



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: SEPTEMBER 12, 2023

PRESENT:

Larry Coburn, Chairperson
Michelle Capone
Maryellen Blevins
Lynn Godek
Peter Monaco

ALSO:

Michael A. Lumbis, Planning & Community
Development Director
Jennifer Voss, Senior Planner

ABSENT:

Linda Fields
TJ Babcock

Chairperson Larry Coburn called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. Mr. Coburn called for a reading of the minutes from the June 6, 2023, July 11, 2023, and August 1, 2023, meetings. Ms. Capone moved to accept the minutes as written, Ms. Godek seconded the motion. All 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

Mr. Coburn addressed the applicant and other Planning Commission members. Mr. Coburn explained that the project was tabled at the last Planning Commission meeting due to the SEQR Lead Agency 30-day review period. Mr. Coburn noted that before voting on the application, the Planning Commission would need to declare themselves Lead Agency for SEQR purposes and complete Part 2 of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) Short Environmental Assessment form (EAF).

Chairperson Coburn asked the applicant to address the board and provide a summary of where the project stands now. Shelby Vakiener, of LaBella Associates, attended the meeting to represent the application on behalf of Neighbors of Watertown. Ms. Vakiener introduced herself as the Design Lead and Project Manager working with the Neighbors of Watertown. Ms. Vakiener began by saying that she previously appeared before the Planning Commission at the August 1, 2023, meeting and that they had appeared before the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) at the ZBA's August 15, 2023, meeting for two Area Variances, which the ZBA had tabled until its September 19, 2023, meeting.

Ms. Vakiener reviewed the project, mentioning a few amenities have been added to the back of the property since the previous submission including a break shelter, a few benches, and some adjustments to the landscaping.

Ms. Vakiener addressed the first two summary items, which require the applicant to obtain two Area Variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals granting relief from the transparency requirements in the Urban Mixed-Use District, as well as the maximum spacing allowed between functional entryways. Ms. Vakiener said she anticipates the Zoning Board of Appeals voting on the requests at their September 19, 2023, meeting.

Ms. Vakiener noted that lighting will be added to the sidewalk areas on the front and side of the building.

Mr. Monaco asked Mr. Reginald Schweitzer of Neighbors of Watertown if this property will be tax-exempt. Mr. Schweizer stated the property will be taxable; the building will probably be assessed as 581-A because of the income limitations of the units.

Mr. Coburn moved on to the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR). Mr. Coburn explained that the proposed project requires a permit, approval, or funding from several different agencies in addition to the Planning Commission and therefore a coordinated SEQRA review is being completed. Staff sent a copy of the applications to the Housing Finance Agency, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, NYS Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation and the City of Watertown Zoning Board of Appeals. Involved agencies had 30 days to respond and responses were received from the NYS DEC, NYS Homes and Community Renewal and the City of Watertown Zoning Board of Appeals. All consented to the City of Watertown Planning Commission's assumption of lead agency. The Planning Commission can now designate itself as the Lead Agency and complete the SEQRA review.

Mr. Coburn addressed the Board and stated that the Planning Commission should now complete the environmental review. The Planning Commission then reviewed and completed Part 2 of the Short Environmental Assessment Form, answering "No" to each question.

Michelle Capone then moved that the Planning Commission of the City of Watertown, after initiating a Coordinated Review with other Involved Agencies, establish itself as the Lead Agency for the State Environmental Quality Review of the proposed Main Avenue Apartments Project, which consists of the construction of a 15,900 square foot, 61 unit, four story, apartment buildings at VL Main Avenue, 144 Main Avenue, 160 Main Avenue, 160 Rear Main Avenue, 164 Main Avenue and 202 Main Avenue and that after review of Part 2 of the Short Environmental Assessment Form, the Planning Commission declares that the proposed construction and site plan constitute an Unlisted Action for the purposes of SEQRA and hereby determines that the project, as submitted, is an Unlisted Action and will not have a significant impact on the environment. Lynn Godek seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Lynn Godek then moved to grant Site Plan Approval for the request submitted by LaBella Associates on behalf of Neighbors of Watertown for Site Plan Approval to construct a 15,900 SF, 61-unit, four-story apartment building at 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, based on the drawing

set submitted to the Planning and Community Development Department on September 7, 2023, contingent upon the following:

1. The applicant must obtain an Area Variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals granting relief from the transparency requirements in the Urban Mixed Use zoning district.
2. The applicant must obtain an Area Variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals granting relief from the required 30-feet between functional entryways on the front of the building.
3. The applicant shall consider the addition of lighting to the entrances to the building along the front and side for pedestrian safety.
4. The applicant shall assemble all parcels into a single parcel, as proposed, by way of a new metes and bounds description filed with the County Clerk.
5. The applicant must obtain the following permits and other documentation, minimally, 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.

MaryEllen Blevins seconded the motion. Mr. Monaco, Mr. Coburn, Ms. Godek, and Ms. Blevins voted in favor. Michelle Capone abstained from the vote.

At 6:19pm Mr. Monaco moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Capone seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Gertrude Mead Karris
Secretary