



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 1, 2022

PRESENT:

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

ALSO:

Michael A. Lumbis, Planning and
Community Development Director
Michael J. Delaney, City Engineer
Geoffrey Urda, Planner
Gertrude Karris, Secretary

ABSENT:

Linda Fields

Planning Board Chair, Larry Coburn, called the November 1, 2022, Planning Board meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. Mr. Coburn then asked for a motion regarding the Minutes from the October 4, 2022, Planning Board Meeting. Mr. Katzman made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Mr. Pierce seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

**ZONE CHANGE - 528 AND 540 STATE STREET
PARCEL NUMBERS 12-03-127.000 AND 12-03-128.000
FROM RESIDENCE C TO COMMERCIAL**

The Planning Board then considered a request submitted by Stephanie Albright of APD Engineering on behalf of Hospitality Syracuse, Inc to change the approved zoning classification of the rear portions of 528 and 540 State Street, Parcel Numbers 12-03-127.000 and 12-03-128.000. The applicant seeks to rezone the rear portion of the subject parcels from Residence C to Commercial to accommodate the construction of a Taco Bell restaurant.

Stephanie Albright of APD introduced the current application for zone change, noting that the application no longer included the parcels owned by Holy Family Church: Parcel Numbers 12-03-124.000 and 12-03-125.000. She said that the Church and Diocese of Ogdensburg were not interested in participating in the development of the site to provide shared parking, so the two church parcels were removed from the request.

Ms. Albright presented a tax map to the Planning Board depicting the portions of Parcel Numbers 12-03-127.000 and 12-03-128.000 that would require rezoning from Residence C to Commercial in order to develop the site. Ms. Albright noted that according to Section 310-54 of the City's Zoning Ordinance no driveway or other means of access for vehicles shall be maintained or used in any Residence District for the servicing of any allowable use located in a

Commercial District. Therefore, allowing access to the restaurant's parking lot required rezoning the subject parcels from Residence C to Commercial.

Ms. Albright noted that changing these parcels to Commercial was in line with the proposed zoning that Watertown has planned for the State Street corridor. Ms. Albright said that development of this site would revitalize those properties and benefit the neighborhood.

Ms. Albright then informed the board that the applicant team was also considering a traffic study to evaluate the feasibility of changing a portion of Winthrop Street from one way to two-way traffic. She said that the two-way traffic would run only between the entrance to the parking lot on Winthrop Street and the intersection with State Street, to allow patrons to exit the parking area and access State Street from the Winthrop entrance/exit. She then said that she would be willing to submit the traffic study to the City Council.

Mr. Coburn asked about the current state of the former bus station parcel, which bounds the subject parcel to the east. Ms. Albright replied that the former bus station parcel is paved except for a small gravel area and that all three parcels are almost all impervious.

Mr. Coburn asked Mr. Lumbis if rezoning at this point of the application was premature or if it would lay the groundwork for the applicant's future requests, such as converting the traffic flow on Winthrop Street and site plan approval.

Mr. Lumbis replied that the Board should consider the applicant's larger plan while deciding if the parcels should be rezoned, but also remember that the change in zoning would allow for other types of commercial businesses, not just restaurants. He emphasized that the Planning Board must consider if a zone change makes sense for this area, and if it is in harmony with the Comprehensive Plan and the proposed Zoning Ordinance rewrite.

Mr. Lumbis then referred to the Staff Report and noted that presently, the parcels that front on State Street are all zoned Commercial to approximately 90 feet in depth at which point the zoning changes to Residence C, which results in several parcels that are split zoned. The City's adopted Comprehensive Plan recommends this block of State Street as the transition point between the Downtown/Central Business District and Urban Mixed Use future land use character areas. Mr. Lumbis confirmed that even if this application had not come before the board, the plan was to clean up the split zoning and rezone the rear portion of these parcels as part of the City's Zoning Rewrite project.

Mr. Coburn asked the other Board members if there were any additional questions for the applicant. Hearing none, Mr. Babcock made a motion recommending that City Council approve the zone change request submitted by Stephanie Albright of APD Engineering on behalf of Hospitality Syracuse, Inc to change the approved zoning classification of the rear portions of 528 and 540 State Street, Parcel numbers 12-03-127.000 and 12-03-128.000 from Residence C to Commercial.

From the audience, Ms. Glenda C. Dickson of William Street, asked the Board if they would be voting on the zone change tonight. Mr. Urda then informed the Board that Ms. Dickson submitted an email to the Planning Department earlier in the afternoon in which she expressed concerns about the dumpster location and other issues that would be addressed during a site plan review. Chairman Coburn replied to Ms. Dickson that the change in zoning had already been planned for this location in the City of Watertown Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance

rewrite. Mr. Urda then clarified the new zoning classification in the rewrite would be Urban Mixed Use.

Ms. Dickson stated her main concern is that she would like any development on the site to include a fence between parcel 128 and 129 to protect the residential occupants of the neighboring area. Ms. Dickson then said that a fence would alleviate multiple problems, especially if the trash bin is in the corner of the lot, as indicated on the preliminary site plan. Ms. Dickson also questioned why the fence would not be addressed if it was related to the parcels that will be rezoned.

Mr. Lumbis explained that fences, buffer zones and setbacks would be addressed by the Planning Board during the site plan review process, if the zone change is approved by the City Council and if the applicant moves forward with a site plan application.

Mr. Katzman announced that the Board needed to move forward with the zoning reclassification. Mr. Katzman then seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

**PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN DISCUSSION
514, 528 AND 540 STATE STREET
PARCEL NUMBERS 12-02-126.000, 12-03-127.000 and 12-03-128.000**

Stephanie Albright, of APD Engineering on behalf of Hospitality Syracuse, Inc. addressed the Board. Ms. Albright informed the Board that there is only one potential site plan at this time as the applicant was unable to come to an agreement on a shared parking lot agreement with Holy Family Church.

Ms. Albright then reviewed the current proposed layout, which had an entrance on Winthrop Street, and two curb cuts on State Street. She said that the entrance on Winthrop Street will serve as both an entrance and exit if the City agreed to convert Winthrop Street to two-way traffic between the curb cuts and State Street. She said that this would allow patrons to exit toward State Street rather than through the residential neighborhood. She added that one curb cut on State Street would be a combined entrance and exit and the second curb cut would exit the drive-thru and be exit only.

Discussion ensued regarding the number of drive-thru lanes (proposed to be one), traffic flow, the stacking of vehicles, entrance and exit options, and the possible need for a variance from setback and/or buffering requirements in the front if this site plan moved forward before the City adopted its new Zoning Ordinance.

Peter Souch, who owns property on State Street (Wendy's Restaurant), addressed the board and suggested that the applicant was underestimating the number of vehicles that the drive-thru and parking area would have to handle and suggested the applicant look at the amount of traffic at the Arsenal Street location.

Mike McCracken of Hospitality Syracuse, Inc. addressed the statement; the new restaurant is partly intended to reduce the amount of traffic at the Arsenal Street restaurant and balance the volume between the two stores and the two sides of town. Mr. McCracken noted that an evaluation of customer patterns, shows customer volume will be much lower on State Street than at the Arsenal Street store but eventually should help balance the volume of patrons served.

Mr. Souch replied that he has restaurant experience on both State Street and Arsenal Street and his primary concern for this new restaurant location was traffic congestion and safety both on State Street and Winthrop.

Jake Johnson, who owns several properties in the downtown area, then addressed the board and noted that his mother operated a business on the opposite corner of Winthrop and State Streets, and he believes the use of Winthrop Street for access as an exit or entrance is a mistake.

Ms. Capone asked to see the site plan again and Ms. Albright reviewed the parcels that can be used, where the building can be positioned and where the entrance and exits can be situated. There was brief discussion about the use of Winthrop Street to enter or exit the parking lot, and other layouts that do not conform with the Comprehensive Plan. There was general agreement that the Board did not want to see a portion of Winthrop Street changed to a two-way street for the project, citing traffic congestion at the intersection, traffic safety and general driver confusion.

The Board discussed concerns about traffic flow and traffic volume, entering and exiting the property, turning left onto State Street, and stacking in the drive through and parking area. The Board asked the applicant to address these concerns during the next site plan review.

Mr. Katzman then moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Capone seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Gertrude Mead Karris, Secretary