

STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES #3580
TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 2010
7TH FLOOR LAND USE CONFERENCE AREA
888 WASHINGTON BLVD., STAMFORD, CT

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Duane Hill, Theresa Dell, Claire Fishman, Rose Marie Grosso and Jay Tepper. Present for staff were Robin Stein and Todd Dumais.

Regular Meeting

The chairman, Mr. Duane Hill, called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Supplemental Capital Appropriations:
Affordable Housing / Zoning Initiative - \$94,746

Mr. Robin Stein described the affordable housing supplemental capital appropriation request. He explained that it represents a fee-in-lieu payment for Glenview Apartments on East Main Street of a .60 unit BMR requirement. The \$94K balance will be deposited in Housing Development fund with no strings attached.

Mr. Tepper moved to recommend approval of this supplemental capital appropriation. Mrs. Dell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 5-0 (Hill, Dell, Fishman, Grosso and Tepper).

Zoning Board Referrals:

Application 210-07 – Text Change, REDNISS & MEAD, Amend Article IV, Section 10, subparagraph H-2, to reduce the required parking for nonconforming commercial to residential building conversions in the Downtown Core.

Application 210-08 – 485 SUMMER STREET ASSOCIATES, LLC, Special Exception, to convert approximately 20,000 s.f. of existing commercial office space into 16 residential units and 500 s.f. of ground floor retail.

Mr. Stein introduced the applications and described the project which is located on Summer Street.

Mrs. Dell said she's not ready to change to reduce the parking to 1.0 spaces/unit.

Mr. Stein described previous statements about reducing parking to 1.0 and Board's and neighborhoods concerns as they were just discussed for the Metro Green project. He stated that the studies seem to confirm that 1.0 space per unit is about what the parking demand currently is.

Richard Redniss, Redniss & Mead, for the applicant, said they have been studying parking in Downtown Stamford since the 1980's. He explained that it is important to look at context and scale and how this type of redevelopment has a different parking demand than new development. Mr. Redniss said that under Section 10H, approximately 1,000 sq. feet of office becomes a unit; and this project would create 16 units. He added that converting office space to residential reduces required parking and reduced parking deficits for older office buildings. Mr. Redniss then described that location of the site which is just north of Burlington Coat Factory. He then described the building to be

converted and described parking level plan, lobby and small 500 sq. ft. of ground floor commercial. He explained that the development plan provides 17 legitimate parking spaces with room to add three more. Mr. Redniss summarized the two applications: a Special Exception to convert the building and the Text Change.

Mr. Hill asked Mr. Redniss to put the text amendment back up and walk the Board through the proposal. Mr. Redniss described the text change in detail.

Mrs. Dell stated that she thinks parking needs to stay at 1.25 spaces per unit. She added that we need consistency and if we didn't change it at the Train Station it doesn't make sense here.

Mr. Hill said there's a difference in policy; the Master Plan calls for a vibrant downtown and it is inconsistent to build parking at such high ratios while simultaneously promoting downtown housing. The Board's policy as it relates to parking is not as thoughtful as it could be.

Mr. Tepper asked if the proposal could include unpaved parking?

Mrs. Fishman said she's inclined to support Mrs. Dell's opinion; she'd hate to see lots of housing downtown without the extra parking.

Mr. Dumais pointed out that a standard of one space per unit currently exists under the Special Exceptions for Historic Buildings.

Mr. Hill asked if there were evidence that parking in a building in Stamford is under-parked. Mr. Redniss said in certain instances yes.

Mr. Hill asked where are we in terms of language? Mr. Tepper stated he would support up to .25 spaces to be provided as green spaces with a multiuse ability. Mrs. Dell agreed. The Board members discussed various language and wording of the proposed text amendment and how the site plan would have to provide for an additional three spaces.

Mrs. Dell moved to recommend approval of Application 210-07, with language as modified by the Board. Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 5-0 (Hill, Dell, Fishman, Grosso and Tepper).

Mrs. Dell moved to recommend approval of Application 210-08, with site plan to be modified as discussed by the Board. Mrs. Grosso seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 5-0 (Hill, Dell, Fishman, Grosso and Tepper).

Zoning Board of Appeals Referrals:

ZBA 028-10 – HP Gateway Land I & II, LLC, requesting a variance of Section 15 Excavations to extend the terms of an excavation permit beyond 18 months.

Mr. Stein described the application. The Board members asked several questions to which Mr. Stein provided answers.

Mr. Tepper moved to recommend approval of Application 028-10. Mrs. Fishman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 5-0 (Hill, Dell, Fishman, Grosso and Tepper).

ZBA 029-10 – John Hiden, requesting variances of Section 10A to allow new potential uses for a nonconforming property and Section 12-D parking for a property having an address of 579 Pacific Street

Mr. Stein described the proposed use. He explained that the key wording is potential uses and that normally when an applicant comes in for a variance, they have a specific use in mind. The property is in MP Category 4, and RM-F, existing nonconforming and staff feels strongly that the variance to approve the list of uses is not correct.

Mr. Redniss said this is a very interesting application and that he doesn't disagree philosophically with staff. He then described three properties how they have been adaptively reused and received a motor cycle use approved in a residentially zoned property. He then described existing neighboring uses and existing non-conforming industrial and asked the Board what the other options were.

Mr. Tepper expressed concern about taking action based on fact one individual won't purchase the building because of the uncertain possible uses.

Mr. Stein again expressed concern about the process that doing Zoning through a variance procedure. He said that in this case given the surrounding new development, this has to be studied in a comprehensive way. He added that the Master Plan states over time a need to move away from nonconformities.

Mr. Hill stated the point about process is very well taken and there is a need to find more creative ways. He added that he was unsure if this application is the right solution.

Mrs. Dell moved to recommend denial of Application 029-10 on the grounds that it contrary to the Master Plan, subverts the zoning process and sets a bad precedent. Mrs. Fishman seconded the motion and it was unanimously denied with the members present voting, 5-0 (Hill, Dell, Fishman, Grosso and Tepper).

ZBA 030-10 – Gary Stluka, requesting a variance of Section 10A to allow for the expansion of a non-conforming accessory structure located at 365 Riverbank Drive.

Mr. Dumais briefly described the application. After a short discussion, Mrs. Dell moved to recommend approval of Application 030-10. Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 5-0 (Hill, Dell, Fishman, Grosso and Tepper).

ZBA 032-10 – Greenwich Hospitality Group, LLC, requesting variances of Section 10A to allow the expansion of a nonconforming use by permitting the construction of an outdoor patio eating area and new sign for a hotel located at 26 Mill River Street.

Mr. Dumais introduced the application. John Leydon, Attorney representing the applicant described the request and that it has the support of neighbors. He explained that the applicant wants to expand by adding an outdoor dining area and some new signage.

After a short discussion, Mrs. Fishman moved to recommend approval of Application 032-10. Mrs. Grosso seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 5-0 (Hill, Dell, Fishman, Grosso and Tepper).

ZBA 033-10 – Rajat Gupta, requesting Special Exception approval and variances of Section 12 Parking to convert an existing single-family home into a Group Daycare Home located at 52 Laurel Road.

Mr. Dumais described the application.

After a short discussion, Mrs. Dell moved to deny Application 033-10 for traffic safety issues and site specific incompatibility with the requested use. Mr. Tepper seconded the motion and it was unanimously denied with the members present voting, 5-0 (Hill, Dell, Fishman, Grosso and Tepper).

ZBA 034-10 – Radoslaw Filarski, requesting variances of Table III, Appendix B, Family Unit Density and Side Yard setbacks to permit an existing 2-family dwelling to be converted into a 3-family dwelling located at 117 Maple Avenue.

Mr. Dumais introduced the application.

After a short discussion, Mrs. Dell moved to recommend approval of Application 034-10. Mrs. Grosso seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the members present voting, 5-0 (Hill, Dell, Fishman, Grosso and Tepper).

Planning Board Meeting Minutes for Approval

Mrs. Fishman moved to recommend approval of Planning Board minutes from the April 6, 2010 meeting. Mrs. Dell seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously with the members present voting, 5-0 (Hill, Dell, Fishman, Grosso and Tepper).

Old Business:

Review of Planning Initiatives:

Mr. Stein provided updates on each of the various planning initiatives.

New Business:

Mr. Stein announced that the next meeting date would be the first week of May (tentative) or perhaps May 11, 2010.

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Hill adjourned the meeting at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Duane Hill, Chairman
Stamford Planning Board

Note: These proceedings were recorded on tape and are available for review in the Land Use Bureau located on the 7th floor of Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard, during regular business hours.