

**STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
APPROVED MINUTES - TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2024
REGULAR MEETING
VIA THE INTERNET & CONFERENCE CALL
6:30 P.M.**

ZOOM WEBINAR
Webinar ID: 899 6895 9337
Passcode: 875633

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Voting Members: Theresa Dell, Chair; Jay Tepper, Vice Chair; Jennifer Godzeno, Secretary; Michael Buccino and Michael Totilo. Alternates: Stephen Perry. Absent: William Levin, Alternate. Present for staff: Anthony Romano, Management Analyst, Office of Policy & Management and Lindsey Cohen, Associate Planner.

Ms. Dell called the meeting to order at 6:35 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:

January 30, 2023: After a brief discussion, Mr. Tepper moved to recommend *approval* of the Planning Board Regular Meeting Minutes of January 30, 2024; Mr. Perry seconded the motion, and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 4-0 (Dell, Perry, Tepper and Totilo). (Ms. Godzeno and Mr. Buccino were ineligible to vote as they were absent at the January 30, 2024 meeting.)

CAPITAL BUDGET (Adjourned from the February 6, 2024 Special Meeting):

The Planning Board will have a final review of the 2024-2025 Capital Budget & 2025-2031 Capital Plan and review of the Transmittal Letter to the Mayor to prepare for submission by March 1, 2024.

Ms. Dell introduced Mr. Romano and thanked him for all his assistance with the Capital Budget.

Ms. Dell provided details of a meeting with Benjamin Barnes, Director of Administration, discussing the Safe Debt Limit and presented several modifications to the Capital Budget to have the Safe Debt Limit come in at approximately \$29M. All Board members agreed with the changes.

After some further discussion, Ms. Dell called for a motion to accept the 2024-2025 Capital Budget with the changes discussed as follows:

- \$32,204,504.00 (Total Budget)
- \$28,804,504.00 (City Bond)
- \$275,000.00 (State Grants)
- \$1,025,000.00 (WPCA Reserve Fund)
- \$2,100,00.00 (WPCA Bond)

Mr. Tepper made a motion to accept the 2024-2025 Capital Budget & 2025-2031 Capital Plan; Mr. Perry seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 6-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Perry, Tepper and Totilo.)

Ms. Dell then called for review of the Transmittal Letter to the Mayor.

After some discussion, Mr. Totilo made a motion to accept the Transmittal Letter to the Mayor dated February 13, 2024 with the exception of changes suggested by Ms. Godzeno to Project Review Criteria No. g/Pg. 2; Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 6-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Perry, Tepper and Totilo.)

ZONING BOARD REFERRALS:

Jason Klein, Carmody Torrance Sandak & Hennessey, LLP, along with Elena Kalman, Project Architect, made a presentation on ZB Applications #223-39 and #223-40 and answered questions from the Board. (Note: Each application voted on separately.)

1. ZB APPLICATION #223-39 - KCI SUMMER, LLC - 1911 SUMMER STREET - Text Change:

Applicant is proposing amendments to Section 7.3 of the Zoning Regulations to grant the Zoning Board the authority to reduce or waive the minimum distance of parking areas from lot lines and buildings, and the dimension of Parking Spaces used for residential uses upon review by Transportation, Traffic & Parking.

The Text Change would also allow for a reduction in front yard setback on Corner Lots with Historic Structures used for residential purposes as well as a reduction in the Usable Open Space Requirement. The Text Change has limited applicability. The Text Change would allow for greater flexibility in meeting the Zoning Regulations and should be considered in the context of increasing the probability and feasibility of preserving historically significant structures in Stamford.

This application would facilitate the Site Plan, Special Permit and CRI application (ZB #223-40) below. Please see further discussion below.

After a brief discussion, Ms. Godzeno recommended **approval** of **ZB Application #223-39** and that this request is in general harmony with the 2015 Master Plan; Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Tepper and Totilo).

2. ZB APPLICATION #223-40 - KCI SUMMER, LLC - 1911 SUMMER STREET - Site & Architectural Plans and/or Requested Uses, Special Permit and an application for approval for addition to the Stamford Cultural Resources Inventory (CRI): Applicant is proposing Critical reconstruction of a historic house and an addition of four (4) new townhouses attached to the rear along with landscaping and on-site parking.

The property is in Master Plan Category #4 (Residential - Medium Density Multifamily). The Planning Board originally considered this project at its regular meeting on January 24, 2023 when it came through as a Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) application seeking relief from the front yard setback requirement and the distance requirement between parking and a building. Staff and the Planning Board recommended approval at that time. Since then, the ZBA application was withdrawn, the project was modified in accordance with recommendations from the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission (HPAC) and these two Zoning Board applications were filed. The Applicant has since reduced the overall height and the massing or building bulk was reduced. HPAC has since recommended approval of these two applications with several recommendations on key historic design details (shingles, windows, etc.). The President of the non-profit Historic Neighborhood Preservation has written a letter in support of this project.

HPAC shares a similar concern with Staff that the 5-foot setback along Fifth Street does not align with buildings on Fifth Street that are setback 10 feet or more and that the proposed building goes beyond the edge of the adjoining historic structure when the Zoning Regulations specify a matching setback to adjacent Historic Buildings. However, by allowing this reduced building setback, it allows for parking to be hidden or wrapped by the building, which is a preferable appearance.

The property is in Master Plan Category #4 (Residential - Medium Density Multifamily). The Category is defined as a transition area from lower- to medium-density use or an area that is a mixture of different types of housing and other compatible uses. A five-unit multifamily project would be a suitable transition between the commercial uses in former single-family buildings to the east and the larger multifamily buildings to the west. Additional surrounding land uses include large format commercial uses to the north. In terms of design, this project would maintain the Historic Building and the addition would mimic the historic characteristics that define the property's historic character.

The Master Plan Category references a density cap that this project meets. This project, in the context of its surrounding uses, fits within the description of the MP Category. As-of-right development would lead to a larger building and potential demolition of the historic structure, which would be more detrimental to the architectural characteristics of the neighborhood than preserving the structure with the four additional townhomes. As such, the proposed project is aligned with the Master Plan policy to Maintain Residential Neighborhood Character by balancing new development with the preservation of existing residential communities and supporting neighborhood revitalization. In addition, the project supports the Master Plan policy to encourage increased density along transit corridors through land use regulations and developer incentives.

After some discussion, Mr. Totilo recommended **approval** of **ZB Application #223-40**. The Planning Board found the changes made to the project between January 2023 and now brought the design of the addition in closer alignment with the design of the historic structure and found that this request is in general harmony with Master Plan Category #4 (Residential - Medium Density Multifamily). Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Tepper and Totilo).

Raymond Mazzeo, Redniss & Mead and Lisa Feinberg, Carmody Torrance Sandak & Hennessey, LLP, made a presentation on ZB Applications #223-47 and #223-48 and answered questions from the Board. (Note: Each application voted on separately.)

- ZB APPLICATION #223-47 - RAYMOND MAZZEO, REDNISS & MEAD - Text Change:** Applicant is proposing to amend Appendix B, Footnote 23 (Hotel Parking) and Section 12.D.12 (Hotels and Motels with fewer than 100 guest rooms).

The Text Change would reduce the parking requirement from 0.75 spaces per room to 0.25 spaces per room by Special Permit for smaller hotels in the C-C District within 500 ft. of a public garage where no conference or banquet facilities are proposed. Restaurants and retail establishments in the Downtown already have no parking requirement. The Parking Study recently adopted by the Planning Board determined there is a substantial reserve of underutilized parking in municipally owned facilities. The Text Change would be aligned with recommendations of the Parking Study to right-size parking ratios.

After a brief discussion, Ms. Godzeno recommended **approval** of **ZB Application #223-47** and that this request is in general harmony with the 2015 Master Plan; Mr. Totilo seconded the motion and passed with eligible members present voting, 3-0-2 (Dell, Godzeno, Totilo - In Favor / Buccino and Tepper - Against). (**NOTE:** Mr. Buccino and Mr. Tepper voted against the Text Change as they were not in agreement with the reduction of parking from 0.75 spaces per room to 0.25 spaces per room.)

- ZB APPLICATION #223-48 - TULLAMORE, LLC (Contract Purchaser) - 0 WEST PARK PLACE (Assessor #004-4021) - Site & Architectural Plans and/or Requested Uses and Special Permit:** Applicant is proposing to construct a 10-story, ninety-nine (99) room extended stay hotel with retail/restaurant space at the ground level and associated amenities.

The site of ZB Application #223-48, a parking lot east of Curly's Diner fronting on Columbus Park, is in Master Plan Category #11 (Downtown). This lot was originally part of a multi-lot redevelopment plan approved by the Urban Renewal Commission in 2006, but development on this lot did not move forward due to challenges in developing the site described in the Application materials.

The Special Permit would be for an application of the Text Change, a review of development over 20,000 sq. ft. and approval of an extended stay hotel. The Site & Architectural Plan and Requested Uses would permit the proposed location, height, etc., as well as a request for shared parking and modification of the sidewalk requirements.

Master Plan Category #11 (Downtown) in which this project is located "provides for and protects an intensive, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use district...serviced by mass transportation and integrated pedestrian access systems...enhanced by up-to-date lighting, seating, planting, signage, etc., to assure a desirable mixing and interaction of people and activities. A variety of scale and design in new construction is to be encouraged." The proposed development facilitated by the above applications fits well within the description of this category. The project will activate a key site in "restaurant row" that has been parking for decades, enhancing the pedestrian

experience with an active use and attractive design and adding pedestrians to the downtown streets, patronizing local businesses. The project will provide an integrated pedestrian access system by reinforcing the pedestrian access to Winthrop Place with a defined pathway, lighting and landscaping. The design of the building will be a more modern approach compared to other buildings on the block, however variety of design is encouraged by the Master Plan. This project would support recommendations of the Parking Study by utilizing shared parking. The project is aligned with the following Master Plan policies:

- Policy 5A.6: Promote Infill development on vacant sites within Downtown.
- Policy 5B.1: Improve pedestrian connectivity within Downtown.
- Policy 5B.2: Implement streetscape and traffic calming improvements Downtown.
- Policy 5B.3: Promote neighborhood revitalization.

After some discussion, Mr. Totilo recommended **approval** of **ZB Application #223-48** and that this request is in general harmony with Master Plan Category #11 (Downtown); Ms. Godzeno seconded the motion and passed with eligible members present voting, 3-0-2 (Dell, Godzeno, Totilo - In Favor / Buccino and Tepper - Against). (NOTE: Mr. Buccino and Mr. Tepper voted against the Site & Architectural Plans and Special Permit as they were not in agreement with the reduction of parking from 0.75 spaces per room to 0.25 spaces per room.)

Ms. Dell mentioned that she and Mr. Totilo have previously stated they would be leaving the Planning Board after the February 27, 2024 meeting. Ms. Dell noted that any potential candidates have not yet been before the Mayor or the Board of Representatives so they will most likely now stay through March to allow time for candidates to go through the vetting process.

Ms. Godzeno asked to make a *New Business* request. Ms. Godzeno stated she is in agreement with Mr. Buccino that the City needs to take action on the Parking Study, make spaces available in the downtown, and that the City was not going forward with regulatory changes until there was an adopted Parking Study in place. Ms. Godzeno suggested inviting Transportation, Traffic & Parking (TTP) to come before the Board to have a discussion on how to open up the supply of parking Downtown and implement the Parking Study recommendations.

Ms. Cohen stated she would check TTP's availability to attend one of the March meetings.

Next regularly scheduled Planning Board meetings are:

- February 27, 2024
- March 12, 2024
- March 26, 2024

There being no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Dell adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
February 15, 2024

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