

SUFFIELD PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
June 17, 2024

Present: Mark Winne, Chairman
 Erin Golembiewski, Vice Chairman
 Ginny Bromage, Secretary
 Brian Dunn
 Christine Sinopoli
 Leon Litvak
 Jeff Girard, Alternate
 Jacob Byrnes, Alternate
 Geoffrey Kaplan, Alternate

Also Present: Bill Hawkins, AICP, Director of Planning & Development
 Dana Steele, P.E., Consultant Town Engineer
 Ellie Binns, Administrative Assistant

The proceedings of this meeting were recorded and are available on the Town website, along with all of the application materials.

I. ROLL CALL

Chairman Winne called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM as a hybrid meeting with eight members in attendance and one member remote.

Ms. Bromage read the legal notice for the public hearing.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

III. PUBLIC HEARING

File #2024-2- Request for a special permit/site plan approval to convert the buildings located at 156 South Main Street into residential apartments per Section V.U. Adaptive Reuse Zoning Regulations. Applicant: MI 22, LLC., Map 44H, Block 47, Lot 216.

Attorney Amy Blume of Bershtein, Volpe & McKeon P.C. representing the applicant, presented the application and noted that Jim McMahan, the owner of the property was present to answer questions as well. Ms. Blume explained that the convent and rectory on this property were previously used for commercial and religious purposes. They are seeking approval to convert the convent into one 3-bedroom and one 2-bedroom apartment and to convert the rectory into three 3-bedroom apartments. The parking regulations require 2.5 spaces per unit which would be a total of 13 spaces, three of which will be in the existing garage and the other ten would be in the existing parking lot. There will be no changes to the outside of the buildings. Attorney Blume explained that the application meets the adaptive reuse regulation criteria, noting that it preserves the historic buildings which have been vacant for years returning them to productive use and generating additional tax revenue for the Town. She noted it is compatible with the surrounding area and showed examples of other multifamily housing within 500 feet of the

These minutes are not official until accepted at a subsequent meeting.

property. This project would equate to a density of 3.2 units per acre with many of the surrounding properties having similar or greater density. She noted the substantial inability to develop the property in conformance with its current zoning with two buildings on one property.

Mr. Winne asked for questions of the applicant from the Commission.

Mr. Kaplan questioned if the property was only used for residential rather than commercial use, stating that they were used primarily as sleeping quarters.

Ms. Sinopoli stated that the application was not valid because the existing structures were not commercial and questioned discrepancies on the assessor's cards comparing this property to other churches in the Town.

Attorney Blume stated that the dwellings were used for religious purposes and were commercial.

Mr. Hawkins spoke about the history of the adaptive reuse regulation and two properties that had received approval under the regulation with a goal of increasing the value of challenging properties that are not being used.

Mr. Hawkins then read his report dated June 13, 2024 into the record noting that the Conservation Commission had signed off on the application administratively since there are no wetland impacts and there is no new construction proposed. There is a capacity letter from the Water Pollution Control Authority for the five units proposed. His report gave a detailed description of the work proposed and listed seven properties that are multifamily within 500 feet of this property. Mr. Hawkins explained the easement from the adjoining 140 South Main Street property for access and utilities, noting that Commission counsel had reviewed and approved it. Mr. Hawkins also explained the proposed parking, lighting, and landscaping. He suggested that any future proposal lighting would need to meet Section III.M. of the Zoning Regulations, and could be listed as a condition of approval for staff review before installation.

Mr. Litvak asked about handicapped spaces required and Mr. McMahon stated that one is required and will be part of the thirteen spots and will meet the requirements.

Chairman Winne opened the hearing for public comment and asked Mr. Hawkins to read a letter from a resident into the record:

Tim Casey, 10 Fair Hill Lane, stated his support of the application and gave a history of a similar application in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, that was presented when he was chairman of the Historic District Commission where abutters concerns were unfounded and explained how preservation of a historic property is beneficial

Eric Boone, 65 Barry Place submitted a letter to the Commission questioning what properties were being applied for and addressed his concerns for all three that the applicant owns. He questioned if the application met the criteria for adaptive reuse, the benefit to the Town, and handicapped parking requirements.

Robert Parks, 30 Barry Place stated that the buildings were residential and housed nuns. He questioned if the change in property lines had created a non-conforming lot.

Michael Lane, 155 South Main Street, noted that he was on the list as having an accessory building and does not have one. He also questioned if the property was residential or commercial.

Brian Kost, 10 Barry Place questioned if the property was commercial and the piece meal approach to developing the various properties.

Jim Albert, 90 Ellison Street, agreed with previous speakers.

Kathy Bielonko, 981 East Street North, felt that the applicant should be showing the plan for all the parcels.

Commission alternate, Mr. Kaplan, noted that the buildings had been mostly residential use with minimal non-residential use.

Commission member Ms. Golembiewski asked about the non-conforming lot question that had been raised and Mr. Hawkins explained that the lot line revision created a conforming lot and the lot coverage was appropriate.

Eric Boone, 65 Barry Place, questioned if the lighting was up to code and if the parking spaces had the required aisle width.

Josh Menke, 221 South Main Street, stated he was in favor of multi-family housing in the area.

Commission member Ms. Sinopoli felt that there should be a detailed parking and lighting plan.

There was discussion by the Commission members about keeping the hearing open to get clarification from Commission counsel.

Attorney Blume stated that they were not in favor of continuing the public hearing unless it was for the specific purpose of getting a legal opinion regarding the non-residential language in the regulation noting that the applicant had covered the relevant information in the hearing and had addressed the topics brought up in the hearing.

With no further comments Ms. Golembiewski moved to continue the public hearing to the next regular meeting on July 15th. The motion was seconded by Mr. Litvak and passed 6-0-0.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

File #2024-2- Hearing was continued so no action was taken.

V. NEW BUSINESS -None

VI. REPORTS

Chairman – None

Director of Planning & Development – Mr. Hawkins reported that the next two phases of Brook Hill Village are likely to start in July. He also reported that an affordable housing development of 89 units is anticipated to be submitted to the Conservation Commission in August.

VII. MINUTES

Ms. Bromage moved to approve the May 20, 2024 minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Litvak and approved 5-0-1, with Ms. Golembiewski abstaining as she was not at the meeting.

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE – None**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

With nothing further to come before the commission, Ms. Bromage made a motion to adjourn at 9:01 PM. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kaplan and approved 6-0-0.

Submitted,

Ginny Bromage, Secretary

cc: Assessor, Building Official, Conservation Commission, Selectmen, Town Clerk, Town Engineer, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Commission Counsel