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CITY OF WEST HAVEN, CT
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON
Tuesday, March 28, 2023

The West Haven Planning and Zoning Commission held a Regular Meeting and Public Hearing on Tuesday, March 28, 2023, in the Harriet North Room, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut at 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order: 6:00

Roll Call:

Christopher Suggs, Chairman	Present
John Biancur, Vice-Chairman	Present
Gregory Milano, Secretary	Present
Gene F. Sullivan, Commissioner	Present
Michael Todd Taylor, Commissioner	Absent
Joseph Vecellio, Alternate	Present
Sammy Rivera, Alternate	Present
Alternate Commissioner	Vacant
Ron Quagliani, Liason to Council	Present
Catherine Conniff, Assistant City Planner	Present
Steven Hotchkiss, Zoning Enforcement Officer	Absent
Brian Miller, Planning Consultant	Present
Karen Kravetz Associate Corp. Counsel, Sussman, Duffy & Segaloff	Present

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes

Vice-Chairman, Biancur makes a motion to accept the minutes from the March 14 meeting Commissioner Sullivan seconded it.

Chairman Suggs states that Alternate Sammy Rivera will vote in the absence of Commissioner Michael Todd Taylor.

Public Hearing

369 Washington Avenue: The Applicant proposes to demolish the existing Elementary school and construct a new Elementary school with associated site, parking, drainage and utility work, in the PF (Public Facility) District and the VDO (Village District Overlay) Zone. The property is located within the CAM boundary. Under section 21, 38, 71, 72, 74, 75, 92 and 85 of the City of West Haven Zoning Regulations.

Owner: City of West Haven

Applicant: West Haven Board of Education File SP #23-150, SR #23-151, CSP #23-152 and ESC #23-153

Lisa Yates, Architect, Antinozzi Associates, 271 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport, presented the Application for the raising and rebuilding of Washington Elementary School. Built in 1909 it is the oldest continuously operating community school that is no longer supporting modern educational needs. The new school will be 64 thousand square feet on the existing 4 acre parcel with a courtyard featuring a view of the glass walled gymnasium. The portion of the school along Brown Street will be two stories and most of the remaining building will be one story all with state of the art security features. Traffic flow for drop off and pick up is currently chaotic. The new plan offers a three lane bus queue that holds 30 cars and parking spaces will increase from 52 to 74. The current drainage system is partially blocked. The new plan adds an underground storm water retention drainage system. Landscaping and full cut off lighting will be installed.

Antonio Camillo, Engineer, Stantec, 55 Church Street, New Haven spoke about how the new design will be much safer all around. He said all lighting and landscaping will be sustainable and they are preserving some of the mature trees to be incorporated in the new design. Swales and all new drainage will remedy the existing poor drainage. All commemorative plaques and the memorial bench on the property will be incorporated in the new plans. Camillo spoke about how the parcel is small but they have successfully incorporated a drop off system that has proven to be successful.

Assistant City Planner Conniff states that Sargent D'Amato recommends that the main entrance only be assessable with proper identification. Yes, there will be a main entry and another interior area and then the lobby all with a lockable doors. She said our Traffic Division is in favor of the pick up/drop off plan but they want the roadway to be striped indicating left turn only. Mr. Camillo will add signs and striping.

Chairman Suggs asks about the security for the entries and exits of the building. There will be card readers for access. Some doors will not have hardware on the outside.

Assistant City Planner Conniff relays that our City Engineer, Abdul Quadir asks that they pay special attention to the drainage system since neighbors in the area suffer from flooding. She says that Frank Gladwin, West Haven Building Official asks if all permits were taken. Yes

Alternate Commissioner Rivera asks why solar panels are not in the plan. The roof will be built to accommodate solar panels in the future said Ms. Yates.

Secretary Milano asks if the future solar panels will be screened and if they will be visible from the street. Yates replied that they would not be screened and they would be visible from the street. Secretary Milano thanks Ms. Yates and Mr. Camillo for breaking down the VDO requirements. He is in favor of the height and elevation of the building and the materials that will be used. He points out that a sidewalk may be necessary on the north corner for walkers. Yes, they will add a sidewalk.

Condition: Sidewalk to be added on the northern corner between Washington Avenue for walkers to access safely

Vice-Chairman Biancur thanks the applicants for the presentation and for adhering to the VDO. He asks for signage and striping indicating no left turn from the north lot.

Condition: No left turn from the northern lot, add signage and striping

Commissioner Sullivan asks if a parent would be able to park and walk their student to school. Yes, they can use the lot. He asks how many busses will fit in the bus drop off. Approximately 4 large busses or 2 small busses with 3 big busses will fit. Next he asks where will deliveries be received and if the new kitchen will have food delivered or food made on site. There is a spot for deliveries and the kitchen is self sufficient. He asks if the gym will have seating. Yes, bleacher type seating. Commissioner Sullivan mentions water problems on a previous school project. He said they built rain gardens and asks the difference between a swale and a rain garden. There is not enough room for a rain garden to be incorporated on this project. The swale, a gully type impression, moves the water slowly and effectively.

Council Liason Quagliani asks about snow piles. Yes, there are two spots available to pile the snow. He asks about impervious surfaces. Impervious surfaces have increased, with the new design, from 49% to 56%. He then asks if there is community space. Yes, with locking doors to secure the remainder of the building.

Planning Consultant Miller said the plan meets all requirements and it is an excellent design.

Public Hearing

Tom Sciarappa, 327 Washington Avenue, is concerned about traffic flow in conjunction with a project happening on the former site of CJM's. He mentions noise and asks about when the project will start and finish daily. Will there be consequences if the project goes beyond the expected date of completion.

Henry Manoni, 362 Washington Avenue, asks if there will be a driveway on the corner of Washington Avenue and Brown Street. He is concerned about the drop off and pick up not moving quickly. He is also concerned about air born contaminants getting on his home and in his home. Lastly he asks about the memorial bench.

Jeffrey Ukleja, 334 Peck Avenue, is concerned about drainage issues, especially snow melt. He is asking for another retention area to be added.

Jhonatan Cataneo, 180 Brown Street, asks if there will be traffic signs and stop lights and he, too, is concerned about air born contaminants. He also asks how many children will be in each classroom. He said his children go to private school because Washington School is the worst.

Chairman Suggs calls three times to the public for additional speakers. There is a one-time speaking rule. He now asks the Applicants to respond to the concerns of the public.

Ms. Yates said that before the building is raised it will be remediated. There will be dust control which is a mist that is sprayed during the removal of the building. She said the cost stated is correct and West Haven's portion is not expected to increase. Gilbane will manage the construction and they will do a neighborhood outreach to make the project agreeable. They will likely start at 7:00 and end at 3:00. Ms. Yates expects Gilbane will be considerate and perform the jobs that generate extra noise during mid-day hours. The project is going to begin in September of 2023 and be completed by January of 2025. If the project goes beyond this time frame it will be at the expense of the contractor so it is expected to stay on schedule. The Ralph Russo Memorial Bench and all memorial plaques will be incorporated in to the new school. The bench will be placed on a paved spot. It is already a part of the plan. Mr. Camillo said that this project does not address all traffic concerns but it will make it better. He said the queue is 35 feet wide making each lane about 11 feet wide.

Chairman Suggs asks that no parking signs are clear for school staff and visitors but that they allow for neighbors' visitors to park. He asked Ms. Limosani how the parking works now. She said the staff does park on Brown and Washington. They also double up in the existing parking lot.

Vice-Chairman Biancur asks how many teachers and staff members are there and during what times. Ms. Limosani said there are approximately 70 there from 8:50 to 3:25. She said about four walk to work and currently 73 students get dropped off. The new queue can accommodate 30 cars.

Alternate Rivera asks if there is a lock down button, yes there is

Secretary Milano asks if the retention area can be made larger to address the neighbor that raises concerns about drainage. It will not help to make it larger. The planned drainage system will make it much better than it is now as the current system is mostly blocked.

Secretary Milano asks if the queue offers room for cars to pass. Yes, the lanes are narrow but you can pass. He asks Alicia Limosani, Principal of Washington School,

Vice-Chairman Biancur asks how it compares to other similar projects. It compares to Jefferson Elementary in Norwalk and the drop off pick up queue works very well

Secretary Milano asks how many children will be in each classroom, Ms. Limosani said no more than 23. She added that she and her staff have a great system and that she is always willing to receive calls or emails from neighbors to address their questions and concerns.

Vice-Chairman Biancur said no parking on Brown Street and Washington Avenue would be handled by the West Haven Police Department.

Assistant City Planner Conniff thanks Ms. Limosani for educating our children and she suggests that Ms. Limosani well informs her school community about the changes and new procedures. She said our Public Works Department will check the drain that is near blocked.

Alternate Rivera asks how long it takes the drainage system to empty. It will drain in 24-48 hours.

The Application was unanimously approved.

Regular Meeting

April 11, 2023 meeting is cancelled.

April 25, 2023 meeting Agenda will hear Fresh Meadow Road; 551 Main Street and zone changes. The staff can decide on 44 Church Street.

Staff Reports

Associate Corp Counsel Kravetz said that Kaplow is waiting for a Court date. She said the Bowl Drive-in Trial is May 18, 2023. Lastly she said that any condition must have essential nexus, not an amenity that does not impact the application.

Other Business

From now on it is acceptable for staff to check with Chairman Suggs about which Applications must come before the Board.

Chairman Suggs made a motion to adjourn and Vice-Chairman Biancur seconded it

Adjournment: 8:28