

## WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: December 10, 2014 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:05 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting

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

### **ADMINISTRATION BUSINESS**

Fergal Brennock motioned to approve Minutes of 11/10/14.

Jeff Brown seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0 In favor

### **CASE PENDING:**

- **65 Grove Street;** Edward Nardi, Cresset Grove LLC - **Special Permit with Site Plan Review**

John Hawes, 65 Grove Street will not be heard tonight.

Jeff Brown motioned to continue the above petition until the next meeting of Planning Board on January 14, 2015.

Fergal Brennock seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0 In favor

### **PROPOSED ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT**

- **PLEASANT STREET CORRIDOR DISTRICT**

John Hawes, the pending Text Amendment for the Pleasant Street Corridor District will not be discussed tonight.

Jeff Brown motioned to continue the hearing on the proposed Pleasant Street Corridor Text Amendment to the Planning Board meeting on January 14, 2015.

Fergal Brennock seconded the motion. Vote: 4-0 In Favor.

### **CONTINUED CASE**

- **631, 651-653, 655 Mt. Auburn Street & 268 Arlington Street;** Robert Korff, Coolidge Square II, LLC - **Special Permit with Site Plan Review**

William York, Atty, revisions to architectural plans and additional peer traffic reviews were done. Revised architectural drawings and a memo on the traffic impacts had been provided to the Board

Kevin Patten, Architect, the revised plans provide a side by side comparison of the exterior design. Seating walls were added along Arlington Street. The space was opened to allow more interaction with the public. A feature was created in the public sidewalk to continue into the public space, awnings have been added on the windows. The front entry element cornice line was lowered to the adjacent building line. Only the profile is above the cap of adjacent buildings. Gooseneck lighting was moved up into the trim line to make it work with the letters. Entry feature was added where the building bends. Cornice height was reduced, and a pattern in the brick work was created. The end bay was treated with trim lines to replicate the storefront glazing sizes and bicycle racks were added to the rendering.

William York, supplemental traffic analysis had been done and peer review was done by the Town. Peer review confirmed that the original traffic analyses were appropriate and scope was correct. Mitigation with the Town, including the DPW, was discussed. Peer review was paid for by the Developer, but done at the behest of the Town.

Robert Michaud, Principal, MDM Transportation, a conclusion of the peer review is that a CVS is a comparatively low traffic generator. The Peer Review concurs with the developer's report. Relative impact to existing traffic and surrounding roads can be easily accommodated. Proposal reduces certain turning movements on Arlington Street. Access to the site locus now includes three driveways very close to the signal at Arlington Street. DPW comments to reduce these conflicts, by placing a driveway central to the Mount Auburn/Arlington Street intersection and the Grove Street intersection. Access on Mount Auburn Street goes away entirely. More coherent site circulation is proposed. Morning peak is 41 total trips (in/out). 118 vehicle trips (60 in/ 60 out) for the PM peak. Pharmacy use generates more than half its trips from people already on the roads. Results in net new trips are directly attributable to the new pharmacy. A diagram, showing all maneuvers into or out of the site, was presented. Largest turning movement is out of the site onto Wells and Bigelow, at 42 trips. The trips on Arlington Street are reduced because of the left turning movement restriction at that entrance. Turning movements will not change the workings of the signals. Tufts expansion, 65 Grove Street, Elan residential/retail project, Hotel at Arlington/Arsenal/Elm, and Hanover/Cresset mixed use development at Arsenal Street were included in the traffic study. These other projects create in excess of 100 vehicle trips up to almost 300 vehicle trips in an hour through several studied intersections. CVS impacts in the same three peak hours and at the same intersections are between fewer than 10 vehicle trips up to just over 50 trips. There are delays under certain conditions at certain times, under current road conditions, without CVS. Also, if traffic is degraded to a lower Level of Service, the lower level of service in part created by the other studied projects, and remains static with the proposed CVS. Same Peer Reviewer looked at traffic impacts in the corridor for the corridor study, and in relation to the other proposed and approved projects. The petitioner will reconstruct the sidewalk, replace signal controller, upgrade to video detection versus in pavement loops, and replace pedestrian activation signals at the Arlington/Mount Auburn intersection and at Bigelow/Mount Auburn. Tens of thousands of dollars of improvements that are far beyond what is necessary to address the project's impacts, are proposed by the petitioner. Truck movement diagram was reviewed by DPW, which found adequate maneuverability in the site for the proposed size of trucks.

William York, this project is a 13,000 square foot CVS with a 1,300 square foot mezzanine. It is replacing one building that is close to 12,000 square feet, and the old gas station, which is also close to 12,000 square feet in size. It will provide onsite parking, which most businesses along these streets do not have. It has less lot area coverage than the existing businesses in the Square. It will provide an onsite loading area, which other businesses don't. Changes to the sidewalk will benefit pedestrians. The proposed project will add value to the Square.

Steve Magoon, Director, Petitioner has addressed comments raised in the last Board meeting, by both the Planning Board and public. Department of Community Development and Planning (DCDP) staff is available to answer any questions.

John Hawes, previous proposal by Mr. Korff was a Walgreens store. The CVS project is undergoing Special Permit review because it needs relief from required setbacks because the building will touch the existing Mount Auburn Grille. The original Walgreens project, is "by right." The Town has very little review, just a requirement for a Building Permit. There will be no mitigation, no adjustments to the pedestrian signals, no upgrade to the traffic signal controller, and no need for site improvements. DCDP staff had worked with the Petitioner to improve the original Walgreens proposal. These are important points to consider. The residents need to understand that the Petitioner chose voluntarily to come forward with a redesigned project which is before the Planning Board now. It will eliminate the driveway onto Mount Auburn Street. Building scale is appropriate. CVS is located as far away from Wells Avenue as possible, and includes the loading area.

Neal Corbett, has the proposed future second story idea been removed?

Steve Magoon, yes, per the direction of the Planning Board at the last meeting.

Jeff Brown, we need to clarify the traffic situation. Upper right hand corner is very close to Wells Avenue. The site is in tough shape now. What about screening for Wells Avenue? I do not understand the servicing and truck traffic circulation. Is it two-way movement?

William York, the proximity of the existing building to Wells Avenue is 81 feet. The proposed setback of the CVS to Wells Avenue is 148 feet. The Petitioner is the owner of the Citizens Bank property, therefore, he can put landscaping on that property too.

William Gobel, Bohler Engineering, the site plan is showing proposed landscaping and proposed understory plantings under the trees along Wells Avenue which will help block visibility and headlight glare. New shade trees will be planted at the property's Eastern end. A screening wall on the island on the interior of the site, 8 foot high mesh netting with ivy will be planted. Other plantings along southern side of driveway, and a bio-retention basin, are proposed. We want to minimize visibility and openness of the parking area that exists now. The project will only accept palletized deliveries as the largest delivery. There is no standard loading dock as in other projects, where the dock is depressed below grade, and the truck backs up.

William York, hours of operation are 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM. Hours of delivery for CVS trucks, which would not be larger than a WB-40 in size, would be 7:00 PM to 11:00 PM, it will only occur twice a week. The trash/recycling trucks would service the site twice a week between the hours of 7:00 AM to 11:00 AM. Paper is picked up as needed. For independent, non-CVS vendors, these deliveries would occur during the store's business hours.

Fergal Brennock, I appreciate the revisions made to the proposed fenestration along both Mount Auburn and Arlington Street. We want to re-enforce the stipulation about not posting advertising on the large windows and encourage keeping the back of shelving away from the windows. We encourage art displays or other ways to engage the public. We urge the Petitioner to consider a wooden, externally illuminated sign.

William York, the Petitioner is allowed to have up to 20% advertising on the windows by the Sign Code. The Petitioner would voluntarily agree to no signage in the windows as a condition of approval. We do not want to block the large windows, as in the Lexington CVS, but there may be another way to accommodate an art display. We are proposing gooseneck externally illuminated sign lighting.

Kevin Patten, signage is externally illuminated with gooseneck fixtures. Not internally illuminated and not "halo lighted." Solid wood sign is a problem. Halo lit sign is also not the best option for use on a masonry background. CVS typically does their own sign permitting.

Fergal Brennock, is the use of a solid sign a maintenance issue or a branding issue, or both?

Kevin Patten, this would be a question for CVS. Don't have any direct feedback on this issue.

Neal Corbett, the Petitioner consider underground utilities, and/or address the light poles around the corner area?

Kevin Patten, initially a different background above the main entrance was proposed. The DCDP staff asked us to change it to masonry. Choice of masonry limits what can be done to articulate the façade. Adding articulation/projection/recession would make it structurally complex.

Gideon Schreiber, the Sign Code would already limit the overall projection of the sign to no more than six (6) inches from the wall façade.

Steve Magoon, there is a differences between a by right proposal and one that is subject to Site Plan Review and Special Permit review. The Petitioner's request triggers a Special Permit. This is not a Variance, all the uses are allowed. There are also uses that are permitted by a Variance. In the case of a Special Permit, this is a use that is allowed in a particular zoning district, but because of the nature of that use, there is a public process, and a discussion of a way to allow those uses with conditions, or that use could be denied. Site Plan Approval is a use that is presumed by zoning to be permitted. Another public process is used to allow the Town Departmental staff to comment on that use, and add possible conditions to that use. Last, there is a by right use. These only require a Building Permit. In the case of CVS, the Petitioner has requested a Special Permit with discretionary review, which requires a process before the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. This is our opportunity to place conditions on the project. This, however, is a permitted and appropriate use. The request for a CVS is not for something that the zoning does not allow.

David Peckar, 24 Wells Avenue, a copy of my comments was given for the record. Myself and a group of homeowners on Wells Avenue had come together to review this project, and all of the homeowners had designated me to provide their combined comments. We have discussed the relevant issues and identify our concerns. I have met with Mr. Korff and Mr. Magoon to review our concerns. Some of the concerns had been addressed, most have not. I do understand both Mr. Hawes' and Mr. Magoon's description of the differences between the current proposal and the prior Walgreens store and the necessity for a Special Permit. The proposed CVS can't be built as of right and the Wells Avenue neighbors prefer the original as of right project. We request that the Planning Board, as a first choice, recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals, denial of the proposed CVS in favor of the original Walgreens designs. We recommend to the Planning Board, as a second choice, that the CVS proposal as it is now be denied, and that the Planning Board request that the Petitioner redesign the proposed project to better address the Wells Avenue concerns. The Petitioner's summary of the Community Meeting does not acknowledge the comments of the neighborhood group made at the meeting. There is no record of the Petitioner making efforts to address those concerns. We have developed a plan which included a parking garage. This creates a park along Wells Avenue, and allows for additional plantings. Having the garage, with its "back" oriented to Wells Avenue provides a screen that shields the houses from lights, noise, etc. It also helps with traffic flow pattern through the site. I have showed this plan to Mr. Korff, who said it was costly and would not work. I have suggested using a parking structure in place of the current municipal surface lot could work, except that it would take more time than the timeline allowed for a review of a Special Permit. We have listed the concerns of the Wells Avenue neighborhood:

1. Loading/unloading of trucks and truck access/egress
2. Disabled access
3. Removal of the Elks building which currently provides a visual and sound barrier/buffer between the Wells Avenue neighborhood and Arlington Street
4. Hours of operation
5. Traffic concerns around the site
6. Granting a demolition permit before the Special Permit has been approved
7. Exterior and interior lights on a timer
8. Signage: Design not clear, and possible nighttime impacts
9. Landscaping: Concerned that the addition of understory plantings to the row of existing street trees on Wells Avenue will unduly harm the root structure of the existing trees
10. Size of the store and its orientation to the Wells Avenue neighborhood

The Petitioner made site plan changes to accommodate the TILL vans so that they would not have to back out onto Wells Avenue. Many of the neighborhood's concerns have not been met. The proposed 8-foot tall "green screen" is inadequate to address noise and headlights intruding onto and into the houses on Wells Avenue. The modified truck access route is unacceptable because the entrance has been moved west, closer to the closest street tree on Wells Avenue. The truck movement diagram provided by the Petitioner does not address changes to the site for the other tenants. The truck route will cause the other site tenant's problems with their deliveries. This, in turn, will cause more impacts to Wells Avenue as those delivery trucks look for places to park to make deliveries. The Town's peer review of the traffic study supports the neighborhood's concerns, by recommending signal improvements at Bigelow. It also supports the concerns about the truck turning movements and the concern about left turns out of the site at the Arlington Street entrance. The ultimate solution to preventing such turning movements will be the placement of a raised median in the road layout of Arlington Street. When this is done, more traffic will divert down Wells Avenue, including trucks. This will exacerbate the traffic congestion and impacts to the neighborhood. The traffic report had originally been issued in July, but had been modified in August, 2014. Between August 5, 2014 and August 16, 2014, the Petitioner's consultants placed an automatic counter for one day, for four hours at the site. Based on this, we question the Petitioner's baseline traffic data. It is uncertain when the data was collected, and therefore the study itself was suspect. I suggest that whether new trips or pass-by trips, the trips were still affecting the Wells Avenue neighborhood. Other businesses in the Square are in keeping with the scale of the neighborhood. The CVS main entrance should be from the parking lot, rather than the entrance proposed at the corner of Arlington and Mount Auburn Streets. The general feeling is that the original Walgreens proposal was better for the neighborhood. It had fewer negative impacts. The current design is suburban in nature and it causes more impacts to Wells Avenue. We urge the Planning Board to reject the current proposal and allow an as of right design instead. A letter from a business owner, Seth Abrahamian, Coolidge Variety, is submitted to the Planning Board. He expresses strong opposition to the proposed CVS. It is too large and will have negative impact on local businesses. I have researched the parking requirements for a CVS on CVS realty website, and even a smaller store needs up to 75 spaces, per CVS requirements.

Stephanie Orifice, Wells Avenue resident, me and my husband have met with several Wells Avenue residents and developed a petition with specific points. Copies of the petition with signatures were submitted tonight. Signatures include residents, businesses, and patrons who come to Coolidge Square.

Malcolm Attaminan, owner of the Mount Auburn Grill, we have serious concerns about how trucks will access and leave the site. The proposed truck access path shown by the Petitioner's traffic consultants will have a serious negative impact on his business, and other businesses in the block.

William York, the CVS has 40 parking spaces. The other parking spaces shown on the lot are for the other businesses, or are dedicated to the existing municipal parking lot. The proposed truck circulation pattern was on Mr. Korf's property, or on property he has rights to. 75 parking spaces are needed for CVS in different areas.

George Omartian, 48 Bigelow Avenue, Unit #31, I do not understand the parking situation. Who has what? Who owns what? I have previously received something from Councilor Kounelis that describes the parking situation, but he still did not fully understand it.

Deborah Peterson, School Street, the gateway to Watertown should not be a CVS. The proposed store is out of keeping with the Square. I and another resident have conducted a survey. The survey showed that many of the respondents felt the same way. The Petitioner should change the proposal by moving the doorway more central to the block, by including local businesses in the building, by

including a public space and/or meeting space in the building. The signage should reflect the existing character. The public process to date has failed to result in the developer making meaningful changes to the project. The Planning Board should ask the developer to re-engage in the public process.

Angie Kounelis, District A Councilor, the area is a home for people. Residents, abutters, local merchants make up the fabric of Coolidge Square. It is a destination. We need to have an understanding of the impacts to Wells Avenue neighborhood. I am concerned about traffic backing up on Wells Avenue. No mitigation was offered for this congestion at Bigelow. We do not want a CVS to be the focal point of Coolidge Square. I am concerned about pedestrian circulation, and how the repeated activation of the pedestrian signals will impact and snarl vehicular traffic. This project is too large, initial Walgreens proposal has more appealing to the neighborhood. The proposed traffic pattern into and out of the parking lot won't work. I understand the implications of a by-right concept. I urge the Planning Board to listen to the neighborhood's concerns.

Helen Coppola, 31 Whitlove Road, owner of Whale of a Wash Laundromat, I support the proposed CVS. Issue of parking on Wells Avenue is something to be solved by the residents.

John Hawes, written comments have been received from other business owners and the Watertown-Belmont Chamber of Commerce. Some are in support, some opposed. I suggest that the Planning Board may choose to deny the project. The developer may choose to come back with an as-of-right proposal, which would be subject to very little, if any, Town review. I am inclined to vote against the current proposal because of traffic concerns. I do not agree with the Petitioner's analysis of pass-by trips and that the pass-by trips should be deducted from the gross trip generation. The traffic impacts were the main impact to the neighborhood.

Neal Corbett, I am concerned about scale and community character. The Petitioner's efforts to address these have been weak, at best. Not enough has been done to address the scale issue.

Fergal Brennock, it is an issue of a national chain store. What if it was a CO-OP or a craft store of similar size? Is it the brand? The Coolidge Square needs a balance through a mix of uses and sizes of stores. Traffic is a problem, but it is a problem throughout Watertown. That is to be accepted in an urban environment.

John Hawes, this is not a suburban design. I urge the Petitioner that should the Planning Board vote to recommend a denial of the project to the Zoning Board of Appeals, that the Petitioner take heed of the comments made during the review to redesign the project. Peer review was disappointing, and on the whole, did not make sense. I have disliked the Petitioner's rejection of a conditional no turn movement requirement/condition at the Arlington Street driveway.

William York, the Town's Peer Review of the traffic analysis agreed with the Petitioner's analysis. The developer has done what had been asked of him.

Jeff Brown, I agree with Attorney York, the project is not overly large but at the same time, Planning Board has always listened to the concerns of the residents, and particularly the abutters or those most directly impacted.

Jeff Brown motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit and Site Plan review under Section 5.01(3)(f)(2) and Section 5.05 (d), based upon the finding that it meets the criteria of the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report..

Fergal Brown seconded the motion.

Vote: 1 to 3 John Hawes, Jeff Brown, Neal Corbett against

Steve Magoon, I appreciate the neighborhood's concerns. From my perspective, we led the Petitioner away from the by-right proposal. We have suggested a design that had virtually the same square footage, and then could be expanded by right to have the same square footage as the current proposal, but had a parking lot on the corner, so the first welcome to the Square in this location was a parking lot, which was not preferable. We have suggested to the Petitioner that this design would provide more of an opening to the neighborhood, and more of an opportunity for noise, headlights and traffic to impact Wells Avenue. Such a by right proposal would not give the public or the Town an opportunity to weigh in on the traffic issues, getting some improvements. We led the Petitioner to the Planning Board with a proposal that put the building on the street, give a presence to the street. We have suggested the entrance could be moved up to Arlington or to just address Mount Auburn, although it was suggested a corner entrance would give a presence to both streets. The Petitioner started with a much more suburban proposal. The prior design was less advantageous for Coolidge Square and Watertown. The recommendation of denial from the Planning Board and the neighborhood may push the Petitioner back to a proposal that is less advantageous for the Town and neighborhood. We have asked for direction from the Planning Board concerning traffic studies. Watertown needs to communicate an objective standard of analysis to developers. Nationally, traffic studies are accepted as a way to do that analysis. Set a Level of Service and measure traffic, and propose mitigation. Can have a third party review. But, if the Town and Boards are going to say a traffic study by a traffic engineer and reviewed by someone independent of that Petitioner is to be ignored, then DCDP staff is not certain what standard to apply. If the Town is going to continue to disregard that, then what must be put in place of that? What analysis should be used by property owner and developers in Watertown to evaluate traffic impacts? What standard does the Town and DCDP staff use to tell a developer to evaluate traffic impacts that is fair and equitable going forward?

John Hawes, this project is one of the first times I can remember a project being denied based on a traffic report. I object to the study and peer review in that they did not deal with the neighborhood issues. That and the pass-by issue. Limited reaction to an overall well done report. I prefer this proposed plan. Ultimately, it came down to traffic and scale. Experience is local in this case. To the DCDP staff, what the staff did was successful, they did all the correct things.

Fergal Brennock, registered Professional Engineer, I made similar presentations to Boards in other Towns. Comments made by Mr. Peckar that the information presented is false or wrong; are insulting to the Petitioner's traffic engineer. Allow the debate of the two sides to go on, presenting what they consider to be different information. To say the study is false is wrong. Similar to commenting on an architectural or civil engineering aspect, and saying it too, is false. We can disagree with the presentation, but can't go so far as to say it's false.

Mr. Magoon, the Comprehensive Plan is moving forward. DCDP staff is incorporating the revisions proposed by the Council Subcommittee. We will forward to the consultants to prepare a final version. It would allow the Council and Planning Board to consider adoption of the Plan.

Gideon Schreiber, there is a proposed Hotel signage amendment in the Board's packets for tonight. This issue is scheduled to be discussed at the Board's meeting in January, 2015.

John Hawes adjourned the meeting at 9:30 pm

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:30 PM MINUTES APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 12/10/14 which is available in the DCDP office.