



## CITY OF WATERTOWN, NEW YORK

CITY PLANNING BOARD  
ROOM 304, WATERTOWN CITY HALL  
245 WASHINGTON STREET  
WATERTOWN, NEW YORK 13601-3380  
(315) 785-7740

MEETING: April 6, 2021

PRESENT:

Michelle Capone, Acting Chair  
T.J. Babcock  
Linda Fields  
Neil Katzman  
Michael Pierce

ALSO:

Michael A. Lumbis, Planning and  
Community Development Director  
Geoffrey Urda, Planner  
Michael Delaney, City Engineer  
Leta Harp, Secretary

ABSENT:

Larry Coburn, Planning Board Chair

Acting Planning Board Chair, Michelle Capone, called the April 6, 2021 Planning Board meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Ms. Capone then asked for a motion regarding the Minutes from the March 2, 2021, Planning Board Meeting. Mr. Katzman made a motion to approve the minutes as written and Mr. Babcock seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

### **SUBDIVISION FINAL PLAT APPROVAL - 205 COFFEEN STREET PARCEL NUMBER 7-04-101.000**

The Planning board then considered a request submitted by Michael J. Mitchell, PLS of BCA Architects and Engineers on behalf of the Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency (JCIDA) and the City of Watertown, for a two-lot subdivision of 205 Coffeen Street, Parcel Number 7-04-101.000.

Ms. Capone read from the Staff Memorandum and stated the application was submitted for Planning Board review under Chapter A322 of the City Code. The Planning Board had the option of not requiring a preliminary plat submission. Since this was a minor subdivision, Staff was processing the application as a final plat. She then said that part 2 of the short Environmental Assessment Form would be reviewed and that a public hearing had been scheduled for 3:05 p.m.

Next, Ms. Capone called for the public hearing to be convened at 3:05 p.m. for a Final Plat Subdivision of 205 Coffeen Street, Parcel number 7-04-101.000. Ms. Capone read the legal notice for the public hearing that had been published in the *Watertown Daily Times*. She invited anyone from the public to be heard on the matter with privilege of the floor. No one was present to speak

regarding comments or concerns in the matter. Ms. Capone then closed the public hearing at 3:06 p.m.

Mr. Urda said the Board should consider the Subdivision Final Plat, and the Site Plan separately. He then said if the Board agreed on the Subdivision, they should consider making a motion for approval, and then Mr. Altieri, P.E. of BCA architects could move on to the next item on the agenda which was the Site Plan application.

The Planning Board then considered each question on Part 2 of the Short Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) one-by-one, answering no to all of them. Ms. Fields made a motion for a negative declaration for the proposed subdivision pursuant to the requirements of SEQRA. Mr. Katzman seconded the motion. All voted in favor, none opposed.

Mr. Babcock then moved to approve the request submitted by Michael J. Mitchell, PLS of BCA Architects and Engineers on behalf of the Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency (JCIDA) and the City of Watertown, for a two-lot subdivision of 205 Coffeen Street, Parcel Number 7-04-101.000, contingent upon the following:

1. The applicant must assemble the subdivided 0.24-acre parcel with 146 Arsenal Street, Parcel Number 7-02-102.001, by way of new metes and bounds description filed with the County Clerk.

Ms. Fields seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

### **SITE PLAN APPROVAL - 146 ARSENAL STREET PARCEL NUMBER 7-02-102.001**

The Planning Board then considered a request submitted by Michael Altieri, P.E. of BCA Architects and Engineers on behalf of the Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency to construct an 11,000 square-foot (SF) building addition at 146 Arsenal Street, Parcel Number 7-02-102.001.

Michael Altieri, P.E. of BCA Architects and Engineers started by saying that this was a transformative project they hoped would add to the ongoing transformation of downtown Watertown, and specifically the downtown YMCA. He then introduced those also in attendance who were representing the project: Travis Overton, Project Architect, Bernier, Carr, & Associates; Marshall Weir, Deputy CEO, JCIDA; and Denise Young, CEO, Watertown Family YMCA.

Mr. Altieri then gave a brief description of the proposed development. He said the site was the former Woolworth's building across the street from the Jefferson County Building and Court House. He said the first floor of the existing building would be completely transformed into a brand-new YMCA facility, and that was the primary reason they were before the Board today. He then said their new addition would require the subdivision plat that the Planning Board just approved. He said the proposed building addition would go out over a portion of the existing parking lot, which they will acquire from the City now that the subdivision has been approved.

He said to facilitate the project, some utilities would be rerouted to accommodate the addition, and the new building would have some of the neatest facilities. He then introduced and gave the floor to Denise Young.

Ms. Young thanked the Board for listening to the Site Plan proposal and expressed the YMCA's excitement about bringing this amenity to downtown Watertown. She said they anticipated a big impact that it would have on the health, the mental health, and the economic health of our community. She said they hoped the Board was as thrilled to have this project presented, and sometime in May, if any member would like a walk thru and tour of the new facilities, she would be thrilled to do that for them, and hoped it would inspire them.

Mr. Altieri then spoke about some of the programs that would be added to the YMCA's current programs. He then invited Mr. Overton to share the architectural aspects of the project. Mr. Overton said he would walk the Board thru the proposed site plan. He pointed to the drawing and pointed out the boundaries of Arsenal and Court Streets and then the parking lot at the Top of the Square and the City parking lot towards the North Country Family Health Center. He referred to the drawing again and said the addition where the natatorium would be, which he said was the main subject of today's site plan review.

He said there would be two pools in the addition, a new entrance located on the west side of the building, a lobby area, locker rooms in the northwest quadrant, and both tennis and pickle-ball courts. He then pointed out the area where the roof would be removed and raised approximately 20' above what exists today to accommodate the height needed for the courts. Mr. Overton pointed out where the wellness center with fitness equipment would be within the corner of the building that faces the square. He said the upper northeast quadrant of the building was recently transferred to the YMCA and would be future program space, but right now it will remain unused.

Mr. Overton then pointed out the height of the exterior wall on the southwest corner, closest to the main entry. He pointed out the southeast corner where the fitness studio is facing the square, and said it is the piece of the project that his staff was most excited about. He said the way it would engage the Square was exciting and would let the vibrancy of this building spill out into the Square, with the fitness studio highly visible with large glass windows. He then showed the southwest corner view on the drawing where the natatorium would be, which he said gave a visible sense of the height of the wall elevation specifically for the tennis and pickle-ball courts.

Mr. Altieri said that to accommodate the new addition, one change they worked thru with the City Planning and Engineering Departments would be reorientation of the parking lot, which was currently oriented on a diagonal. He said the proposal is to reorient it to be perpendicular parking. He said this will allow a more efficient parking pattern and allowed them to net more spaces on their plans. He said this new configuration would provide better turning movement for large fire-fighting apparatus in the event of an emergency.

Ms. Capone asked Mr. Urda if this new parking lot traffic pattern would address the vehicular and pedestrian circulation concerns on page two of the Staff Memorandum. Mr. Urda said Ms. Voss was the lead reviewer and he deferred to Mr. Lumbis. Ms. Capone then asked if the new configuration of the parking lot would create difficulty turning by larger vehicles.

Mr. Altieri said that was a good segue and that the plans would locate the ADA parking spaces as close to the new entrance as possible and it added a few more ADA spaces along the west side of the building. The reconfiguration would also create potential to add some landscaping, another site amenity that would draw the community to the YMCA. Ms. Capone asked if the ADA spaces would also have a pedestrian access aisle. Mr. Altieri replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Katzman asked if the parking lot would accommodate the movements of the new fire truck that the City was scheduled to purchase, which had a larger hook and ladder and would not turn on a dime. Mr. Altieri said he had spoken to Chief Timerman and they were obtaining the specifications for the new Fire truck and would make accommodations to assure maneuverability, and the fire apparatus that was recently sold had a slightly different wheelbase, so they were looking into the clearances and space needed. Mr. Altieri also said they had landscaping planned to offset the hard pieces and indicated them on the map as green areas of building accents to add soft features.

Mr. Altieri then moved on to infrastructure and mentioned a storm line and large water main that were redeveloped during urban renewal in the 1970's. He said that on a side note, his team uncovered an old street shown on maps when the Armory was here, Jackman Street, that he said ran all the way from Arsenal to Court Street, which he found very interesting historically. He then said they planned to relocate some existing infrastructure to accommodate the building. He said as requested by City Engineering, they would reconnect every storm drain they encountered in the parking lot and connect and reroute it to the new storm drain being built around the building. He said this was a very well-engineered parking lot, and one of the most aggressively drained parking lots they have seen, and they want to make sure it keeps the same level of service or higher.

Ms. Fields then asked about the ownership of the upstairs of the building and if the retail located in the downstairs level would be able to remain. Mr. Altieri said there were separate party walls, and property lines split by the bi-level floors within the building. He said the ground floor was under separate ownership and the retail would remain. He then invited Ms. Young to elaborate.

Ms. Young then said that when Convergys took over the former Woolworth building, they eliminated any internal interaction or access from the first to second floors, for example, the employees of the call center could not leave and go downstairs into the mall shops. She said one of their goals was to contribute to the economy of downtown, and to that effect they would create stairs for internal access from the YMCA first floor down to the mall on the ground level. She said this would enable guests to visit the Family Dollar, get ice cream, Carthage Savings Bank, or get coffee, and then come back upstairs, and exit the YMCA into the parking lot.

She then said when people leave a destination and go to their car, they are unlikely to drive around the block, find a parking space on the Square to access other businesses. Ms. Young then said that reestablishing the stair connection would create more economic growth. Ms. Fields agreed that it would be much like the former Woolworth store that provided access from the upper-level department store to shops on the ground level. Mr. Katzman asked if the old escalator

was still there. Ms. Young said no, the escalator is no longer there, but there would be stairs available to go from the first to second floors.

Ms. Fields said her second question involved thru traffic from the Sherman Street extension thru the parking lot down and around the parking garage to Court Street. She said she was concerned about the speed of traffic and pedestrian safety. Mr. Altieri said all the landscaping that surrounds the existing parking lot they would be maintaining and not changing. He said a comment to the City maybe to increase that landscaping buffer to protect families and children to provide a barrier to that effect.

Ms. Capone then addressed the summary items from the Staff report which were as follows:

1. The Planning Board shall consider all four criteria contained within Section 310-57 and determine whether the site plan meets those criteria for adequacy of interior circulation, paying particular attention to pedestrian safety and vehicle backing movements in the southeast quadrant of the parking lot.
  - A. Harmonious Relationship between proposed uses and existing adjacent uses.
  - B. Maximum safety of vehicular circulation between the site and the street.
  - C. Adequacy of interior circulation, parking and loading facilities with particular attention to pedestrian safety.
  - D. Adequacy of landscaping and setbacks to achieve compatibility with and protection of adjacent uses.

Mr. Lumbis said the point of listing the criteria was mainly so that the Planning Board could consider the site plan regarding criteria C. He said that since the applicant is willing to eliminate the two spaces closest to the entrance, he felt that the adequacy of the interior parking lot circulation was addressed and will improve pedestrian safety. He said that the condition needed to be reworded in the motion recommending approval. Ms. Capone suggested the wording should be changed to: "The applicant shall eliminate the two parking spaces closest to the building entrance to provide safer pedestrian access from the parking lot to the building that will include a pedestrian walkway and landscaping area."

Ms. Capone addressed Summary item number two:

2. Tree protection for the trees in the existing landscaped area along the Arsenal St. sidewalk and along the access road must be shown on the site plan and installed and maintained by the contractor throughout the duration of construction.

Mr. Altieri said this was specifically referring to the buffer that exists around the parking lot on the south and west sides, and they would provide protection for those trees, in fact they have a tree protection detail they would provide during construction to eliminate any damage by equipment, if that was acceptable to add as another condition. Ms. Capone concurred it should be another condition.

Ms. Capone then addressed summary item number three:

3. All existing storm basins must be connected to the relocated storm line if they do not flow to another outfall point.

Ms. Capone said summary item number three should remain to the satisfaction of City Staff. Mr. Altieri said all storm lines encountered during construction would be connected to the new storm line and they do not know what may be found other than what was identified on the survey. Mr. Delaney said they could handle this with a note on the Site Plan. Mr. Delaney then said if all the current drainage flows to the relocated line or to an existing system, that would satisfy the City. Mr. Lumbis said there was nothing noted on the Site Plan currently so it should remain a condition.

Ms. Capone then addressed summary item number four:

4. The applicant must obtain a license agreement from the City Manager's Office to allow the monument sign on City property.

Mr. Altieri said that this comment was regarding the proposed signage near the corner of Arsenal St. and Sherman St. Mr. Lumbis said the Site Plan showed a sign located outside of the YMCA property on City property and the applicant would have to obtain a license agreement thru the City Manager's office to assure it is properly insured and lighted, etc. He said that this would be done separately from the site plan approval process noting that a separate sign permit would need to be obtained thru Code Enforcement.

Ms. Capone then addressed summary item number five:

5. The applicant must obtain the following permits, minimally, prior to construction: Building Permit, Sign Permit, Sanitary Sewer Connection Permit, a Water Supply Permit, and a Zoning Compliance Certificate.

Ms. Capone then said all the summary items remain except summary item number one that needed to be reworded.

Ms. Fields asked when the start date of construction would be. Ms. Young said construction would begin in July and will be completed in the Fall of 2022.

Hearing no further discussion, Ms. Fields made a motion to recommend that City Council approve the Site Plan submitted by Michael Altieri, P.E. of BCA Architects and Engineers on behalf of the Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency to construct an 11,000 square-foot (SF) building addition at 146 Arsenal Street, Parcel Number 7-02-102.001 for the YMCA Community Center and Aquatics Facility with the following contingencies:

1. The applicant shall eliminate the two parking spaces closest to the building entrance to provide safer pedestrian access from the parking lot to the building that will include a pedestrian walkway and landscaping area.

2. Tree protection for the trees in the existing landscaped area along the Arsenal St. sidewalk and along the access road must be shown on the site plan and installed and maintained by the contractor throughout the duration of construction.
3. All existing storm basins must be connected to the relocated storm line if they do not flow to another outfall point.
4. The applicant must obtain a license agreement from the City Manager's Office to allow the monument sign on City property.
5. The applicant must obtain the following permits, minimally, prior to construction:  
Building Permit, Sign Permit, Sanitary Sewer Connection Permit, a Water Supply Permit, and a Zoning Compliance Certificate.

Mr. Pierce seconded the motion, and all voted in Favor.

**ZONE CHANGE - 933 MORRISON AVENUE  
PARCEL NUMBER 1-10-414.000**

The Planning Board then considered a request submitted by Jeffrey R. Ostland to change the approved zoning classification of 933 Morrison Avenue, Parcel Number 1-10-414.000, from Light Industrial to Residence B.

Mr. Ostland said when he bought the property, he had tenants living there, and unfortunately the house burned down in 1999. He then said he still used the existing detached garage, which had survived the fire, and had stored a couple cars and a boat in it. He said he had since sold the cars and purchased some property on Lake Ontario, so that is where he stored his boat now. He said he had no more use for the property and the only way he could sell it now was to have it rezoned to Residence B so a potential buyer could build a house.

Ms. Capone asked Mr. Ostland to confirm that the only reason for the rezoning was for resale purposes. Mr. Ostland replied in the affirmative. Ms. Capone then asked if Mr. Ostland had tried selling the parcel as a commercial lot. Mr. Ostland said he had a potential buyer to use the property as an auto repair shop, which he turned down as he said it would destroy the neighborhood feel of the street.

Ms. Capone said that according to the Staff Memorandum, changing the zoning would not be in harmony with the City's Comprehensive Plan. She said the Planning Board is trying to be sensitive to making any changes to remain consistent with the Comp Plan, and she wanted some background on Staff's vision.

Mr. Lumbis said the future land use map in the Comprehensive Plan recommends, in a general way, industrial land use for the entire wedge of the City between Bradley Street and the CSX/Canadian National railroad tracks from Main Street West all the way to the City boundary

with the Town of Pamela. Under a strict interpretation of that recommendation, this proposed Zone Change would not be in harmony with the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Lumbis then said that the land use recommendations painted broad strokes throughout the City. He said that Staff is currently working on a zoning rewrite that will look at zoning down at the neighborhood level. He said generally speaking, this area has an industrial history because of the rail spur, but when you look at a street-by-street level, there were pockets of established residential. He then noted that this section of Morrison Avenue was zoned Residence B on one side and Light Industrial on the other.

Mr. Lumbis then said that the Planning Board should look at the finer detail when considering the change. He said, for instance, the proposed land use map in the area near the proposed dentist's office on Washington Street recommended Urban Mixed use extending back several blocks from Washington Street. A strict interpretation of proposed land use plan would call for rezoning that entire area, however the proposed land use map did not get too particular because if it did, then in a sense it would be creating a Zoning map, which he said was not the intent. The intent was to demonstrate generally, the proposed land use in various areas of the City. He reiterated that the Zoning Rewrite process would get into the finer detail at the block or neighborhood level and make recommendations accordingly.

Mr. Pierce asked if Mr. Ostland purchased the property as Residence B, and then the City went thru and changed the zone to Light Industrial or if it was always zoned Light Industrial. Mr. Lumbis said to his knowledge it was always zoned Light Industrial. Mr. Pierce said as he was looking at the maps all the neighboring properties were residential.

Mr. Urda pointed out that Staff had provided two maps; a zoning map that depicted the Residence B Zoning on one side of the street and Light Industrial Zoning on the other, and a property classification map that depicted existing uses. He said that all the brown or beige properties on the northwest side of the street were classified as one-family residential, and he then pointed out a few one-family residential properties on the other side of the street. He said the parcels colored light blue were residential vacant land.

Ms. Capone said she wanted to be sure the proposed zoning and classification of Mr. Ostland's property fit in with the new zoning rewrite.

Mr. Urda said that the historic industrial land use is a wedge shape, centered around access to the railroad tracks for industry. He said as you move further South in that wedge of land you find more rail adjacent historic parcels. He said the property in question has a more rural feel within the City limits. He said he had spent some time last week on Morrison Avenue, and it had an 'outside of town' feel. He said in the sense of preserving the rural residential character of that street and based on all the residential uses on that street, the applicant's request was in harmony with the zoning rewrite.

Ms. Capone then said that as she understood it, while the request was not consistent with the Comp Plan, it was consistent with the zoning rewrite. Mr. Lumbis said the Staff was working on a draft zoning map. Ms. Capone said she did not want the board to approve something now



that would completely throw off the intent of the zoning rewrite. Mr. Lumbis said this is in line with what Staff is currently working on.

Mr. Katzman said he understood both sides, but wondered if someone would buy that lot and build a new house if the board granted the zone change to Residence B. He said it might not make sense economically and said he did not see why the Board would rezone the property before there was a buyer.

Mr. Ostland said he had a current purchase offer, contingent on the zone change to Residence B. Mr. Katzman asked if this buyer planned to build a house on the lot. Mr. Ostland said yes. Ms. Fields said as a fellow realtor she had to disagree with Mr. Katzman, and she said she felt any residential improvements to that area would be a benefit, and a lot like this could be a perfect fit for a potential buyer. She said she was supportive and said this zone change is in perfect harmony with what the City was trying to accomplish. Ms. Capone said that Staff indicated this zone change was compatible with the rewrite and she agreed.

Mr. Babcock made a motion to recommend City Council approve the request submitted by Jeffrey R. Ostland to change the approved zoning classification of 933 Morrison Avenue, Parcel Number 1-10-414.000, from Light Industrial to Residence B.

Ms. Fields seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

Mr. Urda said the zone change request would go to City Council on Monday, April 19, 2021, and they will set the public hearing for May 3, 2021. He said Staff would be sending him correspondence during the process before the meeting on May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mr. Pierce then moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Katzman seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 3:41 p.m.