

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: August 13, 2014 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting
Public Hearing

PRESENT: John Hawes, Chairman; Jeff Brown; Fergal Brennock; Neal Corbett
Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner; Andrea Adams, Senior Planner

ADMINISTRATION BUSINESS

Jeff Brown motioned to approve Minutes of 6/11/14.
Fergal Brennock seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

Neal Corbett motioned to approve Minutes of 7/9/14.
Jeff Brown seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

CONTIUED CASES

John Hawes, the Board will consider the Pleasant Street Corridor District amendment at a meeting on September 8, 2014.

PENDING CASES

- **20 Seyon Street (Pleasant Street Parcel #806-1D-0)** Mark Murphy, Launch Watertown, Inc. – Special Permit with Site Plan Review

John Hawes, opened the public hearing. The Planning Board is the Special Permit Granting Authority because the site is in the Pleasant Street Corridor District (PSCD). This will be the only hearing on this project.

Mark Murphy, Launch Watertown Inc., this is a petition to allow the interior conversion from a warehouse space to a family entertainment center.

Andrea Adams, the warehouse space was currently used by Sacks 5th Avenue. The location is near the municipal boundary to Waltham. This is a proposal to convert 36,791 square feet in the existing 94,268 square foot warehouse to family entertainment center. There are no significant changes to the exterior of the site. We recommend waiver of Site Plan Review. This proposal is consistent with prior and current draft Comprehensive Plan and it meets criteria for Special Permit. Because the project only involves interior renovations, the staff recommends approval of the Special Permit with conditions. A condition related to making a connection to adjacent properties and Walker Pond to install bicycle racks.

John Hawes, because the Planning Board is the Special Permit Granting Authority in this case, to be approved, the case must receive 4 affirmative votes. I am asking for Board member comments or questions. Is the site owner willing to make that potential connection to Walker Pond? The Alta project also has a walking path.

David Recuen, Building Owner, we are open to working with DCDP and/or Planning Board to explore options for public walking or bike path connection.

Neal Corbett motioned to close the public hearing.
Jeff Brown seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0 In favor.

Jeff Brown motioned to approve the petition to convert 36,781 s.f. of the 94,269 s.f. of the warehouse building to be used for a family entertainment center based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report with an additional condition that connection to adjacent properties and pond will be made and bicycle racks installed.
Fergal Brennock seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0 In favor.

- **33 Robbins Road** John C. Bartley – Special Permit Finding

John Bartley, the original project was to remove and build a two-car garage. We are willing to keep two existing, non-conforming walls of the current garage. The rationale is to keep our father's antique car. There has been a

long term ownership of the vehicle, 1937 Ford, in his family. We need to store it and many boxes of parts and other materials to keep the car running. It is very important to his family. The garage redesign is simple and tasteful. My father had served on the Traffic Committee for many years. Neighbors are in favor of the rebuild. There will be no impact to abutters or the neighborhood.

Andrea Adams, the nature of the request is well described. Petitioner's application includes letter of support from the neighborhood. The project meets the criteria for a Special Permit Finding. Two walls of the existing garage will be retained. A roof on a rear porch will be removed to meet less than 25% Floor Area Ratio on the lot. The proposed change will not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood. Staff recommends approval of Special Permit Finding.

Jeff Brown motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit Finding petition based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report with additional condition to remove roof on rear porch and to retain two walls of existing garage. Neal Corbett seconded the motion. Vote: 4-0 In favor.

- **60 Russell Avenue** Maggie Booz, Architect; Najib & Alexis Kahlil, owners – Special Permit Finding

Maggie Booz, Architect, this is a petition to reconstruct the existing garage to create a larger house. The proposed addition will be built on the North side over an existing subterranean garage. The petitioner is proposing widening of the garage. The two dormers and front porch will stay in character with the neighborhood. The house is very small and they need more space. They are unable to extend the house to the rear due to a very large tree in the back yard which they want to preserve.

Andrea Adams, the photos of the location of the garage are shown in the staff report. How far below the grade are the garage and the large tree? The finding has to be that the change is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood. A non-conforming setback will increase by just over one foot. The proposed change is not substantially more detrimental. The large tree will be retained. The proposed design is in keeping with the neighborhood. Staff recommends conditional approval.

Neal Corbett, the drawings are easy to read and understand.

Garry Shaw, 57 Russell Avenue, across the street from subject property. The design is appropriate, we support this proposal. The existing house is very small and this is a factor in the redesign. This should be noted so support of this petition is not seen as a precedent in the residential district.

Jeff Brown motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit Finding based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report. Fergal Brennock seconded the motion. Vote: 4-0 In favor.

- **12 Dana Terrace** Roger Johnsen, Designer, Brenda van der Merwe & Chris Elzinga, Owners – Special Permit Finding and Variance

Roger Johnsen, Designer, we are asking the Board to withdraw the request for the Variance and only request a Special Permit Finding. The owner is no longer living at 12 Dana Terrace. There is not a connection between the new garage and the existing house. We are proposing to construct 120 s.f. addition by enclosing the existing balcony. We will stay within the existing footprint of the house. Egress will be created through a new set of exterior stairs along the exiting driveway. Set of plan sheet s1.1 showing the exterior stairs is being distributed tonight.

John Hawes, there is no deck, the stairway is on the driveway side now.

Gideon Schreiber, the new proposed egress is shown in the plan set submitted.

Andrea Adams, there were two potential schemes for exterior egress. The Variance request is withdrawn, the petitioner is only seeking Special Permit Finding. The staff report addressed the exterior egress using red text. The connection between the garage and the house is being withdrawn.

Gideon Schreiber, the house is non-conforming. A preferred means of egress from the house concerning the Special Permit Finding is via stairs that are on the driveway side.

Andrea Adams, the enclosure of the balcony and the 120 square foot addition to the house within the existing footprint is not more detrimental to the neighborhood if the Petitioner uses a new means of egress by way of a new set of stairs on the driveway side of the house. The staff recommends egress scheme shown in Plan s1.1.

Neal Corbett, the new stairs are likely to block a window, and may have structural issues.

Roger Johnsen, we are aware of these issues and will address them. It is not preferred to egress out the opposite side of the house.

Jeff Brown, is a landing needed?

Fergal Brennock, I am concerned about whether the rise/run is appropriate, it may not fit. Will the kitchen on the second floor be altered? Will the deck on the garage be remodeled?

Roger Johnsen, it is a tight area but it works. Landing was created at the bottom of the run of stairs and a door on the second floor.

Anne Louise Hiddle, 53 Summer Street, why did the Petitioner withdraw the Variance? I abut the subject property, Is the Petitioner now withdrawing the request for the roof deck? I am concerned about the project.

Gideon Schreiber, the existing garage was condemned. New garage is a replacement with a flat roof to 11 feet. Railings above 11 feet cannot be added.

John Hawes, Petitioner has eliminated the roof deck on the garage, and the connection between the house and the garage roof deck and the set of stairs descending from the garage.

Jeff Brown motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit Finding, only as the request for the Variance had been withdrawn, based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report.

Fergal Brennock seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0 In favor.

- **28-30 Prentiss Street** Gary Ruping – Special Permit

Gary Ruping, the existing house is condemned and does not meet front and side yard setbacks. We are proposing to raze it and build a new two-family home. A couple of iterations of the plan as shown in graphic presented to the Board.

Andrea Adams, two stacked gables in the front will be removed, creating a single larger front gable. The roof will be flattened.

Gideon Schreiber, the roof is actually a hip roof in the front. We met with Zoning Enforcement Officer and the roof line was changed to meet the 2.5-story calculations.

Andrea Adams, the surrounding land use is one and two-family homes. The abutting former Coolidge School is now apartments. The site is appropriate for such a use, landscaping will be provided. Porous pavers will be used in the driveways, maintaining a limited amount of parking. The front-approaching driveways will narrow the development on the lot, leaving the majority as open space. The design is more in keeping with architecture in the neighborhood. At Town's option, remove side yard driveway which encroaches onto Sampson Street. Maximum driveway width of ten feet. Landscaping defines the street edge. Appropriate facilities will be provided. Staff recommends conditional approval of Special Permit.

Margaret Cassidy, 22 Prentiss Street, how many parking spaces per bedroom? Is there a driveway on each side?

Gideon Schreiber, changes are based on number of bedrooms in this District. In one and two family zones it is 2 parking spaces for dwelling unit. If more than four bedrooms, then 3 spaces. Each side will have a driveway that is set back from the house and the street. Three vehicles can be accommodated with the garage and the length of the driveway on one side. Two parking spaces on the other side of the house. Three bedrooms plus a study are proposed. T

John Hawes, the unit closest to 22 Prentiss Street has the two parking spaces: This is a nice redevelopment.

Jeff Brown motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals conditional approval of the Special Permit under Section 6.04(j) based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report.

Neal Corbett seconded the motion

Vote: 4-0 In favor.

CONTINUED CASES

- **21 North Beacon Street** Gregory Sampson, Attorney/US Auto Group of Massachusetts, Ltd. d/b/a Boston Volkswagen – Special Permit Finding

Gregory Sampson, Attorney for Petitioner, recapped the process to date. We have met with DCDP staff. Updated landscape plan has been submitted. This is a petition to convert one non-conforming use to another non-conforming use, to expand use at 43 North Beacon Street. New landscape plan showing additional shrubs and other plantings is presented. We are willing to work with Town to replace street trees. There is an issue of landscaping along Riverside, we intend to upgrade these landscape materials as well. We will include a two-times a month maintenance requirement.

Gideon Schreiber, updated conditions are included in the Board packet. Directed Board's attention to comments from the prior meeting.

John Hawes, we need to better define what Watertown Square is as part of the Comprehensive Plan. I don't believe that this development is included in the Square. We should focus more on Mount Auburn Street, Main Street, and Arsenal Street as part of the Comprehensive Plan. Outdoor use would be more attractive, but the site is limited. We need to discuss what the limits of the Square are. Comprehensive Plan points to the diner and brick house on the corner as the potential terminus of the Square. There are already automotive related businesses nearby.

Neal Corbett, I am not convinced this is the highest and best use of this site. It is a missed opportunity to improve the area. This is a site that engages the Square. Is it right to extend the non-conforming use? We need to be mindful of a better use of the site, particularly in light of the Comprehensive Plan. This site is not properly engaged.

Gregory Sampson, the parking behind this building is not part of this site.

Gary Shaw, 77 Russell Avenue, I agree with Mr. Corbett. The project is small, but the location is key. It's not accurate to say that it is outside Watertown Square. We may have the Square die by a thousand cuts. Comprehensive Plan is trying to establish a new vision for the Square. We have not given regulatory support so that the development community knows what is in keeping with the Plan. The design Standards and Guidelines are coming and we need to make a pause. This project would benefit from design review as it applies to this project.

Rena Baskin, 15 Franklin Street, I support Gary Shaw's comments. Once the case goes to the Zoning Board of Appeals, won't that Board have the same response? As long as it conforms to zoning, the project is approved? They can't require more? Is it a lease or purchase?

John Hawes, we need regulatory backup for the Comprehensive Plan. This project follows the existing Ordinance. This project will also go before the Zoning Board of Appeals. This case raises key questions. Zoning Board of Appeals is generally stricter. I suggest that if the project was denied, there may be an issue with the Petitioner. I understand the frustration with the Comprehensive Plan not yet being approved. This Petitioner has met the test.

Gregory Sampson, it's a 20 year lease.

Fergal Brennock, the question is one of balance. Watertown also needs locations where cars can be serviced. Advocate of the identity of the Square. Perhaps things will evolve in the 20 years of the lease. It's a specific use.

Jeff Brown motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals conditional approval of the Special Permit Finding under Section 4.06(a) based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report.

Fergal Brennock seconded the motion.

Vote: 3-1 In favor Neal Corbett opposed.

John Hawes adjourned the meeting at 8:05 PM.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:05 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see tape dated 8/13/14 available in the DCDP office.