

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 10, 2009**

PRESENT: James White, Chair; Jackie Lightfield; Bob Keyes; Andrea Light; Larry Bentley; John Tobin; Michael Mushak; Adam Blank; Karen Spencer

STAFF: Mike Greene; Mike Wrinn; Frank Strauch

OTHERS: Atty. Liz Suchy; Mark Nevis; Shannon Rutherford; Larry Bork; Atty. Vetter; Bruce Beinfield; Kim Morque

I. SITE PLAN REVIEWS & COASTAL SITE PLAN REVIEWS

a) #7-09SPR – Norwalk Community Health Center – 120 CT Av – 24,000 sq ft of medical office – Final review prior to hrg

Mr. Strauch described the transportation options involving the facility. He said that the item was ready for public hearing.

b) #18-09CAM – McGarty - 10 Branford Street – Additions to single-family residence – Preliminary review

Mr. Strauch stated that the property was located south of the Metro North on a C zone for flooding. He described the additions, stating that the total was about 2100 square feet.

c) #19-09CAM – Sokmen – 13 First Street – 3 unit multifamily development – Preliminary review

Mr. Strauch discussed the flood zone, pointing out that it was similar to the previous item. He said that each unit would be 1300 square feet and that the development met or exceeded necessary regulations.

There was a discussion about adjustments to the facade that faced the street. Ms. Light said that it could be improved by making it appear more like other single-family Victorians in the area. Ms. Lightfield added that the streetscape should be preserved as much as possible.

Mr. Mushak asked about storm drains. Mr. Strauch said that the water would be going into the City sewer system, not into the Mill Pond. He also stated that the item had a DPW signoff.

d) #8-09SPR/#17-09CAM – Curran – 9 Leonard St – Increase number of units from 4 to 8 – Preliminary review

This item was withdrawn.

e) Informal discussion – CVS proposal on Connecticut/Scribner Ave

Mr. Greene explained that staff was concerned with the materials proposed and with the location of the store, which would be at a major intersection. He pointed out the businesses that would be removed in the strip mall.

Atty. Liz Suchy addressed the issue of DOT land and presented a general elevation and materials board.

Mr. Mark Nevis said that the facility would consist of 13,000 square feet on the main floor and storage upstairs.

Ms. Lightfield asked about the street view. Mr. Nevis showed the details of the parking lot and the drive-through area the site plan.

Ms. Shannon Rutherford pointed out that there would be a soft canopy on the drive-through.

Ms. Lightfield asked why the configuration of the site was backwards, with the drive-through in the front.

Ms. Rutherford gave details about the site plan and explained that the applicant was trying to reach a compromise between the City and CVS with regard to the street-front look. She said that the plan allowed for some presence on the corner and also had a large landscaped area with which to work. She said that the site plan would work in either configuration, but that the applicant would have more flexibility if it had the parcel of land from DOT. Ms. Rutherford also described screening at the site.

Mr. Tobin asked about the loading area. Ms. Rutherford gave details, adding that there had been a preliminary meeting with DOT the day before.

Ms. Spencer asked the applicant if the proposal represented a “done deal” or if the Committee still had an actual say about the existence of the facility. Mr. Greene stated that the property had been either purchased or contracted to purchase and that this was an allowed use.

Ms. Rutherford discussed the challenges of the intersection.

Ms. Lightfield asked why the applicant had chosen this site. Ms. Rutherford stated that it was simply because it was available. Ms. Lightfield pointed out the old Lines & Things site would have been preferable. Ms. Rutherford said that that was not the applicant’s purview.

Mr. Blank asked about the square footage of the active area in the other CVS stores in the area. Ms. Rutherford said that it was 10,000 to 11,000 square feet total, with about 8,000 to 9,000 square feet devoted to customer area. Mr. Blank asked if it were typical to have as much storage area as customer area. Ms. Rutherford clarified that it was not necessary to have so much storage area, but that the applicant was meeting with zoning regulations by doing so in this case.

Ms. Rutherford discussed the footprint of the building and the merchandise lift.

Atty. Suchy said that the applicant would evaluate traffic and mitigate as necessary.

Ms. Lightfield stated that the primary cause of traffic problems was the location of driveways and that the traffic situation at the facility potentially could be very dangerous.

Mr. White said that the proximity to exit 14 also made the site dangerous and also that the loading dock would be too visible.

Mr. Greene said that the applicant had studied false and real entry-ways into the facility.

Mr. Blank mentioned another pharmacy that had a front and rear entrance, with parking in the rear.

Mr. Greene described a similar facility in Shaker Heights, Ohio with a variety of entry-ways.

Ms. Spencer asked whether a decrease in the level of service for traffic would stop the facility from being built. Ms. Rutherford discussed traffic counts and “impulse traffic” in the area.

Ms. Lightfield clarified that the Commission did not need to approve the proposal, if it was not satisfied with the traffic count. She added that the Commission had seen to it that traffic was manageable when the Shell station went in, adding that this application involved a prominent intersection. She added that the current aesthetics were bad and the site would need to be pedestrian-friendly.

Mr. White said that he did not like the drive-through on the street side of the store.

Ms. Spencer asked about crosswalks.

Ms. Lightfield pointed out that the problem concerning traffic at the Shell station had been solved with the addition of traffic lane.

Mr. White pointed out that the intersection involved in this application had a finite amount of road space, adding that there was already a dedicated left-turn lane.

Ms. Lightfield said that the traffic at the site was untenable.

Mr. Mushak added that street trees were needed to provide a “green screen.”

Ms. Rutherford showed a map of the site, pointing out the overhead utility lines. She said that the 70’ setback would allow trees and a hedgerow.

Mr. Mushak said that there was a lot of pedestrian traffic in the area and that sidewalk connections would be going in next year.

Ms. Lightfield asked about the old Linens & Things store as an alternate site.

Mr. Bentley reminded the Committee that this was an informal discussion and that the applicant and the Committee had both achieved what was necessary.

f) #5-01SPR – CVS - 327 Main Ave – Retail store – Request to modify approved signage (add manual message board)

This item was considered together with item g).

g) #12-06SPR – CVS - 7 Willard Rd – Retail store – Request to modify approved signage (add manual message board)

The Committee agreed to consider items f) and g) together.

Mr. Wrinn said that the items both involved manual changeable copy signage.

Mr. Larry Bork said that the panels would be replaced, but that there would be no increase in the square footage of the signs.

Ms. Lightfield emphasized that the Committee was concerned with the aesthetics of the signs and would require the applicant to show an example.

Mr. Bork clarified that the photograph presented represented the signage being proposed.

Mr. Bentley said that the proposed sign did not look good.

Mr. White added that the signage was clearly for advertising, not for place-finding.

Ms. Lightfield said that a lit sign was neater and cleaner-looking, as long as it was not blinking.

Mr. Blank said that a black sign with red letters was acceptable.

Mr. Bentley addressed the notion of advertising, pointing out that the signs tended to clutter up the area.

Mr. Blank pointed out that the Committee clearly needed to hold a special meeting to address signage.

Mr. Bork asked if the applicant wanted to add a manual lighting option to the proposal.

Mr. Greene asked that such questioning cease, pointing out that the applicant cannot control the agenda.

Ms. Light stated that the applicant's rendering of the signage was very poor.

Mr. Bork agreed that the applicant would return with other renderings

Mr. Wrinn clarified that the applicant would need to re-submit.

h) #8-05CAM – Vona – 37 High St – Contractor's yard – Request to modify permit to add storage, relocate drive to adjacent property & other site changes

Mr. Wrinn described the application, reiterating that the Committee needed to determine if this were a minor or a major change.

Mr. White said that the item involved a violation of the conditions of approval.

Atty. Vetter said that the applicant was asking to approve the use of the current permit, adding that it was not asking for storage on the site.

Ms. Lightfield said that the Committee required a complete application

Mr. White said that if the proposal involved combining the sites, it was definitely a major change.

Mr. Wrinn added that the trucks at the site were a much different size and also that the site was near a residential area.

Mr. Mushak asked if someone were renting the VFW site, pointing out that there were large trucks there.

Mr. Wrinn said that violations needed to be cleared up.

i) #6-95SPR – Church Associates – 295 Westport Ave – Modification of site plan (after the fact)

Mr. Greene said that trees had been removed without approval. He added that the power company and the developer had agreed to the modification, which was technically a change to the site plan.

II. SPECIAL PERMITS

a) #4-04SP – AMEC Carting – 1 Crescent St – Bulky waste transfer station – Request to modify plans

The item was withdrawn.

b) #23-05SP/#38-05CAM – RMS Construction – 142 East Avenue (south parcel) – Request for return of bond

Mr. Strauch said that this was the old Gibbs site. He said that the lighting and the plantings were in and that the applicant was requesting the bond back.

c) #24-05SP/#39-05CAM – RMS Construction – 144 East Avenue (north parcel) – Request for return of bond

This item was considered together with item b).

III. REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF APPROVAL TIME

a) #5-08SPR – The Berkeley & Frost Bldg LLC – 500-520 West Ave/Lynes Place – ±150,000 sq. ft. mixed use development– Request for extension of time

Mr. Strauch said that the request for extension was due to current economic conditions.

b) #3-05SPR – Merritt River Partners – Glover Av – 4 story, 82,700 sq. ft. office building – Request for extension of time

Mr. Strauch said that the request was also due to economic conditions.

IV. MOTOR VEHICLE LICENSE

a) #1-09MV/#13-09CAM - Hollywood Restorations – 115 Woodward Ave – Auto body repair – Final review prior to hrg

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

V. REVOCATION OF PERMITS

a) #2-06SPR/#24-06CAM - Guinta – 30 Sheehan Ave – Proposed contractor’s storage yard – Status report

Mr. Strauch said that the property was in compliance and that staff recommended no further action.

b) #2-07SP – Stuart Avenue Townhouses, LLC - 42-46 Stuart Avenue – 12 unit multifamily residential – Status report

Mr. Strauch said that staff recommended no further action.

c) #3-09SPR/#30-08CAM - Jackson – 10 Goldstein Place – Contractor’s storage yard - Status report

Mr. Strauch said that he had met with the applicant that day and that staff recommended a public hearing.

Respectfully submitted by Charlene Smith.