



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

Melissa M. Santucci Rozzi, Chairperson
David Ferris, Clerk
Christopher H. Heep, Member
John G. Gannon, Member
Kelly Donato, Member
Neeraj Chander, Alternate
Jason D. Cohen, Alternate

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MINUTES

On Wednesday evening, July 22, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber on the second floor of the Administration Building, the Zoning Board of Appeals held a public hearing.

In attendance: Melissa Santucci Rozzi, *Chair*; David Ferris, *Clerk*; John G. Gannon, *Member*; Kelly Donato, *Member*; Neeraj Chander, *Alternate Member*. Absent: Christopher Heep, *Member*; Jason D. Cohen, *Alternate Member*. Also Present: Steve Magoon, *Director*, Mike Mena, *Zoning Enforcement Officer*; Gideon Schreiber, Sr. Planner; Louise Civetti, *Clerk to the ZBA*.

Chair Santucci Rozzi opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m., and reviewed the agenda with one item, 480 Arsenal Street and a continuation to 80 Elm Street in August. She then introduced the board and staff. Noting that Alternate Member Chander will be acting and voting.

Chair Santucci Rozzi asked for a motion to approve the minutes of April 22 and May 27th minutes. Member Ferris motioned; Member Gannon seconded. Voted 5-0, approved.

Chair Santucci Rozzi swore in the audience.

Member Ferris read the legal notice:

“480-3 Arsenal Street - William McQuillan, Manager, 480 Arsenal Group LLC, 800 Boylston Street, Suite 1390, Boston, MA 02199, herein requests the Zoning Board of Appeals grant a Special Permit with Site Plan Review in accordance with Watertown Zoning Ordinance §5.01.3a2, Business, Office; §5.01.5c2, Light Industry, Office, greater than 4,000 s.f. so as to renovate an existing 73,920 s.f. warehouse into 185,595 s.f. office building with amenities; construct a parking deck for 83 spaces and add at grade parking for 483 spaces. I-2 (Industrial) Zoning District ZBA-2015-17.”

William McQuillan, Agent for the owners, said they have probably heard and read about this project in the paper as they have been going through the planning process for 6 weeks. They will be transforming 70,000 or 90,000 s.f. building to 180,000 s.f. building that will be LEED certified, have high end finishes, and will be called LINX as they are able to link together this building to Coolidge square, the Charles River, the bike path and to various neighborhoods. He introduced the team.

Tom Sullivan, Architect with Spagnola Geisis & Associates for Boylston Properties said the site was underutilized and they wanted to reknit this back into the community. The existing building is a warehouse building with a 36' high side and a low side. They will create two levels on the high side and a mezzanine on the low side with flexible open floor plates for office space with more natural light. The northeast has the ramp to the parking garage which faces the north edge and the open space on the site.

This will tie into the bike path and other opportunities for the public. The south side is the main entrance to the building and there is another entrance on the north side. The use of materials is very 'progressive'; highly transparent, colorful, and uses different layers to create scale; glass, corrugated metal panel, and punched openings with vertically oriented corrugated metal. The interior is open ductwork. He passed around samples of the materials being used. He added that there will be screen outside of the glass wall for shading and texture. The roof screen will be perforated corrugated metal panel for a softer edge at the top. The garage will be pre-cast with some screening. There will be a perforated screening at the stairway but no green screen. They have "carved into the building to provide vibrancy" to the site. This will be a neo-industrial type of presence.

Roy Smith, RJ O'Connell and Associates, Site Engineers, stated that the building meets all dimensional regulations and exceeds open space with 21% in the Industrial Zoning District. He said the frontage is on Nichols Ave as a triangular site with only side yards. There are 3 subsurface infiltration fields and low impact (LID) or conventional storm water management features. The site is all paved today, without any infiltration systems and all storm water drains to the Charles River. They will be able to hold the entire 25 year storm and some of the 100 year storm on site. This is more extensive than the Mass Storm Water policy requires. The parking is 566 spaces overall with 85 in the single level parking deck with 2 means of access/egress. The primary entrance/exit is off of Arsenal Street and is called Birch Street extension. That is a private way near Auto Zone. The secondary entrance/exit is off Nichols. The third is for emergency use only at the NE corner of Nichols. The deck sinks down from Nichols and is screened. The circulation road around the site has colored brick pavers. The south green plaza connects to the greenway in two locations. The storm water basin with wooden bridges over this management feature. They have done an off-shoot of this greenway with two connections to the bike path. There are benches, a bocci court, bridges, lighting. On the north side, there will be access to the western court yard. The Nichols Ave connection has an at-grade circular drive. The deck is low in profile, lower of grade and provides emergency access.

Jiles Han, Vanesse and Associates, Traffic Engineer. They have had a detailed study with staff, neighbors, etc. and they have a plan that is satisfactory to all. This is a replacement project – they looked at 16 intersections. There are about 1700 cars per day, ½ in and ½ out with 272 morning trips and 244 evening trips on a one hour traffic volume number. 25% come from the north; 20 percent from the east; the remaining will come in from the south. He showed a color rendering with the calcs shown. Coming in from Arlington Street, they will add about 55 cars. If Nicholas Ave is closed, add about 1 mile to your travel time. They will encourage other modes of transportation; have travel demand management measures, signal optimization, - a neighborhood improvement plan will consist of a raised intersection at Elton, upgrade all school signage, raised crosswalk on Bigelow, bump-outs to reduce the crossing area, another bump-out on Elton, raised crosswalk up on Bigelow. Add some bike shares, share the lane signs, to accommodate the site traffic.

William McQuillan said the re-opened and re-located curb opening on Nichols Avenue is the last item to mention. They are a fan of it. The western edge had an opening with a gate – that will be relocated across from Bigelow Street. 25% will come from the north side to come to work. If not, they will need to go around to Arsenal. They view Coolidge Square as an important feature to this project. They own a significant retail project to the south and hope the workers will walk there at lunch time however, they expect some to go north to Coolidge Square. If they cannot drive through Coolidge Square on their way to work, they will not know what is available to them. It is important to the existing merchants and several have written to the board in support of the opening. In 2011, the Economic Development for the town spoke about opening this curb cut and the recent comp plan also mentioned it, specifically in regards to the redevelopment of this property. They are obligated to meet the criteria of the Board. 1. The subject site is an appropriate location – the use is allowed by right and they adhere to all of the dimensional requirements. 2. They will be making significant traffic and safety solutions so there will not be an adverse effect to the neighborhood. The 2011 and 2015 town plans talk specifically about connecting this site to the north. 3. No nuisance or serious hazards to vehicles or pedestrians - They are adding sidewalks and crosswalks to Nichols Avenue where they do not exist now. As well as bump-outs, raised walks, etc. added as part of the mitigation. 4. Adequate and appropriate facilities meet all of the building,

health and safety requirements; there are significant storm water upgrades to this site, as it is currently all paved; and the building will be LEED certified.

Chair Santucci Rozzi opened the hearing to the public:

Tony Palumba, Town Councilor, 40 Oakley Road, stated that this is a comprehensive redevelopment project and the developer is creating first class office space; storm water; Coolidge Square benefits; taxes applied will benefit the town. He urges the developer to hire individuals from Watertown to work on the project.

Steve Corbett, Town Councilor, 14 Irving Park, said this is exactly the type of commercial development that the town has been seeking. This is attracting a tenant that will benefit the town in many ways. Multiple access points disperse traffic. Coolidge Square will also benefit from the curb opening on Nichols.

Angie Kounelis, Town Councilor, 55 Keenan Street, she thanked the developers for working with St. Stephens. This will be an asset to the community. The neighbors commented about the Nichols Avenue opening. She stated that concessions were made for several projects where the secondary road became the primary road and the town has to provide signalization, etc. She said the address of this parcel is 480 Arsenal Street not Nichols Avenue. Once this access is opened it will not be reversed; the traffic volume is increasing daily; traffic will need more improvements; 75% of site trips will use this entrance and the residential streets. The Arlington Street intersection took years to signalize and it will be used for short-cuts. Coolidge Square is not a driving destination; lots of out-of-towners now; the emergency access should be there and a pedestrian access should be the only opening. There is nothing stopping from this being a cut-through. NESN, AT&T, etc. will cut-through. This should be a pedestrian access only not vehicular. This access benefits the developer.

Chair Santucci Rozzi asked Staff to discuss David Gamble's comments. Mr. Schreiber said there were three primary components. Parking and access, sustainable design and façade treatments. One recommendation was to add another level to the parking deck. There were concerns about adding parking to one side and a balance of parking spaces. They suggested moving the gate to equal the parking. The balance is pretty good now. The sustainable approach is solar canopies. The structure cannot attach photovoltaic panels. The façade treatments were discussed with the project team and provided panels to shade the left side – however, overall they were acceptable.

Member Donato asked how many tenants they could fit in this space. Mr. McQuillan said 2-4 tenants, not more than 5. They do not have a single tenant right now. 20,000 – 25,000 s.f. or more.

Member Donato asked about the additional level at the garage. Mr. McQuillan said the one level looks shielded by some plantings and the more levels you put on the north side, the more people will circulate around there. They considered the parking deck on the south side; however, it did not fit. The building doesn't really have a back – it has four sides.

Member Donato asked about the traffic monitoring. Mr. McQuillan said it will be at 6 months and 12 months. Someone corrected him – 9 months?

Member Ferris thanked them for the detail. He asked if the upper parking deck had lighting as it is not shown on the plan. Someone answered that there will be pole mounted lighting. Mr. McQuillan said it will be shielded as in other areas on the site.

Member Ferris asked why they are providing more parking than is necessary by zoning requirements. Mr. McQuillan said they are spending money to build a parking deck as they will have more demand. He mentioned a figure of 3.2 cars per thousand and they are moderately served by the MBTA bus and some people will have to come by public transportation. He added that it is a balancing act between the pavement and the greenspace. They want to provide as much parking as possible – 50 or 60 over.

Member Ferris asked if our standards are different than other towns. Mr. Schreiber said the parking standards have changed for residential. He added that the commercial parking is difficult to predict so there is a minimum but not a maximum. Mr. McQuillan said they had a showing with a 50,000 s.f. tenant and they did not care about parking as they have bikes, etc. Mr. Ferris noted that the area he mentioned is very different.

Mr. Ferris said he would like to complement the landscape architect as it is not often at this level of standard. He questioned drawing L1A. Mr. Sullivan said it was a switch at the transformer but the switch has been eliminated. Mr. Ferris said to add lower plantings along the wall to soften that side. Mr. Sullivan said there will be plantings along the bike-path. Mr. Ferris said the addition of low plantings, south of the parking spaces to limit the headlights. Also, alongside the garage. He added that he predicts that the residential development will attract a younger rental in town and this development is geared towards a more youthful group who will be walking to this destination.

Member Gannon commended them for working with the neighbors. He also commends them for taking down the barbed wire fencing. Mr. McQuillan said the fence at AT&T will stay and there will not be any fences elsewhere.

Member Gannon asked about working with DCR regarding the entrance to the greenway. Mr. McQuillan stated that they made a contribution of \$25,000 to design the 1-3 mile piece to connect to Arlington and Fresh Pond and elsewhere. He added that they have worked with DCR extensively on their portion of the greenway and they have added benches.

Member Gannon suggested they add a drinking water fountain. Mr. McQuillan noted that most people have their own water and it is not a bad idea.

Member Gannon said in the deed attached, Exhibit B, there are a number of town properties within the site. Mr. Magoon said there is not any town property in the site; there may be surrounding the site. Mr. Schreiber said originally, this site was part of a much larger site. It could be the stormwater easements on the AT&T site – not this site. He further clarified that this site will provide an easement to the town for creating sidewalks on the north side of their property to preserve the town's street trees.

Member Gannon said at the corner of Nichols and Arlington, there is a dirt path where cars are parked. Mr. Magoon said it is separately owned. Mr. McQuillan said the people that own the auto repair on Arlington Street own that strip of land and they are licensed to park cars there. Mr. Magoon said they did try to get the owners to clean it up.

Member Gannon asked if the Watertown Mall has a culvert that feeds into Sawins Pond and does it go through this property. Mr. Sullivan said the drainage system is isolated to this site. It ties into a 60 inch pipe on the southwest corner to the town's system. Then it goes under Target to the Charles River.

Member Gannon asked what type of tenants are they looking for – lab or straight office. Mr. McQuillan said they prefer office but are open to lab. Lab would have less need for parking.

Member Gannon asked about the peer review on the traffic report. Mr. Schreiber said the findings were acceptable. They focused on the neighborhood to the north and traffic calming. They expanded the area and accepted all. The town staff peer review specified it for this type of view at 6 months and one year after this is 90% occupied. A condition of the Planning Board is to review the possibility of cutting through the site.

Member Chander commended them for the great plans; he likes the west-coast feel of the building; the landscaping is very dynamic. He asked if 2-5 tenants at 20-25,00 s.f. what kind of signage and where would it be incorporated. Mr. McQuillan said they have put up a temporary sign at Birch Road and Arsenal Street which reads, '490 Arsenal Street, Lynx'. They will want to put a monument sign there and something smaller at Nichols. It will have the number (address) and perhaps, Lynx. Depending on the tenants, they may have the larger tenants on the sign but not all tenants. There may be signage on the

building on the north side but that would depend on the tenant. He doesn't see the need for signage on the building on the south side. They will come back to the board.

Chair Santucci Rozzi said the drainage plan was based on estimates. Mr. Sullivan said they did soil testing – monitoring wells for seasonal high groundwater. They potentially can do alternative testing recommended by Massachusetts Stormwater management for permeability vs. Rawls testing. They have used the Rawls guidelines. If they do that, it would be more condensed and it would go back to the town engineer.

Chair Santucci Rozzi asked if they would have food in the building. Mr. McQuillan said they will have a 'Grab and Go', serving coffee and prepared food on a limited time basis. Ms. Santucci Rozzi encourages spending money in the neighborhood and would not want to see a cafeteria in the building. Mr. McQuillan said a cafeteria would not make financial sense to a tenant.

Chair Santucci Rozzi asked if the parking spaces on Nichols Avenue would be further up, closer to their site or stay where they are. Mr. Sullivan said the existing parking will stay – they have added the sidewalk to their property to save the street trees along the landscape. They have shortened the crosswalk along the driveway. They have a 'no left turn' out of that entrance. Mr. McQuillan said Nichols, Bigelow, Elton have not had their traffic markings updated. Jiles said the town proposed the raised sidewalk at Elton; they closed the length of the crossing will slow down the traffic.

Chair asked if they plan to rent the property out to a 'We Works' scenario. Mr. McQuillan said they would be a great tenant.

Chair said they are already doing some promoting of the area in their marketing of the site and asked if they would be providing tenants with a map of the area to get to ATM's or Coffee more efficiently and directly – perhaps offer a local business coupon.

Chair said the grading and elevation on Nichols. Mr. McQuillan said the deck is below grade about 5'. She referred to C2 – elevations. Mr. Sullivan said it is level at Nichols, you will see 5 or 6' of deck outside the garage. The berm and landscaping cover the view from Nichols.

Member Gannon asked to describe the prior uses at this site. Mr. McQuillan said there was a rubber plant 60 years ago; Nstar (Boston Edison) used it – he remembers large spools of wire; Verizon has been there since the late 90's. It has been industrial – the curb cut has been closed on Nichols for as long as they can remember. Bill York, Attorney said he remembers the site as Mr. McQuillan mentioned – the staff report provides a history. Member Gannon asked if there are any hotspots. Mr. McQuillan said there are not. Gannon asked how many employees are expected. McQuillan said there are usually 3.2 per thousand but this can go up to 6 per thousand. He said around 600-800 range of employees.

Chair Santucci Rozzi reviewed some of the materials: A neighborhood meeting on 2/18/15 and 4/2/15 detailed the questions and answers and some documentation was received from ACEC and the SSAES Board of Trustees relating to the schools and facilities and are now very happy with the improvements they noted in April. A letter 7/9/15 from a resident of Coolidge condos has concerns about traffic. A letter in support from the Town Diner; Janet Jameson and Deborah Peterson applaud the project and support shuttle buses, etc. The projects is donating to the town for efforts for traffic mitigation. A letter of support from John Airasian, resident and owner of Eastern Clothing. A letter in support from Fastachi. A petition with Bigelow Avenue residents including the condos are not in favor of the opening at Nichols Avenue. Barbara Ruskin wrote a letter in support.

Chair Santucci Rozzi closed the public hearing and declared a business mode. She began a review of the documents and testimony the board has received - They heard from Gideon on the Design Review letter from David Gamble. She is not in favor of adding another level to the deck. Mr. Ferris said he is not in favor. Mr. Gannon said it is a 'Catch 22' as they would like more green space. Chair Santucci Rozzi said the panels that can be adjusted to block the sun will be done in the future. The solar on the carports

will have to come back to this board as it may take the open space and or the parking on the roof. If solar takes away landscape, she is not in favor.

She continued: the Planning Staff report on June 4th offered conditional approval and the Planning Board report, June 10th and June 11th recommended 3-1 approval with a variety of conditions. She is pleased with the traffic monitoring, They will have to come back to the board for the monitoring - they want to see the impact. Several conditions regarding storm water, car-sharing, bike parking, etc. The traffic mitigation and improvements... She'd like to prohibit a cafeteria in the building as it would take away from Coolidge Square and Arsenal Street economic development and add the bubbler that Member Gannon mentioned. Member Ferris mentioned two planting areas, 1 at the parking deck, north wall and the other was at the southern portion of the site between the perpendicular parking and the bike path. He asked what the limitation of the cafeteria would be – grab and go vs. cafeteria. Ms. Santucci Rozzi said she doesn't want a place to be getting a fried egg and a grilled cheese or larger than 5000 s.f.. Mr. McQuillan said limiting their clients on a food service size would cause them to possibly lose a headquarter client. Mr. Ferris said it is a common scenario for a larger client to have some sort of food area and several smaller clients to have a 'grab and go'. Mr. McQuillan said that if Coolidge Square does not succeed, their building is worth less. A blighted area two blocks to the north is not in their interest. They will be spending hundreds of millions of dollars 4 minutes to the south with the expectation of succeeding. The chair is trying to protect the merchants on either side of their building but he does not know what the un-intended consequences may be and one of them could be bad – giving a number to limit their food service is questionable. Ms. Santucci Rozzi said that some of these cafeterias attract people from other areas to their cafeteria. She does not want a cafeteria there. Mr. McQuillan said it would be a problem if they are limited. They need to entice the right client in the building. They could lose a tenant.

Mr. Ferris mentioned the site solar implementation. Chair Santucci Rozzi said these look like car ports at an angle and are covered with solar panels. Mr. McQuillan said they are fine with a condition to come back to the board for these panels. Mr. Gannon said he likes the solar panels. Mr. Ferris said it should come back to the board. Mr. Schreiber said this is the one use in the ordinance that is by right. They can lease their space out for solar use. Ms. Santucci Rozzi said these are essentially a structure and could cover the entire parking lot and she would want to weigh in on that. Mr. Gannon said he would love to see a green roof – Mr. Ferris said the board is not saying they can or cannot do this, they just want to weigh in on the placement of it. Mr. Magoon said this is part of a review by site plan and he acknowledges that the board wants to review this. Mr. Gannon clarified that the board would like to have them come back for the solar panels.

Mr. Gannon said trash removal was not discussed - he would not like to see a dumpster at 3 a.m. – the noise ordinance states nothing before 7 am or after 11 pm. The dumpster abuts the AT&T building. They suggested 7am -7pm. Mr. McQuillan said it is an industrial area and suggested 6am – 10pm. He said the dumpster is very far from the closest resident. Mr. Ferris said the dumpster is quite distant from Nichols. The board agreed with 6am – 10pm for dumpster pick-up.

Mr. Ferris said he wanted to revisit the cafeteria issue. Chair Santucci asked if he was in favor of limiting the cafeteria. Mr. Chander, Mr. Ferris and Mr. Gannon are not in favor of limiting a cafeteria. A condition will not be added.

Chair Santucci Rozzi reviewed the conditions: add a water fountain outdoors; plantings at the north deck and southern area; if they construct carports for solar, they come back to the board; and the dumpster pick-up time is limited to 6am – 10pm.

Chair Santucci Rozzi reviewed that the board is here for a Special Permit new construction or conversion more than 4000 s.f. and light industrial conversion, no variance, no additional relief.

Mr. Ferris motioned to approve the application for 480 (suite 3) Arsenal Street with the conditions discussed. Ms. Donato seconded. All in favor? Chair Santucci Rozzi; Members Ferris, Donato, Gannon and Chander voted in favor (5-0).

Member Ferris motioned to adjourn. Member Chander seconded. Voted 5-0, adjourned at 9:25 p.m.