

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: June 10, 2015 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Meeting

PRESENT: John Hawes, Chair; Jeff Brown; Linda Tuttle-Barletta; Fergal Brennock; Neal Corbett
Steven Magoon, Director; Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Jeff Brown motioned to approve Minutes of 5/13 & 5/21/2015.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

PENDING CASES

- **11 Fuller Road;** James Caulfield II – Special Permit Finding & Special Permit

James Caulfield, this is a 2-family house. We are proposing to extend existing 2-story 6x16 rear porch, extend the first floor to 8' from the house and increase building coverage from 35.8% to 37.2% where 30% is allowed. Increase FAR from .58 to .61 where .5 is allowed.

Gideon Schreiber, this is a non-conforming site located in T zone. The small add on requires Special Permit and Special Permit Finding. The proposed addition is in keeping with the neighborhood, other houses are substantially more. The criteria have been met. The proposed change is no more detrimental than the existing use. It will provide more space. The staff recommends that the porch will not be enclosed.

Jeff Brown, it seems that the new porch is closer to the existing garage?

James Caulfield, the garage is 6' from the porch.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to recommend to the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of the Special Permit under Section 5.04(r) and Special Permit Finding under §4.06(a) based upon the finding that it meets the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance subject to conditions set forth in the staff report.

Jeff Brown seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

- **480-3 Arsenal Street;** William McQuillan, Manager, 480 Arsenal Group LLC – Special Permit with Site Plan Review

Mark Deschenes, this is a proposal to renovate existing 73,920 s.f. warehouse into 185,595 s.f. office building and to construct a parking deck for 83 spaces and provide grade parking for 483 spaces. Bike path will be on the eastern side of our parcel. The project is called Linx because it will connect the neighborhoods with Coolidge Square, Arsenal Project and the River.

John Sullivan, Architect, this is an opportunity to connect the site to the Coolidge Square area, Arsenal Project, etc. The property is now used by Verizon as a warehouse. This proposal will bring more lively use to the site. Nichols Avenue separates the site from the abutting neighborhood. We will carve into the existing building, add natural daylight. We are trying to attract a tenant that would add vibrancy to the site. We are working with Boylston Properties to create something special. Part of the existing building will be removed, courtyards created, bicycle parking and shower facilities will be provided, it will become highly sustainable building.

Giles Ham, Vanesse Associates, this is a replacement project, traffic study was conducted and there were several neighborhood meetings. 25% of the traffic from the site is destined toward Mt. Auburn Street, 75% toward Arsenal Street. The primary access to the property is from Arsenal Street. Emphasis is on safety to the neighborhood. TMP (Transportation Management Plan) will be

implemented on site and included in new employee package. Four off-site signals will be modified, markings, raised crosswalks and bump outs will be added. We will work closely with DPW, all school signs will be updated.

Roy Smith, RJ O'Connell Assoc., this is an opportunity to generate site plan with improved conditions. The site has been underutilized by Verizon. It abuts the Watertown GreenWay. The primary entrance is from Arsenal Street with additional entrance from Nichols Avenue. The left part of the property has an access gate to prevent cut through traffic. Parking meets all the requirements, the open space requirement is 10%, we will provide 21%. LED lighting on site. The design will follow new Design Guidelines that have not yet been adopted by the Town Council.

Stephen Schram, Landscape Architect, public seating along the bike path will be provided. We are proposing shaded graded walkway along Nichols Avenue. We are proposing clear views into the property.

Steve Magoon, this project will participate in TMA (Transportation Management Assoc). A significant shuttle service is proposed for the area to help address traffic impact. All lights will have shield to protect the neighboring residential neighborhood.

John Hawes, there are four projects affecting the area, CVS, 65 Grove Street, 2 new hotels and this project, how will it be coordinated ?

Steve Magoon, traffic studies take into account all the projects, even already approved projects and traffic from surrounding communities. Impact analysis will be done, but we cannot predict future projects. This applicant is proposing improvements to the neighborhood. The project combine resources to provide shuttle service, network from Waltham to Cambridge. It is a substantial contribution. DPW will coordinate traffic signals, hopefully in a very short time.

Gideon Schreiber, a Special Permit was issued for this site in 1998 to convert warehouse building to office space/storage/warehouse/ vehicle garage for Bell Atlantic. Another permit was issued in 2001 to add additional floor area. The petitioner held community meetings in February, second one on April 1. Summary of the meetings was given to the Board. This proposal is consistent with 1998 Growth Management Plan. Community Development Plan of 2004 spoke more of streetscape. 2011 Strategic Framework of Economic Development underutilized the area. Draft Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Planning Board and is now waiting for Town Council approval. This project was reviewed under Design Guidelines by Gamble Associates. Just a few suggestions were made, such as reduction of surface parking, alternative sources of energy, etc. Staff has reviewed the proposal, the 4 criteria for Special Permit has been met. This is an appropriate site for such a use, major improvements to the streetscape, bicycle improvements, storm water has been addressed. The site will have more parking than required by zoning. The effect on the neighborhood will be minimal, the petitioner is concerned with cut through and access gate will be provided. Sidewalks have been redesigned, it will provide safer pedestrian environment. All buildings will meet health safety requirements. Electric charging spaces will be provided and will be reviewed by DPW prior to issuance of building permit. Transformer will be appropriately screened. The site is connected to Greenway, façade treatment has been updated. Open space requirement was met, 568 parking spaces are provided as well as 38 bicycle parking spaces. Environmental local laws are met, design was reviewed. Staff recommends conditional approval with the attached conditions.

Steve Magoon, trees on Nichols Ave will be placed and will be added as #5 of condition #11.

Jeff Brown, how will visitors know where to enter – Arsenal or Nichols entrance – and where to park? Why isn't the parking structure on the south site where it would not affect the neighbors?

Mark Deschenes, 6 visitor parking spaces will be near the Arsenal Street entrance, visitors will be directed with arrows to the garage. Surface parking is provided on the south site. There is a 5' grade differential between the property, bikeway and the neighborhood.

Neal Corbett, the name of the complex suggest link to the neighborhood. There will be lot of traffic on site. 45% will be using the Nichols Ave access. Is there any retail?

Giles Ham, currently there are no crosswalks, we are proposing bump outs to make the pedestrian walk safer. There is no retail space in the building. The developer has given substantial contribution to provide the neighborhood with mitigation and traffic calming elements.

John Hawes, the parking garage is now almost invisible, how would it look with additional story? A cross section showing the parking deck and how it relates to the neighborhood would be helpful. Left turn onto Nichols Avenue is needed.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta, traffic mitigation measures were not presented tonight. The additional traffic will spill everywhere. This is a substantial increase in daily traffic impact.

James Bell, on behalf of St.Stephens School, we are very concerned with traffic flow. Drivers are coming from Bigelow Ave, going onto Elton. School drop off is between 7:30 and 8:30. Bump out is needed on the east side. Signage to avoid cut through should be placed at Bigelow and Elton. Speed bumps should be placed on Elton. The school is not a property owner and we were not notified.

Steve Magoon, raise tables with provide significant traffic calming element. Signage that would limit traffic needs to be discussed with traffic commission. Limitation to slow down traffic need to be evaluated. We will meet with the applicant to address these issues.

Gideon Schreiber, the north side will generate 95 more cars.

Angie Kounelis, District A Councilor, this site has a long history. During a previous proposal, East Watertown Neighborhood Association (EWNA) requested that the gate on Nichols Ave remain close. Originally the site had thousands of employees, mostly pedestrians, and the gate did not need to be open. It should not be used by vehicular traffic. Memo from Matt Shuman, Town Engineers, to Steve Magoon regarding that entrance and providing mitigation. Bigelow Ave and Mount Auburn Street cannot accommodate more vehicles. We need to address what is happening in this community. Opening this gate cannot be regulated.

Tom Jigazian, parent of St.Stephen's student, people would drive through Bigelow and Elton, etc. North gate should stay closed. The developer is trying but it will not work.

John Hawes, the project has Arsenal Street address, why is the Nichols Ave entrance/exit needed? The impact on school is from Mount Auburn Street

Mark Deschenes, employees will be coming from Cambridge and suburbs, this is a convenience issue. If we close the gate, the project will be closing its back onto the neighborhood.

Fergal Brennock, the entrance can bring benefits, Coolidge Square will be thriving from these development.

Angie Kounelis, when Tufts purchased the AT&T building, same arguments were made. The employees do not patronize the businesses in Coolidge Square. There are 3 churches and 97 condos on Bigelow. I represent the entire East End, we need to consider what another project will do to the area. If the gate on Nichols Ave is open it will be a steady stream of vehicles coming in and out.

George OMartian, 38 Bigelow, the proposed shuttle service needs to be examined closely. Leave the north side gate closed. What is happening in the abutting AT&T building?

William York, Atty, after many planning sessions, the strategic plan was completed. The developer supports suggestions. Traffic experts and DPW concerns were addressed, the developer worked on the plans for 6 months. These are significant infrastructure improvements, the Town should support this proposal.

Father, St.Stephens, this is a very difficult decision, the parking in the area is difficult. There are 3 schools in the area, buildings are used as schools 7 days a week. It is a difficult area to park, drop off the children, etc. Children are very precious to us, safety is our foremost concern.

John Hawes, given the traffic concerns, we should continue the project until next month. It is a great project, very well designed. Could the parking garage be moved to the south side? I am very concerned with the Coolidge Square neighborhood. More discussion is needed to address all the issue.

Jeff Brown, even if it does not work, it will help the community.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to continue the petition to July 8 meeting of the Board.
Neal Corbett seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0 In favor

OTHER

Steve Magoon, Athenahealth is doing infrastructure to realign the roadways. They are working with DPW. Some trees will be taken out. Outdoor area restaurant will be in the rear of the Arts Center. Some new retail will be placed along the existing garage.

Chairman John Hawes adjourned the meeting at 9:45 PM.