

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: December 8, 2023 PLACE: City Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Public Hearing

PRESENT: Janet Buck, Chair; Payson Whitney; Abigail Hammett; Jason Cohen
Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Board; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner; Larry Field,
Senior Planner

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Jason Cohen motioned to approve Minutes of the 11/08/2023 meeting.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

Janet Buck, we have received a request from the 313 & 275 Pleasant St/84-86 Rosedale Rd/60 Acton Street petitioner to continue the petition to January 10, 2024 meeting.

Jason Cohen motioned to continue the petition for 313 & 275 Pleasant St/84-86 Rosedale Rd/60 Acton Street to January 10, 2024 meeting.

Abigail Hammett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

Janet Buck, as a member of the Watertown Boys & Girls Club, I will recuse myself from the next case. Payson Whitney will stand in for Janet Buck as the Chairman.

CASE PENDING

9-11/13 Boyd Street – First Path Daycare d/b/a First Path Daycare Center

Evan Huber, Atty, First Path Daycare is presently operating from the Watertown Boys and Girls Club. They have to vacate the space by May 31, 2024. The petitioner purchased the Boyd Street property, the matter is now in front of the Land Court. We are now participating in the Site Plan Review process in accordance with WZO Section 5.01(2)(a)(2) and Licensed Daycare use as defined by M.G.L.c.40A, Section 3 for the conversion to a daycare use of the industrial portion of the mixed use and non-conforming building and site. The site is located in Two-family zoning district. The staff was very helpful. The 4,000 s.f. site will be converted into childcare facility. Currently the site has 2 apartments, and the rest are vacant. The parking is very limited, it can accommodate 4 parking spaces and 1 handicapped space. We are proposing to have additional parking off site in the garage. The major issue is traffic and how many parking spaces we need during peak hours.

Christa Lucas, Senior Transportation Engineer, we have submitted an impact memo summarizing the parking at on White Avenue facility and Boyd Street parking now and the future. Both spaces are approximately the same, enrolment will remain the same and staffing as well. Parking at the facility and at the garage will accommodate 10-20 spaces, the garage is 2 blocks away. Numbers are consistent, weekdays am and pm are the peak hours. Daycare is different than school, the times are different for all different 64 students. AM pickup is higher than afternoon. Average pickup usually takes 8 minutes. The parking can be used by abutting residents at night, we have 1 handicapped parking space. Some drivers cut through Boyd Street; average speed is 20 mph. No parking is allowed on the north side of the street. We have observed the parking situation in June, November and December. Parents will be reminded where to park, not to block driveways, and to be considerate of other parents. We will recommend the city to move the no parking zone to the north side which would maximize the parking.

....., there are leased parking spaces in the garage, we intent to educate the parents how to drop-off and pick up the children.

Gene ..., RAV Associates, the entire project is within an existing building. The only alteration will be a new landing at the entrance. There will be 3 classrooms housing 64 students.

Evan Huber, initially the proposal had dead space. If less than 4,000 s.f. we do not have to go through the process. ZBA held determination that we do have to go through SPR process. We do not have the luxury of time and if we have to go through the SPR anyway we will use the dead space also. Our official proposal before the Planning Board is less than 4,000 s.f., the difference of 300 s.f..

Larry Field it makes more sense to allow the petitioner to do this. The most substantial change is this but there are other changes as well.

Jason Cohen, parking calculations are based on the square footage. The plans in front of us are the correct one.

Gideon Schreiber, parking is based on general area square footage.

Larry Field, staff recommends conditional approval. Under the Dover amendment there are educational, religious and daycare uses protected. The intent is to limit the municipality to say no. You are permitted to address the issues with conditions. The focus is how to make the use work with the SPR criteria. The biggest issue is the parking. This is a complicated site because of the mixed use, this petitioner will acquire the entire site, he does not intend to change other uses. The focus is on the daycare, drop-off and pick-up are very important.. We do not have a better way than using the existing 4 spaces and leasing the other spaces in the off-site garage. The analysis done by the transportation firm addresses the issue. To address, there has to be a plan how to do all that is needed. We do not want to be locked into a plan that does not work. Garage space will allow off-site parking for the staff, only 6 are using cars to get to work. The number of spaces identified by Evan Huber has to have flexibility, it will be part of parking management that can be edited by the staff. We have provided addendum to condition #8 and #9 regarding Utilities/Sewer/Stormwater and Site Plan/Landscaping and Lighting.

Jason Cohen, there is lot of confusion about this. We usually tell petitioners that employees cannot use street parking.

Larry Field, we do not require using the garage, parents will be told if they are doing anything other than pick up/drop off they would have to park in the garage.

Jason Cohen, the garage is 2 blocks away, I will not park and walk with my child so far.

Gideon Schreiber, this is a request for SPR, SP allows shared parking on other site, you can have thorough permit process. What is unusual about this, that the garage is in Newton. It is a reasonable location for staff parking. This is an urban environment; this building is pre-existing nonconforming with nonconforming use. This is by right and can be conditionally approved.

Payson Whitney, we are not discussing the use that is protected under Dover amendment,

Abigail Hammett, what use was in the basement area?

Gideon Schreiber, it was light industrial use with no access, it would now be a determination by ZBA. The Planning Board is making a decision about the daycare use.

Jason Cohen, we can attach reasonable conditions, denial cannot be the outcome.

Lisa Feltner, City Councilor, I have heard from several residents. The major concern is parking and circulation especially because of the closeness to Galen Street

Payson Whitney, we have received 3 letters with comments from abutters. Public hearing is now closed at 8:20 PM.

Christa Lucas, each drop off takes 4 minutes. Schools are different than daycare.

Jason Cogen, 64 children will be picked up in the 15-20 minute window, the cars will be backing up from the parking spaces, seems like disaster waiting to happen.

Evan Huber, there is other access and egress, it can also be used. The residents might have issues, there is only 4 feet from the property line.

Jason Cohen, that might mitigate the issue.

Payson Whitney, it might require shifting the space, it can encourage people to back into the space.

Abigail Hammett, I am a daycare parent, ideal would be backing into the space. I feel bad for the neighbor, there are 64 children, the plans stated 74 children, is there a possibility that the # of children will increase?

Max Bolyasnyy, General Manager since 1999. It is very difficult to find daycare space. The process took us a year, and this is the only option that we have. We have children with special needs, we are affordable. We have no intention to expand, we are licensed for 64 children until 2025. It is a 2-year license. The building permit is for 64 children only.

Abigail Hammett, it has to be allowed in a safe way, I am all for the daycare. If there was a parking lot, I would not have any issues. We can add condition that only 64 children are allowed based on the space. The parking cost will be covered by the business. Is the landscape area be a play area for the kids?

Jason Cohen, the outdoor area seem to be too small for the children to play.

Max Bolyasnyy, we have another option, we can walk to nearby playground, it would provide exercise for the children.

Gideon Schreiber, we have suggested different layouts, potentially accommodating 2-3 cars. Flexibility created; we are concerned with the number of cars pulling out.

Abigail Hammett, the parking does not feel safe, it would make sense to have a staff person to help.

Max Bolyasnyy, we usually ask the children to dress and to put on their shoes so when the parents come, they are ready. We have worked in this business for 45 years.

Gideon Schreiber, staff management will be required to ensure safe pick-up and drop off. Flexibility to merge the adjacent property curb cuts.

Payson Whitney, there are 2 spaces on the west side, the curb cut could be widened by 4 feet.

Gideon Schreiber, that would violate the Zoning Ordinance.

Payson Whitney, the placard on the building for reserved parking will be removed. The utility pole should be relocated. Condition #11 should not specify the name of the parking management company.

Gideon Schreiber, there is no parking on the entire side of Boyd Street, any changes would need the traffic commission's approval.

Abigail Hammett, could some of the spaces have 15-minute parking only?

Jason Cohen, let's not forget the neighborhood that would be substantially impacted. This is one of the unfortunate things that people will have to deal with. Condition #11, 6-month review is too long. I would like to reevaluate the request in 1-2 months.

Gideon Schreiber, we had it for other case, and it was very effective, we will coordinate with police department, they will provide written document.

Jason Cohen, I would feel better with a police officer, what will happen if it does not work? How do we enforce snow removal? There is no dedicated space for that, we cannot lose the parking spaces.

Gideon Schreiber, they are committing to this operation, ensuring that this situation will not happen. If there is snow in the parking spaces, they could not operate.

Larry Field, condition #4 has 4 changes, leased space in the garage at no cost to the staff, one staff person outside during peak hours, all will be provided by the owners. How to mitigate if there is a problem. Investigate use of the secondary entrance, relieve pressure on the single path. Backing into the parking spaces should be included in the parent manual.

Jason Cohen motioned that the Planning Board grant Site Plan Review approval, based on the finding that the proposed project meets the criteria set forth under Section 9.03, with the general purpose of the Ordinance outlined in Section 1.00 of WZO, under and Section 5.01.2 for the use and construction of the proposed licensed daycare facilities, all with the conditions set forth in the staff report. The motion specifically included the conditions recommended by staff – as amended by the staff addendum – and changes identified during the deliberations.

Abigail Hammett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 3-0 In favor

Payson Whitney adjourned the meeting at 9:40 pm.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:40 PM

MINUTES APPROVED: _____