

## WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: September 9, 2015 PLACE: Lower Hearing Room TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:10 PM  
PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Meeting  
PRESENT: John Hawes, Chairman; Jeff Brown; Linda Tuttle-Barletta, Fergal Brennock  
Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Planning Board, Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner, and  
Andrea Adams, Senior Planner

### ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to approve Minutes of the 8/12/2015 meeting.  
Jeff Brown seconded the motion. Voted: 4-0 In Favor

### CASE PENDING

- **82 Highland Avenue;** Evan Herarty - Special Permit Finding

John Hawes, Chair, asked the Petitioner to present their proposed project.

Vahe Ohannessian, Architect, the proposal is to construct a second story on the existing footprint, and add a side landing and two rear decks to the house. Computer generated graphics of the existing house were used to illustrate his points.

Andrea Adams, Senior Planner, the new side entry stair and landing encroaches into the existing non-conforming Easterly Side Yard. The new front entry also protrudes into the Front Yard setback. The new second story, although directly on top of the existing first floor, creates an intrusion into both Side Yard setbacks. Pre recent amendments made to Watertown's Zoning Ordinance (WZO) by the Design Standards, entrance porticos, such as the new side landing is permitted to protrude into a setback so long as the projection is no more than four feet. The new side entrance extends beyond this allowance. However, staff suggests the intrusion is not more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing non-conforming condition because the landing will have a relatively minimal impact on the immediately adjacent neighbor. The project will also include a new, open front portico, but this is allowed by recent amendments to the WZO. The project will also alter the existing structure by extending it upward within the non-conforming Side Yard setbacks, to create a new second floor. Staff suggests that the new condition is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood because the new design is in keeping with the architecture of the house and will blend in with the neighborhood. Many have dormers, or were similar reconstructions of smaller single family homes into larger structures, including into two-family dwellings. The area under the second floor deck counts towards overall building coverage, but the deck is relatively small, and largely centered on the stairs that lead off the back deck, so the change in coverage is minimal. According to an 8/25/15 Email from Mr. Ohannessian, the attic will be accessed by a set of pull-down stairs. Mr. Ohannessian also submitted calculations (checked by the Zoning Enforcement Officer) which indicate the attic conforms to the WZO square footage requirements for a half story so long as there is only *one* dormer. According to Mr. Ohannessian, his client would like to proceed with a single dormer on the Easterly side, as a possible option, with the final design to be determined later. Given that the area under the roof would be greater than that allowed by the WZO if there were two (2) dormers, staff recommends conditional approval of the project with two options: A) One dormer or B) No dormers. This recommendation is reflected in the *Conditions*, below. The reconfiguration of the house from a single to a two-story structure on the existing footprint would not markedly increase the generation of stormwater, and therefore the new condition is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood.

John Hawes, has the Petitioner considered changing the roof style, to something akin to a Dutch Colonial, to address the concerns of the adjacent neighbor concerning solar access and shadows?

Joyce Cohen, 86 Highland Avenue, submitted a comment letter for the record, and read it into the record. We request that the Petitioner build at a more reasonable scale. The existing house at 82 Highland is non-conforming to zoning, particularly on the side adjacent to our house. The Petitioner's proposal will block light and air with increased shadows, decrease light in the living space of both property owners, and aggravate problems with the narrow, steep driveway that separates her property from the Petitioner's. This would particularly be worse in the winters, where a decreased amount of light on her side would exacerbate problems with ice melt in the winter. The Petitioner's proposal is not in keeping with other houses in the neighborhood, and would be more detrimental to the neighborhood. The additional height on the existing footprint would be magnified because of the small lot size. The steep gradient from the front to the rear of the Petitioner's property would make the proposed project, if approved, "feel" like the new structure was bigger than a 1 ½ story building. The proposed project did not include elevation drawings at the eaves, to illustrate the relative heights of the existing houses to the proposed structure. The proposed new roof would have approximately 12 inches more of overhang, thereby increasing the encroachment, and increasing the shadowing impacts. I suggest that a possible solution would be to step back the additional floor, such as conforming to the side yards, or using a different roof shape, such as a mansard.

Kathy McNeil, 85 Highland Avenue, I have no problem with the proposed addition to the Petitioner's house. This proposal is similar to the recent tear-down and rebuilt larger structure on the corner of Highland and Gilbert.

Paul Barbato, Rosedale Road, the current house was relatively small, Dutch colonial design might be preferable.

Evan Herarty, the house is approximately 800 square feet, when reconstructed, it would probably be about 1,600 square feet. . The proposal would also re-arrange the bedrooms. The proposed single dormer was for aesthetics, not to gain interior height. Would a mansard or Dutch Colonial roof shape be appropriate, given there were no houses with those roof shapes in the neighborhood?

John Hawes, the current design is too high. I suggest that the Petitioner submit a cross-section, to show heights of the proposed structure and surrounding houses. Different roof shape to address the concerns heard from the abutter should be shown.

Evan Hearty, I will consider this option with my architect, but the result will not leave useable space in the double bathroom area on one side of the new structure.

Fergal Brennock, agreed with Chairman Hawes that the roofline is too high, and consideration has to be given to both neighbors.

Vahe Ohannessian, the Petitioner's roof ridge line would be several feet lower than the maximum building height allowed of 35 feet.

John Hawes, the Petitioner has two options: 1) Have the Planning Board vote tonight, or 2) Continue the project to the next Planning Board meeting to allow time to redesign the project. Which option would he like to pursue?

Vahe Ohannessian, discussed the matter with his clients, Mr. Hearty would like to have the process continued to the next Planning Board meeting.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to continue the above petition to the next regular Planning Board meeting in October 14, 2015.

Jeff Brown seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0 In Favor

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

- **Regional Mixed Use District: BP/Arsenal Group**

John Hawes, this presentation is for the benefit of the Planning Board, so that they could become familiar with the Regional Mixed Use District.

Gideon Schreiber, this will be a brief overview of the proposed Regional Mixed Use District (RMUD). We will use the Future Land Use map from the 2015 approved Watertown Comprehensive Plan to illustrate the points. An application was submitted, asking for creation of the RMUD. Some of the parcels included in that area on the map. This area generally encompasses the Industrial-1 area along Arsenal Street. The application to create the RMUD had been submitted by Boylston Properties. The Petitioner requested the RMUD with 4 parcels that encompass Miller's Ale House, Home Depot, Golf Smith, Arsenal Project (formerly Arsenal Mall) and the former Harvard Vanguard site. The intent of the request is to implement and to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, add the RMUD to the Table of Uses and create a Zoning Map amendment. Staff would provide a detailed Staff Report to the Planning Board, analyzing the Petitioner's request. The application addresses the intent and purpose of the proposed new zoning district, height, building mass, and signage. The proposed new RMUD has aspects modeled on the Pleasant Street Corridor District and Arsenal Overlay Development District (AODD), the Planning Board is designated as the Special Permit Granting Authority, and uses a Master Plan process to guide development in the proposed new district. The proposed new district went to First Reading at the Town Council last week. The primary question for DCDP staff at this point is what should be the maximum extent of the proposed new district, as the Petitioner's proposed area is smaller than what is shown in the Comprehensive Plan? This would also affect the potential area for noticing of the public hearing before the Planning Board.

Jeff Brown, would the Department proposed an RMUD-like zoning district if a private developer/property owner had not? What's the major benefit to having an RMUD for a private property owner? Is the RMUD up for a vote by the Planning Board in October?

Gideon Schreiber, based on the corridor plan and the Goals and Action Items in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, the Department would have proposed such a district. The staff may have proposed a zoning amendment, or a modified Design Guidelines process, to guide development in this area. A deeper discussion of the District's intent and a developer's intent is better left to the public hearings. One of the staff's goals is to spell out how what is the Petitioner proposing is different from what is allowed in the I-1 District now, and some idea of the impact of that. The schedule for approval by the Planning Board and sending it on to the Town Council would be up to the Board.

Fergal Brennock, the area may be too broad, but by the same token, development is happening, and the area represents an important area to Watertown's commercial development.

John Hawes, when I first read the Petitioner's request, it seemed to be the same type of planning coming to the East End, as in Pleasant Street Corridor. I am concerned about the piecemeal development of properties. The scope of the proposed district should include the proposed RMUD zone as articulated in the Comprehensive Plan. Using a Master Plan concept, similar to what's used in the AODD, is a good idea. Real logic would be to perhaps going across the street, but should we include Coolidge Avenue?

Gideon Schreiber, the Master Plan process would allow larger projects to be phased over a number of years. There is some interest from other properties to be included in the proposed RMUD area, such as the Watertown Mall. Staff's initial thought is to notice the area described in the Comprehensive Plan. We are asking the Board members to communicate any questions, thoughts or concerns to staff.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta, we need to notify the area more broadly, so that the maximum number of people become aware of what's being proposed. The actual district area could be reduced based on the outcome of the public hearings.

Chairman John Hawes adjourned the meeting at 8:00 PM

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:00 PM MINUTES APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 9/9/15 which is available in the DCDP office.