

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: February 25, 2010 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting\
Public Hearing

PRESENT: John Hawes, Chairman; Jack Zollo; Fergal Brennock

Chairman John Hawes opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Jack Zollo motioned to approve Minutes of 11/9/09 meetings.

Fergal Brennock seconded the motion.

VOTE: 3-0 In favor

CASE PENDING

- **29 Frank Street;** Kamel Alhady/Naim El-Khoury – Special Permit

Norman Kherlop, Architect, this is a single family home located on 6,772 s.f. property located in a T zone. The petitioner is proposing to build additional town home with a 2-story connector that would have garage on the first floor and living space above. All zoning dimensional requirements including FAR have been fulfilled. The historic character of the existing structure will be maintained and the new addition will be built in the same style. The backyard will be landscaped the driveway located in the middle will have brick surface and another driveway will be build on the easterly side. Asphalt shingles will be used on the roof.

Danielle Evans, staff has worked extensively with the owners. The relief required is FAR of 0.53 where 0.5 is allowed, and relief under Section 6.02(j) for an attached garage and driveway located within the building front yard. The proposed design will have the least negative impact on the neighborhood. There will not be serious hazard to pedestrian, the driveway has a setback of 5 feet. Staff recommends an approval with an additional condition that the siding will remain shingles.

John Hawes, what will happen to the 2 mature 18" and 30" town trees? The driveway is very close to the trees, it might damage the trees.

Kamel Alhady, there is a room for driveway between the trees.

Louise Hunter, 41 Frank Street, the neighborhood is opposed to this proposal. This is a huge building on a small street. The design is enormous, this is not a two family house, and these are 2 structures. It looks very out of place, very congested, the mature trees are an issue.

Mark Hunter, 41 Frank Street, heavy machinery will be coming in and out of the street, how long will the construction take, street is very narrow. This street is near Perkins School for the Blind and people walk thru the street with the students.

Kamel Alhady, we can build the house by right without the special permit. The garage is only 200 s.f., it can be removed and the entire backyard paved for parking. I have lived in Watertown for 17 years, I care about safety in this quiet neighborhood. The whole project will take 5-6 months.

Danielle Evans, the first design was by right, with a long driveway. The scale of this house is the same, this design will create more open green space. The petitioners can get the building permit by right, the alternative is not desirable.

Norman Kherlop, this proposal will improve the area and provide more open space. The design is not massive, the alternative would have been a large paved driveway and parking area in the rear. This project will trigger other improvements in the neighborhood. The applicant has the right to have 2 units on this site.

Ed Daly, 18 Frank Street, there is no other house of this size on the street. Many extra cars are on the street from homes rented to too many people. Why not to repair the existing house, we do not want a house that would not improve the neighborhood. We were not contacted by the petitioner. This is a very dense, historic area. The proposed house is the size of 4-units. There are other 2-family homes on this street that are more historically accurate.

John Hawes, the applicant could build the house by right, the lot is over 6000 s.f. It is not the petitioner's fault that the street is dense. The petitioner needs to talk to the neighbors, it is very important to reach out. The Planning Board will make a recommendation, the Zoning Board will have the final vote.

....., 22 Frank Street, we already have parking problem. People park in front of our house, blocking the driveway. We have a courtesy parking space provided by the police department for our blind daughter.

Jack Zollo motioned to recommend to the Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit under Section 5.05(r) & 6.02(j) based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set out in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report with an additional condition that the town's mature trees in front of the house be protected.

Fergal Brennock seconded the motion.

VOTE: 3-0 In favor

PUBLIC HEARING

Steve Magoon, this is a proposal to amend the Zoning Ordinance that was brought up by the Planning Department. As some applications were discussed, we had a situation of parking lots for profit as a principle use. There are some parcels in the Town and parking for profit could have a significant impact on the neighborhood. As a result, the amendment before the Board provides some criteria for the Boards. If changed to principle use, more than 50 parking spaces will require a special permit. A note (10) will be added as follows: A parking lot for gain, as a principle use, and for more than 50 parking spaces, shall only be permitted by Special Permit in accordance with Section 9.05.

This amendment is not just for a specific project, but a proposal for a parking lot is coming from Mount Auburn cemetery who owns the lot. There are other large lots in Town but they are associated with other principal uses. But there is always a potential to be converted to such a use.

Angie Kounelis, a Boston Globe journalist likened Watertown to Cambridge with parking. This is what is missing in the Zoning Ordinance. It is not easy to sell parcels, parking would make it lucrative to surrounding Towns. We encourage people to ride bicycles, to use public transportation and to share commute.

Vince Piccirilli, lack of regulations for parking for gain is unacceptable. Parking lots without buildings are not the best use. Traffic is one of the more significant issues, parking is the necessary evil, but just parking on a lot will not benefit the Town. The lots do not serve Watertown residents, people park here and drive elsewhere for their jobs. Benefits do not flow to Watertown. Huge industrial parcels can be converted into parking.

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John Hawes, this discussion is not for specific projects, we need to have a discussion about the criteria. This amendment will go before the Town Council. The main issue is the traffic, a traffic study would be extremely helpful.

Angie Kounelis, a traffic study of the Grove Street area was provided by Hanover. All these issues can be discussed during the Special Permit process. The proposed parking lot will also need permission from the licensing regarding number of parking spaces.

John Hawes, Steve Corbett, Councilor At Large, could not be present tonight but submitted a letter in support of this proposal...

Vince Piccirilli, the nature of Watertown is such that this will become part of the Zoning Ordinance. If someone were to build a garage to support local businesses, it would benefit this Town, and that would be considered favorable. If the parcel is purchased for cars to park and shuttle buses would be bringing people to other towns, it would not be acceptable.

John Hawes, a mechanism to limit time is included. Each case has to be considered individually. We cannot speculate what the developers' motives are.

Jack Zollo motioned to recommend to the Town Council to approve the proposed amendment to Section 5.01.3(c).

Fergal Brennock seconded the motion.

VOTE: 3-0 In favor

OTHER

Steve Magoon, as part of the Economic Development Study a letter was sent to major business owners. The study is expected 6-8 months. The department is leading the study with an assistance of Mount Auburn Associates, Madden Planning Group and Gamble Associates.

Chairman John Hawes adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:30 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see tapes dated 2/25/2010 available in the DCD&P office.