



# CITY OF WATERTOWN, NEW YORK

CITY PLANNING BOARD  
ROOM 304, WATERTOWN CITY HALL  
245 WASHINGTON STREET  
WATERTOWN, NEW YORK 13601-3380  
(315) 785-7740

MEETING: January 5, 2016

PRESENT:

Sara Freda, Chairperson  
Michelle Capone  
Larry Coburn  
Linda Fields  
Anthony Neddo  
Steve Rowell

ALSO:

Michael A. Lumbis, Planner  
Jeffrey Polkowski, Planner  
Geoffrey Urda, Planner  
Brian Drake, Civil Engineer II

ABSENT:

Neil Katzman

The January 5, 2016 Planning Board Meeting was called to order at 3:00 PM by Planning Board Chair Sara Freda. Ms. Freda called for a reading of the Minutes from the December 1, 2015 Planning Board Meeting. Ms. Fields made a motion to accept the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Neddo and approved with a 4-0 vote, as both Mr. Rowell and Ms. Capone had not arrived at the meeting yet.

### **WAIVER OF SITE PLAN APPROVAL 241 COFFEEN STREET – PARCEL # 7-04-124.000**

The Planning Board then considered a tabled request submitted by Jason Gilmore of Gilmore's Lawncare and Snowplowing Service, LLC for the construction of a 1,200 square-foot, pre-fabricated cold storage building at 241 Coffeen Street, Parcel Number 7-04-124.000. The Planning Board had previously voted at its December 1, 2015 meeting to table this request.

Ms. Freda then noted that Mr. Gilmore had not re-submitted any new materials nor made any contact with Staff in the intervening month. Ms. Freda asked Mr. Lumbis whether the Planning Board should leave the application on the table and if a motion was required to do so. Mr. Lumbis replied that Staff would reach out to Mr. Gilmore and that no motion necessary to leave the request on the table. The Planning Board took no action and this request remained on the table.

### **WAIVER OF SITE PLAN APPROVAL 1 THOMPSON PARK – PARCEL # 12-30-101.000**

The Planning Board then considered a tabled request for a waiver of site plan approval submitted by Edward G. Olley Jr. of GYMO, D.P.C., on behalf of the New York State

Zoo for the construction of a 579 square-foot building addition to the Otter Exhibit at the New York State Zoo, located at 1 Thompson Park, Parcel Number 12-30-101.000.

Ms. Freda then said that it was her understanding that Mr. Olley wanted the request to remain on the table. Mr. Lumbis confirmed that and said that Mr. Olley and his team had a few details that they needed to work on before they were ready to resubmit. The Planning Board took no action and this request remained on the table.

Ms. Capone arrived at the meeting at this time.

### **PRESENTATION OF HONORARY FIRST CITIZEN AWARD TO SARA FREDA**

At this time, Mayor Joseph M. Butler Jr. entered the meeting to present an Honorary First Citizen Award to Planning Board Chairwoman Sara Freda, as this would be her final meeting as a member of the Planning Board. Mayor Butler noted that the Planning Board was one of the most important boards in the City and that it requires a lot of homework and due diligence. Mayor Butler then extended his personal gratitude and thanked Ms. Freda for her service on behalf of all the Citizens of Watertown.

### **SITE PLAN APPROVAL 830 WASHINGTON STREET – PARCEL # 14-02-101.000**

The Planning Board then considered a request for site plan approval submitted by Michael Altieri of Bernier, Carr & Associates on behalf of Samaritan Medical Center for the construction of a 17,900 square-foot, three-story addition and a reconfigured parking lot located at 830 Washington Street, Parcel Number 14-02-101.000. Mr. Altieri was in attendance to represent the project before the Planning Board, as was Thomas H. Carman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Samaritan Medical Center and Chris Bastien, Assistant Vice President of Support Services for Samaritan Medical Center.

At this time, Mr. Coburn notified the other Planning Board members that he would abstain from discussing or voting on this project from this due to a conflict of interest.

Mr. Altieri began by introducing himself, as well as Mr. Carman and Mr. Bastien. Mr. Altieri then referred to a map of the Samaritan Medical Center campus, and drew the Planning Board's attention to the project area on that map, specifically pointing out the intersection of Pratt Street and Sherman Street on the west side of the Samaritan campus. He noted that what exists there now is a parking lot with two entrances, one from Sherman Street and one from the former section of Pratt Street that extends onto Samaritan property.

Mr. Altieri then said that Samaritan Medical Center is proposing a 17,900 square-foot addition, which also includes a new loading dock area. He then pointed out the gray rectangle on the site plan that represented the new building addition and loading dock area. Mr. Altieri added that Samaritan Medical Center also proposed modifications to the parking lot, landscaping, stormwater diversion and the loading scheme for tractor-trailer trucks. He also said that programmatic changes within the building were proposed.

Mr. Rowell arrived at the meeting at this time.

Ms. Capone then asked of the addition consisted of multiple stories. Mr. Altieri replied in the affirmative. Mr. Carman then said that the entire project was a part of the hospital's "Phase 4" renovations. He followed by giving a brief overview of what had occurred in the first three phases. Mr. Carman said that this project, specifically recreating the maternity area, was the showpiece of the entire renovation. He said that the new maternity area would be on the third floor next to all of the other women's and children's services.

Mr. Carman continued, and said that the purpose of the redesign was to create an identity for the women's and children's units. He said that there would be dedicated parking for these services that would include a direct entrance to the labor delivery unit. Mr. Carman then noted that the expansion would create new space on the other two levels as well. He said that on the ground level, the added space would be used for expanded storage, and on the second level, it would be used for an expansion of the inpatient mental health area.

Ms. Freda then asked about internal circulation within the building. Mr. Carman replied that the proposed expansion would maintain all interior connections and would actually improve some. He then said that having one dedicated exterior entrance for maternity was key and that signage would be very specific as to where to enter the building for what service and where to park for what.

Mr. Altieri then said that there will be a lovely building to show off and that the proposed addition would serve as a nice new entrance to the western section of the building. He also displayed all the rest of the elevation drawings contained within the submitted application materials.

Mr. Altieri then drew the Planning Board's attention to the loading scheme and emphasized the movements of tractor-trailers. He said that tractor-trailers presently enter the premises via the former Pratt Street and back into the existing building. He then said that for the immediate future, the hospital would like tractor-trailers to pull in straight and drive through the lot before backing up to the loading dock. He added that this preference was temporary, as Samaritan Medical Center planned further improvements to this parking area in the future.

Ms. Fields then asked about ADA parking spaces. Mr. Altieri replied that that was another reason that these preferred truck movements were a temporary feature, emphasizing that Samaritan Medical Center did not want pedestrian-vehicle conflicts involving tractor-trailers.

Ms. Freda then asked if the applicant was proposing a permanent solution for accommodating tractor-trailers. Mr. Altieri replied that future parking improvements were planned for the corner of Woodruff and Sherman Streets and added that these improvements were in development.

Mr. Altieri then moved on to the list of summary items in Staff's memorandum. He addressed the first summary item, which required the applicant to obtain a variance if the applicant was unable to provide the requisite number of parking spaces as required by the Zoning

Ordinance. Mr. Altieri noted that at the pre-application meeting with Staff, he was asked to verify the number of parking spaces available on site and perform a Code compliance check. Mr. Altieri reported that the research found the site to be somewhat deficient in that capacity and that Samaritan Medical Center is looking at ways to increase the amount of parking at the site. He explained that the way to do this was to expand the parking lots at the corner of Woodruff and Sherman Streets, and that this expansion was in development.

Ms. Freda asked if these exterior lots were included in the existing parking space count. Mr. Altieri replied in the affirmative. Mr. Carman then clarified that the proposed parking expansion to these lots was not included in the count, but that it would be sufficient to make up for any shortfall. He maintained that with the proposed expansions, Samaritan Medical Center would be able to demonstrate that it could meet the parking requirement. He also said that this project was about two months away.

Ms. Freda then asked Mr. Carman to confirm that the additional spaces would meet the basic requirement, thus eliminating the need for a variance. Mr. Carman replied in the affirmative. Mr. Altieri then said that the variance was meant to be a temporary feature until the new parking was completed. Ms. Freda told him that it would likely be quicker to design the parking lot expansion than it would be to get a variance. Mr. Carman said that he agreed and that Samaritan Medical Center may withdraw its variance request.

Mr. Altieri then noted that Samaritan Medical Center would still need a variance for relief from parking setback requirements, which was the second summary item in Staff's memorandum. He added that specifically, a variance would be necessary for the row of parking spaces along Sherman Street. He said that the hospital proposed to maintain the eight-foot setback for this row of spaces rather than create the 20-foot setback required in a Health Services District.

Ms. Freda then asked why a variance was necessary for existing parking spaces. Mr. Lumbis replied that the applicant was proposing a significant enough change to the site that Planning and Engineering Staff determined that the site should come into compliance with the Zoning Ordinance when the project was completed. He added that this was typically the City's stance.

Ms. Freda asked what the reason was for the required 20-foot setback for hospital parking. Mr. Lumbis replied that the Health Services District was relatively new, as it was created in 1997. Mr. Lumbis said that he was unsure exactly why the 20-foot setback was included as a requirement when the district was created, but surmised that it was likely there to serve as a visual buffer and protect the surrounding neighborhoods. Mr. Lumbis added that regardless of the original reason, the 20-foot setback requirement existed and the applicant was unlikely to be able to meet it.

Ms. Freda asked for confirmation that the existing setback was eight feet and that the applicant proposed to maintain the setback at eight feet. Mr. Altieri replied in the affirmative. Mr. Polkowski then asked for confirmation that Samaritan Medical Center intended to keep the application for a setback variance, which the hospital had already submitted. Mr. Altieri replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Altieri then addressed the remaining 15 items in Staff's memorandum, pledging to comply with all of them and to work closely with the City Engineering Department on the items that required tying into City infrastructure such as curbs and catch basins.

Ms. Freda asked for additional detail regarding Summary Item 16, which required the applicant to clarify the intent of the Biohazard Storage Area depicted on the site plan. Mr. Altieri replied that it was used to store medical waste in compliance with codes and consisted of a specialized shed designed to hold such waste.

Ms. Freda asked if a truck came to pick up the waste. Mr. Carman replied in the affirmative. Ms. Freda then asked if there were any specific codes for where such a shed could be sited. Mr. Drake replied that Staff just wanted to see what it looked like before deciding if it needed a permit or not.

Mr. Altieri then said that the hospital wanted to use the area where the shed currently stood for parking in the reconfigured lot. Mr. Carman reiterated that the shed existed now and that it was just moving 30 feet. Ms. Freda asked if there were any setback requirements for such a shed. Mr. Lumbis replied that Staff would check into that.

Ms. Fields then said that Staff recommended that the Planning Board table this request until the Zoning Board of Appeals acted upon the applicant's variance request and asked how long that would take. Mr. Carman replied that he only expected the variance request to take a couple of months and that he hoped to be in the ground when the weather warmed up.

Mr. Lumbis then said that making the revisions to the plans and providing additional engineering details would not take much time and that the parking was the big issue. He specified that the parking requirement has to be met and the City Council cannot approve the site plan until it is met, be that through additional parking or a variance.

Ms. Capone then asked Mr. Lumbis that if the applicant were to come before the Planning Board with a parking expansion, whether the Planning Board could approve it or if the applicant would need a setback variance first. Mr. Lumbis replied that a site plan for additional parking could be treated separately or resubmitted with this application. Mr. Lumbis added that as far as the setbacks went, that it was uncertain how the Zoning Board of Appeals would act. He said that they could approve the variance, but that they could grant a different amount of feet of relief that could alter the site plans, in which case the applicant would have to appear before the Planning Board again anyway.

Ms. Fields then asked which course of action would be most expedient. Mr. Lumbis replied that Samaritan Medical Center had already applied for a setback variance. Mr. Lumbis said that the Zoning Board of Appeals typically considers an application at one meeting, tables it, visits the site in the interim, and votes on it at their next meeting. He added that February 17 would be the likely date of a vote, meaning that if the variance were granted, the site plan request could come back to the Planning Board on March 2 and go to City Council on March 21.

Ms. Freda asked Mr. Carman if the hospital was still using buses to transport employees who park at the Samaritan Medical Plaza on outer Washington Street to the hospital. Mr. Carmen replied that they were not. Ms. Freda then asked if the hospital would use buses for this purpose during construction. Mr. Carman replied that he did not know. Mr. Bastien added that he did not think that the hospital would have to bus anybody during the construction.

Mr. Bastien also noted that Samaritan Medical Center had recently purchased two houses on Woodruff Street where the hospital planned to build a parking lot expansion. Ms. Freda then asked if that would require site plan approval then as well. Ms. Capone said that it would become part of this same project.

Ms. Freda then asked about an existing broken chain-link fence on the Sherman Street edge of the property. Mr. Altieri replied that Samaritan Medical Center proposed to remove that fence and replace it with landscaping.

Mr. Drake asked if the parking expansion on Woodruff Street would require a setback variance. Mr. Carman replied that he assumed that it would. Ms. Freda then said that the properties that Samaritan Medical Center recently acquired were in a Residence B District, noting that the hospital may need to apply for a zone change.

Mr. Carman then brought out a map of the entire Samaritan Medical Center campus and the surrounding city blocks. He pointed out on this map where the new parking would be, and specifically pointed to a group of houses at the western end of Woodruff Street on the north side of the street. Mr. Carman said that was the location of one of the new parking areas, but until Samaritan Medical Center closed on one more house, the hospital could not make anything formal. Discussion then ensued regarding the existing lot on Woodruff Street and the need for a zone change or additional variances. Mr. Polkowski suggested to Mr. Carman that Samaritan Medical Center withdraw its current setback variance request and submit a combined request for the entire campus.

Ms. Capone asked if the entire area then needed to be zoned Health Services first since the relief being sought via a variance was from the parking setback requirement in that zoning district. Mr. Urda then confirmed that the hospital would need to apply for the zone change first, and only after that request was granted, could they apply for a setback variance.

Ms. Freda suggested that the applicant needed to continue working with Staff regarding the various issues and asked if there was a motion to table the request. Ms. Fields then moved to table the request for site plan approval submitted by Michael Altieri of Bernier, Carr & Associates on behalf of Samaritan Medical Center for the construction of a 17,900 square-foot, three-story addition and a reconfigured parking lot located at 830 Washington Street, Parcel Number 14-02-101.000. Mr. Neddo seconded the request and the motion carried with a 5-0 vote, as Mr. Coburn had abstained.

Ms. Freda then asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Fields then moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Neddo and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 3:39 PM.