

**STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD  
APPROVED MINUTES - TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2023  
REGULAR MEETING  
VIA THE INTERNET & CONFERENCE CALL  
6:30 P.M.**

**ZOOM WEBINAR**  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82279519080>  
**Webinar ID: 822 7951 9080**  
**Passcode: 392382**

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Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Voting Members: Theresa Dell, Chair; Jennifer Godzeno, Secretary; and Michael Buccino. Alternates: William Levin and Stephen Perry. Absent: Jay Tepper, Vice Chair and Michael Totilo, Regular Members. Present for staff: Lindsey Cohen, Associate Planner.

Ms. Dell called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Dell introduced the members of the Board and staff present and introduced the first item on the agenda.

**PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES:**

**August 29, 2023:** After a brief discussion, Mr. Perry moved to recommend *approval* of the Planning Board Regular Meeting & Public Hearing of August 29, 2023; Ms. Godzeno seconded the motion, and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 4-0 (Dell, Godzeno, Levin and Perry). (Mr. Buccino was ineligible to vote as he was absent at the August 29, 2023 meeting.)

**ZONING BOARD REFERRALS:**

1. **ZB APPLICATION #223-32 - LISA FEINBERG, CARMODY TORRANCE SANDAK HENNESSEY, LLP, representing NAUTILUS BOTAINCALS EJVI & SIMIENT, LLC - 1110 EAST MAIN STREET - Special Permit:** Applicant is seeking approval to operate a hybrid cannabis retail facility servicing both medical patients and adult-use consumers. Property is located within the C-N Zone. (*Potential Executive Session*)

Ms. Dell read ZB Application #223-32 into the record.

Under Section 1-200 Subsection 6 of the Connecticut General Statutes, Ms. Godzeno called for a motion to discuss this topic in Executive Session as public discussion would result in the disclosure of records and information protected by attorney-client privilege.

Ms. Dell called for a motion to move into Executive Session.

Mr. Levin made a motion to move into Executive Session; Mr. Perry seconded the motion, and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Levin and Perry).

Ms. Dell suspended the Regular Meeting and the Planning Board went into Executive Session at 6:45 p.m.

The Board returned to the Regular Meeting at 7:26 p.m. and Ms. Dell called the Regular Meeting back to order.

Ms. Dell stated for the record that the Board moving into Executive Session was the reason there was a delay in coming back to the Regular Meeting and the Executive Session was closed.

Ms. Dell stated the Executive Session was held with Cynthia Anger, Assistant Corporation Counsel, along with the board members: Theresa Dell, Michael Buccino, William Levin, Jennifer Godzeno and Stephen Perry and that no votes were taken.

Ms. Dell again read ZB Application #223-32 into the record and asked Ms. Cohen if she had any comments before having Ms. Feinberg make her presentation.

Ms. Cohen made brief comments.

The proposed location is in Master Plan Category #7 (Commercial - Arterial), is zoned Neighborhood Business District (C-N) and is greater than 3,000 ft. from any other Dispensary. Per the City of Stamford Zoning Regulations, dispensaries are allowed by Special Permit approval of the Zoning Board only in certain commercial and manufacturing Zoning Districts, with the C-N District being one of them. The proposal is compliant with applicable signage and parking requirements. Please note, this application was received on June 23, 2023, prior to any additional Zoning Regulations for cannabis-related uses going into effect. Although not required, this property is greater than 1,500 ft. from any school.

The Applicant is also requesting a Special Permit to be exempt from the sidewalk requirements of Section 12.K since there is already a sidewalk network surrounding the property. Staff has confirmed the sidewalk surrounding the property is in good condition.

Master Plan Category #7 is intended to provide for a commercial area that is mindful of traffic, safety and community design considerations and that is distinct from Commercial-Neighborhood Category #6 and from Downtown Categories #9, 10, and 11. The C-N Zoning District is characterized as a commercial area abutting residential and such adjacent land uses are customary for the zone. The proposed use poses no risk to nearby properties by reason of noise, fumes, vibration or artificial lighting. There are, of course, concerns about disturbances to health, safety, or peaceful enjoyment of property. However, those concerns are unfounded. The traffic report issued for this project has found the project would not impact local traffic. There are robust physical security measures (cameras, locks, restricted entry, security guards) and electronic security measures (State tracking of purchases). The design of the establishment is not changing, and exterior features are strictly regulated.

Curaleaf is a good example to look at. This dispensary is in the same Zoning District, same Master Plan Category, and is similarly surrounded by multifamily housing in comparison to this project. Curaleaf's traffic study projected no impact to traffic despite public concern and the traffic study has shown to be accurate. There is no traffic issue resulting from Curaleaf. Safety was also a public concern. Curaleaf accommodated police presence for the first week of opening. Police asked Land Use Bureau staff to be relieved due to inactivity at the site prior to week's end. No increase in crime has been reported. Finally, residents of surrounding apartment buildings have not voiced concern over exterior features or reduced property values at the Curaleaf location.

Staff does not find any reason to recommend denial of this application when other similar applications have been recommended for approval in the past.

Approval of this application is recommended as it is aligned with the commercial characteristics of Master Plan #7 and supports the following Master Plan strategy:

- Strategy 3B.4: Encourage the reconfiguration of...retail space to accommodate market trends and potential new users.

Ms. Cohen introduced Ms. Feinberg.

Lisa Feinberg, Carmody Torrance Sandak Hennessey, LLP, along with Connie DeBoever, Merida Capital Holdings, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After some discussion, particularly around parking and customer turnover, Mr. Buccino recommended **approval** of **ZB Application #223-32** with the recommendation the majority of the sales upon opening be through online ordering and finding that this request is compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #7 (Commercial - Arterial); Mr. Perry seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Levin and Perry).

2. **ZB APPLICATION #223-34 - RICHARD REDNISS, REDNISS & MEAD, representing 900 LONG RIDGE ROAD PROPERTY OWNER, LLC - 900 LONG RIDGE ROAD - Site & Architectural Plans and/or Requested Uses and Special Permit:** Applicant is proposing a redevelopment to consist of 508 apartments, approximately 20,000 sq. ft. of complimentary nonresidential space, amenities, associated landscaping and a publicly accessible nature walk.

Ms. Dell read ZB Application #223-34 into the record and stated this is not a Public Hearing and is a Regular Meeting of a referral from the Zoning Board and the public will not be allowed to speak on this application. The Zoning Board will be holding a Public Hearing on this item and it will be posted on their website.

Ms. Dell asked Ms. Cohen if she had any comments.

Ms. Cohen made brief comments.

The property is in Master Plan Category #8 (Mixed Use - Campus). The existing office building campus is primarily vacant with one tenant remaining. The Applicant would like to redevelop this office campus to a mixed-use campus. To facilitate this development, the Applicant must apply for a Special Permit to allow: (1) all permitted uses; (2) an existing freestanding parking structure to remain exempt from building coverage and density standards; and (3) parking spaces of 8.5 feet wide as permitted in other parking categories as opposed to 9 feet wide as required. The Applicant is also requesting approval of the final Site & Architectural Plans and Requested Uses.

Redeveloping the vacant office parks in Stamford with housing is a way to manage the City's growth and dually address the nationwide need for housing and underutilized acres of office space in Stamford. The development will maintain the vegetative buffer around the site that blocks views to the site and buildings from Long Ridge Road and most neighbors. There will be public walking trails in the wooded area adjacent to Long Ridge Road.

Single-family homes would not be financially viable on this site. The density of homes proposed (14 dwelling units per acre) is the lowest multifamily residential density permitted across all zoning districts that permit multifamily dwellings and is aligned with the density allowed in Master Plan Category #3 (Low Density Multifamily).

The campus will continue to be accessed via one signaled access drive off Long Ridge Road. The forecasted vehicle ridership associated with the proposed development would be less than that of what would result from the office buildings being fully occupied.

Approval of this application is recommended as it is aligned with the Master Plan and intensity of uses off Long Ridge Road. Master Plan Category #8 encourages adaptive reuse of compatible office, research and development, residential, government, educational and medical uses, which this project is proposing. The proposal is also aligned with the following Master Plan Policies and Strategies:

- Strategy 3B.4: Encourage the reconfiguration of existing office and retail space to accommodate market trends and potential new users.
- Strategy 4E.4: Consider opportunities for mixed-use transit supportive redevelopment of underutilized office parks on High Ridge and Long Ridge Roads.
- Strategy 6A.1: Balance new development with preservation of existing residential communities.

Ms. Cohen introduced Mr. Redniss.

Ms. Dell stated for the record that many emails had been received regarding this application and will be made part of the public record.

Richard Redniss, Redniss & Mead, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After considerable discussion, Ms. Godzeno recommended **approval** of **ZB Application #223-34** with the following recommendations: (a) having dedicated pedestrian and bicycle access to the site along the main access drive and (b) having a security plan for the residential area since the site can be accessed by non-residents. The Planning Board has found that this request is compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #7 (Commercial - Arterial); Mr. Perry seconded the motion and passed with eligible members present voting, 4-1-0 (In Favor - Dell, Godzeno, Levin and Perry / Against - Buccino). Mr. Buccino desires a cohesive plan for the vacant office parks throughout Stamford, rather than a one-by-one evaluation of proposals. Ms. Dell explained that this will be addressed in the new Master Plan discussions.

### **SUBDIVISIONS:**

1. **SUBDIVISION #4046 - RICHARD REDNISS, REDNISS & MEAD representing KAREN KENNEDY WOODCOCK TRUST (OWNER) and TH1, LLC & HB CAPITAL, LLC (APPLICANT) - 29 INTERVALE ROAD and 131 & 139 TURN OF RIVER ROADS (11 LOTS):** The applicant is requesting a second extension of time to file the final map to December 20, 2023.

The City is currently reviewing the final map. The Applicant is filing for an extension of time to file the final map in case there are any comments from the City that require additional time to address.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Levin recommended approval of the second ninety (90) day Extension of Time to file the final map with a new expiration date of December 20, 2023 and that this request is compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family); Mr. Buccino seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members voting, 5-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Levin and Perry).

### **ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS REFERRALS:**

1. **ZBA APPLICATION #029-23 - ROSELYN VASSILATOS - 36 RUTZ STREET - Variance of Table III, Appendix B (Continued from the August 29, 2023 Meeting):** Applicant owns a single-family dwelling with an existing 9 ft. x 8 ft. open porch. Applicant is proposing to expand the open porch to 12 ft. x 22 ft. and is requesting a rear yard setback of 7.8 ft. in lieu of the 30 ft. required in the R-7½ Zone.

This application was continued from the Planning Board meeting held on August 29, 2023. The Planning Board wanted more information from the Applicant on why the variance is being requested.

The property is in Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family). The existing home and attached deck are nonconforming as they are within the 30-foot required rear yard for primary structures. The home is 21 feet setback from the rear lot line, the current deck is 13 feet setback from the rear lot line and the proposed new deck would be 9 feet setback from the rear lot line. The hardships noted include that the house and deck are already within the required setback, that this is a narrow lot and current deck does not allow for enjoyment of property. However, the Owner is installing several patios and a swimming pool in the side yards such that there will be other locations for the family to enjoy the property while complying with the Zoning Regulations. While a request to increase the width of the deck would be reasonable because it would not further encroach into the rear yard setback, the request to increase the depth of the deck and the encroachment into the rear yard does not seem reasonable or necessary for the enjoyment of property. As such, Staff recommends denial of this Application as currently written as it is not aligned with Master Plan Category #2 to provide for a low-density single-family environment. If the Application were revised to a deck of the same depth as the current deck (8 feet deep), Staff would recommend approval.

Roselyn Vassilatos made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After a brief discussion Mr. Perry recommended **approval** of **ZBA Application #029-23** and that this request is compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family); Mr. Buccino seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Levin and Perry).

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

Ms. Dell mentioned that she has been speaking with Anthony Romano, Management Analyst, Office of Policy & Management, and Ben Barnes, the new Director of Administration, replacing Sandy Dennis, has started and is aware that Capital Budget will begin in October, with the first pre-Planning meetings on October 4, 2023. Ms. Dell also stated the letter has gone out to all departments and outside agencies asking everyone to get their capital project requests ready. Mr. Barnes has requested a meeting to get familiar with the Capital Budget process.

Ms. Dell asked the Board if they would be agreeable to possibly having a Special Meeting on a Wednesday night during October should there be any business other than Capital Budget and all Board members agreed.

Lastly, Ms. Dell stated she received a request from Vineeta Mathur, Principal Planner, if there would be any interest in getting together for a holiday party. Ms. Dell asked the Board to think about it and they would discuss it at the September 26, 2023 meeting.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Next regularly scheduled Planning Board meetings are:

- September 26, 2023 (Regular Meeting & Public Hearing)
- October 10, 2023 (Capital Budget)

There being no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Dell adjourned the meeting at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted  
September 15, 2023

Jennifer Godzeno, Secretary  
Stamford Planning Board

**NOTE:** These proceedings were recorded on video and are available for review on the Planning Board website at [http://cityofstamford.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view\\_id=20](http://cityofstamford.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=20)