

**CITY OF NORWALK  
PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE  
MAY 13, 2010**

**PRESENT:** James White, Chair; Bob Keyes; Jackie Lightfield; Karen Spencer; Michael Mushak; Andrea Light; Adam Blank; Mike O'Reilly

**STAFF:** Mike Wrinn; Frank Strauch; Adam Carsen

**OTHERS:** Lynn Massey; Atty. Frank Zullo; Terry Wilson; Atty. Liz Suchy; Ron Kellogg; Joe Cugno; Paul Garavel; Joe Romano

**I. SITE PLAN REVIEWS & COASTAL SITE PLAN REVIEWS**

**a) Merritt 7 – Retail addition – Determination if minor change**

Mr. Wrinn said that a farmers' market would be implemented, most likely on a weekday.

The Committee agreed that this was a minor change.

**b) Special use - Brien McMahon High School – Bus shelter**

Mr. Wrinn noted that the bus shelter could be used by anyone, not just high school students.

Mr. White asked about advertising on the side of the bus shelter. Mr. Wrinn said that it would not be allowed. He also distributed a letter from a neighbor who supported the installation, but was opposed to the location of the sign.

Ms. Lightfield said that there was probably a good reason for having selected that spot. She said that the vote would involve placing the sign at the current proposed spot.

Ms. Lynn Massey, the co-president of the high school, said that 3 residents had been notified, with one supporting, one opposing, and one unspecified.

**c) #1-10SPR – Dr. Syed Reza – 346 Main Avenue – Conversion of 38,000 sq ft building to medical & general office – Final review prior to public hearing**

Mr. Wrinn said that there would be a public hearing next week.

Mr. Blank asked about an alteration to the siding. Ms. Lightfield described minor changes in the proposal.

Dr. Syed Reza addressed the curb cut issue. Ms. Lightfield reiterated that typically, it was safer to have fewer curb cuts.

**d) #5-10CAM – Trust Realty – 731 West Avenue – Expansion of existing café/dance club Rhythm**

Mr. Carsen showed the location on a map and indicated a few exterior changes. She showed adjustments to the plantings and noted that a noise report had indicated that the establishment would generate no additional noise.

Mr. White requested a condition that ensured that any front windows be closed during times of live music.

Ms. Lightfield requested a condition forbidding outside speakers.

The Committee agreed to hold a public hearing in June.

**e) #7-10CAM – Gould – 45 Neptune Ave – Construction of single family residence – Preliminary review**

Mr. Carsen said that the structure was a single-family residence within 100 feet of the water. He addressed the structure and its elevation. He said that flood certification was also in hand. He noted that a waiver of the public hearing was being requested.

**f) #11-10 CAM – Norwalk Deli Café LLC – 55 Wall St – Tenant fit-up for restaurant use - Preliminary review**

Mr. Strauch said that the tenant had lost permits and never followed through on them. He said the applicant had returned to Zoning due to parking issues. He reiterated that there would be no live music or D.J.

Ms. Lightfield noted that the current signage was unattractive.

The Committee agreed to send the item to full Commission.

**g) #9-90CAM – Public Storage – 35 Hoyt St – Change color of doors to orange – Determination if minor change**

Mr. Carsen said that the proposal involved a change in the color of the doors from blue to orange.

Mr. Wrinn said that it was the corporate color.

Mr. Blank pointed out that the choice to use corporate colors should not give the applicant free reign.

Mr. Blank and Mr. Keyes both stated that they would not support the proposal.

Ms. Lightfield said that the Commission would be hard-pressed to reject the proposal, given the location of the business.

The Committee agreed to request alternatives to the proposed colors.

**h) #3-10CAM – Vona – 37 High St – Contractor's storage yard – Request to modify approvals to increase size of yard & add larger trucks – Review of public hearing**

Mr. Wrinn said that the public hearing on the item had been closed.

Mr. White stated his opposition to the application, pointing out that the Commission had assured residents that this sort of expansion would not be allowed.

Ms. Lightfield reiterated the main points raised at the public hearing and suggested that the Committee reject the application

Mr. Wrinn noted that neighbors were concerned about dust, noise, screening and planting. He also confirmed that the Police Department had received three complaints over a six to nine-month period. He added that the Health Department had not received any official complaints about dust. Mr. Wrinn said that Zoning had received about 20 letters of complaint. He also pointed out that this file dated back 20 years.

Ms. Lightfield said that it would be unwise to expand the use, when the applicant could not manage the current use.

Ms. Lightfield said that the Commission would vote on the item next week.

**i) #4-88 SPR –World of Beverage –295 Main Av – Replacement of existing malfunctioning automatic changeable copy sign**

Mr. Wrinn said that approvals were in hand for the new signage.

Mr. White commented that the Pasta Fair sign was “hideous.”

Ms. Lightfield noted that this applicant’s proposal included no streaming, flashing or blinking.

Atty. Frank Zullo said that the hours of operation for the sign would be from 9:00 am. to 10:00 pm, and that the sign was four feet by eight feet. He added that the sign would be changed twice a day.

Mr. White said that this type of sign involved visual blight, adding that no other surrounding towns allowed this sort of sign.

Mr. Blank said that he opposed this type of sign in this location, pointing out that it posed a danger.

The applicant noted that this sign was no different from a banner. He added that the intensity of the light was adjusted, according to the ambient light.

Ms. Lightfield asked if a condition allowing only text on the sign could be added.

Atty. Zullo reiterated that there would be no flashing and that the sign would change only twice per day.

Mr. Mushak addressed the topic of foot candles.

Atty. Zullo pointed out that it was difficult to limit color due to the products advertised on the sign.

## **II. SPECIAL PERMITS & COASTAL SITE PLAN REVIEWS**

**a) #3-10SP – Maplewood at Strawberry Hill - 73 Strawberry Hill Avenue - 84 Unit Congregate Housing/Assisted Living facility - Final review prior to public hearing**

Mr. Strauch said that the item was set for public hearing.

The Committee had no further questions about the item.

**b) #14-09SP – Norwalk Hospital Association – 34 Maple St/Stevens St - New 628 space parking garage – Modification of approved plan to comply with conditions of approval**

Atty. Zullo discussed screening concerns at the property.

Mr. Terry Wilson described screening on the east side and the angled side of the parking deck. He addressed open-ness requirements and screen materials and presented a rendering of the proposed material.

Ms. Lightfield stated that it was not what the Commission was envisioning, as far as screening.

She questioned whether the Committee had seen all possibilities for the screening options.

Mr. White pointed out that the enclosed nature of the proposed screening would make the building look like a penitentiary and would ruin the view from the hospital to the Sound.

Ms. Lightfield said that she was concerned about contributing to the City resembling a city of garages, rather than buildings.

Mr. O'Reilly pointed out that parking ease was a factor for hospital users.

Mr. Blank suggested that the Committee learn how Stamford's Target garage managed its screening.

Mr. Wilson commented that there was a financial consequence to the decision, as well as an aesthetic one. Ms. Lightfield emphasized that the cost issue was not valid, and that any opportunity to improve the appearance should be explored. She reminded the Committee that this project would impact the City decades into the future.

**c) #7-10SP/#8-10CAM – Norwest Marine & Arnold Diagnostics – 130 Water St – Boat sales and establish new retail use auto parts sales – Preliminary review**

Mr. Strauch said that the applicant wanted to establish retail use, along with boat sales. He showed the retail layout and addressed signage concerns.

Ms. Lightfield pointed out that retail use on Water Street was a good idea.

**d) #6-10SP/#9-10CAM – Cedar Hammocks LLC – Cedar Hammocks Island - Construction of single family residence in Island Conservation zone – Preliminary review**

Mr. Strauch said that the item involved a single-family residence in an Island Conservation zone. He showed a photo of a small shed-like structure currently in place, noting that the proposal involved only a modest replacement.

Atty. Liz Suchy explained that the applicant had approached the ZBA nine months ago and that it was scheduled for a hearing on June 3. She explained that the application had gone through many iterations and that setbacks were the primary issue. She asked for waivers on drainage and traffic.

**e) #8-10SP – Casatelli Corp – 114 CT Av – Wholesale/warehouse use in existing building – Preliminary review**

Mr. Wrinn said that the applicant wanted to keep the majority of the space as warehouse use and that the front of the building would be retail pharmacy.

Mr. Ron Kellogg described the property and discussed parking and sidewalk improvements.

Mr. Joe Cugno described the proposed materials and the parking area.

Ms. Lightfield asked if the building's aesthetics could be improved to avoid the strip-mall look. Mr. Kellogg pointed out that an awning would encroach on the easement.

There was a discussion of architectural and landscaping details.

Mr. Kellogg requested a June public hearing.

### **III. RELEASE OF SURETY**

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**a) #7-09SPR – Norwalk Community Health Center – 120 Connecticut Av – Request for release of surety**

Mr. Carsen said that the work had been completed and that staff recommended a release of surety.

Mr. Strauch said that all tree work had been completed.

**b) #10-00SP – Scicchitano- 8 Fitch Street – Convert to MV repair facility – Request for release of maintenance bond**

Mr. Carsen said that work was completed and staff recommended release of surety.

**IV. MOTOR VEHICLE REVIEWS**

**a) #X-10MV – Georgetown Subaru – 191 Main/New Canaan Av – Replacement auto sales in ex bldg – Preliminary review**

Mr. Wrinn showed the location on a map and said that Subaru wanted to take over a parcel of the area.

Mr. Paul Garavel stated his concern about the signage. He addressed lighting issues.

Mr. Joe Romano gave background about the property and addressed concerns about lighting.

Mr. Mushak raised the issue of tree-topping.

There was a brief discussion of sight lines.

The Committee agreed to send the item to full Commission for a vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Charlene Smith.