



CITY OF WATERTOWN, NEW YORK

CITY PLANNING BOARD
ROOM 302, WATERTOWN CITY HALL
245 WASHINGTON STREET
WATERTOWN, NEW YORK 13601-3380
(315) 785-7730

MEETING: September 2, 2014

PRESENT:

Sara Freda, Chair
Michele Capone
Larry Coburn
William Davis
Lin Fields
Neil Katzman

ALSO:

Kenneth A. Mix, Planning and Community
Development Coordinator
Michael Lumbis, Planner
Andrew Nichols, Planner
Justin Wood, Civil Engineer II

The September 2, 2014 Planning Board Meeting was called to order at 3:00 PM by Planning Board Chair Sara Freda. Mrs. Freda then called for a reading of the Minutes from the August 5, 2014 Planning Board Meeting. Mrs. Fields made a motion to waive the reading of the Minutes and accept them as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Katzman, and all voted in favor.

SUBDIVISION FINAL PLAT

945 ARSENAL ST – PARCEL 9-11-126

The Planning Board then considered a request submitted by Robert Busler, PLS on behalf of I-Site Realty LLC for the two-lot subdivision of 945 Arsenal Street, parcel 9-11-126.

Jeremy Thompson, PLS of LaFave, White & McGivern was in attendance to represent the applicant.

Mr. Thompson explained that his client wished to purchase the vacant land to the rear of a lot that they already own on Bellew Ave South. The piece of land in question is currently attached to the Taco Bell property, but is not used.

Mr. Katzman asked what the ultimate purpose of the land would be.

Mr. Thompson said that his client had not proposed any specific use but added that the addition of this land would make it more desirable for future development.

Mrs. Freda then read the questions listed in Part II of the SEQRA Short Environmental Assessment Form.

The board responded “no” to all questions, after some discussion regarding potential impact on energy use and stormwater runoff for hypothetical future development.

Mrs. Capone moved to issue a negative declaration of environmental significance under the provisions of the State Environmental Quality Review Act. Mrs. Fields seconded, all voted in favor.

Mrs. Freda opened the Public Hearing for the subdivision at 3:07 pm. No one spoke, and the hearing was closed at 3:08 pm.

Mr. Katzman moved to approve the request submitted by Robert Busler, PLS on behalf of I-Site Realty LLC for the two-lot subdivision of 945 Arsenal Street, parcel 9-11-129.000, as submitted on March 18, 2014, subject to the following condition:

1. To provide frontage on Bellew Avenue South, the rear section of the divided parcel shall be combined by deed with parcel 9-11-133.100.

Mr. Davis seconded, all voted in favor.

**SITE PLAN WAIVER – MUSTARD SEED
969 ARSENAL STREET – PARCEL 9-11-126**

The Board then considered a request by Scott Skinner for waiver of site plan approval for construction of building additions totaling 1,284 square feet at 969 Arsenal Street, parcel 9-11-126.

Mr. Skinner approached the board to explain his request. He provided preliminary site plan revisions for the board to consider. He noted that he was willing to remove the two parking spaces in front of the building and add trees in the area.

Mrs. Fields asked if the landscaping would include anything other than trees.

Mr. Skinner said he might try something, but it is a difficult place to maintain plantings and he would have to leave some room for snow storage. He then explained that he had reduced the parking count to 24, so only a single handicap accessible space would be required. He also deleted the parking spaces that were shown in the right-of-way.

Mr. Katzman noted that the parking spaces at the rear of the building were currently slanted, not perpendicular as shown on the site plan.

There was discussion regarding the utility pole located behind the parking spaces along the west side of the building. Mr. Skinner noted that he would like to move the pole, but has not been able to make any headway with National Grid.

Mr. Katzman questioned whether the parking count would be adequate given the amount of customers coming through the business.

Mrs. Freda noted that the parking count could be increased if the concrete ramp on the west side of the building was removed, and additional spaces added in its location.

Mr. Skinner said that he had considered that, and he would be willing to do it despite the extra expense.

There was more discussion regarding the power pole. Mrs. Freda suggested that the handicap parking aisle be located adjacent to the pole.

Ms. Capone asked if the addition would be for additional retail space in the store. Mr. Skinner responded that the front addition would be for retail space.

Mr. Katzman noted that the store is busy now and asked whether there would be adequate parking with the new addition or whether the parking situation would get worse. Ms. Capone and Mrs. Freda noted that the number of parking spaces exceeds what is required on the zoning ordinance.

Mr. Davis suggested that the landscaped area in the front be utilized for outdoor seating in order to recapture what is being lost in the rear of the building. He said that Mr. Skinner could design and create a small, inviting urban space that would offer something more than just planting two trees out front.

Mr. Skinner said he would consider adding something if there was enough space.

Mrs. Fields noted that space would be limited, and the street is noisy.

Mrs. Freda mentioned that she would like to table the application pending revised drawings being submitted.

Mr. Skinner said he was hoping to obtain approval this month if possible to ensure that construction is not pushed out to next spring.

The board discussed adding additional conditions in order to avoid needing to table the application.

Mr. Katzman asked if the site drainage was sufficient.

Mr. Skinner said that he had not seen any problems. He used to take overflow from the Arby's lot before they fixed their system, and even then there was no flooding.

Mrs. Fields asked if any environmental issues were present due to the site's previous use as a gas station.

Mr. Skinner said that Community Bank had completed remediation on the site before he bought the property.

Mr. Katzman moved to waive the requirements of site plan approval for construction of building additions totaling 1,284 square feet at 969 Arsenal Street, parcel 9-11-126, as submitted on August 18, 2014, subject to the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall revise the plan so that no parking is shown within the right-of-way.
2. The applicant shall delete the two parking spaces between the building and Arsenal Street from the plan.
3. The applicant shall remove the asphalt between the building and Arsenal Street and provide a landscaped buffer in this area, including two small-maturing trees. The applicant shall submit plans depicting the landscaping to the City Engineer to be approved prior to issuance of a building permit.
4. The applicant shall relocate, or replace in-kind, the storm catch basin/manhole beneath the deck.

5. The applicant shall provide drawings at a standard scale and comply with district setback regulations.
6. The applicant shall remove the concrete ramp on the west side of the building, and provide parking in this location.
7. The applicant shall depict the setback for the shed at the rear of the property. The shed must be at least 5' from the side lot line and 3' from the rear lot line.
8. The applicant shall revise the location of the handicap accessible parking space so that the backing movement is not obstructed by the utility pole.

Mr. Davis seconded, all voted in favor.

**ZONE CHANGE – RES A TO RES C
253 CLINTON STREET – PARCEL 10-08-115**

The Board then considered a request submitted by Lee Alcott, on behalf of Ronald Granger, to change 253 Clinton Street, parcel 10-08-115, from Residence A to Residence C.

Mr. Alcott was present to explain the request. He mentioned that his client, Mr. Granger, preferred not to appear in person due to a speech disability.

Mr. Alcott summarized to content of the application packet. He noted that the property is 0.71 acres, and the building has 6,000 square feet, 8 bedrooms, and 5 bathrooms. He said that his client was not aware of the 1999 zone change from Residence B to A, otherwise he would have opposed it at that time.

He said that his client is simply interested in selling the property, and that a change to Residence C would allow it to be marketed for use as a bed and breakfast or a medical office.

He said that the owners of the Taylor Mansion and the church have both stated support of the change.

Mrs. Fields asked how long the property had been on the market.

Mr. Alcott said it had been listed at \$500,000 for about two years with no offers.

Mr. Katzman said that he does not see a good rationale for changing the zoning. He said that he knows Mr. Granger and feels badly about the situation, but circumstances do not warrant a zone change.

Mrs. Fields said that the applicant seeks improved marketability, but she does not want to set precedent for the block to help out one person.

Mr. Davis noted that the Taylor Mansion next door contains nine apartments, despite being zoned Residence A. He said in a lagging real estate market, attempting to preserve every big old house as single-family could lead to blight. If the subject property cannot be sold and put to use, it will begin to deteriorate.

Mrs. Capone said that she does not like the idea of changing the zoning on a speculation of its future use. She would rather consider a zone change once a buyer has made a contingent purchase offer for something that is not allowed in Residence A.

Mrs. Freda said that she is not supporting a change at all to Residence C. She said she feels the Board should protect the neighborhood as 9-12 units would be allowed if the change were to happen.

Mr. Davis said he felt the change was appropriate for the economic growth of the City. Mrs. Fields said that any proposed change should be made at a future date once a use has been identified.

Pam Kennedy of 256 Clinton Street approached the board. She said that she has lived on the street since 1976. She knew the former occupants of 253 Clinton St., Mr. and Mrs. Robert Horr. She recalled Mrs. Horr relaying a story to her that the original owner, Senator Starbuck, had only sold the house to the Horr Family (in 1929) on the condition that it should remain a single family residence.

Mrs. Freda asked if there were deed restrictions in place.

Mr. Alcott said that he had checked, and there were none recorded.

Mr. Katzman moved to recommend that the City Council approve the zone change request submitted by Lee Alcott, on behalf of Ronald Granger, to change 253 Clinton Street, parcel 10-08-115, from Residence A to Residence C.

Mrs. Capone seconded, all voted in opposition.

**SITE PLAN AMENDMENT – DR. SCHNEEBERGER
163 BELLEW AVE SOUTH – PARCEL 9-11-117**

The board then considered a request submitted by Christopher Todd of Aubertine & Currier to amend the approved site plan for 163 Bellew Ave South, parcel 9-11-117, to allow construction of an additional parking area, removal of previously proposed lighting, extension of wooden fence, and modifications to the landscaping plan.

Matt Morgia of Aubertine & Currier approached the board to explain the project. He said that sometime during construction of the project, the owner and contractor decided to pave an additional area to the south of the building and extend the fence along the western property line to the end of the property. The additional parking lot was a staging area for

construction that was simply paved rather than restored to turf. Further, no lighting was installed in the parking lot.

Mrs. Freda asked why no lighting had been installed. Mr. Morgia said that the owner felt it was not worth the expense when the hours of operation are always during daylight.

Mr. Katzman said that he feels the lighting should still be installed. He asked whether the city has a minimum lighting requirement. Mrs. Freda also questioned the lighting. She said in the winter it can often be dark by 4:00 p.m. as well as in the early morning.

Mr. Mix said that the city has no minimum requirement. Typically in reviewing site plans, the concern is over-lighting and light spillage. There are already National Grid streetlights in the area. He said part of the owner's argument is that there are building lights which illuminate the area as well as light spillage from the streetlights.

Mr. Coburn said that he sees no reason to put additional requirements on the site plan. The project as built looks fine and works well, despite being built without proper permission. There is no need to penalize the applicant.

Mr. Katzman moved to recommend that City Council approve the request submitted by Christopher Todd of Aubertine & Currier to amend the approved site plan for 163 Bellew Ave South, parcel 9-11-117, to allow construction of an additional parking area, removal of previously proposed lighting, extension of wooden fence, and modifications to the landscaping plan, as submitted on August 13, 2014.

Mr. Davis seconded, all voted in favor.

Mr. Katzman moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Davis seconded, all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.