

**CITY OF NORWALK  
PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE  
June 13, 2013**

Jill Jacobson called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Jill Jacobson, Chair; James White; Nathan Sumpter; Adam Blank; Michael O'Reilly; Mike Mushak; Emily Wilson; Joseph Santo

**STAFF:** Mike Wrinn; Dori Wilson; Adam Carsen

**OTHERS:** Atty John Bove; Do H. Chung; Chris D'Angelis; Mike Galante; Alan Lo; Bob Hart; Atty Liz Suchy; Tim Sheehan

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

**a) #12-13CAM – Jeff Titus – 52 Harborview Av – New single family residence – Preliminary review**

Adam Carsen began the presentation. This single family home had been damaged by Superstorm Sandy. He told the commissioners that the applicant had previously been before the Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) for variances for setback, coverage and height. The applicant planned to build according to the new flood requirements. The house would have breakaway walls underneath it since the house is on pillars. The applicant is proposing drainage improvements which Mr. Carsen explained to the commissioners. Mr. Sumpter had questions about the height of the house. Mr. Mushak asked about other houses and whether they all needed variances for height. Mr. Wrinn said that some of the houses did need a variance. Mr. Carsen said that the commissioners could decide whether to require a public hearing for this application. They decided to waive the public hearing.

**SPECIAL PERMITS**

**a) #6-13SP/#10-13CAM - R. Grosvenor Ely - 71 & 77 Rowayton Ave – Proposed 8 unit multifamily development –Preliminary review**

Mr. Carsen began the presentation by showing the commissioners an aerial map of the property. He described the current property which had an office building that was to be demolished. The marina would keep a small office on the property. There would be a public access way to the property similar to the one at 55 Rowayton Avenue.

Atty Bove, the attorney for the applicants, continued the presentation by handing out photos of the property to the commissioners. He explained how there were two parcels of land that were to be joined so that 8 condominiums could be built. The marina would continue to be maintained. He described the use as a “lighter use” than is currently

being used. The residents would be given the first rights to boat slips. There would be a plaza in front. The commercial building that was on the property was damaged, and the new building would comply with all elevation standards. The parking garage was underneath the building.

Do H. Chung, the architect on the project, continued the presentation by explaining the different levels of the building. The second floor was to be the main floor and the third floor would be where the bedrooms were. The boat slips were to be maintained and the condos would be where the existing office space was. The building would be a lighter color.

Mr. White asked where the dumpsters would be placed. Atty Bove said that the applicant owned a neighboring property where the dumpsters would go which he showed the commissioners on a map. Mr. White asked if it was near the public access. Atty Bove said that it would be screened. Mr. O'Reilly asked what would happen if the property is sold. Atty Bove said they would grant a perpetual easement for the dumpster. There was then a discussion about when the application would be set for a public hearing which could possibly be July 17.

Mr. Mushak asked about the drainage on the property which Mr. D'Angelis, the engineer on the project, answered. He said that the water would be held on site with a small catch basin. Mr. Sumpter asked about the public access to the plaza which Mr. D'Angelis said would be a deeded access that would be filed with the City Clerk's office. Ms. Wilson asked if the public access would connect to other areas of public access. Atty Bove said it was currently staggered and that all new areas of public access are not connected yet. All new developments have public access. Mr. Blank asked the traffic engineer, Mike Galante, about the sight lines for the garage under the building. Mr. Galante said that they were recommending all way stop signs because of the sight lines. Mr. Mushak asked about cut off lighting. Mr. D'Angelis explained how the public access would be lit. He also showed them the lighting plan. Mr. Mushak asked how they would discourage people from hanging out at night in the public access areas. Atty Bove said that a plan had previously been developed by a condominium in the area with help from the Zoning Commission at the time. They would follow that plan. The applicant would also maintain water uses. Mr. D'Angelis told the commissioners that a fence would be added to the public access areas since there currently none.

**b) #X-13SP – Norwalk Public Schools – Naramake Elementary School – King St – Construction of 4 additional classrooms – Preliminary review**

Mr. Wrinn began the presentation by orienting the commissioners to where the school was located on a map. With the addition there would be a storage floor below it. He then continued by discussing the changes that would be made to the parking area because of issues with traffic. Currently there are only 3 buses that bring children to the school. He explained the proposed traffic plan. He then told the commissioners that this application would require a public hearing.

Mr. Lo continued the presentation. He explained that part of the renovation would be to upgrade to make things compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA compliant”). At the request of the school, they are adding on the traffic control plan. Mr. Wrinn asked about the three lanes of traffic that were being proposed for drop off and pick up of the children. Mr. Lo said that it would be difficult and would need parental and teacher supervision. There were questions as to whether all three lanes would be used as drop off lanes. Mr. Lo said that the lanes would be used for passing during the drop off times. Mr. Blank questioned whether it would be a good idea for the lanes to be three lanes wide in a certain section. Mr. Santo showed the other commissioners where the parents were parking every single day since he lived so close to the school. They parked on the curbs, etc. He also said that he and Mr. Greene had a meeting with the principal of the school to determine what could be done. Mr. White thought that the police should be involved. Mr. Santo suggested that there should be a canopy over the sidewalk where the kids would be walking into the school. Mr. Lo did not think it would be possible with budgetary restraints. Mr. Blank wondered how many cars are dropping off and picking up their kids from the school. Mr. Santo explained that currently the road in front of the school is only for the buses and this is why the parents park their cars in the neighborhood.

Mr. Mushak discussed the fact that Strawberry Hill was to be repaved based on a plan which the Planning and Zoning Department paid for. The repaving would include bike lanes. He wanted to encourage bicycling to school by the children who could not walk to school. The commissioners thought there should be a management plan and that the school should have personnel outside to help with the pickup and drop offs. Mr. Lo thought the plan helped the morning drop-off but might not help the afternoon pickups. He also said that they wanted to start construction in the fall so that it could be completed by the following fall. Mr. Mushak suggested adding a crosswalk to have kids come straight into the school. The commissioners also thought they may need a crossing guard. Mr. Sumpter thought that there needed to be revisions to the proposed plan. The commissioners agreed that revisions would be necessary and Mr. White thought it would be a good idea to have a member of the Board of Education at a meeting. Mr. Blank wondered if there would be any problems with the teachers leaving the school at about the same time. Mr. Lo agreed that the proposed plan needed to be revised. The plan would be discussed again at the next committee meeting on July 11, 2013.

**c) #X-13SP – Elite Development, LLC – 542 Westport Ave – Request to modify approved plan to add 110kW solar canopy above parking on upper level of parking deck - Determine if minor change**

Ms. Dori Wilson began the presentation by orienting the commissioners to the location of the property which showed them on an aerial map. The applicant wanted to add a canopy to provide solar panels for the shopping plaza. It would not impact the parking. Mr. Mushak had questions for Bob Hart, the property manager, about the flood lights. Ms. Wilson said those lights were installed in error and would now be replaced with LED lights. He was also concerned about people parking in the fire lanes.

Mr. Hart agreed it was a problem. The commissioners agreed this was a minor change.

**d) #X-13SP – 272-280 Main Av, LLC – 272-289 Main Ave – 108,209 sf retail: B.J.'s Wholesale & other minor retail with parking structure – Preliminary review**

Mr. Wrinn said this application had been withdrawn. The reason for the withdrawal was that the applicant forgot to submit applications to both the Conservation Commission and the Zoning Commission at the same time. They will appear at the July 11 meeting.

Mr. Mushak discussed the traffic management plan that was approved by the Common Council two years ago. The Department of Public Works stated that it was urgent to put the plan in place. There would be more stringent guidelines for traffic studies including pedestrian and bicycle counts as well as more comprehensive intersection studies. These studies would go out further than the current requirements. The draft plan was submitted in September but has not been voted on by the Common Council. The draft Traffic Impact and Access Study (“TIAS”), which can be found online, would have required any project over 20,000 sq. ft and 100 parking spaces to have three years of accident data with collision diagrams and pedestrian and bicycle counts. He wondered whether the applicant would follow these requirements. Mr. Wrinn said they would bring it to the applicant’s attention. Mr. Mushak also said he would ask again why this plan has been inactive since September. There have been a couple of projects, including Lowe’s, which would have been required to use the traffic management plan, had it been approved. He wondered whether there was a connection between the timing of the projects and the traffic management plan being inactive. He believed that this application would have had to supply the commissioners with more data had the plan been adopted. Some of the commissioners suggested that he check with the Common Council. Mr. Mushak said that he thought it would be best for the commission to be transparent regarding traffic impacts.

**e) #X-13SP – SG Belden – 23-27 Belden Av (former Virgin Air property) - Convert portion of office space to 8 residential units – Determine if minor change**

Mr. Wrinn began the presentation. He said that the applicant wanted to develop one of the small towers on the former Virgin Air property into residential units.

Atty Suchy continued the presentation. She showed the commissioners a map of the property as she went over a background of the property. She said that her client wants to change the tower into medical offices as well as eight residential units. They received a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals in April to amend a restriction regarding parking spaces which now allows them to have the required number of spaces for the offices and residences. There will be no other changes to the building except in the interior. Mr. Blank asked if there was a workforce housing requirement she said there was none. Mr. Mushak noted that this would be a mixed use building. The commissioners agreed that it was a minor change.

## II. REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF APPROVAL TIME

### a) #6-08SPR/#16-08CAM - POKO IWSR Developers – Wall St/Isaacs St - Wall St Place mixed use development –Request for 1 year extension of approval time

Dori Wilson began the presentation by orienting the commissioners as to the location of the property. She told the commissioners that the applicant had received their initial approval in 2008 and were now asking for another extension. She said that the applicant had all of its financing, except for funding from the federal government. She noted that there was a letter addressing this in the file.

Tim Sheehan, from the Redevelopment Agency, explained how the applicant has until September 2014 to obtain certificates of completion from the Redevelopment Agency. Mr. Santo asked if they were currently in compliance with the Land Disposition Agreement (“LDA”). He said they were. Mr. Blank was concerned that they had to be completed by September 2014. They could get another extension. Mr. White asked Mr. Sheehan whether the extension should be granted and he said yes. The commissioners agreed to another 6 month extension. Mr. Sheehan noted that the applicant wanted to start demolishing the current building. However, the Redevelopment Agency did not want that to happen if they could not put up a new building in its place. Mr. Blank asked what would happen to the land if the applicant did not meet all the requirements under the LDA. Atty Suchy explained what she knew about the financing as she had been retained by the applicant two days prior to this meeting. The applicant does have 80% of the financing; however, when she asked why they did not want to start the project, they said it was because they did not want to have a vacant lot. She also said that she would tell the applicant that the property should be maintained. Mr. Santo asked whether the applicant had received grant money from the state. Mr. Sheehan said it was awarded but he did not know whether it was received. Mr. Sumpter asked whether the applicant owed the Redevelopment Agency money. Mr. Sheehan said they were working that out. Dori Wilson reminded the commissioners that, although the approval was granted in 2008, the applicant had been in the appeals process until 2010. The extensions had been granted since 2010, not 2008. Mr. Mushak had a question about an article that was in *The Hour*. Mr. Santo asked for clarification about the current approval’s extension. Dori Wilson said that it would expire on June 20, 2013 but that it would now be extended through December 20, 2013.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Diana Palmentiero