



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Zoning Board of Appeals
Administration Building
149 Main Street
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Melissa M. Santucci Rozzi, Chairperson
Deborah Elliott, Clerk
David Ferris, Member
Suneeth P. John, Member
Christopher H. Heep, Alternate Member
John G. Gannon, Alternate Member

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MINUTES

On Wednesday evening, **May 1, 2013 (originally scheduled for April 24, 2013)** at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers on the second floor of the Administration Building, the Zoning Board of Appeals held a public hearing. In attendance: **Melissa Santucci Rozzi, Chairperson; Deborah Elliott, Clerk; David Ferris, Member; Christopher H. Heep, Alternate Member; John G. Gannon, Alternate Member; Absent: Suneeth P. John, Member.** Also Present: **Steve Magoon, Director, Mike Mena, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Louise Civetti, Clerk to ZBA.**

Chair Santucci Rozzi opened the meeting, introduced the board and staff and swore in the audience. The first agenda item is minutes from the February 27, 2013 meeting. Member Heep motioned to accept the minutes as written, Member Elliott seconded. Voted 5-0, Approved.

Chair Santucci Rozzi asked the board's clerk to read the legal notice for the first case.

Member Elliott read the legal notice:

64 Grove Street

Tufts Associated Health Maintenance Organization, Inc. 705 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA herein requests the Zoning Board of Appeals grant a Special Permit in accordance with Watertown Zoning Ordinance §6.01(g) Off-Site Parking and §5.01.5(c)2 Conversion >4,000 Square Feet from Laboratory to Office, Zoning Ordinance, so as to extend Tufts office operations at 64 Grove Street with additional required parking of 87 spaces located at 705 Mt. Auburn Street. I-2 (Industrial) Zoning District. ZBA-2013-07

Attorney William York, representing the petitioner, Tufts Associated Health Maintenance Organization, stating that Tufts is the largest corporate member of Watertown and has had a significant impact to the community since they purchased the property in 2007 and moved in 2008. He introduced Tufts members Amesh Capod, CFO; Ieda Arjesh, VP Finance; Ron Repucci, Director of Real Estate and support. They are seeking a special permit to convert more than 4000 square feet of office space research and development to all office use – a use that is allowed in the zoning district. They are also seeking a second special permit to allow parking on a second lot that is in common ownership. The lot at Boston Biomedical does not have enough parking and the parking will be next door at the Tufts lot on Mt. Auburn Street. The two buildings will run as a campus. Tufts has 109 employees from Watertown; 1800 employees total at this site; they are a major part of the economy and retail and a model corporate citizen for civic responsibility. They have been at the site of the AT&T building since 1998. The Boston Biomedical building has a natural symmetry with the Tufts location and although Tufts was not looking to acquire property, (the purchasing of this) does make a long term commitment to the community for future growth and development. They do not plan to hire employees to fill this building. They will transition employees from 705 Mt. Auburn St. This gives them the opportunity to have space available as their needs expand; provide a conformity for the non-conforming building and a viable use. There will not be any changes to the building exterior except landscaping. The interior will be fit-out for offices. There will be no negative impact to traffic if the building were totally occupied. Tufts has 1736 parking spaces, 1139 are staff; 250 are Mt. Auburn Hospital – leaving an excess of 387 spaces. 64 Grove Street requires 152 parking spaces; they

provide 65 on-site (which will be for handicap employees and visitors) with the remaining 87 parking spaces at the Tufts garage. There will still be excess of parking spaces. Access to the building via a sidewalk for the 87 will walk from the garage across walkway up the sidewalk to the front entrance on Grove Street. Visitors in the rear and handicap accessibility. Located next to the DCR acquired property from the abandoned railroad. Watertown Staff call it the 'Greenway'. Tufts has worked with DCR and received favorable comments to allow Tufts to maintain and beautify the site and will be able to cross the property down a slope and up a slope to the other side. In perpetuity maintained by Tufts for their use and the community use, as well. Many employees use bicycles and once this is on-site there will be a larger number of employees biking to work. Tufts also has a parking program which with a 17% growth since 2007, they developed a focused detailed parking program where they reduced the parking by 12%. 109 employees are enrolled in a proprietary ride matching database (carpool matching). Others have a voluntary program of their own. 100 employees take advantage of pre-tax discounts for transit passes and an annual event to provide employees with information opportunities in regards to safe mode of transportation. All new employees are oriented to these programs and all of the parking programs. There is unlimited bicycle parking provided in a secured area and there are showers at their fitness facility. There are cash prizes and other benefits; 4 zip cars are provided; (and used by residents); preferential parking for carpoolers; electric chargers are available; flexible start times between 6 am – 9 am; and closing time of 3 pm – 6 pm. Quality of life assures a very few employees are there over the weekend. A detail police officer is provided (not required) every day on Grove Street. The company budgets \$300,000 annually to support parking program initiatives; they received a Gold Partner from Mass Rides; an Excellent in commuter options from the Mass Department of Transportation; various Pinnacle awards for their efforts for a more sustainable Massachusetts and voted one of the best employers in the Commonwealth. Tufts is making a long term commitment to the community. They also have a Payment in lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program with the town and will agree to an additional one which will double the one in effect today when they acquire the other property. There is a traffic report that even if it were filled as an independent building, does not have any negative traffic impact. He mentioned Rebecca Brown, TEC, traffic engineer.

Member Ferris asked if the 'crossing' will be a bridge or something that goes down and back up. Mr. York said they have not engineered it as yet, but they show on their plans a walkway from the garage to the lobby of 64 Grove Street. It will depend on what DCR agrees to. They asked for bicycle access and this will need to be designed with DCR.

Member Heep asked about the parking count. Mr. York said the actual accounts are consist with the requirement and excess. Employees work from home, etc.

Member Gannon asked about the move of employees to Grove Street and what will happen to the space at 705 Mt. Auburn Street. Mr. York said they are a bit crowded right now. This is an opportunity they cannot let go. They would rather stay in the same location than to move to Malden or Everett.

Member Gannon said he rides the 71 bus and there are a lot of people that exit at the 705 Mt. Auburn Street. He is interested in the bike component – what is the funding status of the bike path. Mr. Magoon said DCR has an agreement with the property owner for a price and they only need to finish the documents and consummate the sale. He said he doesn't believe they have funding for the construction of the pathway, as yet. Member Gannon would like to see a condition for the crossing and maintenance with DCR and Tufts – acknowledge the beneficial relationship between Tufts and DCR. Mr. Schreiber asked if he would like to modify Condition #8 as that speaks to the Towns' review of that. Member Gannon wants to encourage a positive working relationship with DCR. Mr. York said there will be good-faith efforts to build a strong working relationship with DCR. It will benefit DCR, the community and Tufts. The understanding they have is once the passing is there, they will maintain and beautify the area from Grove Street all the way down to Cottage Street. Mr. Gannon mentioned the DCR program for curators or stewards of their property which private entities would take over their properties and asked if Tufts would formalize this. Ron Repuzzi spoke on the talks they have had with DCR regarding this issue. They made an informal commitment to maintain the area – grass cutting, picking up debris, snow plow, if necessary. Internally they have accepted that concept – management has not refused the idea and the crossway would be the reason for the formal agreement for

maintenance. It would be great access for their employees. Member Gannon specified that he would encourage a relationship like a curatorship/stewardship that the DCR offers. Mr. York said encouraging it would be best as they cannot force a relationship.

Chair Santucci Rozzi asked if there is more than one shift. Mr. Repuzzi said there are different levels – one is an extended shift for the call center but regular business hours for other employees on one shift 6am – 6pm.

Chair Santucci Rozzi asked how many people can 64 Grove Street accommodate at full capacity. Mr. Repuzzi said they have done test fits and it accommodates about 200 people. The call center is too large for that location. They do not plan to have up to 200 people but that would be the maximum. They do not have a final move plan.

Chair Santucci Rozzi said the plan from 1997 is the current condition of the site and nothing will change. The larger plan has the two properties put together. Tufts pays for the police detail.

Mr. Magoon added that he has had conversations with Councillor Kounellis regarding the long-term vision for Coolidge Square including Mt. Auburn Street and signaling at Grove Street and Arlington Street. After meeting with Mr. Mee, Mr. Magoon said the intersection does not warrant signalization currently. For long-range plans, there will be improvements done there. Mr. Magoon reiterated the transportation management program that Tufts has is significant and those are the things that the town tries to have developers agree to when there is a traffic impact and this is an example of an applicant that has done this voluntarily and is appreciated. Tufts is also a property owner that does not have to pay taxes to the town but they demand services from the town and voluntarily pay into a PILOT program – the new location will be paid per square foot and more than doubles the current PILOT payment. From an economic development view, they are taking empty space and occupying it and that is a positive for the town. The most significant are the voluntary things done as a corporate entity and how much those are appreciated.

Chair Santucci Rozzi clarified that there are not conditions in any approvals that require them to have a police detail. Mr. York said there is not. They volunteer this service.

Chair Santucci Rozzi reviewed the plans, the parking program document, a planning board report, staff recommended approval. Revise condition 8 for DCR and the pathway. Mr. Gannon said he would just like a condition to encourage a formal relationship and if an agreement is made, submit it to the staff.

Member Elliott motioned to grant a special permit to allow off-site parking and conversion of greater than 4000 s.f. with conditions noted. Mr. Ferris seconded. Voted 5-0 approved. Suneeth John did not vote - absent.

Chair Santucci Rozzi announced that **462 Mt. Auburn Street, T-Mobile** has been continued through several agendas and the board has received a letter that she read into the record:

Dear Honorable Members of the Board of Appeals, on behalf of my client, T-Mobile, I respectfully withdraw without prejudice (on the above noted matter). My client is withdrawing the application at this time to explore other upgrade options at the site due to the concerns expressed by the board during the public hearing process. Thank you for your consideration. Jackie Slaga, representative.

Member Elliott motioned to accept the withdrawal without prejudice. Member Heep seconded. Voted 5-0.

Member Heep motioned to adjourn. Member Gannon seconded. Voted 5-0. The meeting ended at 7:40 pm