



CITY OF WATERTOWN, NEW YORK

CITY PLANNING BOARD
ROOM 305, WATERTOWN CITY HALL
245 WASHINGTON STREET
WATERTOWN, NEW YORK 13601-3380
(315) 785-7741

MEETING: November 2, 2021

PRESENT:

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

ALSO:

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

ABSENT:

None

Planning Board Chair, Larry Coburn, called the November 2, 2021, Planning Board meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Mr. Coburn then asked for a motion regarding the Minutes from the October 5, 2021, Planning Board Meeting.

Mr. Katzman made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Ms. Fields seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

**ZONE CHANGE REQUEST
AMENDMENT TO PLANNED DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT #24
1398 GOTHAM STREET – PARCEL NUMBER 13-18-103.200**

Mr. Coburn said he would abstain from voting on this application because he is employed by the architect, and that he was also the project manager during the original construction phase of the Hospice Project at 1398 Gotham Street.

The Planning Board then considered a request submitted by Diana K. Woodhouse of Hospice of Jefferson County to amend the approved plan for Planned Development District #24, located at 1398 Gotham Street, Parcel Number 13-18-103.200.

Ms. Woodhouse was present to represent the project. She said that Hospice proposed to construct an addition to the current patient facility to accommodate an additional four (4) patient beds and a nurse's station on the east end and family support areas as well as a solarium on the west end. In addition, the applicant also proposed a small addition to the parking lot along with an additional driveway connection from Gotham Street.

Mr. Coburn commented that Staff's Memorandum indicated the proposed zone change request is consistent with the Future Land Use map in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Hearing no additional questions or comments from the Planning Board, Ms. Fields then made a motion to recommend that City Council approve the Zone Change request submitted by Diana K. Woodhouse of Hospice of Jefferson County to amend the approved plan for Planned Development District #24, located at 1398 Gotham Street, Parcel Number 13-18-103.200.

Mr. Babcock seconded the motion, and all voted in favor except for Mr. Coburn, who abstained.

**ZONE CHANGE REQUEST – 116 WOODRUFF STREET
PARCEL NUMBER 14-01-104.000**

The Planning Board then considered a request submitted by Matthew Morgia, P.E. of Aubertine and Currier Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyors, PLLC on behalf of Samaritan Medical Center to change the approved zoning classification of 116 Woodruff Street, Parcel Number 14-01-104.000 from Residence B to Health Services.

Mr. Coburn indicated that Staff had received communication from an adjacent property owner and asked Mr. Urda to elaborate.

Mr. Urda said that Staff had received one phone call from the neighboring property owner at 112 Woodruff Street, Juan C. Carrasco. He said that Mr. Carrasco called to express a concern over whether the assessment of his property might change if its zoning were to change. Mr. Urda said that Mr. Carrasco expressed concerns in both directions; that his assessment might increase and thereby increase his property taxes and that his assessment might decrease, resulting in reduced resale value of his home.

Mr. Urda then said he spoke to the City Assessor, Brian Phelps, who said the assessment would not increase, even though there are more allowed uses in a Health Services District than a Residence B District allows, because Mr. Phelps could not base his assessment on potential uses of the parcel, and he could only assess based on the existing use. Mr. Urda then said that regarding a potential decrease in value, Mr. Phelps said since the single-family dwelling was an allowed use in Health Services, there would be no risk of Mr. Carrasco's property losing conforming status.

Ms. Capone then said that she thought the request was for a vacant house. Mr. Urda then explained that while 116 Woodruff Street, the subject property for which the applicant requested to rezone, was a vacant house owned by Samaritan Medical Center, that the neighboring property at 112 Woodruff Street was an occupied single-family house.

Mr. Urda then explained that the status of 112 Woodruff Street was relevant, because Staff recommended taking uniform action on both 116 and 112 Woodruff Street to avoid the appearance of "spot zoning." He elaborated that, as stated in Staff's Memorandum, if the Planning Board recommended to City Council to rezone 116 Woodruff Street from Residence B to Health Services, then Staff would recommend that the Planning Board include 112 Woodruff Street in the motion.

Mr. Katzman then said he heard there were neighbor concerns of storing snow on the proposed site. Mr. Urda replied that it may be appropriate to allow the applicant speak about the proposal and address any concerns.

Chris Bastien, Assistant Vice President, Support Services for Samaritan Medical Center (SMC) was present and said there was conversation about using the 116 Woodruff Street site for snow storage, but SMC decided against it, noting that the hospital had a contractor that removes the snow from the lot when it starts to pile up and it would not be stored on the subject parcel. He then said there was a privacy fence separating SMC's adjacent parking lot from the 116 Woodruff parcel and that it is not possible to push snow onto that property.

Ms. Fields then asked if this elevated the request for a Waiver of Site plan Approval to a full Site Plan Review. She then immediately acknowledged that the Zone Change was what was currently on the table and the Planning Board should focus on that.

Mr. Urda then said that if the applicant had a presentation prepared, the Planning Board may wish to afford the applicant the opportunity to make that presentation and follow up with questions afterward.

Mr. Morgia was present to represent the project and said he would give a summary of both the Zone Change and the Waiver of Site Plan Approval request. Mr. Morgia began by pointing out both the 116 Woodruff Street and 112 Woodruff Street parcels on a zoning map, as well as the Samaritan Medical Center parking lots adjoining them to both the east and west. He said the Zone Change request was to rezone 116 Woodruff Street to Health Services for hospital purposes.

Mr. Morgia then said that SMC proposed to use the subject parcel for construction material and equipment storage. He said they would use storage containers, and that SMC proposed to demolish the house at the front of the parcel, noting that they had already submitted an application for a Demolition Permit. He said that the Site Plan Waiver request was to put stone where the footprint of the demolished house was, and to lay down a 15-foot-wide strip of stone east of the house footprint.

Mr. Morgia then said that regarding landscaping; there was a group of trees in the back of the current 116 Woodruff Street property that would remain unchanged, and the existing landscaping along the eastern edge of the property would also remain unchanged. He then said that the total square-footage of the house plus the 15-foot strip of crushed stone equaled the 2,490 square-feet.

Ms. Capone asked Mr. Urda why the Staff's Memorandum referenced over 4,000 SF of land. Mr. Morgia replied that the 4,000 SF figure most likely was established adding the footprint of the house after demolition, and the existing stone driveway in the rear of the house.

Mr. Urda said that 4,000 SF was the total amount of land to be repurposed, not the total amount of land that will be physically changed. Mr. Urda said that a Waiver was allowed when the building and parking area coverage would not increase by more than 2,500 SF and that the applicant's submission indicated that the building and parking area coverage would only increase by 2,490 SF, even though over 4,000 SF of land would be repurposed from a residential use to

construction storage for SMC. He said the decision was at the discretion of the Planning Board to approve eligibility for a Waiver for Site Plan Approval.

Ms. Capone then asked about the concerns that Mr. Carrasco called Staff about regarding the value of his property assessment. Mr. Urda replied that the City Assessor said there would be no impact to the assessment based on changing the zoning from Residence B to Health Services.

Hearing no further discussion, Ms. Fields made a motion to recommend that City Council approve the request submitted by Matthew Morgia, P.E. of Aubertine & Currier Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyors, PLLC on behalf of Samaritan Medical Center to change the approved zoning classification of 116 Woodruff Street, Parcel Number 14-01-104.000, and 112 Woodruff Street, Parcel Number 14-01-103.000 from Residence B to Health Services.

Mr. Babcock seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

SITE PLAN WAIVER – 116 WOODRUFF STREET PARCEL NUMBER 14-01-104.000

The Planning Board then considered a request for a Waiver of Site Plan Approval submitted by Matthew Morgia, P.E. of Aubertine & Currier Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyors, PLLC on behalf of Samaritan Medical Center for the construction of a 2,490 square-foot construction material staging and storage area at 116 Woodruff Street, Parcel Number 14-01-104.000.

Ms. Capone asked why the Planning Board could not take action until the next meeting of December 7, 2021, to vote on the Site Plan Waiver for 116 Woodruff St. Mr. Urda replied that the applicant's proposed use in the Site Plan Waiver would not be legal until the Zone Change takes effect if the Council votes to approve it. A vote to consider the zone change could occur on December 6, 2021.

Ms. Capone then asked if the Planning Board was solely to consider the eligibility of a Site Plan Waiver based on the application. Mr. Urda confirmed that the purpose of the agenda item was to give the applicant the opportunity to present the proposal, and answer any questions, but that determining the project's eligibility for a Waiver was something the Planning Board would have to do, whether that was today or at its December 7, 2021 meeting. He then said that in fairness to the applicant, if the Planning Board were to decide it was not eligible for a Site Plan Waiver, it would be beneficial to let the applicant know now, so they could prepare over the next four weeks to prepare a resubmission.

Ms. Fields then asked what type of materials would be stored on site. She asked if they would be open containers, lumber, boxes, and would it be a secured lot? Mr. Bastien replied that the materials would be stored in metal containers that were about 40 feet long and he thought there were currently three on the Samaritan main campus site. He said they were getting ready to do projects in the Administrative Office building and Purcell Construction Corp., whom SMC hired as a contractor, has a 'lay down yard' that they are using behind the building. He said pending the demolition of the 116 Woodruff house, the plan is to purchase materials to store them on that site. He confirmed that everything would be stored in containers, nothing would be loose,

and they do have plans to construct a fence along the property perimeter so there were no security issues.

After further questions from the Planning Board about the criteria for a Waiver, Mr. Urda said that the amount of land proposed to be repurposed was just over 4,000 SF. He said that the amount of building and parking area coverage would only increase by 2,490 SF. Mr. Urda then clarified that the applicant calculated both of these numbers and submitted these calculations as they made their case for Waiver eligibility. Mr. Urda then said that the Planning Board would need to exercise its judgement to determine if the proposal met the criteria for a Site Plan Waiver.

Ms. Fields then said that she questioned the eligibility for a Waiver approval based on Criterion #4, which states that the proposal may not impair the overall grading, circulation, drainage, utility services and appearance and visual effect of the property. She asked for clarification of how the proposed storage area would impact the property. Mr. Urda replied that visually, the land would change, as the applicant was proposing to demolish an existing vacant house. He then said he would observe that the majority of the block was already car storage to both the east and west of the two properties under discussion.

Ms. Capone then asked if the applicant later wanted to pave the stone-filled footprint of the demolished house, they would have to come back later with a new Site Plan request. Mr. Lumbis and Mr. Urda replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Coburn asked how the applicant arrived at the square-footage of 2,490. Mr. Morgia replied that when you add the footprint of the demolished house at 116 Woodruff St with the 15-foot strip of grass converted to gravel, they equal 2,490. He said they considered adding 20 ft. and realized it was too much. Mr. Urda said the applicant did illustrate their calculations spatially on the drawings that were submitted and were part of the Planning Board's agenda package.

Discussion then ensued about the most appropriate action to take and Mr. Lumbis recommended tabling the application so that it could be considered next meeting after the zone change was considered by the Council. Ms. Fields then made a motion to table the request for a Waiver of Site Plan Approval submitted by Matthew Morgia, P.E. of Aubertine & Currier Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyors, PLLC on behalf of Samaritan Medical Center for a 2,490 square-foot construction material staging and storage area at 116 Woodruff Street, Parcel Number 14-01-104.000.

Mr. Babcock seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Mr. Urda then told the applicant that they should refrain from parking vehicles on the site, because unless parking is for a single-family dwelling, parking in a Residence B district is still illegal while the subject parcel remains zoned Residence B.

Mr. Katzman then moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Fields seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 3:19 p.m.