



PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

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MINUTES
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
THURSDAY MARCH 21, 2024
REGULAR MEETING 7:00 PM

This meeting was held remotely, solely via ZOOM.

Commissioners Present: C. Andres, J. Chadwick, M. Palluzzi, M. Liguori, F. Russo,
S. Huttner

Commissioners Absent: J. Vaiuso

Staff Present: H. Smith (Town Planner), E. Breining (Asst. Town Planner), M. Martin (Clerk)

The meeting started at 7:01 p.m.

Chairperson Andres introduced the staff and commission. He then reviewed the public hearing procedures.

Secretary F. Russo read the public notice into the record.

E. Breining then reviewed how to participate in the public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Branford Real Estate LLC
c/o Arian Prevalla-Applicant & Owner
544 & 558 West Main Street
Special Exception - Used Car Sales Dealership
Application #23-10.2
A/R 11/2/23 & PH opened 1/4/24 & continued from 3/7/24 with time extensions.

Dave Nafis (Nafis & Young Engineers) represented the applicant and reviewed the application. This application is for auto repair shop. The current house on the parcel will be demolished for parking. He displayed a site plan and reviewed it.

The commission asked a few questions.

E. Breining suggested continuing this item to the next meeting since new plans were just submitted and he hasn't reviewed them yet.

Public Input:

1. Perry Maresca- Said this is a good proposal and a huge improvement to what is currently there. He wishes them the best.
2. Jackie Casey- She lives on the East Haven side- She is concerned about traffic and asked will the light at Jefferson Road be able to handle the additional traffic?

Dave Nafis replied to her concerns stating that the state will be reviewing this also.

The applicant Arian Prevella spoke saying this is a low traffic business.

The applicant granted a time extension to the next meeting which the commission accepted.

2. North Main Branford LLC, c/o Dan Iammuno-
Applicant & Owner
17 North Main Street
Special Exception- Auto Body Repair
Application #24-2.1
A/R 2/15/24 & PH set for 3/21/24

Jim Pretti (Criscolo Engineering) represented the applicant and displayed a site plan and Photos. He noted the Town Center Board gave a favorable recommendation. This building will be extra space for the auto body repair shop. He reviewed the landscape plan. He noted the applicant has cleaned up the site and this is a change of use from welding to auto Body. He said that Kevin O Neil is on the call for any questions.

E. Breining reviewed the staff report. He said staff recommends that this item be continued since new plans were submitted yesterday and they need to be further reviewed. The commission asked a few questions.

Public Input:

1. Maureen Gerkin (43 Wilford Ave)- She owns 25 North Main Street. She asked the commission to look at the entire project. She is concerned about driveway angles, how many cars are on the property, parking, landscaping. Prior work that was done and approvals not done. She also Said a driveway is blocked and emergency vehicles could not get in. She also asked about 23 North main St. since it is a multi-family?

Chairperson Andres stated this item will be continued to the next meeting.

3. CP Branford LLC c/o John Knuff- Applicant
Stop & Shop Supermarket Co. aka Twiss Realty Co. Inc.-Owner
329 East Main Street aka 325 East Main Street
PDD Master Plan
Application #24-2.4
A/R 2/15/24 & PH set for 3/21/24
4. CP Branford LLC c/o John Knuff- Applicant
Stop & Shop Supermarket Co. aka Twiss Realty Co. Inc.-Owner
329 East Main Street aka 325 East Main Street
PDD Site Plan
Application #24-2.5
A/R 2/15/24 & PH set for 3/21/24
5. CP Branford LLC c/o John Knuff- Applicant
Stop & Shop Supermarket Co. aka Twiss Realty Co. Inc.-Owner
329 East Main Street aka 325 East Main Street
Subdivision
Application #24-2.6
A/R 2/15/24 & PH set for 3/21/24
6. CP Branford LLC c/o John Knuff- Applicant
Stop & Shop Supermarket Co. aka Twiss Realty Co. Inc.-Owner
329 East Main Street aka 325 East Main Street
Special Exception- Grading (Sec. 6.8)
Application #24-2.7
A/R 2/15/24 & PH set for 3/21/24

Public Hearing items 3,4,5 and 6 are being discussed together.

Attorney John Knuff represented the applicant and gave a brief history of the site noting it is approximately 11.12 acres in the BL Zone.

He noted he received a 12-page memo from Town Planner, Harry Smith that past Monday and they are responding to some of the comments. There will be more information coming.

He also responded to some of the prior concerns that were previously stated at the informal discussion that took place last July. He noted that they had previously submitted a variance

application and then withdrew it.

John Schmitz- BL Companies- gave a brief overview of the site plan, showing the proposed residential building, parking and the smaller coffee shop/office building and the old movie theatre that will become a self-storage building.

Salvatore Talamo- (Sullivan Arch Group)- displayed architectural drawings for the residential portion of the project and reviewed them.

Chris Michalek- (Partner of SGW Architecture , Chicago) reviewed architectural drawings of the proposed self-storage building. He noted the details match the residential building. He also reviewed the site plan.

Tom Scott- (Scott Griffin Architects) spoke and displayed drawings of the retail building which will house 2 tenants (Starbucks & walk in medical clinic).

Rob Baltramaitis (Consulting Traffic Engineer) gave his credentials and noted that BL Companies is the traffic engineer, and he is brought in to collaborate with them during the preparation of the study. He gave an overview of the traffic study dated December 2023. The conclusion was that even with this new site, there will be no significant impact to the roadway and acceptable levels of service will be maintained. There were a few recommendations noted that he reviewed.

Attorney Knuff noted they are going to respond to H. Smith memo and the SLR memo.

H. Smith made a few comments and highlighted a few items on the plans. He also noted and reviewed comments from dept. heads.

Anthony Russo (SLR, Peer Review Consultant) -He spoke of the traffic study and gave a few comments and suggestions.

Attorney Knuff responded to Anthony Russo's comments.

The commission took a 10-minute break at 9:25 pm

The commissioners each gave a few comments-

Joe Chadwick- He said it's a tough site to put residential on or have a residential quality for people who live there. He didn't like the design of the residential building and noted there isn't much of a view.

Fred Russo-Noted this project is better than what is currently there. To worry about whether people want to live there or not is not the commissions prevue. The developer is making an honest attempt to improve this site.

Marci Palluzzi- She said she was comparing this project to the new one on the other side of the exit. And she spoke of the similarity of them. She thinks the renters will be without kids and older people that want elevators. She spoke of the points that she liked about the project. She likes the style and architecture.

Massimo Liguori- He spoke of the metro star project and noted how he heard negative comments about it but when the project was finished, people changed and gave positive comments. He was glad to hear some of the facts from the traffic study. He felt this is a definite improvement to this site and he likes it. He is concerned about the future approvals of large apartment buildings. He spoke of other items he liked.

Sharon Huttner- Said it's a definite improvement to what the site is now, and she commended the applicant for listening to the commission's concerns which she reviewed. But she felt that the community could benefit from a better use than a storage facility and she suggested some uses.

She asked about tax revenue for the town. She felt it is too dense and perhaps we could get more open space.? And why no mention of any renewables?

Chuck Andres - He said the residential component is market driven, there is a need for apartments. He has always felt we should increase the affordable component as much as possible. He commends the developer for increasing the component from 10% to 20%. He had a question about the self-storage, he likes the adaptive reuse of the building and noted there are some separation distance requirements. He thought he brought it up at the informal meeting and asked that and he thought the answer was yes, they comply with them. But do they comply? He is concerned about long lines at the Starbucks,

He reminded everyone that the public hearing will remain open so people will have a chance to speak at a later meeting if needed.

Public Input:

1. Nick Cairo- 2 Oak Hollow Rd.-he had a few concerns: he stated the lot doesn't meet the 50000- sq ft separation requirement. He wants to make sure this doesn't set a precedent for other self-storage facilities. He noted there are 8 self-storage facilities already. He talked of tax implications. He thinks there can be innovative ways to use this space. He felt that more thought needs to go into this project.
2. Ken & Debra Soudan- (owners of 247 No amin Street Self Storage)-She noted she likes the design of the building; it looks like theirs. She asked if Starbucks or a medical office committed yet to the building. They bought the property in 2007 and opened it in 2009 and they had to go before many commissions and jump thru ,many hoops . She spoke of the minimum separation requirement, and she doesn't feel this is being adhered to. They should have to follow the same rules they did. Ken added that they are happy to be in Branford and they contribute money to many things in the community. He likes Branford and asked the commission to think about the town, is this what the town would like? Is this the best use of the property?
3. Shire & Lantz Lyon- 15 Stonewall Lane- She said it's an improvement, but she is concerned with the traffic impact. The studies don't appropriately address living in town or address peak travel times like the summer.
4. Nick Cairo Devlin- The metro apts. are 188 units, and this project is over 300 so we don't want to overwhelm a market since this will lead to vacancies. He repeated that there are deeded exclusions for other grocery stores.

Attorney Knuff made a few comments in response to the public comments. He said they would submit an exhibit stating they meet the separation requirement rule. And noted that self-storage requires less parking than other uses.

Town Planner H. Smith made a few comments, referring to a comment that M. Palluzzi made about the proposed self-storage building facing the residential building and noted its part of the discussion and how that fits in within the site. He displayed a sketch of the façade of the building and spoke of a few other self-storage buildings along 1-91 and how they are intensely lite. It is a concern and maybe one of the architects could review that in further detail. Commissioner Palluzzi asked what this would look like from the residential building.

Attorney Knuff requested this matter be continued to the April 4 meeting and noted if they are not ready they can decide a day or two before the meeting.

MINUTES: 2/15/2024 & 3/7/2024

The February 15 minutes have not been distributed to the commission, so this is tabled.

F. Russo made a motion to approve the March 7 meeting minutes.

J. Chadwick seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Cell tower modification at 21 Acorn Road.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. 35-37 Harrison House LLC c/o Rachel Kelly-
Applicant & Owner
35-37 Harrison Avenue
Special Exception- Proposed residential building with three dwelling units (Sec.7.18)
Application #24-2.9
To be A/R & PH to be set

2. 35-37 Harrison House LLC c/o Rachel Kelly-
Applicant & Owner
35-37 Harrison Avenue
Special Exception- Grading (Sec. 6.8)
Application #24-2.10
To be A/R & PH to be set

3. AJGG Realty LLC c/o Paul Minichino (Manager)-
Applicant & Owner
4 Liesl Lane
Special Exception- Car (Motor Vehicle) Rental
Application # 24-3.1
A/R 3/724 & PH set for 4/4/24

NEW BUSINESS:

OTHER BUSINESS:

1. Planner's Report

H. Smith said that BCTV had a scheduling issue with tonight's meeting and was not able to tape it but he sees that they did arrive and were able to tape it so it will be available for viewing on their website.

The meeting adjourned at 10:31 pm.