

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: February 13, 2008 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED:
7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting

PRESENT: John Hawes, Chairman; Jack Zollo; Linda Tuttle-Barletta; Jeff
Brown; Peter Abair

Chairman John Hawes opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Jeff Brown motioned to approve Minutes of 1/9/2008 meeting.

Jack Zollo seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5 - 0 In favor

CASE PENDING

104 Acton Street; Kevin Morrissey – Special Permit Finding & Variance

Kevin Morrissey, this is a single family house with a detached garage built in 1943. We are proposing to raze the existing rear porch, deck, landing and stairs and replace it with a 16'x18' one story addition and a new 16'x12' deck, located 7'-6" from the lot line where 10' is required.

Danielle Fillis, Senior Planner, the Special Permit Finding and Variance are needed because the structure is nonconforming and is located on a nonconforming lot. Staff recommends a denial of

the variance to construct the addition as proposed. A modest rear addition of 255 s.f. and a 14'x16' deck would meet the criteria for granting. Staff recommends a conditional approval of the special permit finding and that the 255 s.f. addition would not be more detrimental.

John Hawes, it is important for the Board to see sketches/rendering of the elevation pictures/drawings of the proposal. The petition can be continued to the next meeting.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to continue the petition to the next Planning Board meeting.

Jack Zollo seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

Lot 333 3A 5B Palfrey Street a/k/a 212a Palfrey Street; John McGeough – Amendment to Special Permit & Variance

John McGeough, owner of 212A, this structure was built from scratch by my brother and myself. The abutters in the rear and on the sides benefited by stabilizing the site. The exterior stairway is on the property line.

Danielle Fillis, the petitioner is requesting an amendment to the original Special Permit #05-01, and variance from exceptions to setback requirements under Section 4.11, and a variance from setbacks for accessory structures under Section 4.03(d).The exterior stairway encroaches on the lot line. This is a very steep lot and challenging topography. The stairway could not be build without the variance. Staff reviewed criteria for variance and special permit, and both were met.

Jeff Brown, a letter from the Zoning Enforcement Officer dated 8/2/2006 stated that the petitioner was in violation because the project was not built according to the control plans. It is very aggravating that all the construction was done without permit. The building Inspector sent a letter on 11/8/2007 notifying Mr.McGeough that he was occupying the property without occupancy permit and that he was in violation of the Mass State Building Code. The property does not have official street address.

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John McGeough, we have spoken to ZEO. Every department has signed off on the permit, the only one missing is DPW and we still don't have answers from them. The abutter does not want to share 212, after discussion with DPW superintendent, we have decided on 213.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta, the letter regarding these issues was written in 2006. Why did it take 1 ½ years to address the issues? What is the correct section for the variance request?

Joseph Porcaro, owner of 214 Palfrey Street, this house has been in my family for over 70 years. The petitioner's retaining wall is encroaching onto my property. I have tried to work with John McGeough, I have asked him not to prune my trees. If the stairway was built without proper permit, it should not be allowed. ZEO was not aware of when the stairs were put it, some were even built on my property. changes were made from the original control plans. The staff report does not address the stair encroaching onto my property.

John McGeough, the stair issue was an oversight and my mistake. Half of the walls on the rear abutters were built by me but they will always belong the abutter.

John Hawes, you have built on the abutters property, if the abutter does not want it, it can be removed. This is not the right forum for this issue. The Town can setup a meeting or it has to be addressed legally. The staff report is accurate but the petitioner needs to work the issues out with the abutter.

John McGeough, I had many discussions with Mr.Porcaro, we have approved some parts and then Mr.Porcaro changed his mind. I have tried to work with every abutter. The trees were trimmed by a professional. We have spent funds to address every situation.

Peter Abair, we have setbacks in the Zoning Ordinance to avoid this type of situation.

John Hawes, legal road would be expensive for the petitioner and the abutter. Hopefully the issues get resolved before that. The case before the Board should be continued, this Board

cannot make the decision tonight. If abutters are against a proposal, the Board tends to deny the petition.

John McGeough, there have been agreements before. This vote should not hinge on agreeing with the abutter.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to continue the petition until the next meeting of the Planning Board.

Jack Zollo seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

149 Grove Street, 165 Grove Street, 105 Coolidge Hill Road a/k/a 151 Grove Street (former Aggregate site); Kathy K. Binford, Watertown Residential LLC – Special Permit Site Plan Review & Special Permit

Bill York, Arty on behalf of Watertown Residential LLC, this is a plan to transfer the former aggregate concrete site to residential development. The only relief needed is for Special Permit Site Plan Review. We have had series of staff meeting, meetings with various departments, and neighborhood meetings. This proposal will significantly enhance the site and improve traffic in the area. Signalization was proposed for the Grove Street/Coolidge Road intersection. We have contacted Senator Tolman office regarding improvements along Greenough Boulevard and meeting has been set up for next week.

David Holm, The Hanover Company, this is the company's first project in Watertown. We focus 100% on apartments for rent in multifamily market. Our other Massachusetts projects are in Billerica, Braintree, Needham and Foxboro. A building similar to the one here is also in Dallas. The four story

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building will have 2 floors of underground parking. The structure is organized around 2 courtyards. There are 9' ceilings and all finishes in the units are of high quality. Great deal of attention was given to pedestrian streetscape.

The property consists of 4 parcels totaling 3.23 acres (140,503 s.f.) The retaining wall in the rear will stay in place, the old aggregate structure was razed. We have reduced the building from 182 to 174 units, 69 1-bedrooms and 105 2-bedrooms. We will provide 1.5 parking space per unit and 33 visitor parking spaces. In compliance with the new Zoning Ordinance 10% or 17 of the units will be affordable. The regular rental will be up to \$2000 for 1-bedroom, up to \$3400 for 2-bedroom. The design is New England style, the Watertown Arsenal has similar style buildings. The entrance/exit will be on Grove Street, all vehicles will immediately enter into underground garage. The sight line to Coolidge Hill Road is perfectly clear. We are proposing to add new sidewalk. We are proposing access to Phillipello Park but an approval from Conservation is required. The building is 47 feet high, the Ordinance allows 50 feet. There are 333 resident parking spaces, different area has been designated for visitors and taxis. Directional signage will provide guidance. Loading dock will be located at first level of the garage.

Pam Shadley, Landscape architect, the new sidewalks will not encroach onto the roadway. Existing and new vegetation will screen the structure. The vegetation will be low near the entrance/exit to the garage. We are proposing walkway around the site with shade tolerant trees. A fence will be placed in the back of the retaining wall. We will add plants that provide screening and buffering.

Jeffrey Dirk, Vanasse & Associates, we have looked at many intersections in the area and measured existing conditions in the morning and evening. Safety is very important in a traffic study, we are looking at improvements that can be done as a part of this project. The traffic study was made based on 182 units, the project was now downsized to 174 units. We did not find a significant impact by this project. Coolidge Ave & Grove Street intersection has 4-way stop sign, a traffic signal would be an option. Grove/Greenough intersection needs to address safety. Signs and markings need to be upgraded and it will be done as part of this project. We will try to obtain funding for construction of the traffic signals. We are meeting with District A Councilor Angeline Kounelis and Senator Steven Tolman next week.

Greg Watson, Director of DCD&P, we have started communication with the developer many months ago. The site plan review committee was the next step and they worked with the developer to identify issues that need to be refined. Neighborhood meeting provided opportunity for neighbors to review the project. Planning Board will provide recommendations to the Board of Appeals who are the final permit granting authority. The Watertown Growth Management Plan was done by John Connery in 1989. It was proposed that new residential developments be directed toward areas that are in need of such use and are located in I-3 district. The Zoning Ordinance is asking to meet specific standards and affordable housing requirements. This project met all the requirements, the developer is meeting with the Watertown Housing Partnership next week. Traffic mitigation and utilities are still ongoing issues.

Daniel Fillis, Special Permit is required for under Section 5.01.1(g) for 5 or more units, and under Section 5.05(i) for FAR over 1.0, Section 5.07 Affordable Housing requirements and 9.03 Site Plan Review. There have been many meetings between the staff and developer. Many of the existing trees are not healthy. The proposed building harmonizes with other structures in Town. The Ordinance requires 20% open space, the developer will provide 37%. Circulation in the garage is still being worked out. The staff will work with the petitioner on the signage. All HVAC systems will be screened and new vegetation will be planted. The site is appropriate location for the proposed use. The proposed use will not adversely affect the neighborhood. 10% of the units must be affordable, the Watertown Housing Partnership will make recommendations to the Board of Appeals. Same finishes

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will be used throughout the affordable units. The size requirements of the affordable units has been satisfied. Staff recommends an approval of the petition.

Jeff Brown, is the same architect doing all the projects for this company? Smaller buildings would be preferable. Further setback would allow better visibility. I am very concerned with the garage circulation, the ramps are little tight. The courtyard is limited to 40'. We need to see a cross section of the proposal.

Peter Abair, the high parapet will screen the equipment, but smaller size would be preferable. This is a very urban design. Did the petitioner receive any input from the neighbors? The sight line could be improved with lesser landscaping.

David Holm, we have met with about 50 neighbors on January 10, as well as with individual neighbors.

John Hawes, the court yard seems very small. This is a very unique site. The petitioner used maximum of the zoning requirements, the structure feels too large for the site. Building of this size should be further away from the sidewalk.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta, most of traffic studies state that there would not be any impact from the proposed project. The Board appreciates that the petitioner wants to address issues in the area. Did any of the other Hanover projects turned into condominiums?

David Holm, most of our projects in Massachusetts are garden style rentals. Major investors, who specialize in such investment, become the ultimate owners.

John Airasian, 43 Bailey Road, we have many times with David Holm regarding the project. When the FAR of 2 was proposed, the underground parking was too expensive. This building is too big for this site. All the parking is underground, the structure is too high, and the setback on Grove Street is insufficient. These issues are indication that there are too many units, the neighbors will get stuck with the adverse effects. This project is denser than Repton Place on Pleasant Street.

....., Kondazian Street, I have attended the neighborhood meetings. The building needs to be setback further. Unless we have a commitment from the state other intersections in the area, this project should not go forward. I use the street daily, the traffic is always backed up to Coolidge Hill Road. The landscaping is very nice, but the building is too large for this site and traffic is a major issue.

Angie Kounelis, District A Councilor, 55 Keenan Street, as soon as the project came up, I asked the Town Manager to follow up on the issues. I did attend the neighborhood meeting, but I will not meet with the developer in private. The neighbors expressed concerns with the size of the building, generation of traffic. Outside access for drop-off and pick-up, as well as outside space for deliveries, is also needed. We are very concerned about adequate guest parking, all the spaces have to be on site, and there is no on street parking. I have submitted a copy of an article from 2002 Watertown TAB regarding money earmarked by the state for the bike path. The same Transportation Bond Bill also included \$400,000 for a street light at the corner of Greenough Boulevard and Grove Street, which would regulate many of the speeding cars. This was done 6 years ago, and we have not received any funds yet. All the intersection issues will have to be addressed together. We have to be sensitive to abutters.

Alison, 141 Grove Street, I have attended the developers meeting. We own a 2-family house and next to it will be this huge structure. The shadow of this building will impact our homes. The screening of the noise from the equipment is appreciated, but the height of the building needs to be

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addressed. This project has much higher number of units per acre than other Hanover projects in Massachusetts. Residential complex of much smaller scale would be more appropriate for this site.

Greg Walsh, 128 Coolidge Hill Road, this building will take all the sunlight from our properties. I would like to see it scaled down, it is a great project but too big for this site. The loading dock might be an issue.

Linda Palange, 59 Kondazian Street, the building is lovely but outdoor area with setbacks is needed. The area has daily traffic jams, this project will add to the traffic congestion. The guest parking is insufficient. This will affect future problems, traffic lights will contribute to many gridlocks.

Gabriel, 133-135 Grove Street, this house is a life time investment and the new proposal will take away from it. The Boards should listen to the neighbors, this is our neighborhood and our future.

John Hawes, parking under a building is a big asset, but the setbacks on this project are too small. The Board will listen to the neighborhood and the abutters.

Dennis Duff, 33 Spruce Street, this is a great opportunity to have wide area of trees. Adequate pedestrian sidewalks that would be 8 feet wide would be preferable.

Marilyn Petitto Devaney, Council At Large/ADA, I have attended the neighborhood meeting. I am concerned with homes being shadowed, it is a beautiful building but not appropriate for this site. The drop-off area and the parking are insufficient. The Board needs to visit the site and questions need to be answered before any vote is taken. Hanover will be in charge for few years and then the property will be sold.

David Holm, we have heard the same remarks at the neighborhood meeting. The project was reduced from 182 to 174 units, fewer units will not address the neighborhood concerns. Economics would not work with further reduction in number of units. The solution could be a tower.

Bill York, many of the neighbors liked the design, the building is in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance. The traffic on this street needs major remediation, the developer will improve that. Sufficient number of parking spaces is provided.

John Hawes, the developer needs certain number of units for economic reasons. None of the plans and renderings shows the surrounding buildings. There are many issues that need to be addressed. The staff approved the project based on the current Zoning Ordinance. The density is a problem, tower might be appropriate. This project is build to maximum allowed by the Ordinance. Other neighborhoods have on street parking, this one has none. The whole purpose of the Planning Board is to look at each project individually, each site is different.

Peter Abair, does the petitioner want to continue the petition to address the issues and concerns?

Bill York, special permit review is part of this process. Some changes can be made but not a major change. We have followed the regulations/requirements of the Ordinance.

Jeff Brown, not every project has to be approved. Significant downscale is needed.

John Hawes, not all the parking needs to be under, this building looks like a hotel. It is important

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Linda Tuttle-Barletta, we are an advisory board, we will make a recommendation to the Board of Appeals who will make the final decision.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to continue the above petition until the next meeting of the Planning Board.

Jack Zollo seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

OTHER

Chairman John Hawes adjourned the meeting at 10:15 PM.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 10:15 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see tapes dated 2/13/2008 available in the DCD&P office.