

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE
September 12, 2013**

PRESENT: Jill Jacobson, Chair; Emily Wilson; Mike Mushak; Linda Kruk; Nathan Sumpster; Joseph Santo

STAFF: Mike Wrinn; Frank Strauch

OTHERS: Bruce Benfield; Chief Denis McCarthy; Atty Frank Zullo; Aida Latorre; Juan Perides; Michael Galante; Atty David Waters; Atty Liz Suchy

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

I. SITE PLAN REVIEWS & COASTAL SITE PLAN REVIEWS

a) #12-85SPR – Even Hotels – 426 Main Avenue – Modification to existing building and site changes –Determine if minor change

Mr. Strauch began the presentation by showing the commissioners a picture of the current hotel that is on the property. The proposed hotel is a new brand that would be one of the first in Norwalk. There will be some changes to the inside and outside of the hotel. Since it is marketed as a healthy and fit hotel, there will also be a garden on the property. He also showed the materials board.

Mr. Santo asked whether the restaurant would still be in the hotel. Mr. Strauch said that there would be a lounge. Mr. Mushak had questions about the landscaping and lighting. The commissioners agreed that it was a minor change.

b) #10-13CAM – B. Beinfield – 2 Nearwater Road – New single family residence – Preliminary review

Mr. Wrinn began the presentation by orienting the commissioners as to the location of the property. He said it was an unusual piece of property, as it was a peninsula. The existing home would be demolished and a new one would be constructed.

Bruce Benfield, the architect for the home, continued the presentation by showing the commissioners photos and site plans of the proposed single family residence. He described the narrow property and gave a history of the parcel of land. He then described the dimensions of the proposed house and would be compliant with FEMA regulations as well as being hurricane resistant. The house would be constructed on piers. Mr. Benfield also described the different levels of the interior of the house as well as the materials that were going to be used.

Mr. Mushak had questions about the lighting since he was concerned about them reflecting on the water. Mr. Benfield said that any lighting would be low bollards or landscape lighting, which the commissioners could make a condition of the approval.

Ms. Jacobson asked whether the current house had problems with storms. Mr. Benfield said that it had water in it during Hurricane Sandy but it was lower than the proposed house. Mr. Sumpter asked about parking for cars.

The commissioners agreed to move this item to the Zoning Commission agenda.

c) #8-85SPR – Cross St Medical (Marcus Partners) – 40 Cross St – Request to modify parking layout –Determine if minor change

Mr. Strauch began the presentation by orienting the commissioners to the location of the property as well as showed which areas of the parking lot would be changed. With these changes, there would be 10 more parking spaces. He described the changes to curbing and landscaping. The applicant also filed a drainage report which would upgrade the system. However, the increased number of parking spaces increased the amount of impervious surface on the site. Mr. Mushak asked whether the applicant could use pervious pavers. Mr. Strauch did not think the applicant wanted to use it. Mr. Mushak did not think that their drainage plan would help the water especially since some of the run-off could end up in the Norwalk River. Mr. Strauch said that since the applicant was only doing a small amount of re-paving and increasing the amount of trees, the applicant did not think it necessary to use pervious pavers. The commissioners decided that this application was a minor change.

d) #7-11SPR – City of Norwalk – Norwalk Fire Station – 121 Connecticut Ave – Request to replace permeable paving with concrete – Determine if minor change

Mr. Wrinn began the presentation by showing the commissioners the plans for the new Fire Headquarters. At one end of the property, there was a pervious surface that they would like to change to concrete. It would make the training area larger.

Denis McCarthy, Fire Chief for the City of Norwalk, continued the presentation by explaining why they decided to switch from pervious pavers to concrete in order to increase the training area. The chief explained that the firehouse was almost ready to open. They would be moving soon. When they saw the flag flying, that is when it would be officially open.

The commissioners agreed that this was a minor change.

II. SPECIAL PERMITS

a) #11-13SP – Norwalk Public Schools – Rowayton Elementary School – 1 Roton Ave – Construction of gym and additional classrooms – Final review prior to public hearing

Mr. Wrinn began the presentation by explaining that this application would be on the Zoning Commission agenda as a public hearing in the following week. The Conservation Commission would be holding its hearing after the Zoning Commission. Because of that, the Zoning Commission's public hearing would remain open until after the Conservation Commission's hearing and the commissioners would vote after that.

b) #10-13SP – Bender Plumbing – 223 - 237 Westport Avenue – 30,000 sq. ft. retail and wholesale distribution warehouse - Final review prior to public hearing

Mr. Wrinn said the applicant had a meeting with the neighbors and that they had all their sign-offs in the file. They are ready for the public hearing.

c) #9-13SP – 272 - 280 Main Av, LLC – 272-280 Main Avenue – 2 story, 108,209 sq. ft. retail: B.J.'s Wholesale Club & other minor retail with parking structure – Final review prior to public hearing

Mr. Wrinn said that the applicant has all sign-offs and that the meeting will be held in the Concert Hall. A large crowd is expected.

Atty Zullo continued the presentation by introducing the other speakers on behalf of the applicant.

Aida Latorre, the architect for the project, continued the presentation by describing the changes to the proposed building, the sidewalks, garbage area screening, and parking lot to avoid stacking on Main Avenue. She then discussed the green initiatives which included a white roof, lighting and cardboard box recycling. Atty Zullo summarized Ms. Latorre's presentation and addressed the commissioners' concerns from previous meetings.

Mr. Santo asked that the compactor be moved inside the building. Ms. Latorre said that there was no room for it. She also said that since the building coverage was at its maximum, it would not be allowed. The noise level would not be advisable in the building. She said that it had not been done in other BJ's stores. She also said that the sound would be louder inside than outside. Ms. Wilson asked whether there was sound screening outside and she was told there was. Atty Zullo said that they could research further whether they could move the compactor inside. He also noted that the commissioners could condition at what times they could run the compactor.

Juan Perides, one of the civil engineers of Land-Tech Consultants, continued the presentation. Mr. Perides described the changes to the landscaping areas, lighting and the sidewalks. He also went over the recommended changes from the WPCA as well as the commissioners. A fence would be built between the senior housing and the proposed project. The applicant will donate some trees to the senior housing, as well. He described how the elevation of the project is lower than the elevation of the condos. Mr. Mushak asked about drainage off the parking lot of the condos down to the

proposed project. Mr. Perides described the current system and how they were diverting the drainage from the condos. He said that the proposed project would reduce the pervious areas. Atty Zullo noted that the proposed project would improve the water quality from the site. Currently, the water is untreated and ends up in the Norwalk River. Mr. Perides described the proposed drainage plan. Mr. Mushak asked questions about the current system. Mr. Perides said that there would be a “No Parking” sign next to the driveway of the senior housing.

Atty Zullo then discussed a concern by the owner of the shopping plaza directly across from this project. Since the concerns were about the traffic, Atty Zullo then turned the discussion over to Mr. Galante, the traffic engineer, on the project. He described how the traffic signals would be connected to help with traffic.

Mr. Mushak said that he had counted the curb cuts and the number of businesses on Main Avenue. There was some discussion about the curb cuts at the senior housing next door to the proposed project. Mr. Santo asked about the timing for the dedicated left lane into the proposed site. Ms. Wilson questioned who would maintain the traffic signals. There was a long discussion about who would bear the costs of the traffic signals and who would determine what would work. There was then a lengthy discussion between Mr. Galante and Mr. Mushak about the pass-by credit. There was then a discussion about a broken button for the crosswalk at CVS on Main Avenue. Mr. Mushak believed that it had been broken for 2 years.

It was decided that the model would be left in the Planning and Zoning Department offices.

Mr. Mushak then asked Atty Zullo about a state law that allows zoning commissions to be able to request peer review. Atty Zullo said that the Zoning Commission could not request the applicant to do a separate peer review. He reminded Mr. Mushak that the city does its own peer review with the Department of Public Works which is then overseen by the state’s Department of Transportation. There was a lengthy discussion about the traffic study done last year, and the Master Plan. Mr. Mushak believed that zoning regulations should have been implemented based upon these studies but Mr. Santo said that Mr. Mushak should propose regulations, if he believed they should be passed.

d) #3-10SP – Maplewood – 73 Strawberry Hill Av – Congregate housing facility - Unauthorized modification to approved plan without prior authorization to add multi-purpose room

Mr. Strauch began the presentation by orienting the commissioners as to the location of the property. He told them that during a routine inspection they noticed that a modification had been made to the site plan without authorization. The applicant had made one room into a multi-purpose room. This matter would be on the Zoning Commission agenda for the following week.

III. EXTENSION OF APPROVAL TIME

**a) #3-05SPR – Merritt River Partners – Glover Av – 82,700 sf. office bldg
– Request for 1 year ext of time**

Mr. Strauch began the presentation by orienting the commissioners as to the location of the property. The applicant has paid its fees and taxes on the application.

David Waters, the attorney for the applicant, continued the presentation. He explained to the commissioners that this was the 8th extension and why the application continued to request extensions. He also showed the commissioners some aerial photos of the property. He discussed how the state had wanted access through their property in order to make changes to the Merritt Parkway ramps. The applicant does intend to build on the site and hoped to start the project within a year. The commissioners agreed to grant the extension.

**b) #15-11CAM – Norwalk Museum Partnership, LLC – 41 N. Main Street -
Request for 1 year ext of time**

Mr. Strauch began the presentation. Previously, the applicant had been before the commissioners for minor changes to the application. They have paid their fees and taxes to enable them to request an extension. Atty Suchy promised to move the flag pole as requested by Mr. Santo.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Diana Palmentiero