

City of Norwalk  
PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE  
November 3, 2011

**PRESENT:** James White, Chair; Emily Wilson; Joseph Santo; David McCarthy; Jill Jacobson; Mike Mushak; Nathan Sumpter (arrived after start of meeting)

**STAFF:** Michael Wrinn; Frank Strauch

**OTHERS:** Atty. Frank Zullo; Chris Morales; Mark Sweeney, Victor Canseco; Atty. Liz Suchy; Tim Gooding

James White called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

**I. SPECIAL PERMITS**

**a) #8-11SP – Norwalk Hospital – Maple/Stevens Street – New 92,600 sq. ft. addition for outpatient facility and relocated helicopter landing site – Preliminary review**

Atty. Zullo began the presentation with introductions and handed out information about the second phase of the Hospital's expansion project. The first phase of the project, replacing the parking garage, should be completed by March or April of 2012. The second phase is going to be a new outpatient pavilion located on the north side of the hospital. This pavilion will include public spaces and mechanical space; some of the existing hospital will be renovated along with the building of the new addition. They will have to vacate some of the old building. They will have enough parking under the Zoning regulations. The Cancer Center, an ambulatory surgical center and a digestive disease program will all be housed in the new facility. The emergency department will be doubled in size as there is not enough room anymore.

Chris Morales, a representative from the Hospital, continued the presentation. The elevators will now put visitors directly into the hospital as opposed to having to walk across traffic. There will be an enclosed connector from the parking garage to the new pavilion and there will be access to the emergency department from the third floor. The current emergency department was designed for 25,000 patients but last year it saw approximately 50,000 patients. The operating and recovery rooms will be re-designed to meet the level of care that is needed. He continued the presentation with a discussion of the new helipad. Currently a patient has to be transported across lanes of traffic, a building mounted helipad will allow for the patient to be brought directly where needed such as the emergency room or a surgical. Mr. White had a question as to why two of the floors would be unoccupied. Mr. Morales stated that the mechanicals are currently on those floors so they thought it best not to move them.

Mr. Santo asked if the generator would be relocated and Mr. Morales responded that it would be. Mr. Mushak asked if there is a green space behind the covered walkway. Mr.

Morales indicated that there is a space behind the enclosed walkway and there is an opportunity for open space. Mr. Mushak asked if there would be a healing garden and whether the hospital would be seeking LEED certification. Mr. Morales indicated that they were asked to use LEED initiatives but would not necessarily seek LEED certification. Mr. Wrinn said that the applicant has to meet with CEAC and that this application could be on the Zoning Commission's agenda in January 2012. Mr. White asked when they expected to break ground. Atty. Zullo said that they would like to begin in the fall of 2012 but would not be completed until 2015. He noted that this outpatient addition and renovation does not increase the number of patient beds.

**b) #9-11SP – Winston Prep – 57 West Rocks Rd – Proposed 12,155 sq. ft. classroom building on lower campus – Preliminary review**

Mr. Strauch began the presentation. Although the committee has seen this project before the applicant is now starting over. He discussed the prior special permit. Mr. Strauch said that this new application would include a new classroom building on the property. They also have an application with the Conservation Commission in connection with the pond and wetlands. Victor Canseco continued the presentation. He mentioned to the commissioners that much of the storm water that hits the property will be treated. If it ends up in the pond it will be cleaner. There will be daylight in all the classrooms throughout the year. Mr. White asked how many students would be attending classes. Mr. Canseco said that there would be a maximum of 150 students. There was another school, the Clover School that is no longer part of this application because it did not go into one of the buildings on the campus. Mr. Santo asked what would happen to the mansion that sits on the property. Mr. Canseco said that it would stay but there were no funds to renovate it. Mr. Canseco was asked where the students would go while the building was renovated since it would take 10-14 months. They hope to start in June 2012 and open again in September 2013. He was not sure where the students would go at this time but St. Philips is one school that they are in discussions with.

Mr. Mushak asked whether the concrete lining would be removed from the pond. He thought it would make LEED Certification easier. Funding was an issue. Also, Mr. Canseco said that it might have an effect on the gymnasium. They are obtaining their sign-offs and this application could be on the agenda in December.

**c) #11-89SP – Ben Franklin Gardens – 135 Flax Hill Rd – Update on modifications to lights, dumpsters and landscaping**

Mr. Wrinn began the presentation. The property manager for Ben Franklin Gardens submitted an application during the summer but did not attend the Plan Review committee meeting. The committee agreed to allow the requested modifications to the lighting, dumpsters and landscaping. After the approval, the staff spoke with the treasurer of the condo board and gave the board the list of tasks that had to be done. To date, nothing has been completed and the staff indicated that it will submit a cease and desist letter to the condo board. The committee agreed.

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

- a) #7-11SPR/#20-11CAM – NW MFP Norwalk Town Ctr III, LLC – 15 Merwin St – 145,951 sq ft mixed use development 11,566 sq ft retail, 1,600 sq ft restaurant and a 152 space parking garage with a 15space surface lot in a Design District Development Park – Final review prior to public hrg**

Mr. Wrinn began the presentation. Atty. Suchy continued the presentation noting that since the last meeting there were some changes to the architecture. Tim Gooding, the project architect discussed the changes. Previously, the committee had stated that the proposed garage building was a blank slate, the revised design includes awnings that were added, as well as windows and a new paint scheme. The commissioners asked why the cornice on Academy St side was not wrapped all the way around the building. The architect said that it was because the cornice would not be seen from the street and it would be facing a parking lot on that side. Atty. Suchy said that the revisions to the building design had been reviewed by the Redevelopment Agency's designated architect and were scheduled to be acted on next week. The commissioners thought this design was better than the original.

- b) #9-93SPR – Walmart Plaza – 650 Main Ave – Multi-tenant shopping center – Request to modify landscaping plans – Determination if minor change**

Mr. Wrinn began the presentation. There are three issues with the property: the sight lines at the front of the Walmart property near the ground signs, the visibility into the shopping plaza, and safety issues with overgrown shrubs, lanes, etc. Tony Inch, the landscape designer continued the presentation indicating that some of the overgrown trees block the signage for the plaza. This results in safety issues, not just with vehicles but with pedestrians. Mr. Inch indicated that he wanted to remove six trees. The owner's representative, Dennis Valahisis, mentioned that there are restaurants that would like to take over the vacant Chinese restaurant space; however, prospective lessees complain that they cannot see their signs. Mr. Santo had suggestions to improve the traffic in the area. Mr. Santo asked Mr. Valahisis to go to the state DOT to ask for a traffic light. Mr. Valahisis said that he could agree to hiring a traffic engineer to see what is feasible. Mr. Mushak suggested removing fewer trees. Mr. White suggested that the owner's representative work with staff on the types of shrubs that should be there. The commissioners agreed to allow them to cut down four trees as a minor change. After the applicant provides a report from a traffic engineer, the commissioners will review the other suggestions and decide whether any other trees need to be removed.

## **III. DEEP/ARMY CORPS REFERRALS**

- a) DEEP/AC – 11 Rowayton Av – Install dock for recreational purposes & retain seawall**

Mr. McCarthy recused himself and left the room. Mr. Strauch stated that this was a typical single family request for a dock with no zoning issues. The commissioners did not request to see the plans.

#### **IV. REVIEW OF PUBLIC HEARING**

Mr. McCarthy returned to the room.

**a) #13-11CAM/#5-11SP – AMEC Carting – 1 Crescent Street – Modify existing transfer station by adding tonnage, additional haulers – Review of public hearing**

Mr. Wrinn began the presentation. Staff received a follow-up memo from the Dept. of Public Works (“DPW”) which commented on some items that were a concern. The commissioners have until December 2, 2011 to vote with an additional 35 days that could be requested for an extension. There was a discussion about Crescent St. which had been a through street when AMEC Carting opened but is now closed. Most of the commissioners did not believe this would change. There was concern that if the tonnage would increase then the number of trucks would increase as well. Mr. Mushak’s concern was that if this application was made with an existing violation then were the commissioners obligated to proceed with the application. The memo from DPW stated that the site is not in conformance with the state permit. There was a lengthy discussion. Mr. Mushak said that he had asked these questions since August 18, 2011. The commissioners decided to ask advice from Corporation Counsel as to whether they have the authority to act on the application since the applicant is in violation of a state permit. Mr. Wrinn said that the staff would ask for an extension of time or the commissioners would have to hold a special meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Diana Palmentiero