

MINUTES OF PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING #3287
FEBRUARY 27, 2001
4th FLOOR CAFETERIA, GOVERNMENT CENTER
888 WASHINGTON BLVD., STAMFORD, CT

Present for the Board were: Duane Hill, Chairman; Marggie Laurie; John Garnjost; Donna Loglisci; Helane Rheingold; and Claire Fishman. Present for staff: Robin Stein, Land Use Bureau Chief.

REGULAR MEETING

Mr. Hill opened the regular meeting at 7:10 P.M. He explained that the public hearing on MP-373 would be postponed to 7:30 PM due to an error in the legal notice.

Zoning Board of Appeals Referral:

ZBA Appl. #053-01 Kenneth & Barbara Sachs, requesting Variance of Appendix B, Building Coverage, 57.8% in lieu of 50% for property at 200 Richmond Hill Avenue in the C-L Limited Business District and R-5 Multiple Family, Medium Density Design District.

Mr. Stein explained that all of the new construction will take place in the commercial zone. He said if the portion of the property in the R-5 could be included in the coverage calculation there would be no need for a variance. The Board agreed that there would be no adverse impact on the neighborhood.

On a motion by Mrs. Loglisci, seconded by Mrs. Rheingold, the Board voted unanimously to recommend approval. Mrs. Fishman did not vote.

Minutes for Approval:
#3285 – February 6, 2001 – unanimously approved

New Business

The election of officers was postponed to the next regular meeting which was scheduled for March 20, 2001.

The meeting was recessed at 7:25 PM for the Public Hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Hill opened the public hearing at 7:30 PM.

MP-373 MARGS, INC. - 865 High Ridge Road and Merriman Road, to amend the Master Plan from Land Use Category Designated Residential, Single-Family, Low Density to the Land Use Category Designated 3-Residential Multifamily, Low Density.

Mrs. Laurie read the legal notice and Mrs. Davis read the staff report.

Attorney John Leydon, representing the applicant, said the notice of mailing had been submitted. He said that in earlier applications neighbors indicated a preference for residential development of the site. He illustrated his presentation with plans and photos of the site and surrounding neighborhood and asked that the illustrations become a part of the record. He said that if the Master Plan is modified the applicant will apply to the Zoning Board for a zone change to RM-1. In answer to a question from Mr. Garnjost, he said the applicant would be willing to consider less than market rental if that is appropriate. In answer to Mrs. Fishman he said that EPB has proposed a conservation easement for passive recreation and that the applicant would agree to reasonable restrictions. If additional guest parking is needed it could be on the street.

Joe Sanfilippo of 19 Merriman Road, representing residents of Merriman Road, said all of them have a view of the subject property and an interest in this application. He said they were opposed to the last two applications for commercial use of the property but they have participated in the design of this project and favor approval. He read a letter from Theresa Holding of 26 Middleman Road in support of the application.

Norman McDermott of 33 Merriman Road said this project will improve the neighborhood.

William Ferry of 21 Saxon Court read a letter from Mary Price of 25 Merriman Road opposing the request. He said he would favor 4 single-family homes on the property but opposes this application.

Maria Hajjar of 55 Merriman Road said she is ambivalent about the proposal.

Dennis Wilkinson of 63 Vine Place voiced opposition citing parking and increased traffic on High Ridge Road.

Howard Mirsky, traffic consultant to the applicants, said he estimates there will be 8 to 9 trips from the site at both morning and evening peak. He said the impact on High Ridge Road would be negligible due to existing traffic.

Elizabeth Goldfarb, owner of a neighboring business, said the commercial parking lot is a private lot and would not be available for guest parking.

There being no other questions from the Board or speakers Mr. Hill closed this hearing.

Subdivisions:

Subdivision #3782 – John Vikstrom, for subdivision of property into six parcels on the west side of Rock Rimmon Road.

Mrs. Laurie read the legal notice. Attorney William Selsberg submitted the certificate of mailing. He described the subdivision and said all lots will have access from Lars Lane and there will be no access off Ridge Brook Lane. Mr. Stein recommended that the applicants review the City ordinance regarding street names.

Jim Studer of 737 Rock Rimmon Road, Rod Davis of 750 Rock Rimmon Road, Barry O'Neill of Ridge Brook Lane and Robert Formentin of Ridge Brook Lane were neither in favor or opposed to the application. They were concerned that there be adequate screening and Mr. Davis asked that screening be added adjacent to his property.

There being no other questions from the Board or speakers Mr. Hill closed this hearing.

Subdivision #3785 – Great View, LLC. for subdivision of property into two parcels on the north side of Highland Road (#26 & 36).

Mrs. Laurie read the legal notice. Attorney Zoltan Benyus submitted the notification of property owners. He explained that approval of this application would enable his client to build 7 residential units at 32 Highland Road and 7 units at 26 Highland Road. He said there would be no net change in the number of units on the two parcels.

Mr. Stein asked if the applicant is seeking to avoid site plan review and Mr. Benyus replied that he would be willing to hold a public hearing for the site plan.

August Lenhart explained that 20 parking spaces will be provided for the 7 units.

John Curry and Jim Amber residents at 42 Highland Road spoke in favor of the application.

Tom Hardy of 81 Highland Road, Rhea Davidson of 22 Highland Road, and Susan Buchsbaum of 29 Highland Road spoke in opposition to the subdivision. Herb Davidson of 22 Highland Road read a petition signed by 22 homeowners in the neighborhood opposed to the application. Reasons for opposition included lack of landscaping and open space as well as the negative effect on the residential character of the street.

Mr. Lenhart said the quarry would be landscaped as a park. In answer to Mr. Stein he agreed that the subdivision could be conditioned on preservation of the quarry and site plan review for both lots. There was discussion about the condition of the property and storage of construction vehicles in the quarry. Sanford Buchsbaum suggested that the quarry be deeded to the City.

The public hearing was closed at 10:15 PM and the regular meeting was reconvened.

Capital Budget 2001-2008 Capital Plan

Mr. Stein summarized the issues raised at the public hearing. He recommended that \$976,000 be increased to \$976,444 in the Board of Education budget for General Improvement Grant (page 53) to reflect the full grant amount. The Board agreed to the change.

Mr. Hill said the Board of Education has not submitted any changes in the priorities. Mrs. Laurie requested that funds be provided for design of an auditorium at the new middle school. Mr. Garnjost, Mrs. Rheingold and Mrs. Loglisci all proposed no funding for this purpose in 2001-2002 suggesting that the issue be revisited in next year's budget. Mr. Hill suggested that the transmittal message explain that the Board recognizes the desirability of a separate auditorium but due to constraints in this year's budget funding has not been recommended in 2001-2002. Mrs. Laurie proposed other cuts which could be made in the Budget. The Board discussed this proposal but no further cuts were agreed upon. Regarding Northeast Elementary School, Mr. Hill said there is no question about funding it is a matter of timing.

There was considerable discussion about Weed Branch Renovation. Mr. Hill questioned the extent of new construction and whether something less would be adequate. He suggested reducing the funds for Façade Restoration at the Main Library and placing those funds into Weed design. It was agreed to move the \$66,000 for Façade Restoration from 2001-2002 to 2002-2003 and to put \$60,000 into Weed Branch Renovation in 2001-2002. Mr. Stein suggested that the Library and the neighborhood should continue discussion about the Weed Branch.

Mr. Hill said in the future departmental documentation should provide more justification for budget requests. He suggested that the departments could come to the Planning Board for a dialogue six months prior to formal budget presentations.

On a motion by Mr. Garnjost, seconded by Mrs. Loglisci, the Board voted 4-1 to approve the Planning Board Recommended Capital Budget as amended. Mrs. Laurie was opposed and Mrs. Rheingold did not vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Duane Hill, Chairman
Stamford Planning Board

Note: These proceedings were recorded on tape and are available for review during regular business hours.