MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
PLANNING BOARD OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER

Wednesday June 16, 2021

Worcester City Hall - Levi Lincoln Chamber, with remote participation options available via Webex online at https://cow.webex.com/meet/planningboardwebex and call-in number 415-655-0001 (Access Code: 1601714991).

Planning Board Members Present:	Albert LaValley, Chair Eleanor Gilmore, Clerk Conor McCormack Kevin Aguirre Edward Moynihan
Planning Board Members Participating Remotely:	None
Planning Board Members Absent:	None
Staff Present:	Marisa Lau, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services (DPRS) Michelle Smith, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services Stephen Cary, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services Stephen Rolle, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Staff Participating Remotely:	Jody Kennedy Valade, Inspectional Services Department (ISD) Alexandra Kalkounis, Law Department Nicholas Lyford, Department of Public Works (DPW)

Call to Order – Chair Albert LaValley called the meeting to order at approximately 5:30 PM.

Requests for Continuances, Extensions, Postponements, and Withdrawals

Continuances

Item 1: **26 Apthorp Street & part of 7 Darrow Street (PB-2021-024)**
Request to Continue the Public Meeting to July 7, 2021
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to July 28, 2021

Postponements

Item 2: **47R Fourth Street (PB-2020-072) – Definitive Site Plan & Special Permit to allow a Cluster Group of Single-Family Dwellings**
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting & Hearing to July 7 2021
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to July 29, 2021

Item 3: **1103 Millbury Street (PB-2020-076) – Definitive Site Plan**
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to July 28, 2021
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to August 19, 2021

Item 5: **5, 7 & 9 Richards Street (PB-2021-014) – Amendment to Definitive Site Plan**

Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to July 28, 2021
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to August 19, 2021

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore, seconded by Mr. Moynihan, the Board voted 5-0 to grant the requested continuance and postponements as noted above.

New Business

Item 4 - 7 Svea Street & portion of 195 Vernon Street (PB-2021-007)

a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Item 9c – 7 Svea Street & 195 Vernon Street (AN-2021-033) ANR Plan

Ms. Smith gave an overview of the application, a multi-family low-rise with a total of seven residential units; the applicant eliminated one unit from prior iteration of the plan and has gone to ZBA for approval of modifications relative to landscaping requirements—they are proposing a landscaping easement between this and the abutting property; executed easement agreements are conditioned for approval; applicant is proposing to make some improvements into the Svea Street right-of-way including reconstruction of sidewalk.

Andy Baum Summit Engineering, on behalf of applicant, gave a further description of the proposed development; stated that there is an ANR plan before the Board to give a portion of 195 Vernon Street to 7 Svea; described entrance and egress from the site; described steps taken to alleviate abutter concerns about existing trees; described construction of sidewalk; described proposed utilities and proposed sewer and drainage easement; stated that soil testing had been done for locating infiltration units and drainage system.

Ms. Smith stated that Fire Dept had a comment related to sprinkler system that has been addressed; stated that applicant is proposed 3 EV ready spaces; stated that ANR plan should be endorsed concurrently.

Law had no comment.

Zoning (ISD) had no comment.

DPW stated that all comments had been addressed.

Public Comment

Elizabeth O'Connor of 191 Vernon St expressed that she was impressed with the plan; stated that she was concerned about drainage, but those concerns have been alleviated.

Mr. Baum described the drainage on site and the recharge system to be utilized.

Mr. McCormack asked applicant to confirm that they were amenable to plantings between sidewalk and site; Mr. Baum confirmed and asked staff where trees should go; Mr. Rolle stated that staff would like to see trees between sidewalk and the curb.

Ms. Gilmore asked applicant to confirm waivers; applicant confirmed.

Mr. Moynihan ask applicant to clarify discrepancy between number of units and rendering; Mr. Baum stated that it was not known at this time from which floor a unit would be removed; Mr. Moynihan stated his appreciation for the EV-charging station.

Ms. Smith clarified that unit is technically not an accessible unit.

Mr. LaValley asked whether these would be rental or ownership units; Mr. Baum stated they would be rentals; Mr. LaValley stated that he was pleased with EV charging and the proposed trees.

Ms. Smith described the concurrent ANR plan up for endorsement.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore, seconded by Mr. Moynihan, the Board voted 5-0 to endorse the ANR plan and to approve the Definitive Site Plan, subject to staff-recommended conditions of approval, finding that pursuant to G.R.O. Chapter 12 Section 12 the proposed grading and drainage within the right-of-way is adequate, and granting the waivers outlined in the DPRS memorandum.

6) 11 Canterbury Street (PB-2021-038)

a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Ms. Smith gave an overview of the application. Applicant is seeking to construct a 29,000 SF warehouse storage facility; they have received a variance from the ZBA for a rear-yard setback; applicant had withdrawn a previous application, applicant has addressed staff concerns from previous submission; gave overview of parking layout and staff comments.

Lar Greene, participating remotely, stated that site would be accented by perimeter plantings and there would be some lighting; stated that they are amendable to conditions of approval.

Law had no comment.

Zoning (ISD) had no comment.

DPW stated that all comments had been addressed.

<u>Public Comment</u>

No comment.

<u>Board Discussion</u>

Mr. Moynihan asked who the tenant would be; Mr. Greene clarified; Mr. Moynihan asked why only one EV charging ready space was provided, and asked for five EV charging ready spaces instead; Mr. Greene stated that applicant would be amenable to that and it could be added as a condition.

Mr. LaValley pointed out that electric trucks are becoming more widely used.

Ms. Gilmore asked how parking spaces would be assigned; Mr. Greene explained; Ms. Gilmore asked applicant to confirm waivers been requested; Mr. Green confirmed.

Ms. Smith suggested adding item 1k "increase number of EV charging-ready spaces to five"

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore, seconded by Mr. Moynihan, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the Definitive Site Plan subject to staff-recommended conditions of approval outlined in the DPRS memorandum, adding condition 1k: "Increase number of EV charging-ready parking spaces to five" and granting the listed waivers.

7) 30 Exchange Street, 35 MLK Jr. Boulevard & 90 Commercial Street (PB-2021-041)

a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Mr. LaValley recused himself; Ms. Gilmore took over chair duties.

Kevin Dandrade, TEC Inc., on behalf of applicant, introduced development team and gave an overview of the proposed project, a live music venue with bar; new site will be 37 MLK Jr. Boulevard and will be directly appended to 90 Commercial Street; described how building will fit into existing parking lot-- project will reduce lot from 136 to 116 parking spaces.

Scott Richardson, Gorman Richardson Lewis Architects, gave additional details on façade, entrances and egress, and floor plan.

Ms. Lau discussed staff comments; asked for updated renderings and recommended planters on the patio; clarified that there will be pedestrian connection from accessible parking spaces to building.

Law had no comment.

DPW requested that proposed catch basin be offset from main drainage line and connected to manhole.

Zoning (ISD) had no comment.

<u>Public Comment</u>

Kathleen Gagne on behalf on Mechanics Hall/neighborhood association expressed her support.

<u>Board Discussion</u>

Mr. McCormack asked applicant to clarify as to the entrance to the building; Mr. Dandrade clarified.

Mr. Moynihan asked applicant to confirm that Fire Dept concerns have been addressed; Mr. Dandrade stated that fire suppression system from 90 Exchange St. will be expanded; Mr. Moynihan commented that another venue is needed in the downtown area; asked applicant about barrier/retaining wall; Mr. Dandrade explained and stated that there would be removable bollards.

Mr. Aguirre asked applicant about type of music acts; Christopher Besaw, manager of the Palladium, responded that it would largely be country acts.

Ms. Gilmore expressed that she is glad to see existing parking removed and redeveloped into something else; expressed that she was pleased with façade.

Mr. Rolle asked applicant to comment on design of gate; Mr. Dandrade described the gate.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 4-0 to approve the Definitive Site Plan subject to staff-recommended conditions of approval, granting waivers and incorporating DPW comments.

Mr. LaValley returned to the chair.

8) 22, 24 & 28 Mulberry Street (PB-2021-042)

a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Mr. Lee Smith, attorney for applicant, introduced members of the project team from Wood Partners – Jim Lambert of Wood Partners, Justin Dufresne of VHB, and Rob Delsalvio, architect from Embark; Mr. Lee Smith gave overview of project, stated that it addressed the need for housing in the city with 371 units; described importance of project location and advantages of the site; discussed the outreach conducted by developers.

Mr. Lambert, managing director for Wood Partners, described the development firm and their national reach and history with multi-family developments.

Mr. Dufresne, civil engineer with VHB, gave overview of existing conditions and site layout, including number of units, stories, and size of parking garage; there will be 20 EV spaces built and 36 future EV-ready spaces; garage will have bike storage room; describe access and egress from the site.

Mr. Delsalvio, architect, described façades with reference to rendering; described common spaces and garage plans; described elevations and floorplans.

Bart Lipinski, landscape architect, described the landscape design elements and proposed plantings.

Mr. Lambert described interior spaces from examples of past projects in Massachusetts; described case study of similar 2019 development in Framingham.

Mr. Rolle described how the applicant had come to the Interdepartmental Review Team and had taken staff feedback seriously and incorporated them into the design; described how staff wanted to see concentrated development given its central location and proximity to Shrewsbury Street and Union Station; described that each street face has a distinct façade and was pleased to see incorporation of balconies; discussed traffic implications and walkability of site; asked applicant to consider pedestrian connectivity of Leo Turo Way; described required street trees.

Law had no comment.

Zoning had no comment.

DPW stated that they would like to see any drainage pipe entering right-of-ways be reinforced concrete.

Public Comment

Derek Lindstrom, Worcester resident, expressed that he believes it is positive for the City as a whole but not for the immediate neighborhood; believes the removal of parking will create a hardship for the surrounding marginalized people; stated that the development reflects a mentality favoring the development over the neighborhood; expressed his displeasure at the lack of affordable housing; stated that it is the City's responsibility to prevent development from taking away needed parking, and that the developer should be responsible for correcting the issue; stated that other developments in the area have put parking in the area "under siege".

Walter Henrise, Worcester resident, stated that he is displeased that it is an inward facing project; asked about site access from Shrewsbury Street, as Mulberry is currently a I-290 access for locals; expressed concern that parking garage may be an eyesore from Shrewsbury Street and would like to see a façade treatment; expressed that he would like to see more greenspace.

Anthony Lizzaro, resident adjacent; expressed that the existing Little League field, named after Joe DiMaggio, should be kept if possible or memorialized along with a playground, as it has been important to the surrounding community.

Philip Palmieri, Worcester resident, expressed concern that the meeting was not properly advertised and had heard from abutters that they could not access plans prior to meeting;

Mr. LaValley called a recess so that staff could investigate the matter of abutter notification.

After recess, Mr. Rolle reported that the agenda was posted in accordance with applicable notice requirements, confirmed that abutter notification was sent, and noted that plans are posted on the Planning Division's webpage.

Mr. Palmieri described the difficulty abutters experienced in trying to access plans; expressed that the garage would be an eyesore from Shrewsbury Street; expressed his concern over traffic impacts; Mr. LaValley stated that there was a traffic study; Mr. Palmieri expressed that he would like to see first-story retail and his displeasure for the density of development; expressed that applicant has not shown

rendering of proposed parking garage and that the public would be surprised by it; expressed that believes there should be further discussion with the community about the needs that could be met by the site.

John Piccolo, President of Shrewsbury St Merchants' Association, expressed that he has heard positive things from the community about Wood Partners; stated that he is in favor of the development.

Henry Asmont, owner of 65 East Central across the street from the development, stated that he believe that the development would bring professionals to the community which is good; stated that he is also concerned about parking situation in the neighborhood and that he and neighbors would be petitioning Councilor Mero-Carlson about the issue; also stated that traffic in neighborhood is of concern; stated that development is not inclusive to surrounding neighborhood and would like to see neighbors to be able to have access to amenities; stated that landlords would like to get together to put forward a petition to the Board regarding the parking situation.

Councilor Candy Mero-Carlson, representing the district, stated that the community has recently lost the battle to save the Mt. Carmel Church; stated that there is commitment from developer and from City to move the little league field, as it is very important recreational asset for youth on the east side of the city; stated that there is interest re-naming Mulberry St to Mt. Carmel Way, and putting up a memorial; expressed concern over lack of parking available for restaurants on Shrewsbury Street; stated that City will be looking at parking situation and the possibility of having public parking at Mulberry Street; expressed that there is still not enough housing in the area; stated that this developer has made an effort to connect with community.

Robert Branca, an abutter to the property participating remotely, stated that he did not receive notice and was surprised that applicant did not reach out to him; stated that he paid special attention to his façade; would like to see retail; suggested making parking internal to hide eyesore; also expressed concern for parking situation, and noted that expanded outdoor seating under COVID has made the parking situation worse.

Alex Guardiola, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce participating remotely, expressed his support for the additional housing units this development would add to Worcester's housing stock; stated that it furthers the City's economic development goals.

Mr. LaValley called a five-minute recess.

Mr. Lambert responded that there is adequate parking provide on-site, 1.4 spaces per dwelling unit; applicant stated that they are working with City to relocating ballpark; stated that they are committed to memorializing the Mt. Carmel Church; stated that he would not characterize development as inward looking and is meant to be interactive with Mulberry and East Central Street.

Mr. LaValley stated that he is in support of exploring parking issue; Mr. Rolle stated that staff is comfortable with amount of parking provided for their use; Mr. LaValley asked applicant to comment on possibility of screening parking garage and why not retail.

Mr. Delsalvio discussed reasoning for location of parking garage.

Mr. Lambert stated that it would be not be prudent to locate residential units at parking garage location, given proximity to wall and I-290; applicant explained reasoning for not having retail offerings on site.

Board Discussion

Mr. Aguirre stated that he is familiar with area and sympathizes with residents about parking situation; asked applicant how parking on-site would be divided between residents and visitors; Mr. Lambert explained that residents would have key fob and closed-door access to parking garage and visitors would park in external garage; Mr. Aguirre stated that he is familiar with developer's work in Framingham and wished that parking garage could be similarly hidden here; stated that he wishes to see some affordable units offered and more green space available to the community; Mr. Lambert responded that there will be green space created, leaving more than exists today.

Mr. McCormack stated that he would also like to see affordable housing; asked for more information about pedestrian connection to Shrewsbury Street and Leo Turo Way; Mr. Lambert discussed how pedestrian connect may be landscaped; Mr. McCormack asked how façade of parking garage may be more appealing from Shrewsbury Street; Mr. Lambert discussed façade and bicycle parking offered by garage and is open to design interventions; Mr. McCormack asked if there was any rooftop access or solar panels proposed; Mr. Lambert explained that there was not any access currently proposed and are considering solar panels as an option and understand their importance.

Ms. Gilmore stated that scope of Planning Board is limited to site plan criteria; stated that number of abutters notified is limited by proximity to I-290 but that abutter notification system needs some work; stated that Board generally likes to see as little parking as possible and that she would like to see fewer spaces proposed; stated that Worcester does not have an inclusionary zoning policy unlike Framingham; stated that she likes stoop-entry to some units on East Central as it is human-scaled; also stated that she was pleased with landscaping design that does not allow for much gray space.

Mr. Moynihan stated that he also is pleased with exterior entry to building from East Central Street; shares public's concern with inward-ness of design and would like to see pedestrian access to Shrewsbury Street through Leo Turo Way; asked applicant to confirm number of EV-ready spaces (applicant confirmed 38), stated that he would like to see it go up to 90; applicant stated that he cannot agree to a particular number on the spot but his team is amenable to increasing the number; Mr. Lee Smith stated that his client is already going above-and-beyond with current proposal; Mr. Rolle clarified that is generally easier to install EV charging later in a parking garage compared to surface parking lot; Mr. Moynihan stated that he is also concerned about availability of affordable housing but that the proper policy channel is the City Council; stated that he is glad to see more housing supply and that hopefully cost will correspondingly come down.

Mr. LaValley reiterated that the proposed development is a by-right use; stated that in other communities there would be an affordable housing trust that a project like this would need to pay into; Mr. LaValley asked applicant to confirm number and types of housing units and how the parking numbers were calculated; the applicant responded; Mr. LaValley asked applicant to confirm that they are the general contractor; applicant confirmed; Mr. LaValley asked applicant to confirm number of bicycle spaces; Justin DuFresne confirmed 138; Mr. LaValley asked how that number was reached; the applicant responded and stated that additional bicycle parking can be converted from parking spaces; Mr. LaValley asked about dog policy; applicant responded that there is breed and weight restrictions; Mr. LaValley asked is applicant was pursuing public funding and was development contingent on that; the applicant confirmed they would be pursuing a tax abatement and that development depended on it; Mr. LaValley asked about

sewer and utility infrastructure; Mr. Lyford confirmed that infrastructure was sized adequately; Mr. LaValley asked applicant to consider existing history around name of Mulberry Street; Mr. LaValley asked about sky bridge and if ground-level connection was considered; applicant stated that because connection is internal, there is no missed opportunity for walk-by retail.

Mr. LaValley asked staff if traffic study had been reviewed; Mr. Rolle responded that there is moderate impact for residential compared to commercial, and that they were primarily concerned about access and egress from Mulberry Street; stated that study showed network can absorb additional trips generated; Mr. Lyford of DPW agreed.

Mr. LaValley asked applicant if they would like to go forward with a vote tonight or take more time to address public concerns; the applicant responded that they would if the Board would give a favorable vote; Mr. Lee Smith stated that applicant has already made sincere effort in their community outreach; Mr. LaValley asked fellow Board members if they would vote favorably; all nodded affirmatively.

Ms. Gilmore asked staff if conditions regarding exterior bike rack and expanded EV capabilities within the garage should be conditioned; Mr. LaValley stated they should not condition it.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore, seconded by Mr. Moynihan, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the Definitive Site Plan subject to staff-recommended conditions and including DPW comments dated 6/10/2021 and grant waivers.

Other Business

9) Approval Not Required

a. 26 Broome Avenue (Private) (AN-2021-031)

b. 1 Topsfield Road (Private) and Clarence Street (Public) (AN-2021-032)

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore, seconded by Mr. Moynihan, the Board voted 5-0 to endorse the ANRs.

10) Election of Officers and CMRPC Delegate

Ms. Smith explained purpose of CMRPC delegate and that Mr. DePalo was previous delegate.

The Board nominated and elected Mr. McCormack CMRPC delegate

Mr. Moynihan was nominated and elected Vice Chair.

Mr. Aguirre was nominated and elected Clerk.

Adjournment

The Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:47pm.