

**SUFFIELD  
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING  
July 18, 2024**

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

**Absent:** Jacob Byrnes

**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 the application materials.*

**I. ROLL CALL**

Chairman Winne called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM as a hybrid meeting with seven members in attendance and one member remote.

**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.

Mr. Winne asked Attorney Amy Blume of Bershtein, Volpe & McKeon P.C. who is representing the applicant if there was additional information she had to present. She stated that they would like to save an opportunity for rebuttal at the end of the hearing per Roberts Rules of Order. Attorney Blume then requested that Commissioner Sinopoli recuse herself from the rest of the public hearing as well as the decision making process for the application. Attorney Blume then detailed her opinion of Commissioner Sinopoli's predetermination, bias, and adversarial position towards the applicant. Mr. Winne noted that it might be in the best interest of the Town if she did so, however, Ms. Sinopoli refused to recuse herself.

Mr. Hawkins then spoke about the turning radius for a fire truck and noted that Section III. H. 2. of the Zoning Regulations had only ever been used for new single family homes with a driveway over 250 feet in length and not for existing driveways. He then read the letter from the Fire Marshal concerning the fire trucks and their largest truck having a 230 inch wheel base which the

current plan would not accommodate. Mr. Hawkins noted that the current zoning regulation that the applicant had based their drawing on was for a 200 inch wheel base truck. The applicant has not had time since the meeting on Monday, July 15<sup>th</sup> to have a new plan drafted which would satisfy the turning radius for a 230 inch wheel base truck. Mr. Hawkins stated that if the Commission wanted to approve the application tonight, a condition of approval can be added that would require the submission of a new plan showing the largest wheelbase truck can turnaround on the property for staff to review and approve.

Consultant Town Engineer, Dana Steele stated that he had reviewed the plan submitted (7/18/24 at 4:14 PM) and it had the appropriate information to show that they can meet the current Zoning Regulation for a 200 inch wheelbase truck. He pointed out the information showing the types of vehicles on the plan.

Ms. Bromage asked if the access easement could be used to accommodate the larger wheelbase fire truck. Attorney Blume said they did not have time to reconfigure the plan to fit the larger fire truck but they could meet the requirements of the Fire Marshal and suggested that could be a condition of approval.

There was discussion amongst the Commission to revise the regulation in Section III.H.2 to reflect the fire department's largest vehicle.

Mr. Kaplan noted that the letter from the Fire Marshal did not explicitly say it had to accommodate the largest truck. Mr. Hawkins noted that in his discussion with the Fire Marshal he did say that it needed to accommodate the largest truck.

Ms. Sinopoli questioned guest parking and snow removal. Mr. Hawkins noted that the 2.5 parking spaces per apartment takes into account guest parking and there was room on the site for snow removal.

Chairman Winne opened the hearing for public comment.

Shawn Robinson, 130 South Main Street questioned the amount of parking spaces and the snow removal.

Eric Boone, 65 Barry Place presented himself as an expert witness and described his own analysis of the parking. He questioned the accuracy of the applicant's site plan and based his comments on the Town's online GIS program measuring tool and his own measurements on the property.

Ms. Bromage noted that the Commission would be approving the adaptive reuse of the buildings and it would be stipulated that the Building Department and Fire Department would ensure the parking met their approval as a condition.

Dana Steele noted that the GIS map is not an accurate program to use for measurements and the plan submitted by the applicant did not contradict the Fire Marshal's analysis. He stated that the information on the applicants plan is accurate and sufficient.

Ms. Sinopoli asked that the lot line revision and free split plan for the property be entered into the record. Mr. Winne asked what the purpose was and why she felt it was relevant to add more information after the July 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mr. Hawkins noted that those plans were filed on the land records resulting in the current configuration of the property as shown in the application.

Ms. Sinopoli noted that her request was rejected.

In summary, Attorney Blume, stressed that the evidence presented for the site was a stamped plan by a licensed engineer and land surveyor and was corroborated by the Consultant Town

Engineer, Mr. Steele. She stated that they had not received the information about the larger wheelbase truck in time to have their engineer revise the plan, but if the revised plan could be a condition of approval they could adapt the plan easily given the options they have on the property. She also noted that they had submitted ample evidence that their application met the criteria of the adaptive reuse regulation, being a benefit to the Town, and preserving the historic structures.

With no further comments, Ms. Bromage moved to close the public hearing for File #2024-2. The motion was seconded by Ms. Golembiewski and passed 6-0-0.

#### **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

##### **File #2024-2**

Commission members discussed whether they should start deliberations this evening and possibly make a decision. The consensus was to start deliberations and work towards a decision at this meeting.

Ms. Golembiewski stated her opinion that the applicant had met the criteria for the Adaptive Reuse Regulation and there was a substantial benefit to the Town and the proposed plan fits well with the character of the surrounding neighborhood. Mr. Winne said that it is a good fit for the neighborhood. He said the time is now for saving the buildings before they fall into further disrepair and he is comfortable with making the fire truck turnaround a condition of approval. Mr. Litvak felt that he needed to vote based on the current submitted plan which the Fire Marshal had stated could not accommodate the largest truck wheelbase. He did not agree that it could be a condition of approval. Ms. Sinopoli stated that the adaptive reuse regulation did not apply and that the application was a blatant misuse of the regulations. She referenced Section I.C. of the Zoning Regulations noting uses not stated as permitted are prohibited and also noted the new property lines were done 3/19/24, asserting that the property did not qualify for adaptive reuse because the property lines were recently revised. Mr. Dunn concurred that the age of the property made it unsuited for adaptive reuse as well as safety concerns about the radius needed by the fire truck. Mr. Winne stated that he was on the Commission when the adaptive reuse regulation was drafted and this application met the spirit and intent of the regulation and this is the exact type of application that it was meant to address. Ms. Golembiewski noted that the buildings had been used for a commercial religious purpose so the adaptive reuse regulation was appropriate. Ms. Bromage also noted that the assessor property cards show commercial land use for the property and there are several other multifamily buildings in the area.

Ms. Bromage moved to approve File # 2024-2 with the condition that the plan be revised to meet the Fire Marshal's approval with review by staff. The motion was seconded by Ms. Golembiewski. Mr. Litvak did not agree that this could be a condition of approval. The motion was denied in a 3-3-0 vote with Ms. Bromage, Ms. Golembiewski and Mr. Winne in favor and Mr. Dunn, Ms. Sinopoli and Mr. Litvak opposed.

#### **V. NEW BUSINESS -None**

**VI. REPORTS -None**

Chairman – None

Director of Planning & Development – None

**VII. MINUTES -None****VIII. CORRESPONDENCE - None****IX. ADJOURNMENT**

With nothing further to come before the commission, Ms. Bromage made a motion to adjourn at 8:53 PM. The motion was seconded by Mr. Dunn and approved 6-0-0.

Submitted,

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Ginny Bromage, Secretary

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