

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: May 11, 2016 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:05 PM
PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Meeting
PRESENT: John Hawes; Chair, Linda Tuttle-Barletta, Fergal Brennock, Jeff Brown
Steve Magoon, Director; Andrea Adams, Senior Planner

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to approve Minutes of the 4/13/16 meeting.

Jeff Brown seconded the motion.

Voted: 4-0 In Favor

CASES PENDING

- **9 Bartlett Street;** Mohammed and Lila Karachi – Special Permit Finding (ZBA-2016-09)

Mohammed Karachi, the property was purchased in 2006. It is a small house, our family is growing, and we are proposing to add a second floor. The front yard setback is approximately 21 feet back from the street, where 25 feet is required. We have considered selling the house, and leaving Watertown, but decided an addition was a better choice. Adding a story to the house would not negatively affect the neighborhood, as many of the houses were already two stories in height. Our house is one of the smallest in the area.

Andrea Adams, described the proposed project site. The subject property is a 6,098 +/- square foot parcel containing a single story ranch style house, built in 1954 with a driveway leading to an existing garage under the house. The lot is conforming in size, frontage, rear yard, building height, building coverage, impervious coverage, and both side yard setbacks. It has a non-conforming front yard setback, having 21.8 feet, where 25 feet is required. The Special Permit Finding request is to construct a second floor with new gable roof on top of a 26-foot by 38-foot single story single family house. Relief is necessary to maintain the non-conforming front yard setback. The staff recommends that the project will not be substantially more detrimental than the existing non-conforming condition. The design is in keeping with the architecture of the house and, although not in keeping with the older houses directly adjacent to the site, will be consistent with the eclectic housing styles in the immediate vicinity in the neighborhood. Many houses in the surrounding area are two-story and have dormers, or are reconstructions of smaller single family homes into larger structures. The site has a non-conforming front yard setback, when considering the abutting property to the Northwest (larger Victorian style house), that abutting house has a porch that protrudes further into the front yard setback, and the main house is in line with the proposed addition.

A member of the public asked for an explanation of the architectural drawings.

Steve Magoon, there are two overhangs or protrusions once the house would be rebuilt. The front stoop would be covered, and then the second floor would be slightly shifted backwards, to create a small overhang (2 foot) on the rear.

Jeff Bell, 22 Everett Avenue, I am a neighbor to the right, and on the corner, I am in favor of families moving into Watertown, and changing or adding to their houses to accommodate family growth. However, when you buy a home, you buy into the neighborhood. The changes you make to your home have to be appropriate for the neighbors, too. The proposed structure is too big, and not quite appropriate for the neighborhood. It is too close to the street for such a small lot. The project will downgrade home values in the neighborhood. The existing house size is small, but appropriate for the size of the lot. It fits. Similar homes behind 9 Bartlett went through the same changes, and built bigger houses. These houses look better than what's planned for this site. I left Cambridge for some place less crowded. I bought the house because of the view and sunsets. The proposed design of 9 Bartlett will prevent me from seeing the sunsets. The house will be 36 feet tall if the second story is granted. I

suggest that the owner should think ahead to make the house fit, and should consider the neighbors. The space should be created in another way particularly that would allow parents to be better accommodated. I suggest a dormer off the back, to create a space to the rear.

Anita Shismanian, 15 Bartlett Street, one of the things that has affected the neighborhood, is that two ranches behind Bartlett Street that were demolished and converted into bigger houses. All of the residents who have been in Watertown for decades feel like the Town is changing too fast. It's more than the historic residents can take, in terms of the changes.

Timothy Murphy, 15 Everett Avenue, I look at the houses built on Palfrey Street. This development, which removed one building for 4, is a great dis-service to Watertown residents. I am dismayed at the manner in which these changes are allowed to occur in Watertown.

Sharon Holewinski, 12 Bartlett, I live across the street, my house is a smaller Cape. The other homes existed, and the others on Everett Street have been increased in size since she moved there. I question when one person can veto what another does in their homes?

Jeff Brown, one of the issues being raised is a lack of context. I have driven by the project site, but there are no context maps, or photos of the surrounding neighborhood. The house is low, and small, I suggest the issue is not the height. The case should be continued to June, to allow more context information to be provided to the Planning Board.

Fergal Brennock, the relief being sought is not from height, but from the front yard setback. A comment about investing in a property, this has to be tempered by the fact that a homeowner is entitled to build on their lot if they do it by right, or through a permit. The issue here is about the setback, not the FAR or the height.

John Hawes, I agree with Mr. Brennock, it is the setback from the street that created the non-conformity, not the height per se. I acknowledge the concerns of the immediate abutters. I agree with Mr. Brown's proposal for a continuance. The staff had not until now received any negative comments on the project. Mr. Karachi's proposal is not a bad concept. He should use the intervening time to discuss what is being proposed, and if possible, a change to the project, with the neighbors. Some drawings showing the neighboring houses are needed.

Steve Magoon, the Board is interested in having more information about the proposal, and the neighborhood context.

Mohammed Karachi, I would prefer to create the second story, but I would build to the back of the lot, if necessary. The size and placement on the lot of the other houses in the neighborhood, particularly the houses on either side of his house.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to continue the petition to the June, 8, 2016 Planning Board meeting.
Fergal Brennock seconded the motion. Voted: 4-0 In Favor

- **124 Marshall Street;** Laura A. Zimmerman – Special Permit Finding (ZBA-2016-08)

Peter Sachs, architect, this is a request to expand an existing, non-conforming structure that is too close to the setbacks. Relief is to expand the front stoop to 21 feet, and to reconstruct a rear porch into a two-story addition. The lot coverage is non-conforming, and the proposed project would increase the non-conforming coverage by approximately 1.4%. The project is largely a restoration of an existing

house. My client had sent letters to the neighbors explaining the project, and had received one letter in support from an immediate neighbor.

Andrea Adams, described the proposed project site as a 3,833 square foot parcel containing a 2 ½-story Colonial style house. The lot is non-conforming in size (6,000 square feet is required), frontage, front yard setback, both side yard setbacks, and building coverage. The project requires a Special Permit Finding to build an approximately 9.7'x23' 2-story rear addition with an indent of 2.5'x8' adjacent to the driveway and garage, replacing an existing approximately 8'x21' single-story sunroom. The front stoop is also being reconstructed, but will comply with zoning. The expansion will maintain the existing non-conforming side yard setbacks, and increase the existing non-conforming building coverage from 29.7% to 31.1% (a 1.4% increase). The new massing will be to the rear of the house, screened from public view and will minimally affect the neighbors' yard, despite the narrow setback, as the addition will only encroach into the rear yard setback by an additional 2 feet and the height of the addition maintains the second floor wall heights. The roof of the addition also matches the existing hip roof. DCDP staff recommends the project will not be substantially more detrimental than the existing non-conforming condition.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to recommend approval to the Zoning Board of Appeals of a Special Permit Finding under Section 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.

Voted: 4-0 In Favor

- **Pleasant Street** / Utility Pole near Repton Parking Lot; Cellco Partnership – Special Permit Finding (ZBA-2016-07)

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to continue case #ZBA-2016-07, a Special Permit/Telecommunications Variance request for a cellular facility on a utility pole on Pleasant Street to the June 8, 2016 Planning Board meeting.

Jeff Brown seconded the motion.

Voted: 4-0 In Favor

OTHER BUISINESS

Steve Magoon, the Planning Board had previously approved a mixed use project at Bacon-Howard Streets, now under construction, and called Riverpark Lofts. The 2013 approval stipulated that the staff review and approve the final exterior treatments and colors. The staff did not find any of the proposed changes a problem, but was bringing the matter before the Board, to allow them to see and comment on the proposed exterior materials and final building designs.

Douglas Annino, architect, updated the Board on final exterior materials and some architectural changes that were proposed to be made, and were different than the 2013 approved plans. A handout lists the proposed changes, color blocks of the exterior materials, and large plans on fomecore to explain the changes. Some of the changes include a lighter, more pastel color scheme, lowering some trellises, changing the texture of some exterior materials, changing some single to double hung windows, adding clapboard in certain locations, and changing the orientation of some sloped roof elements.

John Hawes, the proposed changes are acceptable.

Jeff Brown, this is one of the more interesting project designs, given the bridges and walkways.

Watertown Planning Board

May 11, 2016

Page Four

The consensus of the Board was that the proposed architectural and exterior materials changes were acceptable.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta, this would be my last Planning Board meeting, I have withdrawn my request to be re-appointed. I came to the decision that my personal and professional obligations outside of being a Board member would take more of my time, and not allow me to devote the kind of attention to the Planning Board that I would want. I would like to thank Steve Magoon, Ingrid Marchesano, Gideon Schreiber and Andrea Adams for their hard work, it was a pleasure to work with you. It was a pleasure and an honor to work with my colleagues on the Planning Board.

The Board members in turn thanked Linda Tuttle-Barletta for her 16 years of service to the Planning Board and to Watertown.

Steve Magoon, there are two pending appointments to the Planning Board: Janet Buck, to fill Linda Tuttle-Barletta's vacancy, and Gary Shaw. This will bring the Board up to five members.

Steve Magoon thanked Linda Tuttle-Barletta for her years of service to the Board, and Watertown. It is a challenge to be a volunteer. There is no compensation, and often having to sit in judgement of friends' and neighbors' projects. There is often controversy, competing opinions, and having to balance the interests. I thank Linda Tuttle-Barletta for always being prepared, for her professionalism, and for always treating the position with respect. Watertown is a better place for her efforts and hard work.

John Hawes, Linda Tuttle-Barletta was a great colleague, a steadying influence, and the conscience of the Board. Linda Tuttle-Barletta always spoke up for concerns of scale, traffic impacts, and density. The Board needs to continue to be cognizant of these issues. I congratulate Linda Tuttle-Barletta on her consistency on these issues.

Jeff Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting.
Fergal Brennock seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0 In Favor.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:00 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 5/11/16 which is available in the DCDP office.