

## WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: August 12, 2015 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:10 PM  
PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Meeting  
PRESENT: John Hawes, Chairman, Jeff Brown, Neal Corbett  
Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Planning Board, Andrea Adams, Senior Planner

### ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Jeff Brown motioned to approve the Minutes 7/8/2015.  
Neal Corbett seconded the motion.

Vote: 3-0 In Favor

### PUBLIC HEARING

**Amendments to Zoning Map:** RCAB St. Patrick: Rezoning of the applicant's land, which consists presently of religious, educational, or licensed daycare uses as defined by G.L.c.40A, §3, to apply the WZO, §5.14. Religious/School Building Overlay District (R/SOD).

Steve Winnick, Atty, on behalf of RCAB St. Patrick, introduced Chris Carpenter, Chair of the Parish Finance Committee, and Father George Fitzsimmons, of the Parish. The zoning amendment had a First Reading before the Town Council on July 14, 2015. The zoning amendment would create an overlay district: Religious School Building Overlay District (R/SOD). The proposed overlay would cover the four parcels that make up the Parish property, and include the one property which is owned by the Catholic television station. DCDP staff put up a graphic on the in-room televisions showing the five parcels. The Catholic TV is independent of the RCAB. The impetus for the proposed zoning change is a building that is approximately 20,000 square feet, of which 10,000 square feet had most recently been occupied by a pre-school use. The school represents approximately 15% of Parish revenue, the school use left in January-February, 2015. The Parish is not receiving any revenue, and has been looking for a replacement tenant, the Parish is required to be funding self-sufficient.

Chris Carpenter, Chair of Parish Finance Committee, the rental property is very important in the Parish financial situation. The lease accounts for roughly \$120,000 in revenue. New fiscal year is starting July 1<sup>st</sup> and is starting with a deficit. Parishes are expected to be self-supporting. This Parish is struggling to make financial ends meet and to market the property. We were close to leasing up to other school tenants, but these have fallen through. We have been using Parish savings to make up the short-fall. The Parish is approaching a tenant relationship in a sensitive way. We are looking for a tenant that's beneficial to the neighborhood and Parish.

Father George Fitzsimmons, we need to lease the space, it is critical to the Parish's well-functioning. We are looking for a tenant that is compatible with basic Church teaching. It is a cooperative and collaborative effort. Zoning change will give the Parish more possible options for leasing the space.

Steve Winnick, Atty, the proposed amendment doesn't change the underlying zoning. It will provide a wider scope of possible uses. Overlay would allow the Church to entertain possible tenants that are more than religious or school uses. The underlying zoning of T and R.175 will stay in place. Zoning Ordinance foresaw a need for church structures to be re-used. Overlay guides the reuse and redevelopment of the religious and school structures, and in a way to be harmonious with the neighborhood. The Parish is under financial stress. Several of the potential Special Permit uses are allowed by the proposed overlay. The Parish would look for uses that are compatible with the Parish's underlying mission.

Andrea Adams, Senior Planner, map and area photographs are projected on the in-room television screens to illustrate the points. The Zoning Ordinance was amended in 2004 to create the R/SOD overlay. A key part of the R/SOD is to redevelop religious or school buildings while protecting the character of the building, and taking steps to ensure the re-use is compatible with the surrounding

neighborhood. The reuse review is through a Special Permit process, which establishes criteria for the review, as well as the requirement for a public hearing, with abutter and newspaper notices, before the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. As of now, nothing is proposed to happen to the Church and existing religious uses. An Email had been received by staff from Carole and Patrick Stockdale, expressing concern about the proposed zoning amendment. This Email had been forwarded to the Board and Petitioner, no other comments on the matter had been received.

Jeff Brown, does the Petitioner have plans showing just the buildings? Was the school that left started by the Church? How long would the proposed overlay district be in place?

Steve Winnick, the Petitioner did not have a plan showing just the structures. Chris Carpenter, Chair of the Parish Finance Committee, responded that the school that had recently left the space had not been started by the Church. If implemented, the overlay district would be in place until rescinded or changed.

Neal Corbett, has the Church been in talks with any potential renters other than educational uses? Does the Church want to keep the building in its current state as much as possible?

Chris Carpenter, the Church had been focused on educational uses, and had not yet reached out to other potential renters. This was in part the reason for the requested change. The Archdiocese lease has some restrictions in it, in that the use must be compatible with Church teachings to some extent. The Church would like to have as little done to the buildings as possible.

John Hawes, does the Church anticipate any changes to the building's exterior, or changes in parking? If something came up later, they would have to come to the Planning Board for review.

Attorney Winnick responded that the Church was in active discussions with another potential replacement school. He said this would result in no real change in use. He noted the potential replacement school would reconfigure the inside of the building, but not the exterior. At the same time, the Church still needs the change in zoning. If the current negotiations don't work out, the Petitioner will have to look for a greater space of tenants.

Marilyn Petito Devaney, 98 Westminster Avenue, I am in support of the change to the zoning. Many various churches had been lost to other uses. St. Patrick's is the oldest church in Watertown, it dates to 1847. Allowing the zoning change to keep the church going.

Chuck Langenhagen, 111 Pleasant Street, we should restrict the overlay district to just the buildings that the Church is looking to lease out to a tenant. Neighborhood should have another ability to give input if something changes. What kinds of checks and balances are built into the overlay to prevent "less than desirable" tenancies?

Steve Winnick, the overlay has a low trigger for further review, which was a change that was 4,000 square feet or greater. The space the Church was seeking to rent out was 10,000 square feet in size. The intent is to attract one single tenant for the entire space. If there was a change in use, there would also be a community meeting.

Andrea Adams, the overlay district requires a Special Permit process, which entails a newspaper notice, a mailing to abutters, and a public hearing before the Planning Board and another public hearing before the Zoning Board of Appeals. A key intent of the overlay is to preserve the buildings, and to have uses that are harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood character. A use such as a strip club or a medical marijuana dispensary would not be allowed by the overlay zoning.

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Jeff Brown motioned to recommend to the Honorable Town Council to adopt the requested Zoning Map Amendment to add the Religious/School Building Overlay District to the St. Patrick Parish parcels.  
Neal Corbett seconded the motion. Vote: 3-0 In Favor

Chairman John Hawes adjourned the meeting at 7:35 PM.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 7:35 PM MINUTES APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 8/12/15 which is available in the DCDP office.