

**STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
APPROVED MINUTES - TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2024
REGULAR MEETING
VIA THE INTERNET & CONFERENCE CALL
6:30 P.M.**

ZOOM WEBINAR

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84331582920>

Webinar ID: 843 3158 2920

Passcode: 813787

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Voting Members: Jay Tepper, Chair; Jennifer Godzeno, Vice Chair; Prasad Tungaturthy, Secretary and Ravi Subramanian. Alternates: William Levin and Chester Salit. Present for staff: Lindsey Cohen, Associate Planner.

Mr. Tepper called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Mr. Tepper introduced the members of the Board and staff present and introduced the first item on the agenda.

PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES:

September 10, 2024: After a brief discussion Mr. Subramanian moved to recommend *approval* of the Planning Board Regular Meeting Minutes of September 10, 2024; Mr. Tungaturthy seconded the motion, and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 4-0 (Tepper, Godzeno, Subramanian and Tungaturthy).

ZONING BOARD REFERRALS:

- ZB APPLICATION #224-32 - RMS 74 BROAD STREET, LLC - 74 BROAD STREET - Site & Architectural Plans and/or Requested Uses and Special Permit:** Applicant is proposing demolition of the existing 123,000 sq. ft. retail building and construction of a 7-story residential building with 280 apartments and 5,722+ sq. ft. of retail space and associated amenities.

At its regular meeting on January 30, 2024, the Planning Board recommended approval of a Zoning Map Change (ZB #224-03) to facilitate redevelopment of this site. The Zoning Board approved the Map Change and now the contract purchaser is seeking Site Plan and Special Permit approval. The Applicant is seeking a Special Permit pursuant to Section 2.E for the review of large-scale development (10 or more units) and Appendix B for a reduced base setback and increased residential density. In accordance with the Zoning Regulations Section 2.C.3, the Special Permit is referred to the Planning Board. The Site & Architectural Plans are not referred to the Planning Board but are provided for context.

The property is located in Master Plan Category #11 (Downtown). The surrounding properties are also in the Downtown Master Plan Category because the site is at the heart of Stamford's Downtown in walking distance to transit, retail and jobs. The Downtown category is intended "to provide for and protect an intensive, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use district. Intended is a full array of retail, office, cultural, recreation and residential uses serviced by mass transportation and integrated pedestrian access systems, always at-grade, enhanced by up-to-date lighting, seating, planting, signage, etc., to assure a desirable mix and integration of people and activities. A variety of scale and design in new construction is to be encouraged." The Special Permit would allow for a residential use of 10 or more units and at a density of 400 sq. ft. per family with a building base that meets the street. The Special Permit allows for a building design that is aligned with the description of this Category. Firstly, permitting a residential use of 10 or more units at lower square footages per family at this location makes total sense - resident shopping, job and transit needs can all be met within walking distance, taking development pressure off lower density neighborhoods. The development will bring more people living downtown, will increase in and out pedestrian movement at the site during the day and night, contributing to an active downtown and street frontage. The building design will update lighting and streetscape as intended for in this Category. The proposed reduction in curb cuts helps improve the pedestrian-oriented nature of this category.

The reduced setback and ground floor commercial space will contribute to a pedestrian-oriented environment integrating people and activities.

The proposed project aligns with the following specific Master Plan policies and strategies:

- Strategy 3B.4: Encourage the reconfiguration of existing office and retail space to accommodate market trends and potential new users.
- Strategy 3B.1 and 5A.1: Concentrate regional office, retail and entertainment uses and high-density residential development in the Downtown.
- Strategy 4C.4: Transportation demand management strategies.
- Strategy 4D.1: Prepare a parking management strategy.
- Policy 4E: Promote transit-oriented development.
- Strategy 5B.2: Implement streetscape and traffic calming improvements Downtown.
- Strategy 5B.3: Encourage quality urban design that relates well to streets and people.
- Strategy 5B.4: Emphasize ground-floor retail and pedestrian activity.
- Policy 6B: Create new affordable housing.
- Policy 6C: Encourage development of mixed-income housing.

Ms. Cohen made introductory comments and introduced Mr. Redniss.

Richard Redniss, along with Raymond Mazzeo, Redniss & Mead, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After considerable discussion, Mr. Levin recommended approval of **ZB Application #224-32** with a request that the parking for Ferguson Library be considered an important part of the project and finds that this request is in general harmony with Master Plan Category #11 (Downtown) and is aligned with the Master Plan Strategies and Policies listed above; Ms. Godzeno seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Tepper, Godzeno, Levin, Subramanian and Tungaturthy).

2. **ZB APPLICATION #224-33 - RAYMOND MAZZEO, REDNISS & MEAD representing 460 SUMMER STREET, LLC & 460 SUMMER, LLC - 460 SUMMER STREET - Site & Architectural Plans and/or Requested Uses and Special Permit:** Applicant is seeking to convert an existing 5-story Class B office building consisting of 28,279 sq. ft. into forty (40) apartments with associated parking and amenities.

The property is located in Master Plan Category #11 (Downtown). The Applicant is requesting a Special Permit pursuant to Section 10.H of the Zoning Regulations to allow for the conversion of a commercial building to residential building in certain districts. In accordance with the Zoning Regulations Section 2.C.3, the Special Permit is referred to the Planning Board. The Zoning Regulations do not require Site & Architectural Plans to be referred to the Planning Board, but they are provided for context. No changes to the exterior of the building are proposed. BMR deed restricted units will be provided on-site (4 units). Parking is compliant via 34 on-site spaces.

At the time of the last Master Plan update in 2015, Stamford's office market was seeing higher vacancy rates. In order to protect Stamford's office market, the Master Plan made a number of recommendations including encouraging vacant office buildings to residential uses. This project aligns with that policy and strategy. The Master Plan also notes the important role Transit Oriented Development can play in the growth of a city, allowing for greater density development with less impact on traffic and preserving lower-density neighborhoods from development pressure. The proposed project will help reduce Stamford's high office vacancy rate while bringing much needed housing to our transit-oriented Downtown. Redeveloping a vacant office building also promotes neighborhood revitalization by bringing more people to one of Stamford's primary downtown corridors.

The proposed project is in harmony with the Master Plan and the following specific policies and strategies:

- Strategy 3A.3: Encourage modernization of office space and allow for adaptive reuse.
- Strategy 3B.3 and 5A.3: Encourage redevelopment of vacant Downtown office space for housing.
- Strategy 3B.2: Encourage the reconfiguration of existing office and retail space to accommodate market trends and potential new users.
- Policy 4D: Promote Transit-Oriented Development.
- Policy 6B: Create new affordable housing.
- Policy 6C: Encourage development of mixed-income housing.
- Strategy 6C.2: Promote development of a variety of housing types.
- Strategy 7G.3: Where feasible, locate and/or design development such that 50 percent of residential units are within a ¼-mile radius of walkable, diverse uses supportive of the compact and complete community.
- Strategy 7J.5: Encourage adaptive reuse of existing structures

Ms. Cohen made introductory comments and introduced Mr. Mazzeo.

Raymond Mazzeo, Redniss & Mead, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After some discussion, Mr. Subramanian recommended approval of **ZB Application #224-33** and finds that this request is in general harmony with Master Plan Category #11 (Downtown) and is aligned with the Master Plan Strategies and Policies listed above; Mr. Tungaturthy seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Tepper, Godzeno, Salit, Subramanian and Tungaturthy).

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS REFERRALS:

1. **ZBA APPLICATION #032-24 - MATTHEW & MEGAN MALLOY - 102 ROCKLEDGE DRIVE - Variance of Table II, Appendix B:** Applicant owns a 1,560 sq. ft. single-family dwelling with three (3) bedrooms and two (2) bathrooms and is proposing to add a second floor over the existing footprint. Applicant is requesting a rear yard setback of 29.4 ft. in lieu of the 30 ft. required and a street centerline setback of 51.7 ft. in lieu of the 65 ft. required.

The property is in Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family). The Applicant would like to re-use an existing foundation to build a two-story home. The foundation (and former house) is non-conforming, and, in fact, a Zoning-compliant home could not be built on the lot due to being undersized. Seeing as the home is already demolished, these variances would permit a new home to be built in its place allowing for the continued use of the property as a single-family home, which is aligned with the Master Plan Category. The Applicant makes a valid point that is aligned with the Master Plan, in that permitting this variance would enable the applicant to comply with Strategy 7W.2 to reduce construction and demolition waste by re-using the existing foundation.

Ms. Cohen noted that this application does require a Coast Site Plan Review and introduced Mr. & Mrs. Malloy.

Matthew & Megan Malloy were in attendance and answered questions from the Board.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Tungaturthy recommended **approval** of **ZBA Application #032-24** and found this request to be in general harmony with Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family); Mr. Levin seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Tepper, Godzeno, Levin, Subramanian and Tungaturthy).

2. **ZBA APPLICATION #033-24 - PETER & DINA SUCIU - 28 TERRACE AVENUE - Variance of Table II, Appendix B:** Applicant owns a single-family dwelling and is proposing a two-story addition to create an additional bedroom and a deck. Applicant is requesting lot coverage of 28.4% in lieu of the 25% maximum.

The property is in Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family). While this block and surrounding blocks to the north and south contain single family homes, the area is not very low density. The lot size and setbacks are all smaller in this neighborhood compared to areas of the same Category north of this location. The proposed addition is not visible from the front, nor would it be visible from Terrace Avenue looking at the side of the building due to the proximity of the other homes. This all goes to say that a 3.4% overage of building coverage would not negatively impact this neighborhood or the character thereof and is generally aligned with the existing character, which is supported by the Master Plan.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Subramanian recommended **approval** of **ZBA Application #033-24** and found this request to be in general harmony with Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family); Mr. Salit seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Tepper, Godzeno, Salit, Subramanian and Tungaturthy).

3. **ZBA APPLICATION #034-24 - ROBERTO TORRES representing ROBERTO ORTIZ GARCIA - 4 OLD BARN ROAD SOUTH - Variance of Table II, Appendix B:** Applicant owns a single-family dwelling with a single car garage and is proposing construction of a second-floor addition consisting of additional bedrooms, closets and a bathroom. Applicant is requesting the following variances:

- A front street line setback of 18.3 ft. in lieu of the 30 ft. required. (Old Barn Road)
- A front street line setback of 16.8 ft. in lieu of the 28 ft. required. (Second floor building overhang)
- A front center line street setback of 43.3 ft. in lieu of the 55 ft. required. (Old Barn Road)
- A front street center setback of 41.8 ft. in lieu of the 55 ft. required. (Second floor building overhang)
- A front street line setback of 26.6 ft. in lieu of the 30 ft. required. (Cold Spring Road)
- A front street line setback of 25.2 ft. in lieu of the 28 ft. required. (Second floor building overhang)

The property is in Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family). The existing home is located partly within the required setbacks. The requested variances would allow for a second story to be built that is approximately 2 inches beyond the front of the existing home (creating an overhang). Even so, the property is sized such that there is ample green space in the front and sides of the property that are characteristics of a low-density single-family neighborhood envisioned in the Master Plan. There are many 2- to 2.5-story single-family homes in this neighborhood. As such, the proposal is in general harmony with the Master Plan, specifically the Master Plan Category in which it is located and its intention to provide for and protect a suitable environment for single-family dwellings.

Ms. Cohen made introductory comments and introduced Mr. Torres.

Roberto Torres, representing the applicant, made a brief presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Tungaturthy recommended **approval** of **ZBA Application #034-24** and found this request to be in general harmony with Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family); Mr. Levin seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Tepper, Godzeno, Levin, Subramanian and Tungaturthy).

4. **ZBA APPLICATION #036-24 - JOSEPH J. CAPALBO II, ESQ. representing ALAN & MICHELLE GENN - 57 LEDGE BROOK ROAD - Variance of Table II, Appendix B:** Applicant owns a single-family dwelling on a legal non-conforming one (1) acre parcel in a two (2) acre zone and is proposing to construct a covered entryway to the existing structure which will be located in the front of the dwelling. Applicant is requesting a rear yard setback of the proposed covered entryway of 45.8 ft. in lieu of the 70 ft. required.

The property is in Master Plan Category #1 (Residential - Very Low Density Single-Family). The lot is an accessway lot and the home is not visible from Ledge Brook Road. The rear of the lot abuts a park. The lot is undersized for the Zoning District in which it is located, and a significant portion of the house exists within the required rear yard setback. The proposed addition requiring a Variance is still over 45 feet from the rear yard setback from the adjoining park, which is a greater setback than the current existing house. The Master Plan Category is intended to provide for and protect a suitable environment for single-family dwellings and approving this variance would not hinder that intention.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Subramanian recommended **approval** of **ZBA Application #036-24** and found this request to be in general harmony with Master Plan Category #1 (Residential - Very Low Density Single-Family); Ms. Godzeno seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Tepper, Godzeno, Salit, Subramanian and Tungaturthy).

Next regularly scheduled Planning Board meetings are:

- October 1, 2024 (Special Meeting)
- October 8, 2024 (Capital Budget)
- October 15, 2024 (Capital Budget)
- October 22, 2024 (Capital Budget)

There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Tepper adjourned the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
September 25, 2024

Prasad Tungaturthy, 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