

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 12, 2009**

PRESENT: James White, Chair; Jackie Lightfield; Bob Keyes; Michael Mushak; Andrea Light

STAFF: Mike Greene; Adam Carsen; Mike Wrinn

OTHERS: Atty. David Waters; Atty. Frank Zullo

Mr. White called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

I. SITE PLAN REVIEWS & COASTAL SITE PLAN REVIEWS

a) #24-09 CAM – Jill Hanau – 8 Valley Road – Additions to a single-family residence – Preliminary review

Mr. Carsen said that the residence was within 100 feet of the water at Wilson Point. He showed plans and said that the proposal was very straightforward.

b) #24-95 CAM – Crystal LLC (Grasso) – 314 Wilson Av – Add boat prep & shrink wrap to boat storage – Preliminary review

Mr. Carsen said that the review was postponed.

II. SPECIAL PERMITS

a) #10-02SPR – AvalonBay Communities – 30 Belden Av – 311 units – Request to modify public access walkway

Mr. Wrinn said that the item involved a request to modify the public walkway. He described the location, near the former OTB along the river. Mr. Wrinn explained that there were some uncertainties regarding how the walkway was structured. He presented an approved plan and the proposed modifications, adding that issues remained concerning its width and landscaping. Mr. Wrinn confirmed that the item needed to go through the Redevelopment Agency.

Atty. David Waters discussed the retaining wall, clarifying that the applicant was not able to locate plans for it, but that engineers had advised against adding more load to it. He showed the existing emergency access, which was separate and distinct from the walkway itself, but which would now be combined. Atty. Waters emphasized that it would be the same walkway with the same materials and that the retaining wall would be lower.

Mr. Wrinn pointed out that the final plan was the third one presented to staff. Atty. Waters stated that staff had been helpful with adjusting the plan.

Ms. Lightfield asked if the project were originally a state project and also asked about the choke point near the mass of the building. The applicant said that it was unclear whether the project had been a state project, since the original plans could not be found. He also addressed the turn radius issue near the building.

Mr. Mushak stated that the slope was an improvement from a security point of view.

Mr. Greene asked about the red line on the plan, adding that the Redevelopment Agency had wanted to discuss it.

Atty. Waters explained that Mr. Munro Johnson of Redevelopment had seen the plan and had not objected to it. Atty. Waters said that he was surprised now to learn that Redevelopment was concerned about the materials. Mr. Greene clarified that the materials on the whole rear had changed, not just on the riverwalk itself.

Ms. Lightfield stated that despite the applicant's time restraints, the Commission would need to further examine the item due to Redevelopment's concerns.

Atty. Waters pointed out that Redevelopment had the funding and was impeding its own progress.

Mr. Mushak stated that the concerns about materials needed to be considered.

Atty. Waters said that the project was represented as a single wall.

Mr. Greene added that it was a single *tall* wall.

b) #9-09SP – Anchor Academy – 3 & 7 Academy St – Private elementary school in the Carver Center building – Final review prior to public hearing

Mr. Wrinn said that all the signoffs were on hand and the project was ready.

c) #4-07SP – CT Friends School – 440 Newtown Av – Elementary school – Request to phase & modify plans – Preliminary review

Mr. Carsen explained that the applicant sought to use the existing barn as temporary classroom space.

Mr. Wrinn added that ZBA and Conservation had both reviewed the item.

Atty. Waters stated that the applicant was not changing the approved site plan and that the work involved only a re-phasing. He addressed the 50% demolition limit. He showed the bays of parking on the site and discussed the number of students at the school.

The Committee agreed that the item involved a minor change.

d) #X-09SP – Pasta Fair Restaurant – Connecticut Avenue - Replacement of previously permitted automatic changeable copy wall sign – Preliminary review

Mr. Wrinn gave background concerning signage at the property, stating that a permit for a changeable copy sign had been issued 10 years ago.

Mr. Carsen presented a photograph of the new sign.

Mr. Wrinn explained that the sign was changing more frequently than allowed by regulations and also that the sign flashed and scrolled.

Atty. Frank Zullo explained that the applicant did not know that he needed a permit to change the sign. He gave said that the applicant had received a letter from the sign maker regarding technical problems.

Ms. Lightfield pointed out that the building's exterior had been changed and its entrance moved at the same time that the sign was changed.

There was a discussion about the frequency of change for the sign.

Mr. White explained that the Commission was planning to have a special meeting about signage. He stated that he considered the changeable copy signs to be for advertising purposes and that they represented blight.

Ms. Lightfield asked if the same sign was also at the restaurant location in Orange. The applicant said that the Orange location was now closed.

Atty. Zullo showed a photograph of the sign for which the applicant had contracted, explaining that it had always been fuzzy in appearance.

Ms. Light asked whether the only concern was with the lashing and scrolling or whether the size of the sign was also a problem.

Ms. Lightfield clarified that if it were a wood sign, the Commission would only be concerned with the size, adding that the sign's operation was a land use issue and technical speculations were needed about its programming capabilities.

Mr. Wrinn asked if the applicant could agree to do something about the sign right away. Atty. Zullo said that the applicant had already agreed to a reduction from a change every 11 seconds to a change every 30 seconds.

Mr. Greene said that the originally approved time change of every five minutes needed to be adhered to.

III. REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF APPROVAL TIME

a) #16-08SP – AG Phase I – Jefferson/W. Main Sts – 32 units – Request for extension of approval time

Mr. Wrinn explained that this was the larger of two previously approved projects.

b) #8-07SPR – Norwalk Ctr, LLC - 10 Norden Pl – 154,691 sq. ft. office building – Request for extension of approval time

Mr. Wrinn stated that the item also involved an extension of time.

c) #4-09SPR/#11-09CAM – Shawn's Lawns – 15 Chapel St – Proposed contractor's storage yard - Request for extension of approval time

Mr. Wrinn said that the applicant had come in due to a violation and was asking for an extension. Mr. Wrinn said that staff had requested a commitment to landscaping and that the applicant had done a small amount of landscaping. He stated that a violator who requested an extension had a reduced consideration than an applicant with no violations. He addressed the issue of surety regarding the item.

The Committee agreed to grant a six-month extension.

IV. REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF SURETY

a) #4-98SP/#28-96SP - Norwalk Hospital – Hemodialysis bldg & addition to Emergency Dept – Request for release of surety

Mr. Wrinn described the item briefly.

b) #2-90SPR – Harwill Homes, Inc. – 330 Connecticut Av – 14,932 sf retail building (Rickels) – Request for release of surety

Mr. Wrinn described the item, adding that planting and graffiti removal had been completed.

c) #7-08SP/#18-08CAM – Q Properties LLC – 350 Ely Ave – 51,276 square foot commercial recreation facility – Request for reduction of surety

Mr. Wrinn explained that the item involved a 50% reduction request.

V. REFERRALS

a) DEP/USACE Referral – 32 Yarmouth Road – Install new pier, ramp, and float for recreational boating use

Mr. Carsen distributed maps indicating the float with the pier. He reiterated that the support for water-dependent uses.

b) DEP/USACE Referral – CL&P Norwalk substation – Norwalk River – Restoration & rip-rap of embankment

Mr. Carsen distributed maps and described the item.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Charlene Smith