

STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING MINUTES #3576
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2010
4TH FLOOR CAFETERIA
888 WASHINGTON BLVD., STAMFORD, CT

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Duane Hill, Theresa Dell, Claire Fishman, Rose Marie Grosso and Jay Tepper. Present for staff were Robin Stein and Todd Dumais.

Regular Meeting

The chairman, Mr. Duane Hill, called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm. He then announced that tonight's Public Hearing portion of the meeting was cancelled because the applicant for Master Plan #408 requested a postponement and would be heard at a later date.

Zoning Board Referrals:

Appl. 210-01 BBSF, LLC & Affordable Housing Development Corp., LLC, text change to amend Article III, Section 9-BB.5.f residential parking requirements.

Appl. 210-02 BBSF, LLC & Affordable Housing Development Corp., LLC, amend previously approved General Development Plan for Metro Green Development, 715 Atlantic St.

Mr. Stein introduced the applications. He explained that application 210-01 relates to the general Zoning Regulations and that application 210-02 relates specifically to the Metro Green development. Mr. Stein stated that the first phase of Metro Green was completed last fall; that the units are fully rented; and that the project was awarded LEED Gold Certification, the first for residential construction in Stamford. He explained that the text amendment specifically regards parking requirements and that Transit Oriented Development should not be required to provide unnecessary parking.

William Hennessey, Attorney for the applicant explained that the applications are for a minor amendment to GDP plan and a text change to the TCDD to lower parking requirement to one space per dwelling unit. He stated that it is irony that the TCDD has a higher parking ratio than required under other zones in the Downtown. Mr. Hennessey explained that actual parking surveys, for existing developments throughout the Downtown, have shown the true parking demand is below 1 space per unit and that Building C of Metro Green observed parking demand is 0.74. He stated that the applicant's original request was to reduce the current regulation of 1.25 and 1.5 parking spaces per unit to 1.0 per unit regardless for bedroom size. He explained that a number groups support this amendment including URC, DSSD and Chamber of Commerce, however, the neighbors expressed concern that 1.0 might not be enough parking. Mr. Hennessey then stated that the neighbors requested the applicant be changed from 1.0 to 1.25 spaces per unit and that is now what they will ask approval for. He added that in the future they will back to further reduce the requirement as additional empirical evidence supports it.

Mr. Hennessey then discussed the General Development Plan referral. He explained that it was two parts; a request to reduce the total amount of parking to match new proposed 1.25 spaces per unit parking ratio (net change of 330 to 298 spaces) and a

change to Building B. Mr. Hennessey stated that in its approval the certificate holds a condition requiring ground floor retail space. The applicant wants to reword the condition to read residential, retail or commercial space no smaller than 1,600 s.f. because of the uncertainty of the retail market.

Several members of the Board expressed concerns about including the word “residential” as a permitted use on ground floor of building. They stressed the importance of having activated ground floors and suggested the applicant find a way to word the condition to ensure that the space is not residential but actual live/work space

Attorney Hennessey again stated the applicants fear that retail space would remain vacant for too long and be a deterrent to the development.

Mrs. Dell said she does not want the word residential included in the condition.

Mr. Hill commented on the proposed text change and stating there is sufficient evidence that a parking ratio of 1 to 1 is ample for transit oriented development: 8 buildings in downtown that are currently below a ratio of 1 to 1.

Mrs. Dell asked if guest parking is included in the ratio? Attorney Hennessey said yes, that’s included.

Mr. Hill said the evidence doesn’t support that we need parking for everyone and hopes that at some point we can get the ratio’s down. Building more parking is not consistent with TOD and not consistent with promoting downtown living.

Mr. Dumais suggested that the Board consider substituting the term “professional office, accessory use” for residential in the applicant’s request. This term is in the zoning regulations and is the closest thing that matches live/work. Mrs. Dell said she supported this idea.

Appl. 210-01 BBSF, LLC & Affordable Housing Development Corp., LLC, text change to amend Article III, Section 9-BB.5.f residential parking requirements.

Mrs. Dell moved to recommend approval of application 210-01, at 1.25 spaces per unit. Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 5-0. (Hill, Dell, Tepper, Grosso and Fishman).

Appl. 210-02 BBSF, LLC & Affordable Housing Development Corp., LLC, amend previously approved General Development Plan for Metro Green Development, 715 Atlantic St.

Mrs. Grosso moved to recommend approval of application 210-02, with the suggested language professional office, accessory use instead of residential. Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 5-0. (Hill, Dell, Tepper, Grosso and Fishman).

Old Business:

None.

New Business:

Mr. Stein stated that the Board needs to meet before the March 10th because they have several required ZBA referrals. Mr. Hill suggested the Board cancel its March 2nd meeting but meet on the 9th.

Mr. Stein informed the Board that on March 8th, the both the Mayor's Operating and Capital Budgets would be presented to the Board of Finance and that he and the Chairman were requested to provide the Board of Finance with an overview of the Planning Board's Capital Budget. Mr. Stein also commented that on March 24th, he had to present the Land Use Bureau's Operating Budget.

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Hill adjourned the meeting at 8:12 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Duane Hill, Chairman

Note: These proceedings were recorded on tape and are available for review in the Land Use Bureau located on the 7th floor of Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard, during regular business hours.