



# MEMORANDUM

CITY OF WATERTOWN, NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
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TO: Planning Board Members

FROM: Michael A. Lumbis, Planning and Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Subdivision Approval – 345 Engine Street

DATE: April 28, 2016

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**Request:** Subdivision Final Plat Approval for a two-lot subdivision of 345 Engine Street, Parcel Number 7-16-114.000.

**Applicant:** Gregory F. Ashley of GYMO D.P.C. on behalf of Purcell Construction

**Proposed Use:** Parking

**Property Owner:** Robert P. Purcell

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**Overview:** This proposal is being submitted for Planning Board review under Chapter A322 (Subdivision Regulations) of the City Code. The Planning Board has the option of not requiring a preliminary plat submission. Since this is a minor subdivision, Staff is processing this application as a final plat. A public hearing is required and a notice has been published for it to be held at 3:05 p.m. during the Planning Board meeting. After the public hearing and completion of Part II of the Environmental Assessment Form, the Planning Board will be free to make a decision on the proposal.

The applicant wishes to divide the lot at 345 Engine Street, Parcel Number 7-16-114.000, separating the parcel into a 0.177-acre (approximately 7,710 sq ft) south section, and a 1.45-acre (approximately 63,162 sq ft) north section.

The applicant proposes to assemble the south section with the neighboring property at 566 Coffeen Street, which Mr. Purcell also owns.

The applicant proposes to convey the north section, which would become landlocked as a result of this subdivision, to National Grid, which owns the neighboring parcel at 327 Engine Street. The applicant has also indicated that National Grid will also acquire the property at 341 Engine Street, presently owned by Sarah Purcell.

**Frontage:** The above proposal would result in National Grid owning three contiguous parcels, one of which would be landlocked. The deed for the property at 341 Engine Street includes a 10-foot wide right-of-way across the adjacent City-owned parcel in order to provide access to this property to and from Engine Street. However, this right-of-way does not extend to the parcel being subdivided, nor is it intended to provide such a connection.

Staff recommends that National Grid be required to assemble all three parcels as a condition of Subdivision Approval in order to prevent creation of a landlocked parcel.

**Fire Department Access:** The proposed subdivision also creates an issue for Fire Department access to the two buildings on the north section of the parcel. Currently, a City fire truck could access these buildings from Coffeen Street via the paved area along the western edge of the parcel alongside the railroad tracks. However, subdividing the southern section of the parcel and assembling it with 566 Coffeen Street would cut off these buildings from Coffeen Street, necessitating a fire truck to cross a newly created parcel in order to fight a fire in either building.

As long as these two buildings stand, the Fire Department must be able to access them. The applicant has two options for how to provide that access.

The first option is to provide access from Engine Street. An existing easement and gravel drive connects Engine Street to the two buildings, but is not wide enough to accommodate a City fire truck due to the presence of the existing building at 341 Engine Street, where the drive narrows to less than 15 feet in width.

The applicant could demolish enough of this building to create a 20-foot wide opening through which a City fire truck could pass. This option would also necessitate appropriate grading along this section of the gravel drive so that it was flat enough across the entire 20-foot width for a fire truck to use.

The second option is to dedicate an easement along the western edge of the newly assembled parcel at 566 Coffeen Street so that the Fire Department could continue to access these buildings the same way they do presently. This means that no parking would be allowed within the easement, and the property owner would need to sign or delineate their parking lot as such.

The need for this easement would go away if the remediation at 327 Engine Street was completed and a fire truck was able to cross that parcel. The deed could be written such that the easement would expire once fire truck access was established by any other route.

In lieu of providing fire truck access to these two buildings, the applicant could demolish them prior to subdivision and assemblage. A New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Record of Decision dated March 2009 designates these two buildings, as well as the building at 341 Engine Street, for demolition. If these buildings were demolished, there would be no need for fire truck access. However, under this scenario, National Grid (or any other future owner of that land) would need to establish fire truck access before obtaining a building permit to re-build in their place.

**SEQR:** In his response to Question 8c of Part 1 of the SEQR Short Environmental Assessment Form (EAF), the applicant indicates that there are no pedestrian or bicycle accommodations on or near the site of the proposed action. This is inaccurate, as there is a bicycle lane on Coffeen Street and a sidewalk that are both directly in front of the site. The applicant should change the answer to Question 8c to “yes” to reflect the presence of these facilities.

In his response to Question 16 on Part 1, the applicant indicates that the site is not located in the 100-year floodplain. This is inaccurate, as the northern end of the parcel proposed to be subdivided is in the 100-year floodplain. The applicant should change the answer to Question 16 to “yes.”

Prior to approval, the Planning Board must complete Part 2 of the EAF and make a determination of significance relative to SEQR. The Planning Board has to determine whether or not it needs more information for answering the questions in Part 2.

**Miscellaneous:** The boundaries at the eastern edge and southeastern corner of 341 Engine Street are unclear on the submitted survey, and do not appear to match the dimensions identified in the deed or on the City’s tax maps. It appears as though eastern edge of the area shaded in grey labeled in the survey as “Building” is actually more likely the eastern parcel boundary and the other line to the immediate east on the survey is actually the building edge. The applicant should clarify this area of the survey to reflect accurate existing conditions on the ground.

After approval, the applicant must submit two (2) reproducible Mylars and two (2) paper copies of the plat for signature by the clerk of the Planning Board. One of the Mylar copies and the two paper copies will be returned, and must be filed in the County Clerk's Office within 62 days of signing.

**Summary:** The following should be included as contingencies with the motion for approval:

1. The applicant shall provide Fire Department access to the two northern buildings on the parcel proposed to be subdivided.
2. The applicant shall assemble the south section of the parcel proposed to be subdivided with 566 Coffeen Street, Parcel Number 7-16-103.000, by way of a new metes and bounds description that is filed with the County Clerk.
3. The applicant or National Grid shall assemble the north section of the parcel proposed to be subdivided with Parcel Number 7-16-112.001, 341 Engine Street and Parcel Number 7-16-113.000, 327 Engine Street by way of a new metes and bounds description that is filed with the County Clerk.
4. The applicant shall change the answers to Question 8c and Question 16 on the Short EAF from "no" to "yes."
5. The applicant shall clarify the eastern and southeastern boundaries of the parcel at 341 Engine Street on the submitted survey.

cc: Brian Drake, Civil Engineer II  
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