MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER

July 12, 2010
WORCESTER CITY HALL, 455 MAIN STREET, LEVI LINCOLN ROOM

Zoning Board Members Present:

David George, Chair
Lawrence Abramoff
Andrew Freilich
William Bilotta
Vadim Michajlow
Kola Akindele
Timothy Lowe

Staff Present:

Joel Fontane, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Ruth Gentile, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
John Kelly, Department of Inspectional Services

REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)

CALL TO ORDER

Chair George called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

REQUESTS FOR CONTINUANCES, EXTENSIONS OF TIME, POSTPONEMENTS,
WITHDRAWALS

NEW BUSINESS

1. 89 – 91 Malden Street (ZB-2010-017) - Special Permit for Expansion or change of a
pre-existing non-conforming use/structure, Variance for relief of 8 feet from the side
yard setback requirement, Variance for relief of 21.5 feet from the frontage
requirement and a Variance for relief of 1625 square feet from the gross dimensional
requirement for 89 Malden Street; Variance for relief of 8 feet from the side yard
setback requirement, Variance for relief of 28.77 feet from the frontage requirement,
Variance for relief of 2999 square feet from the gross dimensional requirement,
Variance for relief of 1.5 feet from the exterior side yard setback requirement and
Variance for relief of 1 parking space from the off-street parking requirement for 91
Malden Street. David Sadowski, representative, presented a new plan that showed the
parking spaces on the lot, in response to comments from Planning Staff. Mr. George stated
that there was not enough information provided to the Board to determine if the Special
Permit for Expansion or Change of a pre-existing non-conforming structure/use was needed.
He said that the structure may only need variances. Mr. Sadowski stated that he was not sure
if he needed the Special Permit, but that he received information from the Division of
Inspectional Services to apply for the Special Permit. Mr. Kelly said that the structure
appeared to have an old foundation and then perhaps was rebuilt in the 1970’s. He suggested
that the applicant should do more research to find out when the structure was built either in
1920 or 1975 and said that the Division of Inspectional Services has records available with this information. Mr. George stated that the information from the applicant’s research must be at the Planning Department, one week prior to the next Zoning Board of Appeals meeting and also to Mr. Kelly for his review. The applicant requested a continuance to August 2, 2010 to allow time to provide more information. Upon a motion by Lawrence Abramoff and seconded by William Bilotta, it was voted 5-0 by David George, Lawrence Abramoff, William Bilotta, Vadim Michajlow and Andrew Freilich to grant the petitioner’s request for a continuance to August 2, 2010.

Exhibit – Application
Exhibit Special Permit – Findings of Fact
Exhibit – Memo – Ruth Gentile, dated 7/1/2010

2. 3 Forestdale Road (ZB-2010-021) – Special Permit: To allow Lodging House use in an RG-5 zone and a Variance for relief of 3 parking spaces from the off-street parking requirement.

  Michael Burke and Chris Valeri, representative and owner, presented the plan for the Special Permit to allow a lodging house in an RG-5 zone and a variance for relief of 3 parking spaces from the off-street parking requirement. Mr. Valeri stated that his father was the owner of the property and was unable to attend the meeting and requested that he read a letter from his father which read as follows:

  My name is George Valeri. I apologize for not being able to be here tonight. I had planned to attend the last ZBA meeting so the commitment I am on would not conflict with this meeting.

  A little about myself I am a lifelong resident of Worcester and have lived in 4 houses in 61 years,

  My real estate career started in 1988 when we bought out the family trust at 51-53 and 72-74 Wall Street. That made me the fourth generation to own these four buildings. I actually lived in 72 and 7 Wall.

  Since then we have increased our real estate portfolio to 90+ units all in Worcester. They include apartments commercial and rooms. They are managed by my son Chris and me.

  Presently we own 61 rooms in 5 buildings. 21 Litchfield St 15 & 21 Oread St 39-41 Irving St and 90 Burncoat St. All of which we purchased and rehabbed with our own money.
We receive 2-3 calls a day from people looking for a room. Due to the social draw Worcester has, working with people in need. There is a demand to add rooms in Worcester.

We are looking to purchase 3 Forestdale Road. This single family home which we will convert to lodging house again using our money (with no grants or subsidies).

We will do whatever the city requires to convert this building to a lodging house. When completed this will raise the value of the building there for increasing the tax amount the city will charge us.

We so far received a letter from Mr. Joseph Borbone who stated the DPW Engineering Division reviewed the submittal on this project with our plan and it meets the DPW & Parks standards.

The planning board past our plan unanimously with no issues as did other officials of the city agencies that night. Ms Bard did ask for some information regarding measurements which Mr. Michael Burke the engineer answered.

As a Worcester resident I would like to think I put back into our city to help offset what it offers us as residents, I am very active in Worcester but I can’t get into that at this time.

With that concern I sent a letter with our house rules to all the abutters that the city sent their notification to, and in my letter I stated I said I would be at 3 Forestdale Rd on June 28th at 6 PM and stay until 8 PM or later to answer any concerns or answer a questions the neighbors may have. I arrived at 5:45 and left at 8:05 and no one came. We in fact enforce our house rules to the fullest.

At the end of my presentation to the Planning Board a member of the neighborhood and a gentleman who owns a business at the corner of Lincoln and Forestdale testified their concerns.
I offered to talk with the people at the end of the meeting in the hall at City hall. We did speak at length.

The business owner has a concern about parking. He feels my residents will be parking on his property.

I attempted to convince him rooming house people do not own cars. Of the 61 rooms we own only 3 cars are owned by residents and this is over 5 buildings. I went on to say I will post notices on the building regarding parking concerns in the neighborhood. I will also include this concern in the house rules. We received a letter (included) from Attorney Anthony Voci regarding his client Lincoln Dental and their concerns with illegal parking. Quote they have and will continue to tow automobiles out of the lot at the owner’s expense end quote. I will encourage this practice if my tenant(s) disregard the request’s of our neighbors.

We have requested a variance for two spaces. A handicap and a visitor space due to the lack of tenant owned cars. If the ZBA allows I would make parking for 4 cars but they would be doubled.

I would even go so far as to not allow tenant with cars. I do not see tenant cars as being a problem.

I cannot emphasize that enough!

The neighbor had a concern about the type of people that will be living in the building.

I explained that people who live in lodging house are not troublesome people. This is their life style like ours who live in houses.

I would like to say to the board people who live in rooms from my experiences mostly because of financial issues. This does not make them bad people just people who are not financially astute.

In our 15 Oread St we have two elders that have lived in the same room 28 and 35 years.

We have many other long term lodging house tenants.

One of the neighbors asked if he could call our neighbors at our other lodging house locations. I said I will do you two better! I suggested he call Amanda Wilson head of code and then call the property management team and ask them about George Valeri.

Members of the board when any city official calls with an issue regardless what it is we try what we are doing and we attempt to resolve the issue as soon as possible. Feel free to call the above city officials and inquire. I would welcome you to do so.

As for 3 Forestdale Rd we will do whatever this board requires us to do. We are under a severe time issue due to circumstances beyond our control. We started this project in March and had several setback but have overcome them. We would respectfully request your approval to night and make any changes you will require ASAP!

Our latest problem is the seller has granted us many extensions but the latest was shorten from August 31 st to August 3rd. this is all due to they are relocating out of Worcester and the delays we have been experiencing have affected them.
Should you have any questions Mr. Burke the engineer will give the technical answers! If you have a question for me my son, will call me on my cell and I will gladly answer them.

We thank you very much for your anticipated approval on this plan.

George and Chris Valeri

The Board asked if there were violations in other properties owned by Mr. Valeri. Mr. Kelly responded that he did not know. Mr. Alex Fanous stated that he lives in the property at 3 Forestdale Street and that it is not vacant. Mr. George stated that the petitioner needs to demonstrate a need for a lodging house. Mr. Valeri said that his father receives requests for rooms every day and that they own other lodging houses for a total of 50 rooms. He further stated that their lodging houses are located in various sections of the city. Mr. George addressed the audience and said that he did not want testimony to be duplicated and said that a representative should speak for the group. Anne Ford said that she was a member of the Quiet group and that her property has a rental unit and three cars use on-street parking. She submitted photos (Exhibit D) to demonstrate that parking is a problem. She also stated that she was not told of a neighborhood meeting or the guidelines that Mr. Valeri presented. She presented a letter (Exhibit F) sent to the neighbors by Mr. Valeri. She then read a letter (Exhibit E) as her testimony.
We, Anne Hanzarak-Ford and Mark Ford, are the owners of 4 Forestdale Rd. As members of this quiet community we want to express our unequivocal disagreement with Mr. Valeri's application for a RG-5 zoning variance.

We reside in this 2 family home and use the other apartment as a rental unit. Between the 2 apartments we have a total of 3 cars which park on the small amount of curb space that flows from Lincoln St. up Forestdale and stops at Westminster St.

Here are some pictures of that space.

There are 4 driveways on the right side of Forestdale Rd. between these 2 streets.

Come winter and the Parking Bans are applied there is very minimal amount of space for any and ALL neighbors to park. You must consider these conditions are magnified when snow is plowed and parking spaces are shoveled. As we all know, this can spill into trouble during the parking bans. If Mr. Valeri is allowed to make 3 Forestdale Rd. into a 9 room lodging home with only 2 parking spaces this will cause distaste amongst the new tenants and principal owners who live in this area throughout the year. You must also consider the type of people Mr. Valeri maybe renting to.

When my husband and I first moved into this neighborhood we had a few experiences with tenants from other homes dealing in drugs. As a community, we helped alleviate this problem and now live in a peaceful setting.

Mr. Valeri had visited one of our neighbors and had a written statement that he would be at 3 Forestdale Rd. on June 28th at 6pm to answer any questions they may have. I have a copy here. I also have a copy of Mr. Valeri's Lodging House Rules. My husband and I did not receive any such letters and were not allowed to talk to Mr. Valeri on June 28th.

I have a few contentions with Mr. Valeri's plans. If you read his introduction letter it states he has 97 units and is available 24 hours a day but does not say he will provide a phone number to neighbors if the need arises. Then as you go on he states that he wants to convert 3 Forestdale Rd. into a
“9 to 10” room lodging house. His application states “9” room lodging house.

As I have just stated, these are just a few problems that may occur. Mr. Valeri will not be living in this area and will not feel the effects of this process.

On his Lodging Rules Mr. Valeri keeps his tenants responsible for cleanliness. Will he be providing a dumpster? If so where will it be placed? Possibly in one of his two parking spaces? How about rodent control? The neighborhood has not seen any rats since the old funeral parlor was demolished and a dental office was erected. Plus keep in mind that the way he states evicted it implies immediately. In Worcester that can be a long, drawn out process. What kind of disruption can occur during this process?

Please remember. My husband and I pay $1062.78 per tax quarter. This equals $354.26 per MONTH!

This should, at least, give us a space to park on this, now, quiet street.

As a forethought, Mr. Valeri should ponder making his beautiful building into a lovely 3 family home.

Mr. Valeri stated that he understood the concerns of the neighbors and said that parking is not an issue as the people who will be renting the rooms, do not own cars. He then stated that the Planning staff is who notified the abutters of the meeting, sent a copy of the rules and said that they do CORI checks and if there is any drug dealing, the tenant is evicted and their building management contact information is posted in public view. Monica Duval stated that she has three concerns: 1) will property values go down being near a lodging house, 2) will the beautiful trees on Forestdale Road be taken down for a handicap parking space and 3) are there going to be sexual predators in the lodging house, as there are young children in the area? Michael Burke stated that none of the trees are in the area of the proposed handicap parking space. Mr. Valeri said that the conversion to a lodging house use has made the taxes go up in other properties that they own. Phil Davis presented photos (Exhibit H) and said that there is no more than one parking space in the tiny driveway and questioned where tenants’ and visitors’ cars will park. Mr. Valeri said that the people who visit this site will come on mass transit or by taxi cab. Mr. George questioned if the petitioner had considered a three-family use instead of a lodging house use. Mr. Valeri stated that only his father could answer that. Marc Tetreault was concerned with the tenants walking up and down the street and the effect that at rooming house will have on the assessed value of the next door properties. Mr. Freilich asked if there was a law that determined the number of people a lodging house was allowed. Mr. Kelly stated that the owner sets the number and then gets a license from the License Commission based on that number. Mr.
Mr. George asked if Exhibit A showing the four parking spaces is the plan that the Board wanted. With respect to the house rules, note that the clause “10% late fee on all late rent” will begin immediately be removed as landlords must still have permission to enter the room with the exception of a court order or emergency situation.

Mr. Freilich was also concerned about the number of vehicles and asked if Mr. Valeri could give an example of one of his properties where the tenants do not have any vehicles. Mr. Valeri answered that their property at 90 Burncoat Street did not have any vehicles. Mr. Freilich asked if the tenants were at-will and what the rent was. Mr. Valeri answered that a lease was required and the average rent was $140.00 per week. Mr. Fontane clarified that the allowed parking determines the number of beds and that the Board can set the number of occupants. Mr. Abramoff asked if Mr. Valeri had seen staff’s recommendation for 4 parking spaces and Mr. Valeri stated that they only wanted two parking spaces. The Board agreed that it appears that four parking spaces are doable and that a retaining wall will need to be constructed and the dumpster moved outside the front and side yard setbacks. Mr. Abramoff stated that he wanted an engineered plan showing the parking spaces and also the house rules. Mr. Abramoff asked if the Board could condition the approval based on the applicant doing CORI checks for perspective tenants. Mr. Michajlow asked if the applicant wanted to confirm that the plan was feasible prior to going forward. Mr. Valeri stated that they had Planning Board approval for a site plan and that the change in parking would require more changes to the plan. He further requested that the Board allow him to confer by telephone with his father, who is the applicant, regarding the change in parking. The Board approved a recess to allow time for Mr. Valeri to make a phone call to his father.

**Recess: 6:45**

**Reconvene 6:55**

Mr. George asked if Exhibit A showing the four parking spaces is the plan that the Board wanted the applicant to use as guidance for the revised plan. Mr. Valeri said that it was acceptable to his father. Mr. Burke stated that they wanted to be allowed to back out of the driveway and leave the driveway gravel. Mr. Fontane stated that an Amendment to Definitive Site plan would be required for Planning Board approval. Mr. Fontane read from Lara Bold’s memo of July 1, 2010 regarding discrepancies between the rules and state law as follows:

- With respect to the house rules, note that the clause “10% late fee on all late rent” must comply with state law regarding tenants rights including that late fees cannot be incurred sooner than 30 days of a late payment.¹
- Staff also recommends that the clause “unannounced room checks will begin immediately” be removed as landlords must still have permission to enter the room with the exception of a court order or emergency situation.²
- Finally, staff suggests that the lodging house rules replace all clauses that state “violators will be evicted” with the phrase “eviction proceedings against the tenant will be filed with the court “ as only the court can technically order an eviction; it is not within the rights of the landlord to evict. (See Exhibit G)

The Board discussed conditions of approval. Mr. Tetreault stated that he has a very old retaining wall between the properties and inquired as to what his responsibility would be if it collapses during construction. Mr. Kelly stated that a retaining wall on his property must be maintained by him. Ms. Ford said that she did not believe the Board cared about the neighbors. Mr. Abramoff stated that the Board accepted the Findings of Fact as modified by Planning Staff for traffic flow.

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¹ Source: http://www.masslegalhelp.org/housing/private-housing/ch5/what-if-the-rent-is-late
² http://www.masslegalhelp.org/housing/private-housing/ch18/what-rights-do-you-have
and parking. Upon a motion by Andrew Freilich and seconded by William Bilotta, it was voted 5-0 by David George, Lawrence Abramoff, William Bilotta, Vadim Michajlow and Andrew Freilich to close the hearing. Upon a motion by Lawrence Abramoff and seconded by William Bilotta, it was voted 5-0 by David George Lawrence Abramoff, William Bilotta, Vadim Michajlow and Andrew Freilich to grant the requested for Special Permit to allow a Lodging House use in an RG-5 zone and a Variance for relief of 1 parking space from the off-street parking requirement with the following conditions:

- That approval is tied to final approved Definitive Site Plan. Note that the plan has been modified to show a different configuration / number of off-street parking spaces, the applicant must file an Amendment to Definitive Site Plan and build to the amended approved plan by the Planning Board.
- That the gravel depth of the driveway and parking areas is to be approved by the Planning Board in accordance with site plan approval.
- That the driveway and parking area to remain gravel and existing pavement be eliminated and label such on amended site plan
- That relief is for one parking space; provide the four parking spaces on the eastern portion of the site.
- That the dumpster on site have stockade or simulated stockade fencing and be placed outside the front yard setback and outside the side yard setback for the abutting residential property.
- That the height and materials of existing and/or proposed fencing be labeled on amended site plan.
- That a stockade fence be constructed between the existing property and property owned N/F by Luis Marrero and Marc Tetrault.
- That the applicant label existing trees in excess of 9 inches in diameter and label any existing or proposed dense vegetative buffers on amended site plan and not remove any trees in excess of 9 inch diameter.
- That a weekly or more frequently, if needed, maintenance program for lawn, shrubs, snow removal and parking areas be established. Gravel runoff, if any, is to the removed from street as part of the maintenance program.
- That a letter from the company agreeing to the maintenance program above be filed with Division of Planning and Regulatory Services.
- That the off-street parking relief is for a lodging house use only.
- That a minimum lease period of 12 months for the lodging house use.
- That the lease is to include the house rules as finally revised and that the house rules are to be posted on all floors.
- Lodging house rules accepted as modified by the ZBA, referred to as “Claremont rules”, whichever is more stringent and further modified to comply with state law.
- That a Resident Assistant be retained and live in the building to ensure compliance with house rules.
• That the occupancy of the lodging house is a maximum of 10 people, including resident assistant.
• That the contact information of the landlord is to be posted outside and available to the public.
• That the applicant must notify the abutters that were notified for ZBA hearing of the License Commission hearing and pay for notification at own expense.
• At the time of the annual inspection by Inspectional Services and the Fire Department, the land owner must demonstrate that the conditions of the Special Permit are being met.

Exhibit A – Application with plan showing four parking spaces
Exhibit C – letter from George Valeri received 7/12/10
Exhibit D – photographs submitted at meeting received 7/12/10
Exhibit E – letter from Anne Hanzarak-Ford and Mark Ford – submitted at meeting received 7/12/10
Exhibit F – letter to Mr. and Mrs. Tetreault from George Valeri received 7/12/10
Exhibit G – Lodging House Rules dated 1/1/10 submitted by George Valeri received 7/12/10
Exhibit H – Photographs taken 7/23/10

3. 101 – 104 Pleasant Street (ZB-2010-026) – Special Permit: To allow a non-accessory sign in a BG-6.0 zone. Mr. Fontane stated that staff had received an exhibit package from Damien Jacob on Friday before the meeting and was not able to review it and it was not able to be included in the information that the Board received for its review. Mr. Fontane then distributed the package to Board members. Mr. George stated that the Board was not able to review the information and that both the Board and Planning staff needed the time to review the submitted information. He further stated that submittals to the Board must be received at the Division of Planning and Regulatory Services one week prior to the meeting. Edward McCormick, representative for Worcester Sign Co., LLC, apologized for the late delivery and requested a continuance to August 2, 2010 to allow time for review of the submitted information, known as Exhibit X. No testimony was taken. Upon a motion by Andrew Freilich and seconded by Lawrence Abramoff, it was voted 5-0 by David George, Lawrence Abramoff, William Bilotta, Vadim Michajlow and Andrew Freilich to grant the continuance to August 2, 2010.

Exhibit A – Application
Exhibit X – Worcester Sign Company received 7/12/10

4. 1 Kelly Square (ZB-2010-027) – Special Permit: To allow a non-accessory sign in a BG-3.0 zone. Edward McCormick, representative for Worcester Sign Co., LLC, requested a continuance to August 2, 2010 to allow time for review of the submitted information, known as Exhibit X. Upon a motion by Andrew Freilich and seconded by William Bilotta, it was voted 5-0 by David George, Lawrence Abramoff, William Bilotta, Vadim Michajlow and Andrew Freilich to grant the continuance to August 2, 2010.

Exhibit A – Application
5. **255 Main Street (ZB-2010-028) – Special Permit: To allow a non-accessory sign in a BG-6.0 zone.** Edward McCormick, representative for Worcester Sign Co., LLC, requested a continuance to August 2, 2010 to allow time for review of the submitted information, known as Exhibit X. Upon a motion by Andrew Freilich and seconded by William Bilotta, it was voted 5-0 by David George, Lawrence Abramoff, William Bilotta, Vadim Michajlow and Andrew Freilich to grant the continuance to August 2, 2010.

Exhibit A – Application
Exhibit X – Worcester Sign Company received 7/12/10

6. **111 – 117 Pleasant Street (ZB-2010-029) – Special Permit: To allow a non-accessory sign in a BG-3.0 zone.** Edward McCormick, representative for Worcester Sign Co., LLC, requested a continuance to August 2, 2010 to allow time for review of the submitted information, known as Exhibit X. Upon a motion by Andrew Freilich and seconded by William Bilotta, it was voted 5-0 by David George, Lawrence Abramoff, William Bilotta, Vadim Michajlow and Andrew Freilich to grant the continuance to August 2, 2010.

Exhibit A – Application
Exhibit X – Worcester Sign Company received 7/12/10

7. **379 Main Street (ZB-2010-031) – Special Permit: To allow a non-accessory sign in a BG-6.0 zone.** Edward McCormick, representative for Worcester Sign Co., LLC, requested a continuance to August 2, 2010 to allow time for review of the submitted information, known as Exhibit X. Upon a motion by Lawrence Abramoff and seconded by Vadim Michajlow, it was voted 5-0 by David George, Lawrence Abramoff, William Bilotta, Vadim Michajlow and Andrew Freilich to grant the continuance to August 2, 2010.

Exhibit A – Application
Exhibit X – Worcester Sign Company received 7/12/10

**Other Business:**

**Approval of Minutes:**

Upon a motion by Lawrence Abramoff and seconded by William Bilotta, it was voted 5-0 to approve the minutes of June 21, 2010.

**Open Meeting Law:** Mr. Fontane distributed an information package about the Open Meeting Law requirements and stated that all Board members should review the Open Meeting Law information and that the receipt, included in the packet, must be signed by each Board member and returned to the Division of Planning and Regulatory Services at the next Board meeting. He stated that the information included a memo from City Manager O’Brien and from City Solicitor...
David Moore describing changes to the Open Meeting Law. He said that also included is a guide by Attorney General Martha Coakley regarding the Open Meeting Law and the specific aspects of the law. He clarified that this information differs from the Conflict of Interest information and on-line training that was received previously and is separate from those. He stated that the Open Meeting law is a separate requirement which also required signed documents that are kept on file and will be required annually. Mr. George questioned if there were any more items like this that the Board will have to address. Mr. Fontane said that there were no more that we know of, but that Rules and Regulations would have to be promulgated and that the law was in effect as of July 1, 2010.

Sign Ordinance: Mr. Freilich asked if the Board was required to review the new sign ordinance to seek how it would affect future signs. Mr. Fontane stated that the review could be under “Other Business” at a regular meeting or at a Special Meeting of the Board where the information that is being provided to the Planning Board could also be provided to the Zoning Board of Appeals. He said that the Planning Board held a Special Meeting on July 23, 2010 regarding the sign ordinance where testimony was taken and that the hearing was continued to August 4, 2010. He said that a package will be created with the testimony heard at the Planning Board, remaining questions and recommendations from staff, recommended revisions from staff and recommendations from others and responses from staff. Mr. George asked if the Board had comments could they be presented to the Planning Board. Mr. Freilich asked if the staff presentation could breakdown the information that was received tonight as to how it will pertain to the old sign ordinance and the proposed sign ordinance for the Zoning Board of Appeals. Mr. Fontane stated that the sign petitions presented tonight would be decided using the current sign ordinance and that staff would advise based on that. He reiterated that the packet would be created before the August 4, 2010 Planning Board meeting and could be sent to the Zoning Board of Appeals also. Mr. Freilich requested that the presentation sent to the Zoning Board contain photos as an aid to understanding the changes. Mr. Fontane clarified that the presentation included pictorials and graphics. Mr. George then stated that any questions and comments that any member of the Board has should be forwarded to Planning staff or that any member of the Board can attend the Planning Board meeting on August 4, 2010. Mr. George then asked if any meetings beyond August 4, 2010 were planned for the sign ordinance. Mr. Fontane responded that the August 4, 2010 meeting was a special meeting and did not know if any more would be required.

Decisions: The Board signed decisions.

Adjournment

Chair George adjourned the meeting at 7:47 pm.