

**STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
APPROVED MINUTES - TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 2020
REGULAR MEETING
VIA THE INTERNET & CONFERENCE CALL
7:00 p.m.**

Via Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81836113238>

Meeting ID: 818 3611 3238

Password: 491826

Web & Phone Meeting Instructions

- If your computer/smartphone has mic and speaker then:
Type in, paste or click the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81836113238>; **OR**
- If not, then **Call-in** using the **phone number & password** provided above.
- Sign-up for Planning Board meeting updates by emailing lcapp@stamfordct.gov.

Web meeting ground rules:

- The meeting shall be recorded and the video shall be posted on the City of Stamford website http://cityofstamford.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=8
- The Planning Board shall moderate the audio for attendees.
- Attendees shall be on mute and will be unmuted when called to speak by the Planning Board members.
- Applicants will have 20 minutes to make their presentation.
- Any applicant wishing to submit written testimony can send it prior to the meeting to lcapp@stamfordct.gov or submit through a Chat message to the Planning Board Chair during the meeting.

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Voting Members: Theresa Dell, Chair; Jay Tepper, Vice Chair; Jennifer Godzeno, Secretary; Michael Buccino and Michael Totilo. Alternates: Claire Fishman and William Levin. Present for staff: David W. Woods, PhD, FAICP, Deputy Director of Planning. Additional Staff Present: Mark McGrath, Director of Operations.

Ms. Dell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and introduced the members of the Board and staff present.

Ms. Dell introduced the first item on the agenda.

PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES:

June 9, 2020: After a brief discussion, Mr. Tepper moved to recommend approval of the Planning Board Regular Meeting Minutes of June 9, 2020; Ms. Godzeno seconded the motion, and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Godzeno, Levin, Tepper and Totilo). (Mr. Buccino was ineligible to vote as he was absent at the June 9, 2020 meeting.)

REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION:

ETHEL KWESKIN THEATER OPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF STAMFORD AND CURTAIN CALL, INC. (Tabled from May 26, 2020): The City of Stamford (the “City”) is the owner of a certain premises known as the “Sterling Farm Golf Course” and a portion of said premises contains a theater known as the “Kewskin Theater” to be operated by Curtain Call, Inc. (“Operator”). The current Operation Agreement expires on June 30, 2020 and the City of Stamford hereby exercises its option to extend the

Agreement for the Renewal Term of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2030. The City shall provide the Operator with an annual stipend, which shall be used exclusively to defray the cost of utilities, maintenance and security bills servicing the Premises. The Operator must provide the City with an annual audit of said expenditures no later than December 31st of each calendar year. The annual stipend, in accordance with the schedule set forth below, shall be paid by October 1st of every year beginning on the first year of this Agreement and on each anniversary thereafter as follows:

1. July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021: \$80,000.00
2. July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022: \$80,000.00
3. July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023: \$85,000.00
4. July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024: \$85,000.00
5. July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025: \$90,000.00
6. July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026: \$90,000.00
7. July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027: \$95,000.00
8. July 1, 2027 through June 30, 2028: \$95,000.00
9. July 1, 2028 through June 30, 2029: \$100,000.00
10. July 1, 2029 through June 30, 2030: \$100,000.00

Comments from Lou Ursone, Executive Director - Curtain Call, Inc.

Though we are not currently able to produce shows here due to government regulations, we have been running our spring session of classes, streaming many of them from our studios here.

Curtin Call will be offering more with our summer workshops, which will be streamed from here as well. Of course, our income on these has been greatly reduced as we cannot charge as much for online classes. (IF protocols change for late summer, we will be ready to pivot back to in person classes, quickly.)

Curtin Call has streamed one cabaret event partially from The Kweskin and our next event will include more solo performances from there as well.

Curtin Call is working with The State to clear us for outdoor performances (like our Shakespeare on the Green we have produced since 2004) by mid-July.

Curtin Call has retained all 10 regular staff (at 50% to 60% reductions) so as not to add to unemployment rolls, and for people to keep health insurance. PPP funds are being used, but will not be 100% forgivable due to our reduced pay plan, but it will last longer. Better to have a 1% loan to pay back over five years, than to run out of money while waiting for more regular income.

Even with furnaces turned down since March and extraneous lights turned off, our monthly utility costs for the four buildings were: April - \$2,978.00 & May - \$3,206.00.

Curtin Call's general liability insurance package and Workers Comp (based on City requirements for the four buildings) cost \$2,537.00 and \$1,118.00 per month, respectively.

Curtin Call's staff has been communicating with patrons daily, processing refunds, or exchanges for the nearly 50 canceled performances. Contributions also need to be processed and receipted for donors.

Curtin Call also used the patron-free time to work on upgrade projects we have not had time for. Even though we have been dark and the likelihood of any virus still being present is next to nil, we did a deep clean and sanitizing of all our theatre seating.

The thought of using off-site venues was an idea in theory, but the costs involved make them economically unfeasible.

Curtin Call has successfully managed the property for the City for nearly 30 years, and are proud to continue doing so. We will get back to live, on-site performances as soon as government regulations allow. We just do not know when.

After some discussion, Mr. Totilo recommended approval of the Ethel Kveskin Theater Operation Agreement Between The City of Stamford and Curtain Call, Inc. and this request has been reviewed pursuant to Connecticut General Statute Section 8-24 and the City Charter Section C6-30-13 and finds this request to be consistent with CGS Section 8-24, and the City Charter Section C6-30-13, as well as consistent with the adopted 2015 Master Plan; Mr. Buccino seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Tepper and Totilo).

The Planning Board also thanked Mark McGrath, Director of Operations for attending this meeting and Lou Ursone, Executive Director of Curtain Call, Inc. for the creative ways of helping the City deal with sheltering at home.

ZONING BOARD REFERRALS:

1. ZB APPLICATION #220-31 - CITY OF STAMFORD ZONING BOARD - Text Change:

The Zoning Board is proposing, as part of the Omnibus Text Change, to amend the current Section 12 “Automobile Parking and Loading Space” and rename it to Section 12 “Mobility.” In addition to parking and loading regulations, the amended Section 12 would also take into account the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists by establishing standards for sidewalks and bike parking facilities.

Changes to Section 19 include moving Section 7.2 “Site Plan Review” and Section 7.5 “Review of Large Scale Development” to Section 19 without any substantive changes except for the updating of references, and adding to Section 19 Subsections 19.F “Parking Management Plans” and 19.G “Transportation Management Plans.”

Dr. David Woods made a brief presentation on the proposed Text Amendment which would amend the current Section 12 “Automobile Parking and Loading Space” and would rename it to Section 12 “Mobility”. In addition to parking and loading regulations, the amended Section 12 would also take into account the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists by establishing standards for sidewalks and bike parking facilities. These changes are intended to implement the City’s 2015-25 Master Plan (Policy 4.C.3 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Improvements) and the City’s 2019 Bike and Pedestrian Plan. All proposed changes have been developed in close coordination with the City’s Transportation, Traffic and Parking Bureau.

The changes to Section 19 include moving Sections 7.2 “Site Plan Review” and 7.5 “Review of Large Scale Development” to Section 19, without any substantive changes except for the updating of references, and adding to Section 19 Subsections 19.F “Parking Management Plans” and 19.G. “Transportation Management Plans.” (These regulations could be amended once the Citywide Parking Study is completed sometime in 2021.)

After a brief discussion, Mr. Godzeno recommended **approval** of **ZB Application #220-31** and that this request is consistent with the 2015 Master Plan; Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Tepper and Totilo).

2. **ZB APPLICATION #220-22 - NGUYEN REALTY, LLC - 302-312 SHIPPAN AVENUE - Site & Architectural Plans and/or Requested Uses and Special Permit:** Applicant is requesting a Special Permit and Site & Architectural Plans and/or Requested Uses pursuant to Section 7.3 to facilitate the renovation of two (2) detached historical structures and construct an addition to create a total of eight (8) units along with onsite parking and ground floor retail.

John Leydon made a presentation on the Site Plan, Architectural Plans and Special Permit.

Dr. Woods made additional comments

The property is an approximately 17,625 sq. ft. parcel located on the eastside of Shippan Avenue approximately 127.63 ft. south of the intersection with Wardwell Street. There are two (2) existing buildings on the parcel, which would be preserved under the proposal. The existing residential building, which is more northerly, has two (2) floors and an attic containing a total of two (2) residential units. The southerly building has two (2) floors. The ground floor is utilized for retail use; currently the Blow Hair Salon. The second floor of that southerly building contains one (1) residential unit. The applicant proposes to restore the existing buildings consistent with their historical character. Also, the applicant would construct five (5) new attached townhouses. Each of these five (5) units would contain approximately 850 sq. ft. of living area.

This development proposal is consistent with the following Master Plan Policies:

S1: Preserve and enhance neighborhood character and quality of life.

S1.1: Maintain existing residential character of neighborhoods by maintaining existing residential zoning district.

S2: Improve mobility and circulation.

S2.2: Support the creation of a safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle circulation network connecting the neighborhood's residential area to local parks, schools, neighborhood business district, Downtown and the South End on the waterfront.

After considerable discussion, the Planning Board expressed major concerns with the applicant's position because the "commercial space located on the property precedes the enactment of the Zoning Regulations that is *grandfathered* and not subject to the assigned density provisions of Article III, Section 7.3(D)(5) of the Zoning Regulations;" the Planning Board focused on the precedent this claim may set for future applications. However, Mr. Tepper recommended **approval** of the two Special Permit requested on **ZB Application #220-22** with the recommendation the Zoning Board only grant a waiver, as necessary, under the provision of Appendix B, Footnote 15.1; Mr. Totilo seconded the motion and this application is compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #6 (Commercial - Neighborhood Business).

[ZB Application #220-23 & #220-24 will be heard together but voted on separately.](#)

3. **ZB APPLICATION #220-23 - RICHARD REDNISS c/o 22 FIRST STREET (REDNISS & MEAD) - Text Change:** Applicant is proposing to amend Section 10 (Non-Conforming Uses) by adding a new Subsection "L" to create Special Permit standards for renovations and additions to residential buildings, within the RM-F Zoning District, constructed prior to 1984 pursuant to high-rise development standards existing at the time, and are currently non-conforming with regard to density, parking, open space and/or yard requirements.

Richard Redniss, of Redniss & Mead, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

The proposed Text Change will help residential buildings located in the RM-F Zone that were constructed prior to 1984 pursuant to Appendix B Footnote #3 at the time of approval permitting high-rise development, and are nonconforming with regard to density, parking, open space and/or yard requirements, to be renovated pursuant to certain standards. The proposed standards are intended to encourage and incentivize capital investment in distressed buildings and the creation of affordable housing opportunities while limiting the potential increase in development intensity.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Tepper recommended **approval** of **ZB Application #220-23** concurring with the reasons Mr. Redniss presented on the need of this Text Change to add a new Subsection “L” and that this request is compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #4 (Residential - Medium Density Multifamily); Mr. Totilo seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Tepper and Totilo).

4. **ZB APPLICATION #220-24 - SPRUCE CT INVESTORS, LLC (Contract Purchaser) - 72 SPRUCE STREET - Site & Architectural Plans and/or Requested Uses and Special Permit:** Applicant is proposing to add new units as well as renovate all existing units, update fitness center, community room, roof top terrace and site landscaping. The total units will increase from 89 units to 121 units. The parking lot will also be restriped increasing the parking spaces from 89 to 95 spaces. The site is within the RM-F Zoning District.

The applicant, Spruce CT Investors, LLC (Contract Purchaser), is seeking to renovate and reconfigure an existing 89-unit residential building into 121 units on the property commonly known as 72 Spruce Street (“the Property” and/or “the Site”). The Site is approximately 1.2 acres located between Spruce Street and Fairfield Avenue within Master Plan Category 4 (Residential - Medium Density Multifamily) and the R-MF (Multiple Family Residence Design District) Zone. The building was constructed in 1971 in an effort to provide affordable housing to serve Stamford. Since then, the building has deteriorated and is in foreclosure. There are millions of dollars of outstanding debts associated with the building over many years (e.g. water, electricity, taxes, gas, etc.). The contract purchasers have agreed to settle those debts and look forward to renovating the property and providing the current and future residents an updated and safe place to live.

The Applicant is proposing to renovate each unit to today’s standards and reconfigure the existing floor area to accommodate a new unit mix consisting of 28 studio, 65 one-bedroom, 22 two-bedroom, and 6 three-bedroom units for a total of 121 units. This will be accomplished by creating a more efficient floor layout. To facilitate the proposed enhancements, the Applicant has submitted applications for Text Change, Special Permit, and Site and Architectural Plans.

CONFORMING WITH THE MASTER PLAN:

The site lies within Master Plan Category 4 (Residential - Medium Density Multifamily) and meets the goals of the Master Plan by protecting existing affordable housing and providing for significant improvements to the quality and quantity of Stamford’s housing stock.

Other goals of the Master Plan that are advanced by this proposal include:

- 3C.3 Maintain the affordable housing stock to ensure that people who work in Stamford can afford to live in Stamford.
- 6B: Preserve existing and create new affordable housing.
- 6B.3: Encourage rehabilitation and sound management of small multifamily buildings.
- 6B5: Enhance inclusionary zoning incentives.
- WS3: Retain existing and promote new affordable housing.

- WS3.3: Continue to apply inclusionary housing regulations to all large-scale (10 or more homes) residential development.

After considerable discussion, Mr. Buccino recommended **approval** of **ZB Application #220-24**. However, the Planning Board shared reservations with the proposed make-up of the reconfigured units in the building specifically with the loss of 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom units. This loss is exacerbated by the fact that only 2% of the BMR units in the building are 3-bedroom units. Therefore, the Board urges the Zoning Board to review the BMR configuration for the whole building as well as requiring more 2 & 3-bedroom units and less studio apartments in the entire building. The Board's concern is that this aspect of the application is not consistent with *Master Plan Policy 6C: Encourage development of mixed-income housing* and specifically, implementation strategy *Policy 6C.2: Promote development of a variety of housing types* (create a mix of housing units that includes housing suitable for families with children); but the application is consistent with the other Master Plan strategies presented by the applicant. Therefore, the Planning Board also recommends that if approved as proposed by the applicant, the Zoning Board require at least two (2) of the existing 3-bedroom apartments be dedicated as BMR units, in perpetuity and that this request is compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #4 (Residential - Medium Density Multifamily); Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Dell, Buccino, Godzeno, Tepper and Totilo).

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Next regularly scheduled Planning Board meetings are:

Dr. Woods made a brief statement that the B&S Carting proposal (ZB Application #220-26 through #220-30) would be the topic for the July 21, 2020 Special Meeting. Dr. Woods also reminded the Board, at Ms. Dell's request, to send any questions, comments, etc. to him as Ms. Dell will be on vacation.

July 21, 2020 - Special Meeting

August 4, 2020 - Regular Meeting

There being no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Dell adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Godzeno, Secretary
Stamford Planning Board

NOTE: These proceedings were recorded on video and are available for review on the Planning Board website at http://cityofstamford.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=20