

Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Branford
Branford, Connecticut 06405

Minutes

Chairman James Sette called the May 18, 2021 meeting to order at 7 p.m. Those also present were Acting ZEO Evan Breining and members David Laska, Peter Berdon, Donald Schilder, Barry Beletsky, Leonard Tamsin. Absent: Brad Crerar and Anthony Beccia.

Jim called the meeting to order by announcing that the application concerning 21/5 – 3: Stanley Speer Jr., 31 Oak Hollow Road, had been withdrawn prior to meeting. He then stated the other business would follow in order and called the first item.

21/5 – 1. 1100 West Main Street LLC, Owner/ John W. Knuff, Esq. Agent, 1100 West Main Street. Attorney Amy Souchuns represented the application for a variance under Sec. 4.4.B: where maximum lot coverage is 0.25 and 0.285 has been requested to allow erection of a new 2,250 SF commercial building within the existing 17,368 SF retail center. She then introduced Project Engineer Chris Walker who would answer any questions concerning the plan. She described the addition of a new building to the rear northerly side of the property where it could also serve as noise abatement for the other retail outlets on the site. She described two takings by Amtrak and the State of approximately 6,300 SF of the property along Route 1 in 2006 when they started reconstructing the train overpass adjacent to the property which left the property more nonconforming, however the property meets all the other requirements of the Branford regulations including ample parking area. She explained that even before the taking, the property would have needed a minor variance of about 0.3, and because retail business does best in first floor locations it requires more floor area ratio to lot area ratio than is allowed, where as if it could be placed on a second floor it would require less, but there is little choice for business success other than to locate it on a ground floor. During questioning from Peter Berdon, she explained that there is no other property in the area available to build.

Tom Kelleher, landlord of the complex, described this new retail space as being suitable for a small business. He and his brother reside in Branford and both are established business owners in the complex so it assures that potential renters will be suitable. He explained that the placement of the new building at the northerly rear of the property would help in mitigating the noise of passing trains and fills a space that is a concern for the owner.

Speaking in favor was Economic Development Chairman Perry Maresca who explained that the current businesses have brought in additional tax revenue and he can't see any down side to this additional building. It will not create more traffic to an already congested area, however there is a traffic light already there.

John Limauro, 34 Driscoll Road was not in opposition, but inquiring about future occupants of the building, asking if the space would be used as a medical office or a similar use. Tom Kelleher responded it would be a small business. Mr. Limauro mentioned that his wife, Catherine (who had been on earlier) loved the old Pier One and was disappointed when they closed. He further stated that

although the traffic was tight, she had no problem shopping there, so he was satisfied.

There being no other comments, Jim Sette closed the hearing and made the motion to grant the variance with a second by Leonard Tamsin. There was no discussion, although Jim did comment that he felt it was a good addition to the complex and in his opinion the traffic issue was minimal and they were joined in affirmative votes by Dave Laska, and Donald Schilder, making it 4/0 to grant, when Peter Berdon chose to pass.

21/5 – 2. Nancy and William Kearns, 12 Tyler Avenue: There were many questions asked concerning the statement by Nancy Kearns that there was no change to the footprint, yet she spoke of enlarging the porch which would then be enclosed and screened in with a new deck above it off a room that would serve as an artists studio.

Without all the measurements accurately depicted on the plans, there was confusion as to what was being removed and what would be kept, and how the porch would be enlarged. The Board suggested that she have a design professional represent her to answer any technical questions from The Board, provide more detailed plans and include elevations so the board could more accurately understand what she was proposing. Rather than possibly having the variance denied, she decided to continue her application to June 15, 2021.

Other Business

Action on Minutes of April 20, 2021- Peter Berdon made the motion to approve, second by Jim Sette and all were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Leigh Bianchi