

Special Meeting

The 1667th meeting of the Town of Stonington's Planning and Zoning Commission was held virtually via WebEx on Wednesday, November 4, 2020. The meeting was called to order by Commissioner David Rathbun at 7:00pm. Also present for the meeting were Commissioners Gardner Young, Ben Philbrick, Fred Deichmann, and Lynn Conway; Alternates Chuck Sheehan, Ryan Deasy, and Peter Chomowicz; and Town Planner Keith Brynes.

Seated for the meeting David Rathbun, Gardner Young, Ben Philbrick, Lynn Conway, and Fred Deichmann.

Minutes:

Mr. Deichmann moved to approve the minutes of the October 20, 2020 meeting, seconded by Mr. Philbrick, all in favor 5-0, motion approved.

Administrative Review:

20-264ZON Joseph Dzekevich (A. Slater) – Zoning permit application for landscaping and dock access in the Non-Infringement Area (NIA). Parcel located on Palmer Neck Rd., Pawcatuck. Assessors Map 56 Block 1 Lot 4A. Zone RC-120.

Mr. Brynes presented the application. The proposed activity is located in the RC-120 non-infringement area that requires permission from the commission in order to be used for water activity access. The applicant is proposing to remove undergrowth and invasive species. DEEP approval would be required for a dock or any further disturbance to the area. The lot is currently vacant and a zoning permit is required to build on the lot. A Natural Resource Evaluation has been submitted by a Soil and Wetland Scientist that identified natural resources on the adjacent property to the north

Mr. Slater stated their plan is to remove the invasive species and replace with native, plantings of higher ecological value to the area. Mr. Philbrick asked what invasive species are there and what they are planning to plant. Mr. Slater stated he is not familiar with the technical names but would follow the University of Connecticut's guide.

Mr. Deichmann moved to approve with the stipulation that staff review the removal and planting plan, seconded by Mr. Philbrick, all in favor 5-0, motion approved.

Stipulation:

1. A Vegetation Management Plan involving maintenance of existing trees and replacement of invasive ground cover with suitable vegetation shall be reviewed by staff.

Public Hearing:

PZ2018SUP & CAM G Development, LLC (S. Cherenzia) - Special Use Permit and Coastal Area Management Review applications for the redevelopment (change of use) from Automotive Service/Gas Station to small Hotel (previously to Restaurant). Proposal includes demolition of

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existing structure, parking, stormwater management, utilities, and associated landscaping. Property located at 32 Broadway Ave., Mystic. Assessors Map 174, Block 19, Lot 1. Zone LS-5.

Sergio Cherenzia, project engineer, presented the application, describing the current site conditions. The site was previously a gasoline and auto service station dating back to 1934. The gas tanks and pump stations have been removed and the building on site has been recently used by the fire departments for training. The proposed use will conform to all bulk requirements and will not require a variance. They previously proposed to develop a restaurant by utilizing offsite parking, however, the regulations do not allow for it. After meeting with the Police Commission, they decided the restaurant would be too intense a use for the site. They are now proposing for a 6-unit hotel with significantly less parking requirements. Mr. Cherenzia reviewed the site elevations and flood plain conditions. The access to the property would be from Washington Street going in and exiting onto Broadway. One curb cut to Broadway will be removed. There will be more than adequate parking on site, noting easy access to those traveling by train may access the property on foot. They do not plan to have construction complete until after the WPCA moratorium is lifted and understand that would be a condition of approval. There will be significantly less traffic in and out of the site as compared to the previous service station use. Mr. Philbrick asked if there is a sidewalk on Washington Street. Mr. Cherenzia stated that they would prefer not to install on Washington but will discuss further if necessary. The current sidewalk on Broadway will be maintained. Ms. Conway asked for a visual review of the parking spaces on the plan. Mr. Chomowicz asked about the height of the building. Mr. Comeau stated the height is 39.5 feet overall. The floor is at Elevation 14 to meet FEMA flood standards. Mr. Sheehan asked if the site was designed for hydrostatic flood proofing. Mr. Cherenzia stated that the building will be flood proofed and the drainage basins can handle the flooding. They will also meet all of the requirements of the utilities. They are not in a wave action area.

Mark Comeau, project architect, presented the building plans. Mr. Comeau addressed community concerns about scale and design of the structure. The ground floor will have piers and some concrete structures for flood regulations. There will be no hotel staff, just a virtual check in kiosk. There are three guest rooms on the first floor, two guest rooms on the second floor and the attendant's apartment. The roof deck will have a small pool, spa/Jacuzzi, a pergola covered roof deck and fitness area. The fire marshal has approved egress from the roof deck. The siding would be white clapboard siding with black windows and column detail. Mr. Comeau presented examples of the materials to be used. Mr. Comeau reviewed the town's design guidelines. Mr. Comeau provided a comparison of a nearby home with the proposed building and presented renderings of the proposed building from various vantage points. Mr. Philbrick asked about the need for the third floor. Mr. Comeau stated that it provides an amenity to set the facility apart from others in the area. Mr. Philbrick asked whether food and beverage would be served. Mr. Comeau stated there would be no service on the property. The pool would be about 4 feet deep and the structure would be ample enough to support the pool. Mr. Philbrick asked about a nightscape view. They did not have one. Mr. Philbrick asked about the west elevation view. Mr. Comeau stated he is open to banding the elevator shaft and reviewed the

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shadow plan. Mr. Philbrick asked about the building being in the setback. There are extra setback requirements for multi-story hotels which was not previously a concern with the restaurant construction. The manager will be living on site but there will not be cooking facilities. Landscape Architect, Elena Pascarella, addressed the live planting wall and stated it will be structurally built to withstand hurricane force winds. It is 5 feet off the property line and complies with the setback requirements. Mr. Deichmann asked for clarification on the elevation and pool. Mr. Cherenzia stated they are within zoning rights to build the live wall 5 feet from the property line. Mr. Rathbun addressed concern about the neighboring building losing their view out the windows. Mr. Philbrick suggested building the wall below the areas of the windows. Mr. Brynes said it is considered to be a fence and would even be allowed in the setback. The applicant is concerned that the neighboring building may be installing a mural. Mr. Philbrick stated that if they could still build below the windows as they would not be painted. Ms. Pascarella discussed options for the wall. Mr. Cherenzia stated that his client would like to keep the wall at its height and feels it is within his right. The wall ends at the corner of the building and would not be seen well from Washington Street. Ms. Conway asked about the height of the building without the third floor. Mr. Comeau stated it would be 30 feet. Ms. Conway expressed concern with the comparison to the home in the neighborhood due to overall shape. Ms. Conway asked about the design guidelines regarding context. Mr. Comeau stated that the intention was to go out 3-4 buildings in every direction for context and reviewed the buildings in that area. He noted that this building is quite small and would fit inside the Ameriprise building being built down the road. Ms. Pascarella reviewed the landscape plans. There will be two infiltration basins on site for storm water management. Ms. Pascarella also reviewed the green wall structure and composition. Ms. Conway asked about the outdoor lighting and signage. There will be wayfinding signs for traffic and the name of the facility on the building. The lighting will be dark skies compliant and the parking can be lit from the building and possibly with a few bollards. They do not plan to have lights on the roof deck but would stipulate to timing or motion sensors if needed.

Public Comment in Favor: None

Public Comment Against: None

General Comment:

Mystic resident, Ben Tamsky, read a letter from Paul and Claire Sartor of Jackson Avenue. They are against relief from setbacks. Mr. Tamsky reiterated that only the ZBA can grant a variance for the setbacks. He is also concerned about mass of the building and supported installation of sidewalks. Mr. Tamsky reminded the commission they can provide an extension and don't need to rush a decision.

Mr. Brynes reviewed comments received on the application, noting no comments have been received comments from DEEP on the CAM application. The setback issue is the main issue for the application, and the sidewalks are an item of consideration. Mr. Brynes reviewed the recommended stipulations from the staff report. Mr. Cherenzia stated they would install a

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sidewalk on Washington Street. Mr. Deichmann asked about residential uses in a flood zone. Mr. Brynes stated they have previously required applicants provide evacuation plans and could do so for this.

The commission discussed seeing the third-floor plans more clearly. Ms. Conway would like more information on the building and roof deck lighting. Mr. Sheehan also discussed the setback issue and that it should be addressed now to see the impacts of possibly moving the building location.

Mr. Cherenzia discussed the regulations on multi-story hotels and that the third floor will not be enclosed therefore not needing to conform to additional setbacks. Mr. Cherenzia stated they have been before the Architectural Review Board three times and feel the application is complete and ready for a decision. Mr. Cherenzia stated they will abide by all code requirements for the roof, but will need some for safety. Mr. Comeau stated they are slightly away from being allowed to build a whole third floor, but are trying make the best choice for the town. Mr. Philbrick requested they provide a west elevation for the next meeting.

Mr. Philbrick moved to continue the hearing to November 17, 2020, seconded by Mr. Deichmann, all in favor, motion approved.

Mr. Deichmann moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Philbrick, all in favor, the meeting adjourned at 9:19pm.



Ben Philbrick, Secretary