



MEMORANDUM

CITY OF WATERTOWN PLANNING OFFICE

245 WASHINGTON STREET, ROOM 304, WATERTOWN, NY 13601

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TO: Planning Board Members
FROM: Michael A. Lumbis, Planner
SUBJECT: Waiver of Site Plan Approval – 865 Coffeen Street and 891 Coffeen Street
DATE: October 28, 2015

Request: Waiver of Site Plan Approval for the construction of an approximately 2,160 square foot parking lot expansion at 865 Coffeen Street and 891 Coffeen Street, respective Parcel Numbers 8-13-103.100 and 8-13-102.000

Applicant: Laura D. Penazek-Whitney

Proposed Use: Parking lot for State Farm Insurance

Property Owners: Laura D. Penazek-Whitney and Richard A. Chase

Submitted:

Property Survey: No	Preliminary Architectural Drawings: N/A
Site Plan: Yes	Preliminary Site Engineering Plans: No
Vehicle and Pedestrian Circulation Plan: No	Construction Time Schedule: No
Landscaping and Grading Plan: Only existing landscaping is identified (no grading or contours)	Description of Uses, Hours & Traffic Volume: No

SEQRA: Unlisted	County Review Required: No
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Zoning Information:

District: Neighborhood Business and Residence B	Maximum Lot Coverage: 40%
Setback Requirements: F: 20', S: 5', R: 25'	Buffer Zone Required: Yes

Project Overview: The applicant proposes to expand the existing parking lot by approximately 2,160 square feet by paving over the grassed area to the east of the existing lot. This proposed expansion would create 7 or 8 new spaces as well as extra room for snow storage. It would bring the aggregate number of parking spaces on the site to

18 or 19, depending on how many spaces the addition enables. None of the parking spaces in the existing lot are striped. The applicant proposes striping all parking spaces on the site, existing and proposed, as part of the project. The applicant does not propose any changes to the existing structure on the site.

The project footprint occurs over parts of two different parcels; the applicant's parcel at 891 Coffeen Street and the neighboring parcel at 865 Coffeen Street. The property line that separates the two parcels bisects the area that the applicant proposes to pave for their parking lot expansion. The attached aerial map, prepared by Staff, depicts the approximate area of land proposed to be paved in relation to the property line and surrounding buildings. The applicant has entered into a 10-year lease with the owner of the parcel at 865 Coffeen Street for a section of land adjacent to the applicant's parcel that is approximately 20 feet wide and 120 feet long. It is a condition of the lease that the land being leased to the applicant is to be used for the sole purpose of a parking lot and may not be used for any other purpose without the written consent of the lessor.

It should be noted that the southern property line of the applicants parcel is actually a few feet south of where it is depicted on the GIS map. The property lines on the City's Draft Mapping Application are approximate and do not always match where monuments are in the ground.

The lessor does not intend to subdivide the area that they are leasing to the applicant, and thus there is no official metes and bounds description available. The land being leased will remain part of the lessor's parcel. The paved footprint of the proposed parking lot expansion would occur partially on the land being leased and partially on a section of the applicant's own parcel.

The applicant has submitted a request for a waiver of site plan approval. In order to be eligible for a waiver of site plan approval, a project must meet the four criteria that are listed in Section 310-55 B of the City of Watertown Zoning Ordinance, which is transcribed below:

"Such site plan approval may only be waived if, in the judgment of the City Planning Board, based on the application for a building permit with supporting documentation, the proposed new construction or expansion:

- 1) Does not involve a change in the boundaries of the property, and
- 2) Does not represent the initial building on the property, and
- 3) Is minor and incidental in size to the existing building pattern, size and coverage on the property, but in no event shall exceed 2,500 square feet, and
- 4) Does not effectively change or impair the overall grading, circulation, drainage, utility services, and appearance and visual effect of the property and is also otherwise consistent with all purposes of this chapter."

It is Staff's conclusion that the applicant meets all four of the above criteria, and that granting the applicant a waiver of site plan approval would be appropriate. However, since the proposed parking lot expansion is greater than 400 square feet, the City of Watertown Planning Board reserves the right to require Site Plan Review if the Planning Board determines that such review is necessary.

Zoning: Both of the parcels that the proposed project occurs on are split-zoned parcels. The northern sections of each parcel are in the Neighborhood Business District, while the southern parts of each parcel are in the Residence B District. The proposed parking expansion's paved footprint lies entirely within the Neighborhood Business portion of each parcel. Therefore, only the requirements of the Neighborhood Business District apply to this project, and are thus the only requirements identified in the Zoning Requirements section above.

Parking and Vehicular Circulation: There are access points to the site from both Coffeen Street to the north and Bellew Avenue to the west. The existing U-shaped drive aisle connects these two access points around the south

and east sides of the building. The drive aisle extends along the north side of the building to provide access to a small parking bay in the northwest corner of the site.

The existing site provides 11 parking spaces, three in the aforementioned bay and eight along the southern section of the drive aisle. That number is approximate however, since the existing site is not striped. All of the spaces, existing and proposed, are 10'x20'. If area restraints exist, the applicant should consider 9'x18' spaces in lieu of the proposed 10'x20' spaces.

The proposed expansion would connect to the eastern edge of the existing drive aisle for the length of the expansion. The proposed aggregate site total after the expansion, as indicated above, will be either 18 or 19.

The existing drive aisle has two-way vehicle flow and the applicant does not propose any changes to its basic footprint or circulation. The applicant proposes to have the drive aisle continue to carry vehicles in both directions around three sides of the building while widening it slightly on the east side to handle the proposed expansion.

Landscaping and Buffers: There is some existing landscaping at the site. There is a small lawn area surrounding the building that includes trees and shrubs to the west of the building. There is a row of conifers at the southern edge of the site that shields the existing parking lot from the Residential District that abuts it to the south. To the immediate south of the grassed area that the applicant proposes to pave over, there is a cluster of deciduous trees.

Section 310-59, Paragraph A of the Zoning Ordinance requires a 5'-15' landscaped area wherever the property abuts a Residential District. As mentioned before, the southern sections of both parcels involved are in a Residence B District, even though the proposed project occurs entirely within the Neighborhood Business District. To meet this required buffer, no new paving shall occur any fewer than 15 feet from the southern property line of the applicant's parcel.

The Planning Board's adopted Landscaping and Buffer Zone Guidelines supplement the ordinance and define the makeup of acceptable landscaping in various situations. It is also an objective of the guidelines to treat any external alteration or expansion of a site as an opportunity to gradually bring that existing site into compliance with minimum landscaping standards.

The guidelines for exterior parking lot landscaping recommend a landscaped strip a minimum of 8' wide around the perimeter of any parking lot exclusive of driveways. This strip should provide large deciduous tree every 40 linear feet or one small to medium deciduous tree every 20 linear feet or one large coniferous tree every 20 linear feet.

The existing row of conifers satisfies the intent of these guidelines at the southern edge of the site. The guidelines would suggest that that the applicant should plant trees to the east of the proposed parking lot expansion, and do so in the linear foot intervals described above. However, that land does not belong to the applicant and it is unfeasible for the applicant to plant trees on her neighbor's property.

An opportunity for new landscaping does exist in the 5' grassed buffer strip that the applicant proposes to leave between the northern edge of the parking lot expansion and the sidewalk that runs parallel to Coffeen Street. This buffer would be an appropriate place to install a planting bed with small bushes or shrubs that would shield the sidewalk from the northernmost parking spaces. The planting bed should be a distance of ten feet from the edge of the driveway.

SEQRA: Section 617.5(7) of the State Environmental Quality Review Act states that "Construction or expansion of a primary or accessory/appurtenant, non-residential structure or facility involving less than 4,000 square feet of gross floor area and not involving a change in zoning or a use variance and consistent with local land use controls, but not radio communication or microwave transmission facilities;" is a type II action that requires no further review under SEQRA. Therefore, no EAF was required, and the applicant did not submit one.

Engineering Comments: There is an existing catch basin at the northern end of the site, adjacent to the driveway that accesses the site from Coffeen Street. The proposed parking lot expansion should be graded to drain to this catch basin.

In addition, no refuse vehicle or refuse container may be parked or placed within 15 feet of a parcel boundary without the written consent of the adjoining owner, if the owner occupies any part of the adjoining property. If the adjoining property is rented or leased, then written consent must be obtained from the owner or lessee. All written consents must be filed by the owner of the adjoining property with the Health Officer.

Miscellaneous: The applicant should indicate the proposed hours of operation. The applicant has also inquired with staff regarding potential future construction of a storage shed in the southeastern portion of the applicant's parcel. Permits for any future buildings on the site must be obtained by the City Code Enforcement Bureau prior to any construction or installation.

Summary: It is Staff's conclusion that the application meets the criteria to make it eligible for a waiver of site plan approval, subject to the following conditions:

1. No new paving shall occur any fewer than 15 feet from the southern property line of the applicant's parcel or 5' from the northern property line (sidewalk) along Coffeen Street.
2. The applicant shall install a planting bed that includes several bushes or shrubs in the 5' buffer area that will separate the sidewalk from the proposed parking lot expansion.
3. The applicant shall indicate the proposed hours of operation.
4. The applicant must meet the Engineering Department's grading requirements.

cc: Robert J. Slye, City Attorney
Brian Drake, Civil Engineer II
Laura D. Penazek-Whitney