

MEETING MINUTES OF
WEST HAVEN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
September 28, 2021

The West Haven Planning and Zoning Commission held a Regular Meeting and Public Meeting on Tuesday, September 28th, 2021, in the Harriet North Room, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, CT at 6:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Commissioners Hendricks, Biancur, Sullivan, Mullins, Suggs, Taylor, Vecellio, Milano, Zoning Enforcement, Steve Hotchkiss, Assistant City Planner Conniff and Director of Planning Soto and Corporation Counsel Kravetz.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Commissioner Biancur made a motion to approve the Regular and Public Meeting minutes of August 24, 2021, seconded by Commissioner Milano. Commissioner Mullins requested a modification to insert a comma between Vecellio and Milano. Minutes to be amended.

Commissioner Mullins amended his motion to add the comma. Commissioner Sullivan seconded. Motion carried.

Public Hearing:

1. **27/322 (291 Campbell Avenue); 35/473, (313 Campbell Avenue), 35/472 (315 Campbell Avenue); and 35/450 (Washington Avenue)** Applications for Special Permit and Site Plan Review approval, including erosion and sediment controls, Resource Removal, Filling and Grading, and a Coastal Site Plan review to demolish existing with associated site, parking, drainage and utility work in the CBD (Central Business) district and the VDO (Village District Overlay) Zone. Under section 20, 21,73,74,75, and 85 of the City of West Haven Zoning Regulations Owner Applicant Shmuel Aizenberg, GLI Holding, LLC. File # SP 21-71, SR 21-72, CSP 21-73, RFG 21-74 and ESCP 21-75.

Attorney James Perito, Halloran and Sage, on behalf of owner, Shmuel Aizenberg, and Developer GLI Holding, LLC stated project began over a year ago. Design team started meeting with City in 2019, '20, meetings with police and fire departments, public works, zoning and building staff. Filed applications and pandemic shut down project. Aizenberg closed on purchase of parcels and is ready to move forward.

Neighborhood meeting May 17, 2021. Discussion regarding storm water measures and traffic flow. Overall reaction to design positive. In August and September, 2021 had joint committee meetings to review design which resulted in multitude of changes. Will review changes in presentation.

Presented project to Inland/Wetlands, which issued approval. Several changes suggested at Wetlands Public hearing, which are incorporated. Met with city engineer, director

public works, neighborhood apartment complex to discuss storm water issues. Last week attended Wetlands Agency's open meeting.

Project consists of two buildings. Campbell Ave. building has retail on first floor. 140 units and parking for residential and commercial. Plan submitted complies with zoning regulations and site plan complies with all of the ZBD zone setbacks, height, coverage and parking spaces. In density, number of units less than technically permitted. Parking and traffic designed to eliminate pass and cut through travel. Designed to encourage pedestrian flow through site.

Updated traffic reports shows no change in LOS at intersections. Storm water plan will treat and retain storm water presently flowing off site. Architects reviewed the design, how it evolved with input, suggestions from joint committee. Project legally complies with village design standards and plan of conservation and development and economic infusion project will bring to West Haven.

Slide presentation by Joe Avini, licensed landscape architect, Langan Engineering, 555 Long Wharf Drive, New Haven discussed site design and incorporating Old Field Creek into design. Pointed out site constraints, including draining easement and limit of flood zone. Presented sign plan rendering. Two buildings in L shape, Campbell Ave and Washington Ave, first level parking with structure above. Wood screened fence, street scape with public amenity spaces, adjacent to cafes. Street scape material stamped concrete and pavers to fit in with neighborhood. Optimize site drainage by using storm water management, rain garden design, above grade drainage. Washington Avenue more lawn aesthetic here away from edge similar to nearby residential. Presented vehicle and pedestrian traffic flow, public amenities, drop off and loading areas, infrastructure.

Katie Gagnan, Professional Engineer, Langan Engineering presented drainage system, which includes rain gardens, four underground infiltration systems. Proposed storm water management system designed in accordance with Section 75.6.4 of City of West Haven Zoning regulation.

Christopher McLain, Licensed Professional Engineer, Langan Engineering presented traffic analysis, including intersection of Campbell Ave and Lester Street, Campbell and Brown and Brown and Washington, estimating peak volume for morning and afternoon. Do not anticipate any change to the overall operations of the surrounding roadway network as related to this development.

Maura Gilmore, Newman Architects, 300 York Street, New Haven presented extensive plans discussing C2.00 pointing out that the application exceeds the minimum bulk requirements for central business district with respect to minimum watt size per dwelling unit, street frontage and setbacks. Proposed development is below the maximum permitted by the bulk standards for the CBD and at 140 dwelling units proposed development has 14 less units than maximum of 154 units allowed based on watt size.

Summarized points received from joint committee on VDO requirements, including number of stories, staging, overall building height, scale of primary facades, distinction of ground floor from upper floors, expression and design of cornice lines. Discussed project fitting in visually and functionally with existing buildings in the surrounding area as well as conforming to design principle 24.4(e) regarding 100 year flood plain and drainage easements.

No new streets are proposed as part of this development. Project will connect to existing roads and sidewalk networks. Development includes pocket park and public amenity space in response to design principle 21.4(g). Trees and shrubs to enhance adjacent wetlands and creek. Signs and lighting to be compatible with surrounding sites.

Joe Avini concluded with the landscape and site requirements.

Attorney Perito addressed the comprehensive nature of the plan and development and aim to help West Haven to evolve as a city and to thrive economically. Estimated investment is \$30 million. Immediate impact to city is building permit fees and real estate taxes.

Commissioner questioned using existing elements of factory, whether artistic. Will take some of the metal items, etc. and locate them in pocket park, lobby, etc.

Confirmed that existing buildings will be demolished; restaurant and buckle factory.

Commissioner asked if there will be property manager on site. Melissa Saint, owner's rep for projected state owner and investors are searching out a third party property management company. Pocket park will be approximately 225 square feet. No one in mind at present time for commercial units. Parking under buildings and will be marked which is for commercial. Anticipated timeline between construction design and permit 3 and 4 months, within that time demolition would start to clear site. 18-20 months build.

Anticipated rents projected between \$1,100 and 2,000, studio through 2 bedroom. Will be marketed as A-Class property attracted to ages 25-60, commuters, people who want to be close to downtown and outside of New Haven, first year doctors, professors at Yale, UNH. Laundry in each unit.

Commissioner Suggs questioned Attorney Perito about the drainage system, including maintenance system and rain gardens. Commissioner Taylor and Chairman Hendricks asked questions relating parking and the traffic study and concerns about congestion.

Commissioner Suggs commented the concerns of city engineer and fire marshal which would have to have additional review at time of permit, should commission vote to approve applications in addition to coastal management and DEEP.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Brittany Goodman, 302 Campbell Avenue, read letter into the record on behalf of Attorney Charles Willinger, who on behalf of residents and clients oppose the petition for reasons including flood zone, density, neighborhood impact as well as violations of zoning regulations and CBD guidelines.

Gregory H. Pidluski, Licensed Professional Engineer and Land Surveyor and flood plain manager, expressed concerns including wetlands, soil report, water course and rain gardens, although he did not have the current site plan, which Chairman Hendricks pointed out has been available to the public for review in the Planning Department.

Edward Charles Walkovitz, Washington Garden Apartments, Washington Avenue, expressed no objection to project but wanted clarification on square footage, number of buildings, traffic, retail.

Michael Lipsett, 788 Ocean Avenue, West Haven, presented a petition on behalf of the neighbors and expressed concerns on storm waters and flooding, traffic, parking, especially near the school, building height and fitting in with current neighborhood.

Richard Chamberlain, broker/owner Chamberlain Realty, West Haven, 433 Campbell Avenue, objects to the project at its planned location stating it may be better suited in another part of the city.

Tom Sciarappa, 327 Washington Avenue, objects to project in regard to building height in relation to surrounding two-story homes, inadequate parking spaces, traffic congestion.

Richard Larr, 278 Washington Avenue, posed a question about the additional drainage which will be going onto his property and approval process.

Jerry Kreiger, 119 Driftwood Lane, Guilford, expressed opinion that project will enhance neighborhood, increase property value, generate tax revenue and revitalize Campbell Avenue.

Cindy Palmer, 256 Washington Avenue, West Haven objects to height of the project and feels the administration wants apartments instead of existing single family homes.

David Suraci, 281, 283 (indiscernible address), business owner objects to project due to number of units and traffic concerns.

Bridgette Hoskie, 326 Washington Avenue, West Haven, expressed concern about traffic study and whether it was done during COVID, traffic pattern, building height, drainage.

Commissioner Suggs addressed concern about public speaker Richard Larr's concerns about water being dumped onto his property and how this will be addressed. Attorney Perito responded will be handled by additional drainage pipe and handled by city as this is has always been a City issue and discussions have taken place regarding making other improvements for drainage between the city, applicant and owner of the property.

Commissioner Milano addressed the resident's concerns with the height of the project and how it relates to continuing the patterns of existing height. Attorney Perito stated building designs and setbacks to conform to village district overlay and discussions about issues in the joint committee meetings to have the project blend in with the committee. Chairman Hendricks addressed discussions about importance of mixed use in the central business to revitalize the center.

Commissioner Suggs requested clarification on number of parking spaces. Explanation was given on how parking regulations are being met. Discussion on need for possible speed bumps for pedestrian walkways. Commissioner Milano suggested salvaging items from current site and thoughts about how to display to preserve history of the area.

Motion to close public hearing made by Commissioner Biancur. Seconded by Commissioner Suggs. Motion carried.

Public Hearing CLOSED

Commissioner Biancur made a motion to approve File No. SP-21-71, SR 21-72, CSP21-73, RFG 21-74 and ESCP 21-75 with the following two conditions; that there is signage available for the crosswalks and that minimum of two speed humps be put on the property to prevent the cut through and those two conditions should be worked through staff. Other condition that the Historical Society be contacted to go in and help with any refurbishing and keeping any of the artifacts with the applicant.

Deliberation on File No. SP-21-71, SR 21-72, CSP21-73, RFG 21-74 and ESCP 21-75

Commissioner Biancur re-tracked motion and Commissioner Milano re-tracked second.

Commissioner Biancur made a motion to approve File No. SP-21-71, SR 21-72, CSP21-73, RFG 21-74 and ESCP 21-75 with conditions that signs be added for crosswalks, that a minimum of at least two speed humps be put on property and that the Historic Society be contacted in regards to some of the things to be preserved at the buckle factory. Motion made for the following reasons: Page 65 of POCD, goals 1, 2 and 5 align the strategies under PD1 façade and sign approve is PD3, strategies for redevelopment, which specifically says the City should consider in the long term strategy for encouraging private sector redevelopment in downtown. PD9 talks about creating more active and lively sidewalks. In terms of the VDO, this fits in section 21 of the village district overly virtually on every single one, although due to the large property, this is relatively unique for the village district overly, but does meet both the design principles. It does its best for harmonious relations to the surroundings and it does meet design standards, as well as façade set back, etc. It does fit in all of the CBD regulations for setbacks, height, parking, et cetera and then quote section 20.2.3 which reads “The Central Business District, to encourage local retail development in combination with residential use for the mutual advantage of both the merchants and consumers that is easily accessible to mass transit for the elderly and disadvantaged.” This does fit into the general definition, as well as

specifics. Matches or exceeds all storm water and drainage regulations under special permits. Fits into at minimum Sections 85.4.1, 85.4.2, 85.4.3 and 85.4.4. Provisions have been made to minimize any disturbances or nuisances to surrounding properties arising out of the creation of such use, including the provision of landscape, screens and buffers. Used proper setback screening and buffers but also buffered building itself. Commissioner Mullins seconded. Motion carried.

Staff reports: None

Other business: Nice job on flashing lights. Minutes will be changed to include 288 Washington Avenue and any actions and minutes for tonight should show the same.

Commissioner Mullins made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Sullivan seconded. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 10:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Fiore, CERT

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