



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: JULY 11, 2023

PRESENT:

Larry Coburn, Chairperson
Linda Fields
Maryellen Blevins
Peter Monaco

ABSENT:

TJ Babcock
Michelle Capone
Lynn Godek

ALSO:

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

Planning Commission Chairman, Larry Coburn called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Coburn called for a reading of the minutes from the June 6, 2023, Planning Commission meeting. Planning Commission members deferred taking action on the minutes until the next meeting when additional members are present.

**SUBDIVISION FINAL PLAT APPROVAL
VL3 COMMERCE PARK DRIVE
PARCEL NUMBER 8-50-101.009**

and

**SITE PLAN APPROVAL
VL1, VL2, AND A PORTION OF VL3 COMMERCE PARK DRIVE
PARCEL NUMBERS 8-50-106.000, 8-50-105.000,
AND THE NORTHERN HALF OF 8-50-101.009**

Mr. Coburn then addressed the applicant and the other Planning Commission members. Mr. Coburn said that both the Subdivision and Site Plan applications submitted by DePaul Properties were related. He then noted that before voting on either application, the Planning Commission would need to declare themselves Lead Agency for SEQR purpose and complete Part 2 of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) Short Environmental Assessment Form (EAF).

Dan Brocht, of LaBella Associates, attended the meeting to represent the applications. Mr. Brocht introduced himself as the Civil Engineer and Project Manager working with the DePaul team. Mr. Brocht began by saying that he previously appeared before the Planning Commission at the June 6, 2023, meeting and that he had appeared before the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) at the ZBA's June 21, 2023, meeting for two Area Variances, which the ZBA had tabled until its July 19, 2023, meeting.

As Ms. Blevins and Mr. Monaco were attending their first meeting as recently appointed Planning Commission members, and did not attend the June meeting, Mr. Brocht then presented a brief overview of the project to give the new members some background on the application.

Mr. Brocht stated that DePaul was proposing a four-story affordable housing building with 120 residential units. Mr. Brocht explained that he and his team have addressed the summary items from Staff's original memorandum and proceeded to hand out revised plans and written responses to the summary items. Mr. Coburn asked the Mr. Brocht to go through each of the summary items.

Mr. Brocht then addressed the first summary item on the Staff's memorandum, which required the applicant to provide crosswalks to the sidewalk on the opposite side of Commerce Park Drive in order to connect the pedestrian network. Mr. Brocht stated that they can provide a crosswalk at Commerce Park Drive and work with City Staff on placement.

Mr. Urda then approached the map to show Mr. Brocht Staff's preferred location for a crosswalk adjacent to the roundabout located to the northwest of the site. Mr. Urda explained that the roundabout acts as a traffic calmer and qualified as a controlled intersection, meaning the crosswalk would not be a mid-block crossing. He also stressed that it would connect the tenants to commercial, retail, restaurant activity to the west of the building. Mr. Urda also stated that the new crosswalk would connect to a crosswalk that is on the north side of the roundabout, that connects to a sidepath that parallels Western Blvd.

Mr. Brocht then addressed the second summary item, which states that the applicant should consider the placement of a bus shelter along Commerce Park Drive for residents to allow them easier access to the CitiBus, especially during inclement weather. Mr. Brocht stated that they are more than happy to provide at least a location and base. Mr. Brocht also mentioned that they are open to future discussions about what kind of structure the City would like to see as a bus shelter.

Mr. Brocht then addressed the third summary item, which required the applicant to obtain an Area Variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals granting relief from the transparency requirements in the Commercial District. Mr. Brocht stated that they are seeking an Area Variance to decrease the required transparency requirements of the front façade. Their area variance request is to decrease the requirements by 4% for both the ground and upper floors. Mr. Brocht said that the ZBA did not have any negative comments on the applicant's request at its June meeting and he anticipates them voting on the request at their July 19, 2023, meeting.

Mr. Brocht then addressed the fourth summary item, which required the applicant to obtain an Area Variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals granting relief from the 100-foot maximum between functional entryways on the front of the building. Mr. Brocht went on to explain that since this is a multi-family residential building, for security reasons, they try to limit the amount of

access into the building, which is why they proposed entrances farther apart. Mr. Brocht acknowledged that the intent of this requirement for a Commercial Building. Mr. Brocht then said that the ZBA did not have any negative comments on this request and anticipates the board voting on the request at their July 19, 2023, meeting as well.

Mr. Brocht then addressed the fifth summary item, which required the applicant to review the planting schedule to ensure that the drawing accurately depicts the proposed planting plan. Mr. Brocht stated that SWBR completed the landscaping plan to match the planting plan. Mr. Brocht went over the placement of street trees and foundation plantings per Staff's request on their updated landscaping plan.

Mr. Brocht then addressed the sixth summary item, which required the applicant to stagger tree species along Commerce Park Drive to avoid creating a monoculture. Mr. Brocht stated that the revised planting plan complies with the summary item.

Mr. Brocht then addressed the seventh summary item, which required the applicant to replace the tree species proposed for the parking lot islands with a more salt tolerant species such as those suggested in Staff's memorandum. Mr. Brocht stated that the landscaping plan has been updated to include salt tolerant trees. The proposed 'Redmond' Linden had been replaced with Northern Red Oak.

Mr. Brocht then addressed the eighth summary item, which states that the applicant should consider the addition of lighting at the entrances to the building along the front and side for pedestrian safety. Mr. Brocht pointed out the existing building mounted lighting and noted that they added bollard lights along all entrances. Mr. Brocht also mentioned the addition of the pedestrian-scale pole mounted lights at the main entrance.

Ms. Fields then asked if there would be any continued lighting along the building, away from the entrances. Dan Glading of SWBR Architects replied that they were exploring building accent lighting that will not throw light, but rather highlight the building. Mr. Glading then elaborated on street and interior lighting. Ms. Fields emphasized the importance of lighting for the safety of tenants. Mr. Glading agreed and mentioned that DePaul provides an advanced surveillance security camera system for their community and neighborhood.

Mr. Brocht then addressed the ninth summary item, which required the applicant to identify a snow storage area on the proposed plan and ensure the tree planting plan is amended so that the snow removal operations will not damage any trees. Mr. Brocht stated that they have added primary and secondary snow storage areas and the trees along the perimeter of the parking lot in the primary and secondary snow storage areas have been relocated. Mr. Brocht then pointed out the three snow storage locations on the map.

Mr. Brocht then addressed the tenth summary item, which required the applicant to assemble all subject parcels into a single parcel, as proposed, by way of a new metes and bounds description filled with the County Clerk. Mr. Brocht stated that they have submitted a map to the city and the process is ongoing.

Mr. Brocht then addressed the eleventh summary item, which identified all the permits that the applicant needed to obtain, 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. Mr. Brocht stated that they acknowledge that these permits are required and will work towards getting those permits as the project moves along.

Mr. Monaco then asked the applicant when they expect to break ground. Mr. Glading replied that he anticipated shovels in the ground around late summer of 2024, and doors will open in late 2025 or early 2026.

Ms. Fields then asked the applicant if there was sufficient turn around for emergency vehicles. Mr. Brocht said his team ran emergency vehicle turning radius throughout the entire site and there was sufficient space.

Mr. Monaco stated that the lot has been vacant for 30 years and that it was good to see someone improving the area. Mr. Monaco went on to ask the applicant what was going to happen to the remaining half of the subdivided parcel. Mr. Brocht replied that the current owner is going to retain the land, along with the adjoining parcel to the south.

Mr. Lumbis stated that Site Plan approval is valid for 18 months and can be extended by mutual consent. Ms. Voss clarified that the 18-month period begins once a Building Permit has been approved.

Mr. Lumbis then stated that for the Subdivision application, the applicant has been working with Ms. Bonello to satisfy summary items and that all the summary items have been satisfied except for combining the lots into one single parcel.

Mr. Monaco then asked the applicant if they have purchased the land from the current owner. Both Mr. Glading and Mr. Brocht replied in the negative.

Mr. Coburn then asked Staff to explain what it means for the Planning Commission to be designated as the Lead Agency pursuant to the SEQRA. Mr. Lumbis explained that usually, this project would be an Unlisted Action, but due to funding sources and approvals required from other involved agencies at the New York State level, the project requires a coordinated review.

Mr. Lumbis then said that Planning Staff reached out to the other agencies involved requesting that the agencies agree to the Planning Commission be the Lead Agency along with any comments they had on the Site Plan. He said that the City received responses from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), and the City of Watertown ZBA. He said that all other interested and/or involved agencies did not respond within the 30-day period, effectively giving their concurrence. Mr. Lumbis stated that the Planning Commission can proceed with the Environmental Review as the Lead Agency.

The Planning Commission then reviewed and answered each question of the Short Environmental Assessment form, answering no to all of them. Ms. Fields then made a motion that the Planning Commission of the City of Watertown, after initiating a Coordinated Review with other Involved Agencies, hereby establishes itself as the Lead Agency for the State Environmental Quality Review for the proposed DePaul Apartment Project, which consists of the construction of a 115,063 SF, 120-unit, four-story apartment buildings at VL1, VL2 and a portion

of VL3 Commerce Park Drive 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. Mr. Monaco seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the motion.

Ms. Fields then moved to grant Subdivision Final Approval for the request submitted by DePaul Property for a two-lot subdivision of VL3 Commerce Park Drive, Parcel Number 8-50-101.009, contingent upon the following:

1. The applicant shall assemble the 1.0-acre northern subdivided parcel with Parcel Number 8-50-106.000 located at VL1 Commerce Park Drive, and Parcel Number 8-50-105.000 located at VL2 Commerce Park Drive into one single parcel, by way of a new metes and bounds description that is filed with the County Clerk.

Ms. Blevins seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Ms. Fields then moved to grant Site Plan Approval for the request submitted by DePaul Property to construct a 115,063 SF, 120-unit four-story apartment building at VL1, VL2 and VL3 Commerce Park Drive, Parcel Numbers 8-50-106.000, 8-50-105.000 and 8-50-101.009, contingent upon the following:

1. The applicant should provide crosswalks to the sidewalk on the opposite side of Commerce Park Drive in order to connect the pedestrian network.
2. The applicant should consider the placement of a bus shelter along Commerce Park Drive for residents to allow them easier access to the CitiBus, especially during inclement weather.
3. The applicant must obtain an Area Variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals granting relief from the transparency requirements in the Commercial District.
4. The applicant must obtain an Area Variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals granting relief from the required 100-foot between functional entryways on the front of the building.
5. 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.
6. 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.

Ms. Blevins seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

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

Mr. Coburn stated that he did not see representation for the proposed application. Mr. Urda replied that the application will need to stay on the table. Mr. Urda further explained that the applicant appeared at the June 6, 2023, Planning Commission meeting, where Staff and the Planning Commission deemed the application as incomplete. Mr. Urda said that the applicant planned to resubmit for a future Planning Commission meeting with a complete application. Mr. Urda then clarified that the 62-day review period for the Site Plan has not started because per the Zoning Ordinance, it does not begin until the Planning Commission deems the application complete.

Mr. Urda then stated that the applicant has submitted an Area Variance application, which the ZBA would hear at its July 19, 2023, meeting. Mr. Urda then noted that the ZBA rarely votes on a Variance application at the meeting at which that application is introduced. Mr. Urda said that the Planning Commission should likely expect to see this application reappear at its September meeting.

Mr. Urda then recommended rescheduling the September Planning Commission meeting for Tuesday September 12, 2023, due to the City Council using Council Chambers the evening of September 5, 2023. The Planning Commission unanimously agreed.

Ms. Blevins moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:41 p.m. Mr. Monaco seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharlice Bonello
Planner