



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: January 7, 2020

PRESENT:

Larry Coburn, Planning Board Chair
T.J. Babcock
Michelle Capone
Linda Fields
Kerry Johnson
Neil Katzman

ALSO:

Michael A. Lumbis, Planning and Community
Development Director
Michael DeMarco, Planner
Geoffrey Urda, Planner
Michael Delaney, City Engineer
Benjamin Arquitt, Civil Engineer I

ABSENT:

Katie Dermody

The January 7, 2020 Planning Board Meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m. by Planning Board Chair, Larry Coburn.

Mr. Coburn then called for a reading of the Minutes from the December 3, 2019 Planning Board Meeting. Ms. Fields then made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Mr. Babcock seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Mr. Coburn then said that there would be an additional item added to the meeting agenda, so he asked that members not leave after the Zone Change Request and stay for a brief presentation.

SUBDIVISION FINAL PLAT APPROVAL 131 MOORE AVENUE, PARCEL NUMBER 12-16-208.000

The Planning Board then considered a request submitted by Patsy A. Storino, PLS on behalf of Faith Fellowship of Watertown for a two-lot subdivision of 131 Moore Avenue, Parcel Number 12-16-208.000.

Scott Kolb attended to represent the request.

Mr. Coburn then said that this request required a public hearing, and that it was almost time to open the hearing. Mr. Coburn called the public hearing to order at 3:05 p.m., read the legal notice that had been published in the *Watertown Daily Times* and asked for public comment on the request. Hearing no comments, Mr. Coburn closed the public hearing at 3:06 p.m. Mr. Coburn then invited Mr. Kolb to speak about the request.

Mr. Kolb began by saying that Faith Fellowship of Watertown was in the process of selling their smaller adjacent parcel at 119 Moore Avenue. Mr. Kolb noted that because the house on 119 Moore encroached onto the church's primary parcel at 131 Moore, the Church was proposing a subdivision and assemblage that would add 20.92 feet of frontage to 119 Moore, and bring its frontage over 60 feet. Mr. Kolb said that would clean up the encroachment and make the parcel more pleasing to the eye for a prospective buyer.

Mr. Kolb then drew the Planning Board's attention to the subdivision drawing and pointed out the small rectangular parcel that Faith Fellowship proposed to subdivide from 131 Moore and assemble with 119 Moore. Mr. Kolb said that would create a 0.15-acre parcel that the church would try to sell.

Mr. Coburn then said that the Planning Board needed to complete Part 2 of the Short Environmental Assessment Form (EAF). The Planning Board then considered each question on Part 2 of the EAF one-by-one, answering no to all of them. Ms. Fields then made a motion to issue a Negative Declaration for the proposed subdivision pursuant to the requirements of SEQRA. Mr. Katzman seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Mr. Lumbis then noted that Staff was recommending one condition of approval, which was that applicant must combine the subdivided piece with the residential parcel, as proposed. Mr. Katzman then asked if the church proposed to plant grass in that area or if it was already grass. Mr. Kolb replied that it was already grass.

Ms. Fields then moved to approve the request submitted by Patsy A. Storino, PLS on behalf of Faith Fellowship of Watertown for a two-lot subdivision of 131 Moore Avenue, Parcel Number 12-16-208.000, contingent upon the following:

1. The applicant must assemble the 0.047-acre subdivided parcel with Parcel Number 12-16-209.000, located at 119 Moore Avenue, into one single parcel, by way of a new metes and bounds description that is filed with the County Clerk.

Mr. Katzman seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

ZONE CHANGE

**231, 237 and 241 GOODALE STREET, PARCEL NUMBERS 11-01-109.000, 11-01-108.000
and 11-01-107.000 – COMMERCIAL TO DOWNTOWN**

AND

**201 and 209 STERLING STREET, PARCEL NUMBERS 11-01-106.000 and 11-01-105.000
RESIDENCE C TO DOWNTOWN**

The Planning Board then considered a request submitted by the City of Watertown to change the approved zoning classification of 231, 237, and 241 Goodale Street, Respective Parcel Numbers 11-01-109.000, 11-01-108.000, 11-01-107.000 from Commercial to Downtown

and 201 and 209 Sterling Street, Respective Parcel Numbers 11-01-106.000 and 11-01-105.000 from Residence C to Downtown.

Planning Staff represented the request.

Mr. Urda began by saying that the request stemmed from the City's efforts to expand the City Hall parking lot. He said that the City of Watertown recently acquired five parcels across Goodale Street from City Hall, three of which were zoned Commercial and two of which were zoned Residence C.

Mr. Urda then explained that the Residence C district did not permit off-street parking as a primary use, and the City would need to change the zoning to move ahead with the project. Mr. Urda then said that since a zone change was inevitable, Staff felt that it was most appropriate to unify the zoning of all five parcels to match City Hall's zoning classification, which was Downtown.

Mr. Urda then said that Staff included a conceptual drawing along with the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) Short Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) in the Planning Board packets. He explained that to avoid segmentation, the City would need to consider the environmental impacts of the zone change and the parking lot together, pursuant to SEQR. He said that he and Mr. Lumbis had discussed this at length and agreed this was the most appropriate way forward. He also said that the City Council would serve as lead agency.

Mr. Urda then reiterated that the drawing was only conceptual, and further design work was likely to follow, but Staff was advancing the zone change now because the City Manager wanted the zoning to be appropriate once a finished design was shovel-ready.

Mr. Katzman then asked why the City did not seek to change the zoning for the entire block and that this sounded like spot zoning to him. Mr. Urda replied that at this time, Staff felt it was only appropriate to change parcels that the City owned. He noted that the City did have the legal authority to change the zoning on any parcel in the City, but in this case, Staff only recommended these five. Mr. Urda then said that this was not spot zoning, since the parcels to be changed were contiguous to the existing Downtown District. He then asserted that the three commercially zoned parcels were actually a better example of spot zoning, as they were isolated.

Ms. Capone then said that the City would be completing a new Zoning Ordinance soon as it had just adopted a new Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Urda said that was correct, and that the Comp Plan recommended the entire Sterling Street corridor for Downtown/Central Business District. He also referenced Staff's memorandum to point out that the memo now identified the Comp Plan's recommendation for the subject parcels instead of the 1987 Land Use Plan, and that the Planning Board would see that for all zone change requests moving forward.

Ms. Fields then asked about ADA accessible parking spaces. Mr. Urda replied that the City would provide the required number of accessible spaces per the Americans with Disabilities Act. He said that the required number is dependent on how many total spaces were in the lot, but confirmed that the City would meet the requirement.

Ms. Fields then moved to recommend that City Council approve the request submitted by the City of Watertown to change the approved zoning classification of 231, 237, and 241 Goodale Street, Respective Parcel Numbers 11-01-109.000, 11-01-108.000, 11-01-107.000 from Commercial to Downtown and 201 and 209 Sterling Street, Respective Parcel Numbers 11-01-106.000 and 11-01-105.000 from Residence C to Downtown.

Mr. Coburn seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION – SOLAR FARM IN THE TOWN OF WATERTOWN AND TOWN OF HOUNSFIELD

Mr. Lumbis then said that as Mr. Coburn had mentioned, there was a guest in attendance, Andrew Buckley of Boralex Inc. Mr. Lumbis said that Mr. Buckley requested an audience with the Planning Board and wanted to discuss a project just outside the City.

Mr. Buckley began by thanking the Planning Board for staying late and said he wanted to make the Planning Board aware of a solar project that Boralex was undertaking in the Town of Watertown and the Town of Hounsfeld. He said that Boralex was a new energy operation headquartered in Quebec with a satellite office in New York State. He had that Boralex currently owned hydro facilities in New York State and sought to expand into solar.

Mr. Buckley then said that this particular project being over 25 megawatts was now going through Article 10 review at the State level. He said that they were in the first phase of that process, which was the public involvement phase, which included educating stakeholders. He said they were still a ways out from implementation and said they were looking at construction in 2022 or 2023. Right now, he said, Boralex was just looking to verify that people were aware of the project and give them an opportunity to provide feedback. He said that they held open house meetings in November 2019 that were well attended.

Mr. Buckley then said that Article 10 has a 2,500-foot buffer area within which an applicant must inform landowners, and that extends into the City of Watertown, which is why he was informing the Planning Board today. He then said that Boralex was holding another public outreach session from 3-to-8 p.m. on Wednesday, January 29, 2020 at the Hounsfeld Town Barn.

Mr. Coburn then asked the specific location of the proposed solar farm. Mr. Buckley replied that it was approximately 1,000 acres off the Old Rome State Road, and identified the location on a map. He then said there was a project website at www.boralex.com/projects/greens-corners/.

Mr. Buckley then said that another element that would be interesting to discuss with the City specifically, aside from the footprint, would be the energy that the solar farm produces, specifically with regard to Community Choice Aggregation (CCA). Mr. Buckley said that CCA is popular in Massachusetts, and explained that a municipality had the authority to negotiate a wholesale energy rate on behalf of its citizens. He said that Boralex would like to discuss this further with the City, and added that NYSERDA offered more information on CCA.

Ms. Capone then asked about the implications on the City's power purchase agreement with National Grid. Mr. Lumbis replied that the agreement with National Grid was just for the energy that the City produces from its own hydro plant, and it sells the surplus energy to National Grid.

Mr. Buckley then further explained that under CCA, a municipality has the authority to choose an electricity provider on behalf of its citizens, but individual citizens have the right to opt out if they wish. He then said that Boralex anticipated that the proposed solar farm would provide enough energy to power 16,000 homes.

Mr. Katzman then asked about plans for a substation. Mr. Buckley replied that Boralex planned to connect into a 115 kV line that runs right through the project area, and that they would build a small substation within the project area to connect to that line.

Mr. Buckley then asked if there were any more questions. Hearing none, he invited everyone present to reach out to him if they thought of any questions later and thanked the Planning Board again for staying late.

Ms. Capone moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Coburn seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 3:29 p.m.