

CITY OF NORWALK
PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE
April 11, 2013

PRESENT: Jill Jacobson, Chair; Jim White; Emily Wilson; Joseph Santo; Nathan Sumpter; Mike Mushak; Mike O'Reilly; Adam Blank (arrived at 8:25 p.m.)

STAFF: Michael Greene; Frank Strauch; Adam Carsen

OTHERS: Atty Frank Zullo; Atty Steven Grushkin; Michael Glynn; Erick Anderson; Richard Pearson; Atty Al Vasko

Jill Jacobson called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

I. SITE PLAN REVIEWS & COASTAL SITE PLAN REVIEWS

a) #6-13CAM - LaVigna - 40 Shorefront Park - New single family residence - Preliminary review

Mr. Carsen began the presentation by showing the commissioners a map of the property. The house has flood damage so it will be torn down. He also showed the commissioners the drawing of the new house. It will be a 2.5 story house in a B residential zone and is in a flood zone. The house will be built on piers except for the garage. It will meet the higher flood zone requirements. It will also have drainage improvements which include galleries to catch the run-off from the house and French drains. He mentioned that the public hearing is at the discretion of the commissioners.

Mr. Mushak asked whether the drainage improvements were suggested by staff or brought to them by the applicant. Mr. Carsen said it was in the drainage report. Mr. Strauch said they usually suggest it. The driveway would be pervious.

The commissioners waived the public hearing.

b) #7-09SPR - Norwalk Community Health Center - 120 CT. Ave - Health center - Release of maintenance surety

Mr. Carsen began the presentation by showing the commissioners some pictures of the property when it was almost finished. Staff recommended the release of surety.

Mr. Mushak asked Mr. Strauch whether he had gone to the property and seen a tree behind the donut shop that had died about two years ago. He was concerned about releasing the surety. Mr. Greene said the tree should be in. The staff would look at it before the Zoning Commission meeting the following week.

c) X-13SPR - Merritt 7 Venture LLC - Merritt 7 101- 601 - Site lighting replacement project - Determination of minor change

Mr. Strauch began the presentation. The managing agent has been doing a lot of upgrades to the site. This application is for the site lighting. The poles and lights

would be new and refract downward which would prevent spillover into adjacent properties. The current lighting is 30 years old. The commissioners considered it a minor change.

d) 9-11SPR/#22-11CAM - North Water, LLC - 20 N. Water St - 5 story, 133,035 sf mixed use development with 108 units, 17,500 sf retail, 3,200 sf restaurant & related amenities - Request to modify plan to revise first floor elevation to comply with new FEMA flood maps & related changes - Determine if minor change

Mr. Greene began the presentation. Because of FEMA's new flood height requirements the applicant will have to raise its floors on the project. Mr. Greene told Mr. O'Reilly, who had asked the question that the Flood Hazard zone regulations would change in July 2013. The applicant has added some steps and raised the sidewalks. Although the windows come down to the floor they would look a little higher from street level.

Mr. Mushak commented that the funding for the lighting underneath the railroad bridge had been approved by the Common Council. Mr. Greene said he was not sure whether it was that lighting or the lighting under the bridge at I-95 that had been approved. It could have been both.

The commissioners agreed it was a minor change.

II. SPECIAL PERMITS

a) #3-13SP - First Taxing District - 34 Grandview Ave - Water tower & pump station replacement - Final review prior to public hearing

Mr. Greene said that the public hearing had been postponed until May. However, Atty Zullo was present to answer any questions that the commissioners still had. He also said that the suggestion for having a sign on the water tower could only be done if the Zoning Commission changed their regulations. Mr. White questioned who would be responsible for re-painting the sign when it was needed.

Mr. Mushak said that he would like the regulations to be changed, especially since his letter about painting on the water tower had been well-received. Mr. Greene thought that the regulations could be changed even while the tower is being constructed. Mr. Santo did not think that they should require the applicant to paint the sign. Mr. Mushak said that his letter was well-received by many people, including the Mayor. He again stated that since the water tower would have to be painted in order to be maintained, it shouldn't be a problem to paint it with "Welcome to Norwalk." Atty Zullo was concerned about how high the letters would have to be so that they could be seen from I-95. Mr. Greene said they could get some pictures of other water towers that had letters on them. Mr. Mushak told Atty Zullo that some of the commissioners would welcome a request from the applicant to change the regulations.

This applicant would be on the May Zoning Commission agenda.

At this point, Mr. Mushak and Mr. Santo began to have a disagreement about the lack of civility of the meeting. Mr. White also added that he did not think that the conversation would continue since this was not something they would be working on at this time. Mr. Mushak thought that some of the commissioners were saying untrue things.

b) #4-13SP - Shelter Development, LLC - 162 New Canaan Ave - 90 unit
congregate housing and assisted living facility - Preliminary review

Mr. Strauch began the presentation by showing the commissioners a map of the property and describing the project. It would be a 90 unit residential development, specifically for assisted living and Alzheimer's care. Two parcels of land would be combined to make a total of 4.25 acres. He also noted that that the staff had requested a model for this project. The applicant still had to attend a CEAC meeting as well as other sign-offs.

Atty Grushkin continued the presentation. He said that this was a good project for Norwalk. He explained where the property was and that about 1 acre of the 4.25 acreage would be given to the Norwalk Land Trust. It could be used as a conservation area or a buffer from the neighbors. He described what this residential property would do for the city. He also described the benefits to the city in connection with tax revenues, burdens to the city, and adding jobs during and after the project is completed. He mentioned that there are not enough of these facilities in the area. He believed that they had complied with all the necessary requirements. He also explained how the facility was near the Merritt Parkway which was important. They have spoken with the neighbors who are in favor of the project. There would also be proper screening. Mr. O'Reilly asked who the neighbors were. He said they were residential. Ms. Jacobson asked if anyone would have access to the land given to the Norwalk Land Trust. Mr. Grushkin said that it would be up to the city to decide.

Mr. Mushak asked about the mobility of the residents. Mr. Glynn said that most were not mobile. Vans were provided to allow the residents to get out into the community but they do not walk much. Mr. Mushak stated that the views from the site were striking. He said that you could see the hospital and many of the church steeples. He hoped the Norwalk Land Trust would use the views. On his site visit, he noticed there were no sidewalks. He wondered if the applicant had looked into this. Atty Grushkin said that there was a bus route on Rt. 123. Mr. Mushak said that there was a way to walk through Woodacre Road in the back of the property, through the land trust. He made some suggestions on how to have a route from the property to the business area on Route 123. Atty Grushkin said that the applicant could reserve an easement from the site through the land trust. He also noted that the Zoning Department staff has been a pleasure to work with. They have been helpful to work with and did a terrific job with the application.

Mr. Sumpter asked what the cost would be for the assisted living part of the facility. Mr. Glynn said that it could be between \$3500 - \$7000 per month, depending on the units and the level of care. Mr. Santo asked whether they had kitchenettes and cafeterias if the residents do not want to cook. Mr. Glynn said they do have kitchenettes but the residents don't usually use them. The monthly rent includes three meals per

day. Ms. Wilson asked whether the residents moved to the Alzheimer's section. Mr. Glynn said that if they are a wandering risk, they would move. Mr. Sumpter asked whether there was an age limitation. Atty. Grushkin reminded him that the regulations said that it was 60 years old and older.

Erick Anderson, the architect on the project, continued the presentation. The inspiration for the building was local Victorian architecture. He explained the architecture and how it would help to break down the mass of the structure especially since it would be in a residential neighborhood. He showed the commissioners some of the renderings of the building. Mr. Anderson answered Mr. Santo's question about the square footage of the building with 70,000 sq. ft. The commissioners did not think that the building would be seen from the street. Mr. Anderson explained the courtyards at the building. There would be an Alzheimer's garden.

Richard Pearson, the traffic engineer on the project, continued the presentation. He gave a description of some of the other projects that his firm has worked on in the past. They are familiar with the traffic patterns for these types of facilities. Most of the traffic generated is from employees because there are not many visitors. He said that the employee shift changes are not at the typical rush hour times because they are in the early morning, mid-afternoon and late nights. They studied some of the traffic signals in the area. Mr. Mushak asked whether there were sensors on the traffic signals. Mr. Pearson was not sure and said that he would check it. Mr. Santo asked about the service level coming out of the site. He also asked whether the wall going into the driveway would be re-built. Mr. Pearson said it would. He then saw what the treatment would look like for the wall and was happy with it. The driveway would be re-built and widened. They were working with the Fire Department to change it.

Mr. Greene told the commissioners that this would be on the Zoning Commission agenda in May. The model should be delivered 10 days before the public hearing.

There was a discussion about the walk behind the building. Some commissioners thought the hill was a problem for some residents and employees.

III. REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF APPROVAL TIME

a) #9-06SP - 110 Richards Ave LLC - 110 Richards Avenue - Third story, 13,056 sq. ft office addition - Request for 1 year extension of approval time

Mr. Carsen began the presentation. The applicant had received their approval in 2007, and there was a slight modification in 2010. Taxes have been paid and there are no zoning issues. This is the applicant's sixth request.

Mr. Sumpter questioned why the approval was being extended again. Mr. Carsen said that the building is 30% occupied and the owner is doing his own repairs which has been costly. Atty Zullo, the attorney for the applicant, continued the presentation. He confirmed what Mr. Carsen had said and added that the applicant moved his factory to Norwalk. He explained how the applicant had gotten his application approval and that the property was not in good shape and empty for a long time. The applicant also repaired the whole roof. Mr. White explained that it may seem

like the economy had bounced back but that it had not reached Norwalk. It was still difficult for companies to obtain financing.

b) #2-09SPR - Tilly - 25 - 29 Bouton Street - 12 unit multifamily development - Request for 1 year extension of approval time

Mr. Strauch began the presentation. He oriented the commissioners on the plans. This would be the fourth request for an extension. The applicant had paid their taxes and there had been no updates to the zoning regulations. The applicant had financing problems because market conditions had not been helpful. Atty Vasko also spoke on behalf of his client. He said that the applicant had his contractor meet with Mr. Strauch on this matter.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Diana Palmentiero