Road, stated support for the project. Watertown needed more housing, and this would increase the supply. More people living in the Square would help revitalize it. It would bring businesses back to the Square and draw other new businesses to it.

Clyde Younger, 188 Acton Street, stated that this was not downtown Watertown, that it was a much different area. He was not against the project and development. He was against the project as it was configured. He noted that it had been acknowledged that management of this size of a project would be a challenge. He raised several questions--Would the housing be affordable to those currently residing in the row houses? Would they be able to live there after this development? He did not think so. He stated that the impact this development would have on the existing citizens of the community and the taxpayers had not been discussed. In reference to the packet circulated, Younger drew attention to the open space offered near neighboring town and city halls -Boston, Newton, Belmont, and Waltham (accordingly very similar to Watertown). He had not observed any 5 and 6 story buildings across them. He asked how the proposed building would look in an aerial view in conjunction with the library; it was important to ask how the project would impact the community aesthetically. Additionally, the applicant was going to make contributions to the city towards its infrastructure—it was also important to recognize how insignificant this contribution was compared to their total costs. He also stated that this location was not part of the Square; that there should be special zoning for his area. It was important to ask how the project would impact the community aesthetically.

Dennis Holland, 29 Nyack St, stated that he was pleased to hear that Mr. O’Connor had roots in Watertown. He had noted that the taller side of the proposed building was where their abutters were located. He asked several questions; Why wasn’t the taller side located along Cross St? Why was the green space not located on the other side of the building where their residential neighbors were located? Why did the developers not purchase the building on the corner? Why didn’t the applicants show pictures on the side of the residential abutters? Given the new road plans for Main St, there would be bike lanes along it with no parking on the street. He also noted the loss of the Post office. Existing businesses would lose customers because of the loss of parking space. It was unlikely that the Bank would relinquish their parking spaces for other businesses. He also wondered where parking for the construction workers would be during the construction phase of the project. This project would bring changes to Watertown Square, and he wanted to make sure that it was done right. He suggested moving

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the building away from the residential neighbors and buying the building in the corner before it became an empty storefront.

George Skuse, Pilgrim Road, speaking on his own behalf, stated that he was opposed to the height of the building-the sixth story would set a bad precedent for this location. He wished the building was located further away from Main Street to give room for trees, benches and pedestrian activities and actual onsite amenities visible from Main Street. He added that it was important to differentiate between open space and green space and was concerned about the mixed language used by the developer.

Skuse noted that while the parcel was in the Central Business District it was also in the Watertown Square Design Overlay District. Among its objectives was to maintain and enhance the Squares architectural environment including some of its existing older buildings and new developments. Referring to Section 5.09, recommendations regarding alterations would be based on the Watertown Square Design Handbook. However, the Planning Board Report had failed to reference this important document. Similarly, deliberations by the Planning Board lacked any reference to this document. According to Skuse, the Handbook specifically declared 104 and 106 Main Street as “an excellent example of the traditional storefront to be maintained.” The same was true for the Post Office, which according to the Handbook should maintain its original façade. In pointing out these references, Skuse wanted to bring attention to the fact that the processes outlined in the Ordinance had not been followed. He concluded his comments by noting that any development within the Watertown Square area had the potential to significantly impact the area and he hoped that this was given the full consideration that it deserved.

Linda Scott, 55 Olcott St stated that she was not trying to oppose development on the property. She wanted to respect what was there as well, given that this was one of the oldest communities in the country. She described the early stages of this project when she had met to discuss it with the DCDP staff member along with Carolyn Gritter. No reference had been made by the staff member to the Handbook or Zoning Ordinance Section 5.09 at this time. The Handbook was discovered two weeks ago quite by accident. She referenced pages that specifically related to the preservation of 104 and 106 Main Street. Scott described her attempts to reach out to the Planning Board members to share her input, only to find out that they had been delivered to them only minutes before the meeting.

The Chair stated that the Board had seen her letter and was aware of her concerns. She asked that comments be kept pertaining to the project. Scott described the taxpayer petition with 200 plus signatures concerning the density and size of projects including this one on Main Street and the request for reconsideration of the FAR. Before concluding her comments, she also alluded to the small size of the retail component of this project—“the equivalent of 1.5 MacDonald’s restaurants retail space.”

Joan Gumbleton, 32 Falmouth Road, referred to the June 7, 2022 issue of the Watertown News article regarding 104 Main Street. The article listed the number of residential units, stories, and size of the retail space on ground level. In addition, it quoted O’Connor’s statement that the existing retailers and property would have a chance to stay in the new development. During the first community meeting on January 19 there were many comments made regarding the excessive height of the building. They were specifically asked to bring down the height to four stories instead of the proposed 5 stories. It was a

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shock to find out at the Planning Board Meeting that the building would now have 6 stories. According to Gumbleton, the developer showed no respect for the desires and comments of the residents. People have been particularly concerned about the “delightful outdoor space” outside the library that would be overshadowed by the building and felt that it “just wouldn’t fit into the scheme of Main St.” She noted the diversity of building types in the surrounding neighborhoods. These developments allowed more open space and tall structures were located in the “true business area.”

Gumbleton asked why it was allowed to increase in size from its first proposal of 5 stories at the Community Meeting to 6 stories at the Planning Board Meeting, given the numerous comments, emails and phone calls to different government officials that had been sent. She added that the developers coming into Watertown were only thinking of themselves and not the residents in the long run. The petition mentioned by Linda earlier had been readily signed by numerous people who disapproved of the recent developments in Watertown. She wished that changes in Zoning had taken place sooner—they would not have to run into these issues, otherwise.

Regarding the charging station inside the garage area, she expressed concerns about fires associated with electric vehicles and wondered if the Watertown fire department was equipped to handle the additional load from these vehicles. Traffic was another concern.

Gumbleton also noted the loss in retail space as a result of this project as well as the loss of the post office to this community. She added that the project would likely offer more luxury condos with a few “affordable” places with too many parking spaces that would have a negative impact on Pleasant Street. Traffic would only get worse with the addition of 61 cars, as indicated by the Traffic Study. She concluded her comments by stating that she would like to see the development reduced in size to at least 5 if not 4 stories. Allowing such tall structures along Main Street would set a precedent for future development.

Elodia Thomas 67 Marion Rd declared that she had attended numerous meetings for the project, including the two Planning Board Meetings. She felt that the residents’ comments were “highly minimized in the reports that are put together.” She had been part of the Comprehensive Plan in 2014 which she described as a “rough and tumble affair.” She noted that the Plan was up for review and felt that this project could be pushed out further given the updates that were anticipated. Noting a response made at the Community Meeting in January, as described in the Meeting Summary prepared by O’Connor Capital and posted on the City’s website in April, Thomas referred to their commitment to design a building that was consistent with the design study done in Watertown Square. The developers would also work within any future changes to the regulations.

Elodia Thomas also referred to an email that she would send to the Board.

Alluding to the additional housing that this project would bring, she stated that only 22 Affordable Housing units would be added. The townhouses would be priced at more than a million dollars each. Also given that there were 14 housing units already in that location, replacing them would not bring the “big big splash of affordable units based on income by HUD standards.” She recognized that the building would set a precedent for the rest of the Square and was concerned that it might go forward without

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the updates that were in the pipeline. She also expressed her concern about the numerous complaints related to the building height and its impact on the neighborhood, that were being dismissed and downplayed.

Elodia Thomas also made suggestions on how the reduction in height would reduce the number of units which in turn would reduce the need for parking and parking spaces. This additional space could be used to create more retail spaces. She also mentioned the absence of assigned parking spaces and the challenges associated with it. She also wondered who the users of the parking spaces would be; Other issues commented on included the limited public open/green space that the project offered; the inadequate space for delivery vehicles, especially with 150 plus units on site; the uncertainty related to demand for retail and the empty spaces that were currently on the market; She hoped that the meeting would be continued. She appreciated the questions asked by the Board and acknowledged Member Girard's comment regarding the time frame needed to change behavior patterns. She also pointed out the lack of attention given to the West side of the property and how it would be impacted by its proximity to the dog park.

Marybenham Nygren, 15 Church Ln, stated that she was not an abutter but resided near the property. She described comments voiced at the Community Meeting related to the building height. Despite this opposition to the building height no change was made. Instead, a 6-story building had been proposed. The Watertown community had been very clear in stating their opposition to the building because of its size in the Downtown area. Referring to the criteria for granting additional height, she stated that the proposed development did not meet any of the four criteria set forth in Section 4.10, especially given that 104 Main St was not part of Watertown Square. Based on this she felt that the Zoning Board should not allow a sixth floor containing 18 living units.

Elodia Thomas offered additional comments. She added that taking out the 18 units would reduce the parking need which could enhance retail. She reiterated her concern for the height of the building.

Josh Matloff, 19 Stuart St, speaking remotely voiced his support for the project. He acknowledged the need for more housing in Watertown and the project density would allow this. He also felt that this development would support both the existing and proposed retail. As a resident he was excited about the retail component and hoped to take advantage of it. He wanted Watertown Square to be a vibrant community center. He was not concerned about the height. The Planning Board had been very thorough in their review and the developers had been thoughtful and considerate in responding to their concerns and comments. The project would provide housing for the workers in the life sciences and the density would be well utilized. It would also alleviate the traffic concerns as people would walk to work and not drive in from other cities. Without this building and the residential units it would offer, traffic could get worse as more drivers would enter the city from other towns. He thanked the Board for their thoughtful comments and for giving him the opportunity to voice his comments.

Joshua Driesman, 127 Nichols Ave, speaking remotely, supported the project and wished its expeditious approval. He visited the Square regularly and this development would help make it a vibrant, walkable and transit-oriented city that they could all be proud of. It would make Watertown a denser community than its neighbors and have a vibrant downtown. This had drawn him to Watertown versus Newton.

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Right now, the city appears to be an auto pass through, as previous speakers had stated. He did not find the buildings that the project would replace “architecturally remarkable.” The project proposed was a beautiful building that would help revitalize the Square, especially the outdoor dining opportunities and open space that it would offer. The building was “within scale” compared to other projects along the street including the residential housing further along Main Street, and the Armenian American Museum. The project was also in line with the city’s goal to increase housing along transit-oriented areas and the job sites. Given its proximity to the different bus lines it would also reduce issues around traffic and parking. The Planning Boards approval reflected that the project was in line with the Comprehensive Plan. He encouraged the Board to approve the project and thanked them for their time.

Len Holt, 44 Grenville Road, speaking remotely, said he also had an office on Arsenal St. He had been a member of Watertown community for the past 65 years. He was the most immediate abutter to the project, owning the two-family home behind Attorney Winnick’s office. His property was 3 feet off the Post Office wall. He had had significant conversations with the developer and had also addressed a letter to the Zoning Board. He detailed the agreements he had reached with the developers. This included the setbacks on the west side between the two properties; the installation of two gates and a fence on the property line on the west side walkway to prevent its use as a public walkway; absence of venting, both active and passive, adjacent to their property; restriction of operating hours for the west side roof terrace; the location of the fire pit to the middle of the terrace; maintenance of the landscape buffer on the west side of the garage roof top terrace; protection of the walkway at 128 Main streets to maintain the second means of egress and repair/replacement if necessary; lighting plans that were dark sky compliant with minimal effect on their property and fencing plans for the roof top terrace. Holt asked if the Board considered these requests and if possible, included these as conditions for approval.

Joseph Levendusky, 13 Templeton Parkway, speaking remotely, expressed his comments; he was concerned that none of the transportation slides were visible on Zoom; Other comments included the significance of the project as it would set a precedent for other such developments in the revitalization of Watertown Square; the current traffic concerns in Watertown Square especially as they impacted pedestrian accessibility; The Squares current limited use as a place for business and not a place where people spend time; the importance of addressing traffic concerns to bring vitality back to the Square; the inadequacy of retail space proposed in the project, particularly as it catered to food related retail-- Watertown was known for its food operations and was one of the many reasons for visiting the city from other towns. He asked the developers to endeavor to understand the culture of Watertown, particularly its marketplace.

Levendusky stated that he was “mixed” about this development. He liked the idea of additional housing, particularly affordable housing, and the activation along Main Street. He felt that the alley way was a “great idea” but needed more work; he favored the preservation of the historic structures on Cross Street and the frontage on Pleasant Street with its brick masonry and peaked roof, similar to the residences on Cross Street. He did not think the project would provide enough activation on Main Street; it would actually reduce the size of the retail compared to the existing. He wanted to make sure there was enough space on the sidewalk for outdoor dining; he also would like to see real balconies on the Main Street façade to provide further activation and signs of life. Similarly, the alleyway needed to

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be activated with cafes so people were drawn to venture down that way. He admitted that the height of the building core made it loom over a lot of its surroundings, particularly from Cross St. If the Board were to allow this height, this section would need more “architectural flourish.” He described that section as “bland” even at a lower height. A post office in Watertown Square was essential and a solution needed to be found; he wanted to know the developer’s plans for transit advocacy; he didn’t think there was not enough capacity to accommodate more ridership-- the buses were crowded to an unsafe level given the risks of COVID. He advocated for more parking spaces and more incentives to encourage people to occupy these residents without automobiles. He also stated the need for drawing vital and successful retail along Main Street. He was also concerned about the reduction in retail space; the length of the contiguous wall for which relief was being sought needed to be designed attractively. He hoped the meeting would be continued and the public would have a chance to give the drawings additional consideration.

Chair SantucciRozzi announced that the presentation would be posted to the web, as were previous presentations.

Sam Ghilardi, 17 Derby Rd, speaking remotely, expressed his excitement about the project; he thought the art walk was a “nice feature.” The project would be a “huge improvement” from what existed. He also stated that in the Comprehensive Plan base assessment car ownership in the city has gone down 20% over the last ten years despite the growth in population of 10%. He also stated that given recent trends in the demand for parking, we should get rid of it from the building and not add more because “we seem to add too much.” Regarding retail space, he suggested looking at Osome Café’s model of making a small retail space work. He also referred to the Zoning Ordinance for encouraging developers to unbundle parking by separating the cost of parking from the cost of rental. He added that the height was appropriate and would add some character to the building.

Qibin Ye, 16 Olcott Street, expressed his disapproval of the sixth floor of the building. No nearby town had such a tall building located in the center of the town. He particularly disapproved of the ground level setbacks of the building. This issue had been consistently brought up by many residents in the community, with no effect. The sidewalks were not wide enough to accommodate such structures. He asked the building to be pushed back from Main St to allow more room on the sidewalks. The narrow sidewalk was especially a concern when piled with snow and when the snow was pushed onto the streets.

After confirming that there were no other hands raised for additional comments on Zoom, Chair announced the continuation of the hearing. She also clarified that the public hearing had not been closed. The motion to continue was made by Member Heep and seconded by Member Girard. Motion to continue to the next scheduled meeting on June 28 was approved unanimously (5-0) with Alternate Member Girard, Member Ferris, Member Brangwynne, Member Heep and Chair SantucciRozzi voting in favor.

The above minutes represent only a summary of the public hearing. For a more detailed account of the meeting, please visit the Watertown Cable Access Corp channel at, vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/gallery/47?channel=3 where a video of the hearing can be viewed.