Watertown City Council
Tuesday, June 11, 2019
6:00 p.m.

WORK SESSION AGENDA

Discussion Items:

1. Vacant Property Registration – Second review of draft Ordinance
   - Richard M. Finn, City Manager
   - Justin L. Wood, City Engineer

2. Parking at Thompson Park
   - Justin L. Wood, City Engineer

3. Main Street West – Phase 2 Road Diet and Parking Ordinance Amendment
   - Justin L. Wood, City Engineer

DRAFT

Vacant Building Registryand Inspection Legislative Findings and Purpose.

It is the finding of the City Council that buildings which remain vacant are unsightly, unsafe and have a negative effect on the surrounding neighborhood. Many buildings, once vacant, remain that way for many years. The purpose of this article is to establish a program to identify, register and inspect vacant buildings; to determine the responsibilities of owners of the vacant buildings and structures; to ensure that the structures do not deteriorate, to provide a level of safety to emergency responders and to the general public and to speed the rehabilitation process of vacant properties.

Definitions

Unless otherwise expressly stated, the following terms shall, for the purpose of this article, have the meanings indicated in this section:

CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

A duly authorized representative of the City's Bureau of Code Enforcement.

OWNER

Those shown to be the owner or owners of the records of the City of Watertown Assessor's Office, those identified as an owner or as owners on a vacant building registration form, a mortgagee in possession, assignee of rents, receiver, executor, trustee, or lessee, or other persons, firm or corporation in control of the premises.

SECURED BY OTHER THAN NORMAL MEANS

A building secured by means other than those used in the design of the building such as; doors, locks, window locks etc…

VACANT PROPERTY

Any property with a building which is not legally occupied or in which all lawful business or construction operations or residential habitation or other occupancy has substantially ceased and which is in such condition that it cannot legally be reoccupied without repair or rehabilitation.

UNSECURED

A building or portion of a building which is open to entry by unauthorized persons without the use of tools or ladders.

VACANT BUILDING

A building or portion of a building which is:

A. Unoccupied and unsecure; or

B. Unoccupied and secured by other than normal means; or

C. Unoccupied and is determined to be an unsafe building pursuant to Section 20(35) of the New York General City Law; or

D. Unoccupied and has multiple housing or building code / property maintenance code violations; or

E. Illegally occupied.

A building shall not be considered Vacant for purpose of this chapter if it is listed for sale with a licensed real estate person or entity and the property remains in compliance with the State Property Maintenance Code.

Vacant building registration

A. The owner of any vacant building located in the City of Watertown shall register that building with the Bureau of Code Enforcement no later than 30 days after it becomes vacant as defined.

B. The registration shall be submitted on forms provided by the Code Enforcement Office and shall include the following information to be provided by the owner:

(1) A description of the premises, including but not limited to square footage, number of stories, age of building, and most recent use of the building.

(2) The names and addresses of the owner or owners. If the owner is a corporation, limited liability corporation, or partnership, the address for each director, manager, or partner, as the case may be. The address must include a street address. A post office box is not an acceptable address.

(3) If the owner does not reside in Jefferson County or any adjoining county, the name and address of any third party with whom the owner has entered into a contract or agreement for management of the vacant property. The address must include a street address; a post office box is not acceptable.

C. Vacant building fees.

(1) The owner of a vacant building shall pay a fee of $50 upon registration, meaning no later than 30 days after any building becomes a "vacant building," as defined above, or no later than 30 days after being notified by the Code Enforcement Office of the required registration.

(2) If the building will remain vacant more than 90 days, then the owner shall also pay an annual vacant buildinginspection fee of $750, which fee is designed to reimburse the city for its expenses in arranging for, conducting, cataloging, and reporting on each required inspection. The first inspection fee is due and payable at the end of 90 calendar days, period. Subsequent annual fees shall be paid on each anniversary date of registration.

(3) If the building is to be rehabilitated or returned to a permitted use allowed within its zoning district within 90 days, then no registration and inspection fee shall be required. However, a plan for such rehabilitation or use must be filed with the Bureau Of Code Enforcement and a Building Permit issued within 30 days. Such plan must contain a start and estimated completion date, as well as identifiable benchmarks to be met at least every 90 days, unless the Bureau of Code Enforcement grants an extension for good cause shown upon receiving a written statement from theowner detailing the reasons for the extension. Said extension shall not exceed 6 months. If the rehabilitation has not been completed or extended by the Bureau of Code Enforcement, then the owner shall pay an annual vacant building registration and inspection fee in accordance with the rate established above until the building is properly demolished or rehabilitated. The annual vacant building fee is payable upon the owner's failure to meet a required benchmark and will be on each anniversary throughout until the building is demolished or rehabilitated. The annual fee shall continue until the structure is demolished or occupied.

(4) If the owner of the vacant building fails to register and pay the fees in a timely manner, the registration fee, building inspection fee, plus an administrative fee of $150 will become a lien upon the property and shall be certified by the City Council to the City Assessor as a charge to be added to and to become a part of the taxes next to be assessed and levied upon such lot or land and shall bear interest at the same rate as taxes and shall be collected and enforced in the same manner as taxes.

(5) Upon the sale of any vacant building as defined herein, the new owner shall be responsible for compliance with the provisions of this Chapter, and no timelines for inspection or payment of the annual fees established for the building shall be waived or otherwise adjusted. It shall be the full responsibility of the new owner to comply with all requirements previously required by the City.

Inspections.

The Code Enforcement Office shall inspect any property in the City for the purpose of enforcing and assuring compliance with the provisions of this Chapter. Upon the request of the Enforcement Officer, an owner shallprovide access to all interior portions of an unoccupied building in order to permit a complete inspection.

Annual reports.

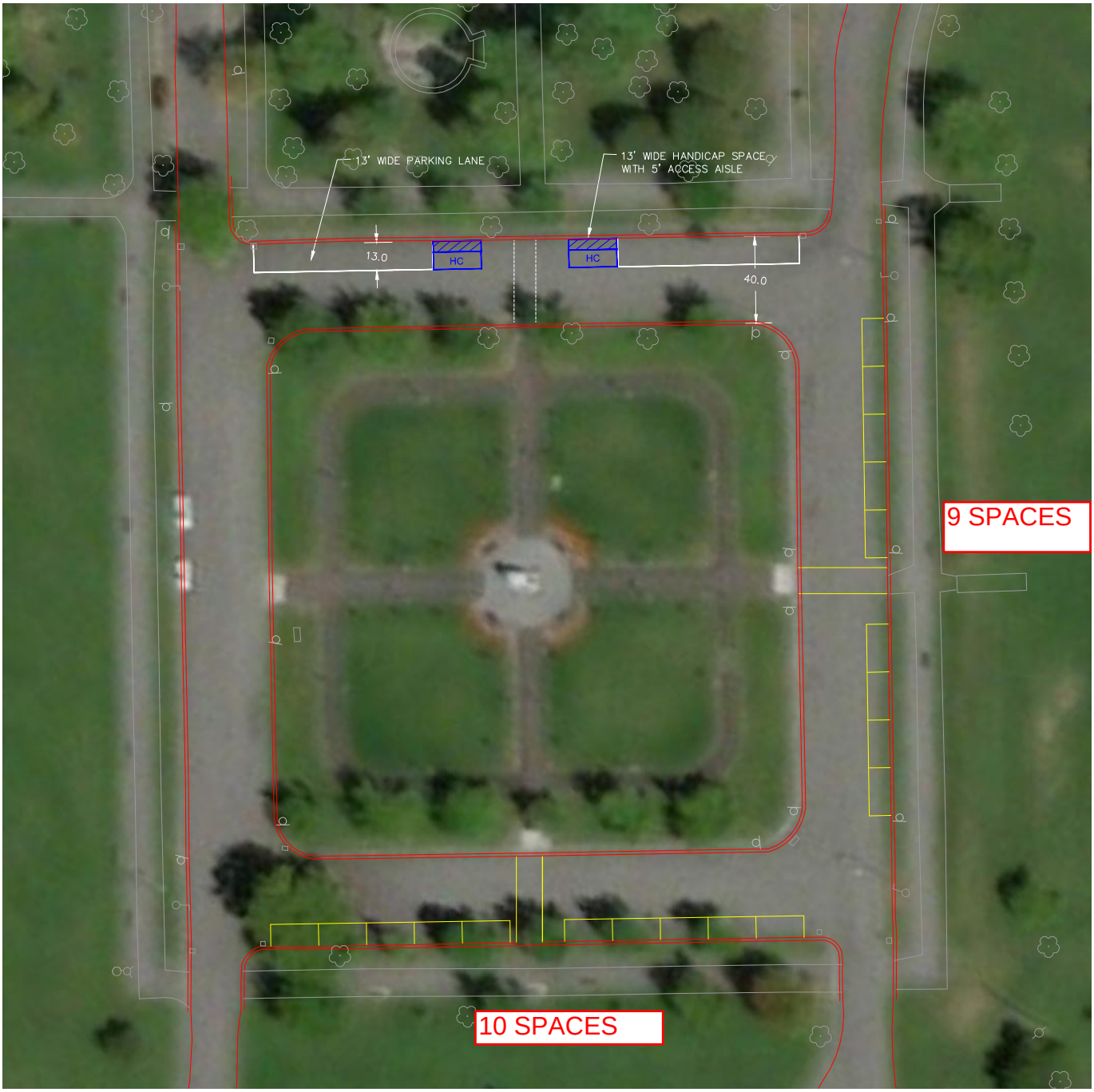
Once a year, on or before April 15th, the Code Enforcement Office shall send to the City Manager a list of all buildings in the City declared vacant under the provisions of this article, as well as a list of all previously declared vacant buildings which are no longer subject to the provision of this article. This listing shall be forwarded to the City Council.

Penalties for offenses

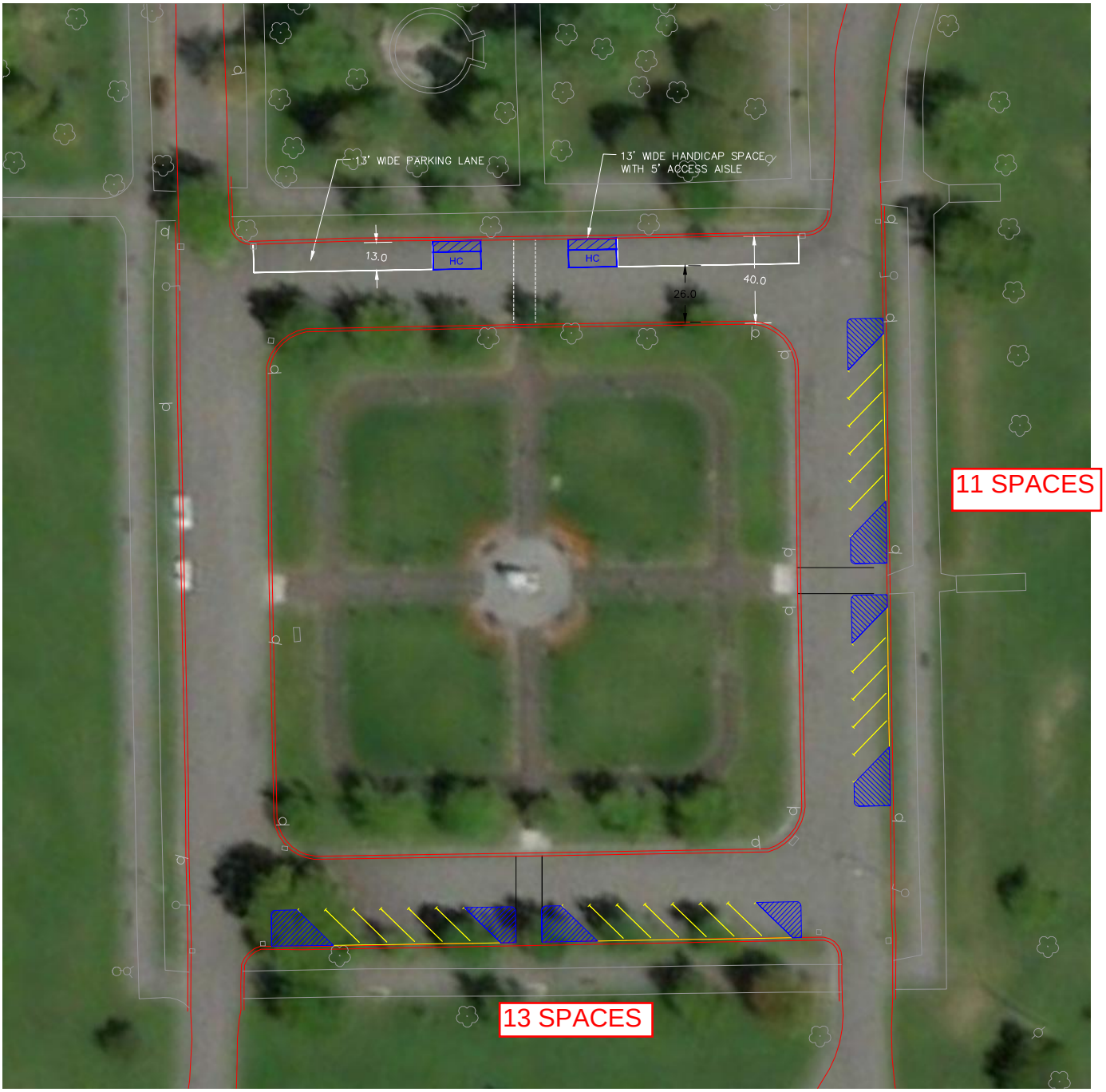
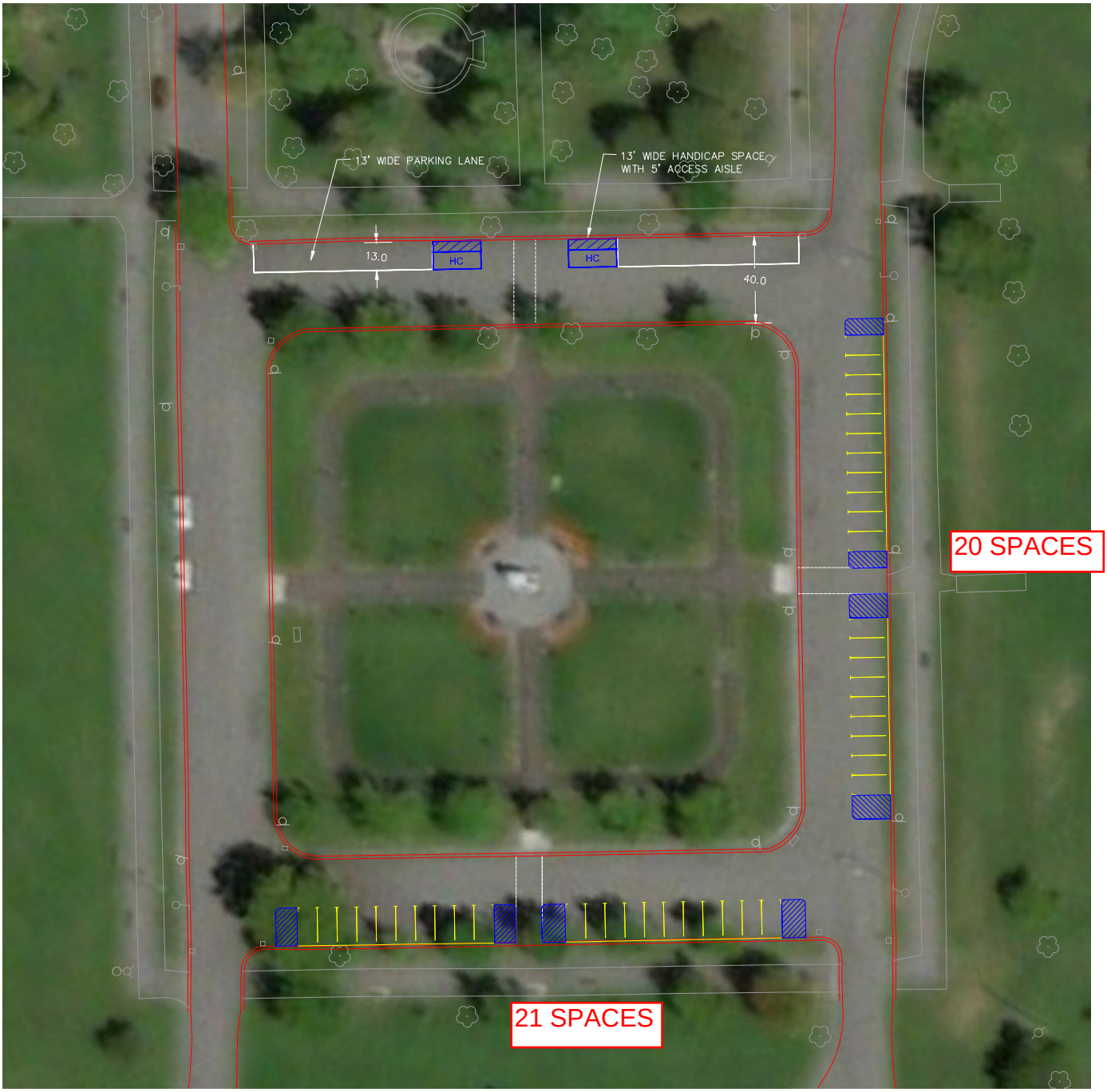
Any owner violating any provisions of this Chapter, including but not limited to a failure to register or providing false information to the Code Enforcement Office, shall be subject to prosecution in Watertown City Court for any such violation, and subject to a penalty of $500 for each month of non-compliance.

* The above fees will be included in the City Fee schedule.

EXISTING PARKING
NET 19 SPACES
2019-06-06



ANGLED PARKING CONCEPT
NET 24 SPACES
2019-06-06



PERPENDICULAR PARKING CONCEPT
NET 41 SPACES
2019-06-06