

TOWN OF BRANFORD  
CENTER REVITALIZATION REVIEW BOARD  
BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT 06405

Norbert Church, Chairman  
Phil Carloni  
Earl Lind  
Tricia Bohan  
R. Anthony Terry  
John Herzan  
Schuyler Coulter

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**MEETING MINUTES**

The Town Center Revitalization Review Board  
Regular Meeting, 8:45 a.m. Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Members Present: Chair Norbert Church, Tony Terry, Schuyler Coulter, John Herzan, Phil Carloni, Earl Lind

Absent: Trish Bohan

Staff Present: Town Planner Harry Smith, Assistant Planner Rich Stoecker

Others Present: Ed Crowley- Stony Creek Brewery, Jim Pretti – Criscuolo Engineering, Joe Sepot – Sepot Architects, Jennifer Yoxall – Carmody law Firm, Jeff Dow - Dow Realty, Doug Colter, Stephanie Linke, Robin Laske

- 1) A motion was made to approve the minutes of March 8, 2017 and April 12, 2017 as presented by T. Terry. P. Carloni seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

2. **New Business:**

4-6 Indian Neck Ave., Tidal Basin LLC – Ed Crowley stated that he had purchased property that was utilized by Paul's Wire and Rope manufacturing facility and a residential house. A lease for the Wire Rope industrial building expires in December 2017. The adjacent former house has been torn down exposing beautiful views of the Branford River basin. Ed described the site as an ideal location for a small boutique hotel. Initial plans call for a three level 34 room hotel with parking underneath on the first floor. Ed noted the following observations about the need for a hotel destination in Branford;

- 1) He has spoken with hotel consultants and received feasibility studies verifying that Branford is in need of a high quality small boutique hotel to take advantage of the local culture, destination spots and convenient pedestrian and shuttle opportunities to the town center restaurants and other attractions.
- 2) The Stony Creek Brewery has been an enormous success and upwards to 30% of the visitors are from out of state and looking to extend their stay in Branford.
- 3) The town is taking advantage of the successful Branford River developments and the popular outdoor activities of biking hiking and an increase in Transit Oriented Development opportunities with major private and public investment in the Branford Railroad Station, Atlantic Wharf and the Shoreline Greenway Trail

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Jim Pretti, Criscuolo Engineering described the property survey and the stone rip rap Branford River interface. The property shape, roadway intersection and FEMA requirements dictated the building design, parking underneath building and outdoor amenities including the construction of a boardwalk along the Branford River. There will be improvements to the roadway intersection and pedestrian walkway access. There is opportunity to provide connectivity to adjacent properties owned by the Branford Land Trust and Atlantic Wharf. The impervious surface is not increased on the site and the demolition of the existing 10,000 s.f. industrial building will expose a very attractive site for a hotel. The CTDEEP will need to approve a small boat (kayak, paddle board) boat launch planned for the riverfront boardwalk. The parking required for the site was generated at 1.2 spaces per room totaling 41 parking spaces.

Joe Sepot, Joe Sepot Architects reiterated the notion that the unique site dictated the hotel design. The hotel is planned to be 3 floors with open parking on the first level and a flat roof. The rooms are planned to be 420 s.f with each room overlooking the river with a balcony. Joe described the following issues pertaining to the proposed 34 room hotel.

- 1) The building will be served by an elevator from the ground floor open parking garage. The use of a type of planting screen to help soften the look of the open parking was discussed.
- 2) Each floor of the proposed hotel will be stepped back. Each room will include a balcony that is 5 foot deep with a 75 s.f. area.
- 3) The 1<sup>st</sup> floor will include the underbuilding parking and lobby. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor will include conference room small kitchen area for guests, and client exercise room. The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor will include a roof garden of 1,500 square feet and hotel rooms.
- 4) Description of landscaping including street trees and hedge rows to isolate the distinct entry point was discussed.
- 5) Description of the use of service hallway to help buffer the noise from the railroad lines along with minimal use of windows was discussed.
- 6) Materials were discussed including cedar shingle siding and Stony Creek granite.
- 7) The positive use of stepped back front balcony hotel rooms and stark rear façade facing the railroad tracks were discussed. A possible north side change of the proposed building using different roofing detail and use of horizontal breaks in the façade may be an improved change to be considered. The north façade is in plain site from Meadow Street and needs further consideration. Concern was also expressed about the diagonal view of the street façade element, to better mediate scale between the entry façade and the wall of private balconies.
- 8) The height of the proposed hotel will be no taller than the brewery or apartments at roughly 49 feet.

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The Board was very supportive of the proposed hotel plan and felt the plans put forward a great concept that takes advantage of the setting, presents an aesthetically pleasing design, recognizes that hotels are underrepresented on the shoreline and helps to promote transit oriented development to take advantage of the cultural amenities of Branford Town Center.

Harry Smith noted that the presentation was informal and the Town Center Board would be reviewing the formal application of the Planned Development District – Detailed Plan once it is submitted.

Chairman Church noted they would table the review until a formal referral for Detailed Plan is presented.

**First Congregational Church Playground Child Development Center** – Robin Laske & Stephanie Linke distributed photo renderings of different shade coverings to be considered for permanent shade for the child care playground. The preferred permanent structure would be a blue sail shape with permanent support systems, located outside the fence. There was discussion on lack of information, more detail on how the coverings would be secured and other design and support questions.

The Board recommended that a Site Plan be presented showing the size, support system details and location be submitted for approval. Once that site plan is developed it shall be presented to staff who will seek input and approval from the Board for a permanent shade structure. In the meantime the Child Development Center is encouraged to utilize temporary shade coverings to provide shade for the daycare.

**618-622 Main Street, Dow Realty Company** - Jeff Dow presented a revised site plan for the Phase II of the renovation of the site. Phase II included improvements to the façade of the front building in terms of windows, structural façade, color and use of the brick exterior. The proposed Site Plan displayed scaled elevations with the exterior façade renderings. The Board and applicant discussed the following key elements:

- 1) Powerwashing, and cleaning the exterior surface of the buildings. Sandblasting the building was discouraged and rejected by the Board.
- 2) Use of round columns in the front building entrance. The columns are very close to the building (1 foot) and may not add to the aesthetic appearance of the building. Moving the columns further out would create parking difficulties.

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- 3) Front awning standing seam design does not match well with the front entrance and columns. Canopy appears to be large and not in symmetry with the building front façade.
- 4) Colors appear to be stark with the white and red tone. The windows will have white trim.
- 5) Trying to maintain some design elements and color scheme of a retrofit of an automotive and dry cleaning industrial structure is a worthwhile pursuit.

After a lengthy discussion P. Carloni made a motion to approve the proposed change of use plan for 618-622 Main Street (Phase II – front building) and send the following proposed modifications to the PZC for consideration that was seconded by John Herzan and approved unanimously.

“The building façade for the front and rear buildings shall be cleaned, exposed brick with the front building including a white canopy 3 feet deep, no columns and no metal standing seam green canopy. The use of the linear pvc trim was discouraged. The rear building shall have a 3 foot deep canopy and relocate the canopy to be aligned with the rear building entrance.”

The Agenda was amended to add one more application that was submitted to the PZC.

**152-158 South Montowese Street, Doug Colter Owner**

Doug Colter presented the history of the adjacent properties and the past uses of the residential and mixed use properties. The proposal is to eliminate dilapidated garages and re arrangement of the parking layout adding drainage, utilization of existing landscaping and possibly develop a rain garden. H. Smith noted that the purview of the Town Center board should concentrate on landscaping,,lighting and general appearance.

After reviewing pictures, aerials and site plans and a lengthy discussion on required residential buffer requirements, including snow shelf and use of fence as a residential buffer, it was determined that Mr. Colter would resubmit the site plan with landscaping and drainage and memorialize the existing conditions. The application was tabled awaiting further revised site plans.

**4) Planners Report**

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 A.M.

Minutes prepared by Richard H. Stoecker, Assistant Town Planner