



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

MEETING: AUGUST 1, 2023

PRESENT:

Michelle Capone, Acting Chairperson  
TJ Babcock  
Maryellen Blevins  
Lynn Godek  
Peter Monaco

ALSO:

Michael A. Lumbis, Planning & Community  
Development Director  
Michael J. Delaney, City Engineer  
Jennifer Voss, Senior Planner  
Geoffrey Urda, Planner  
Sharlice Bonello, Planner

ABSENT:

Linda Fields  
Larry Coburn

Acting Chairperson, Michelle Capone, called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Ms. Capone called for a reading of the minutes from the June 6, 2023 and July 11, 2023 meetings. Ms. Blevins noted that there were not enough members of the Planning Commission present at this meeting that also attended the June or July meetings. Ms. Capone then deferred acting on the minutes until the next meeting when additional members will be present.

**SITE PLAN APPROVAL  
155 CLINTON STREET, PARCEL NUMBER 10-07-109.100**

The Planning Board then considered a request submitted by Michael E. Lundy of Design Build Innovations, LLC to construct a 2,378 square-foot (SF) building addition, a 253 SF building addition and an approximately 9,500 SF parking lot expansion at 155 Clinton Street, Parcel Number 10-07-109.100.

Ms. Capone said that based on Staff's updated memorandum, it seemed that there had been significant progress on the summary items and recommendations contained in Staff's original July 6, 2023 memorandum. She then asked Mr. Lundy's representative to address the board.

Jared Dickinson of Lawman HC began by confirming that Mr. Lundy had applied for an Area Variance for relief from the transparency requirements of the Downtown Zoning District, which the Zoning Board of Appeals tabled at its July 19, 2023 meeting and would hear again on August 15, 2023. He then proceeded to address the summary items one-by-one.

Mr. Dickinson stated that he gave copies of the Transportation Demand Management Plan (TDMP), which was required as one of the summary items, to Mr. Urda. Mr. Dickinson also said that the spacing of trees has been updated to 20-foot spacing along Clinton Street and they are now all deciduous trees. He added that the planting schedule had been revised to reflect these changes. Mr. Urda then stated that the Planning Commission must decide whether it wished to condition any potential approval on a satisfactory Staff-level review of the TDMP or whether the Commission deemed it necessary to review the TDMP itself. Ms. Capone said that a Staff review would be sufficient.

Mr. Dickinson then explained that the applicant was aware that they need to preserve and protect any existing utilities encountered throughout the duration of the construction. Mr. Dickinson then stated that final construction drawings will be submitted to the City Engineering Department and would include final inverts and grading information. He added that the C-501 Detail Sheet showed the required core and boot connection to an existing city Catch basin using a boot style connector with watertight seal.

Mr. Dickinson then described the trio of 4-inch roof drains that would connect to the sanitary sewer lateral, which the site plan proposed to replace in its entirety. City Engineer, Michael Delaney clarified that the project plans should submit information on the quantity of water that will be introduced to the system, based on a 25-year flood event. Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Lundy acknowledged the requirement and said it would be no problem to provide that information.

Mr. Dickinson went on to note that the sole fire hydrant on the property has been marked on the site plan and there are no plans to make any changes.

Ms. Capone asked the other Planning Commission Members if there were any questions about the summary items that have already been satisfied. Mr. Monaco noted that he felt the transparency requirements are incompatible with this type of land use, and he was concerned about the three applications have been submitted to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Mr. Monaco believes this may make it difficult for developers and that parts of the law need to be adjusted because they are prohibitive and not user friendly for the applicants.

Ms. Capone suggested an after-action review of the new Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Lumbis replied that Staff was already tracking specific items that would ultimately need adjusting. Mr. Lundy asked that developers be invited to join the discussion. Ms. Capone agreed that it would be important to have developers' input, but she also said that she wanted to make clear that the City created the new Zoning Ordinance over the course of three years and in a very public way. She specifically noted that the city held multiple open houses, public hearings, and stakeholder interviews. Mr. Lumbis noted that Mr. Lundy was involved in that process.

Mr. Urda added that the purpose of Zoning, including transparency requirements, is to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Transparency goals are a tool to reinforce the pedestrian-oriented nature of downtown and avoid the feeling of isolation on streets without windows.

Ms. Capone asked the Commission Members to return to the issues that apply to this specific site plan. Mr. Dickinson then said that the applicant is planning an interior landscaped island with trees in the parking lot, and that the newest set of plans would depict this change.

Ms. Blevins asked for clarification of parking lots that were labeled as Watertown Savings Bank on the drawings. Mr. Lundy replied that the drive aisle extending south from Clinton Street behind the two-story building was property he donated to the bank for the drive aisle and the parking stalls would remain on his side.

Ms. Blevins also asked whether the lights in the parking lot would be sufficient to illuminate the sidewalks on Sherman Street. Mr. Dickinson referred to the photometric plan, which depicted that the parking lot lights would provide sufficient lighting throughout the lot and the City streetlights would illuminate the sidewalks.

Discussion continued regarding areas of the parcel that are planned for future development, and how to discourage parking in those areas when there is no lighting. Mr. Lundy stated he had no plans to stripe that area, but that there was no realistic means of preventing people from parking there until that project begins.

Ms. Blevins asked if the two bathrooms depicted on the floor plans were the total number of restrooms. Mr. Dickinson replied that each business will rent space and those offices would have dedicated restrooms that would be private to that business.

Ms. Capone discussed the remaining need for Staff review of the outstanding summary items and approval of the project by the Planning Commission, contingent on the applicant complying with all summary items to Staff's satisfaction.

Mr. Monaco asked for more information of the Transportation Demand Management Plan (TDMP) requirement. Mr. Urda explained that the Comprehensive Plan's vision for downtown was for it to be a more walkable district. He then said that the Downtown Zoning district is specifically designed to encourage pedestrian activity. He explained that any new private, off-street parking lot downtown would require the applicant to submit a TDMP that demonstrates why the surrounding public parking lots and on-street parking is not sufficient to meet the applicant's needs.

Mr. Urda then stated that parking lots over 75 spaces in any zoning district required a Level of Service (LOS) Analysis to prove that if the proposed use expects to generate so many trips that it would need such a large lot, that the anticipated trip generation would not overburden the surrounding road network.

Ms. Blevins pointed out that three questions on Part I of the SEQR Short Environmental Assessment Form were not answered. Mr. Lundy and Mr. Dickinson reviewed the questions, and provided replies for questions, 6, 7 and 12 of Part One of the Short EAF. The Planning Board then considered each question on Part 2 of the Short EAF one by-one, answering no to all of them.

Ms. Capone then asked for a SEQR motion. Mr. Monaco made a motion to issue a Negative Declaration for the proposed site plan pursuant to the requirements of SEQRA. Mr. Babcock seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Capone requested a motion to approve the Site Plan contingent upon staff approval of all summary requirements.

Ms. Godek moved to grant Site Plan Approval to Michael Lundy of Design Build Innovations, LLC to construct a 2,378 square-foot (SF) building addition, a 253 SF building addition and an approximately 9,500 SF parking lot expansion at 155 Clinton Street, Parcel Number 10-07-109.100, as depicted on the plans submitted to the City Planning and Community Development Department on July 19, 2023 and contingent upon the following:

1. The applicant shall obtain an Area Variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals granting relief from the transparency requirements for all proposed building façades that would fail to meet the required percentages.
2. The applicant shall submit a Transportation Demand Management Plan (TDMP) that contains all the requirements identified in Section 310-36 of the Zoning Ordinance.
3. The applicant shall provide small to medium deciduous trees at a spacing of 20' within the landscaped strip adjacent to the Right-of-Way (ROW) on Clinton Street.
4. The applicant must provide one interior parking lot tree within a landscaped island in the parking area.
5. The applicant shall be responsible for preventing damage to the existing storm line underneath Clinton Street where the applicant is proposing to widen the margin and move the curb line.
6. The applicant shall submit a copy of the final construction drawing set, which must include all final inverts and grading information, to the City Engineering Department prior to the issuance of any permits.
7. The applicant must add a construction detail and note to the plans providing information regarding the proposed manhole boot connector that will be required for connection to the City catch basin.
8. The applicant shall be prepared to clarify where their roof drains are proposed to connect to.
9. The applicant shall depict and label all existing and proposed fire hydrants on the plan drawing.
10. The applicant must obtain the following permits, minimally, prior to demolition and construction: Demolition Permit, Building Permit, General City Permit, Sanitary Sewer Connection Permit, Water Supply Permit and a Zoning Compliance Certificate.

Ms. Blevins seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.

**SITE PLAN APPROVAL**  
**VL MAIN AVENUE, 144 MAIN AVENUE, 160 MAIN AVENUE, 160 REAR MAIN**  
**AVENUE, 164 MAIN AVENUE, and 202 MAIN AVENUE**  
**PARCEL NUMBERS 2-01-332.002, 2-01-301.001, 2-01-301.000, 2-01-302.000, 2-01-332.003**  
**and 2-01-332.004**

Acting Chair Michelle Capone stated she will continue to chair the meeting; however, she would abstain from voting.

Dan Brocht of LaBella Associates introduced himself and said that he is working with Neighbors of Watertown on a new affordable housing project near the corner of Main Ave and Mill Street. He said that the six relevant parcels are currently vacant and added that there were two vacant parcels on either end of the proposed project that Neighbors of Watertown intended to purchase, and as such, they would not be assembled to become part of the project area.

Mr. Brocht then introduced Shelby Vakiener of LaBella Associates, the design lead who addressed the board and reviewed the plan. Ms. Vakiener explained that the project would consist of a 61-unit, four-story multifamily apartment building on Main Avenue and a 40-space parking lot in the rear, with an entrance on each end of the building to provide emergency vehicle access. She said that landscaping requirements would be met with a mixture of trees and shrubs along the front of the building, trees lining the parking lot and on the bump outs within the parking lot. She then added that all lighting throughout the project is dark sky compliant.

Ms. Vakiener explained that the project will not need above ground stormwater features because the development will reduce existing stormwater runoff by reducing the impermeable surface on the site.

Mr. Brocht then reviewed the summary items in Staff's memorandum, addressing each of them one-by-one. Mr. Brocht said that the project will go before the Zoning Board of Appeals to request an Area Variance from the Zoning Ordinance's transparency requirements for the front facade. He said that the proposed facade was close to the required amount, which in the Urban Mixed-Use District was 50 percent minimum transparency on the ground floor front facade and 30 percent transparency on the upper floor front and corner side facades. He said that his team was able to achieve 43 percent transparency on the ground floor and 27 and 26 percent transparency on the third and fourth floors, respectively.

Mr. Brocht also explained that the proposed development will need a Variance for the distance between functional entryway locations on the front facade. The Urban Mixed Use District requires a functional entryway at least every 30 feet along the front of the building. The proposed building is approximately 226 feet long, with one functional entryway proposed along the front facade. Due to the residential nature of the building, the applicant wishes to maintain one entrance to control access to the building and improve safety.

Mr. Brocht stated that the applicant will comply with the remaining contingencies and reviewed the four remaining items on Staff's memorandum.

Mr. Brocht then said that his team agreed with the addition of lighting at the entrances, along the front and side of the building; acknowledging that safety is very important in these projects and an important part of the application for funding.

Mr. Brocht then informed the Commission that a landscape architect has already been consulted about avoiding future damage to the trees and ensuring that no trees are planted in the proposed snow storage areas. He pledged to submit those plans to the board before the next meeting.

Mr. Brocht then confirmed that his team would assemble the six parcels into a single parcel prior to development and acknowledges all permits that his team would need to obtain prior to construction (Building Permit, Water Permit, Sanitary Sewer Permit, Storm Sewer Permit, General City Permit for work within the ROW and a Zoning Compliance Certificate).

Ms. Blevins asked why electric vehicle charging stations are taking up four spots in the relatively small parking lot. Mr. Brocht explained that EV charging stations are a requirement in the State Funding Application for the project.

Ms. Blevins asked why the apartments are all one-bedroom apartments. Mr. Brocht noted that this development is geared toward single people who are trying to get back on their feet, some may be veterans, some may be homeless, or dealing with disabilities, but this is not a development for families.

Ms. Capone explained that a Coordinated SEQR Review is required by the funding sources; the Planning Commission will give notice to other agencies and wait for a 30-day comment period. Therefore, the Planning Commission will table this application until that review is complete.

Ms. Blevins asked for clarification of when the stormwater report will be reviewed in relation to the permitting process. Mr. Brocht then acknowledged that his team would not be able to obtain some of the required permits until the City Engineering Department reviews sewer and storm-water capacity. Ms. Blevins also mentioned the letter from the New York State Historic Preservation office and asked if this project might need any additional clearance from the State Historic Preservation office. Ms. Capone noted that the SEQR process would address that.

Mr. Lumbis noted that under the old zoning law, the applicant would have been required to go to another board for final approval but under the current zoning, this project could be approved today, with contingencies, if not for the fact that the funding agencies that the applicant is working with did not require a coordinated SEQR review.

Ms. Capone asked for a resolution to table the application; Mr. Babcock made a motion to table the application; Ms. Godek seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, all voted in favor, Ms. Capone abstained.

Mr. Monaco then moved to adjourn the meeting. Blevins seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:59p.m.