



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: October 26, 2020

PRESENT:

Larry Coburn, Planning Board Chair
Michelle Capone
Linda Fields
Kerry Johnson
Neil Katzman

ALSO:

Michael A. Lumbis, Planning and Community
Development Director
Jennifer Voss, Senior Planner
Geoffrey Urda, Planner

ABSENT:

T.J. Babcock

Planning Board Chair, Larry Coburn, called the October 26, 2020 special Planning Board meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Mr. Coburn then asked for a motion regarding the Minutes from the October 6, 2020 Planning Board Meeting. Ms. Fields made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Katzman seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

SITE PLAN APPROVAL – 1511 WASHINGTON STREET PARCEL NUMBER 13-23-104.002

The Planning Board then considered a request for Site Plan Approval submitted by Robert Ferris of Ferris Holdings, LLC for the construction of a 2,707 square-foot parking lot and a new retaining wall at 1511 Washington Street, Parcel Number 13-23-104.002.

Mr. Ferris and his architect, David Mosher, both attended to represent the request.

Mr. Mosher began by saying that this project originated when Ferris Holdings, LLC answered a Request for Lease Proposals for the Veterans Center. He explained that the Veterans Association (VA) had certain parameters for parking that exceeded what the site could handle, and that they had to meet those prerequisites, but also look at the whole site. Mr. Mosher then said that they proposed to expand the existing parking lot, which would necessitate paving 2,700 square feet of new asphalt and a new retaining wall that would run along the Washington Street side. He said that the square footage of the building yielded a requirement of 66 parking spaces and, after the proposed paving and with the benefit of an agreement with the adjacent property owner at 1575 Washington Street, they were able to provide 67.

Mr. Mosher then said that four existing catch basins accommodated the stormwater runoff from the rear and southern side of the site. He then said that the existing catch basins conveyed water to the Washington Street sewer system. He said they proposed to keep the existing grades and install two new drywell systems that would connect to a series of perforated 24-inch pipes to drain the inlet that runs due south. He said that the new drywell system would capture water from the existing parking area in front of the building and the parking lot expansion. He said they would also add two (2) six-inch lines for overflow if necessary and add drain protection on the outlet side, per an Engineering Staff comment. Mr. Mosher then said that they proposed two new mature, red maples within the front lawn area, per a Planning Staff comment.

Ms. Fields then asked if the applicant had the parking agreement with the neighbor in writing. Mr. Ferris replied in the affirmative and added that the adjacent property owner was happy because they would get new pavement, which he would maintain, at no expense to them.

Mr. Coburn then asked how the applicant got to this stage, when he knew that Mr. Ferris had almost finished with the work and had not yet obtained Site Plan Approval. Mr. Ferris replied that he had originally assumed that he could obtain a Site Plan Waiver. He then said that Mr. Lumbis subsequently explained to him that although the proposal might seem small, it would affect more of the subject property and paving would require Planning Board permission. Mr. Ferris then said that what you saw on the site presently was the wall backfill, because he could not pave the lot yet. He then added that he wanted to move forward per the correct process.

Mr. Coburn then said that just for the record, the Planning Board had previously approved a different development proposal for the site¹ and suddenly, this shows up. Mr. Ferris replied that the Planning Board had been unbelievably fair with him in the past. He explained that he did obtain a permit for the retaining wall, and that someone in the Engineering Department told him that a retaining wall did not require any further permissions, and said that he explained at that time that the retaining wall would hold back a parking lot. He continued that after this permitting process, Mr. Lumbis informed him that his proposal would increase the size of the parking lot. Mr. Ferris then said that as of the present time, he had only backfilled it.

Mr. Coburn then said that he just wanted Mr. Ferris to acknowledge what he had completed thus far.

Mr. Johnson then asked if the Planning Board was just approving the final touches. Mr. Ferris replied that the Planning Board was approving more than that; the board was approving the parking lot expansion, as well as new lighting. Mr. Ferris then elaborated that his team needed to prepare a photometric plan as part of submitting a full Site Plan application.

Mr. Ferris then said that this proposal would create a useful parking lot for the new tenants moving into the building. He added that the VA had only informed him of their intent to lease on October 5 or 6, and they told him they needed to move in within 120 days, 60 of which Mr. Ferris said would be back-and-forth with the VA.

¹ Editors note: The Planning Board previously granted the applicant a Waiver of Site Plan Approval for a drive-thru Automated Teller Machine (ATM) on the site. The Planning Board also granted a Waiver of Site Plan Approval for a temporary parking area on the western end of the property.

Ms. Fields asked about erosion and sediment control and Mr. Ferris deferred to Mr. Mosher, who then explained the various measures they were taking to prevent excessive erosion on the site.

Mr. Katzman then said that he visited the site earlier in the day and it looked like a nice project, but he had further questions about drainage. Mr. Katzman said that from what he could see, the proposed blacktop would create a major conduit for water to get to Washington Street. He added that the new wall would likely catch some, but he has seen the hillside near the North County Radiology building washed out in the past and he thought that the applicant needed to do more to slow down the water than what was currently proposed.

Mr. Mosher then said that their Civil Engineer determined that the existing grades all drain toward the existing catch basins, which then connect underground to a storm sewer system. He explained that they were maintaining the existing grades so as not to alter that drainage pattern. He then said that all these existing grades would go to the new drywells, and in the event of a 100-year storm, the two overflow pipes would handle the situation. He then assured Mr. Katzman that the banks would not overflow as they previously did.

Mr. Katzman said he was unconvinced that the site could handle all the flow. He then observed that the existing grading directed water towards the building, and nobody does that; they usually direct water away from a building. Ms. Capone then asked if Engineering Staff had reviewed the Site Plan application.

Mr. Lumbis replied that City Engineer, Michael Delaney sends his apologies because he had another meeting that he unexpectedly had to attend, but that he did review the plans and provided the engineering comments that were in Staff's memorandum to the Planning Board. Mr. Lumbis continued that Mr. Delaney did not point out any concerns regarding drainage in that area.

Mr. Lumbis then said there were two things under discussion: the existing parking area along the entrance drive and the proposed parking expansion near the retaining wall, which the applicant was asking the Planning Board to approve. Mr. Lumbis then said that the applicant was trying to make improvements to the system, while mitigating any potential new problems that might be out there. Mr. Lumbis said that Mr. Delaney evaluated the entire site and found no issues.

Ms. Fields then asked the applicant to confirm that the project would have no effect on the neighboring Watertown Animal Hospital to the north. Mr. Mosher replied that it would not and explained why by referring to the drawing.

After asking if Staff was satisfied, Ms. Fields then moved to recommend that City Council approve the site plan submitted by Robert Ferris of Ferris Holdings, LLC for the construction of a 2,707 square-foot parking lot and a new retaining wall at 1511 Washington Street, Parcel Number 13-23-104.002, contingent upon the following:

1. Erosion and sediment control measures will be required at each of the pipe outfalls to ensure that sediment is not carried to Washington Street during heavy rain events.

2. All SWPPP requirements will need to be met and a copy will need to be provided to the City and the New York State DEC.
3. The applicant must obtain a Zoning Compliance Certificate prior to finishing the construction and paving of the lot.

Ms. Capone seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Mr. Lumbis then said that Staff had not received any applications for next month, which meant that the Planning Board would not have a November meeting.

Ms. Capone then moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Katzman seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:19 a.m.