STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
APPROVED MINUTES - TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025
REGULAR MEETING
VIA THE INTERNET & CONFERENCE CALL
6:30 p.m.

ZOOM WEBINAR
https://us02web.zoom.us/s/83648107462

Webinar ID: 836 4810 7462
Passcode:754223

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Voting Members: Jennifer Godzeno, Chair; Ravi Subramanian, Secretary and Jeremy Linder. Alternates: William Levin and Chester Salit (Arrived at 6:49 p.m.). Absent: Jay Tepper, Vice Chair & Voting Member. Present for staff: Lindsey Cohen, Associate Planner.

Ms. Godzeno called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Ms. Godzeno introduced the members of the Board and staff present.

PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES:

April 22, 2025 (Regular Meeting & Public Hearing): After a brief discussion Mr. Linder moved to recommend ***approval*** of the Regular Meeting & Public Hearing Minutes of April 22, 2025; Mr. Levin seconded the motion, and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 3-0 (Godzeno, Levin and Linder). (Mr. Subramanian was ineligible to vote as he was not present at the April 22, 2025 meeting.)

REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION
SUPPLEMENTAL CAPITAL PROJECT APPROPRIATION REQUESTS:

1. **TURN OF RIVER HVAC CONTROLS - PROJECT #001435 - TOTAL REQUEST $762,000.00:** Phase II replacement for inefficient pneumatic controls, valves and shut off valves, beyond their useful life. The new system will use direct digital control and convert from constant flow to pressure differential flow to reduce energy inefficiencies and operational costs associated with heating the building. The new system's energy cost savings are anticipated to offset the cost of the improvements over the course of the new system's life.

Katherine LoBalbo, Director of Board of Education Construction, along with Mike Smith, Stamford Public Schools Director of Facilities - Capital Projects, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Subramanian recommended approval of the Turn of River HVAC Controls - Project #001435 with a Total Request of $762,000.00. This request has been reviewed pursuant to Connecticut General Statute Section 8-24 and the City Charter Section C6-30-13 and finds this request to be consistent with CGS Section 8-24, and the City Charter Section C6-30-13, as well as consistent with the adopted 2015 Master Plan; Mr. Linder seconded the motion and passed unanimously with eligible members present voting, 4-0 (Godzeno, Levin, Linder, and Subramanian).

ZONING BOARD REFERRALS:

1. **ZB APPLICATION #225-11 - JOHN F. X. LEYDON, JR., ESQ. representing AC LEONARD, LLC - 68 LEONARD STREET - Site & Architectural Plans and/or Requested Uses, Special Permit and Addition to the Cultural Resources Inventory:** Applicant is proposing to convert a portion of an existing carriage house to a residential studio unit.

Explanation of applications: The Applicant is requesting a Special Permit to utilize the special bulk standards for preserving historic structures (Section 7.3, Historic Preservation; an extra unit). Use of the historic preservation zoning incentive also requires the applicant to register the historic building on to the Cultural Resources Inventory, for which the Applicant is applying. Finally, a Site Plan application is required for historic preservation projects that make changes to the exterior and/or façade, which this project does.

Staff Comments: The property is in Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family).

The primary structure is a legally nonconforming two-family home and is not of historic significance. There is a suburban carriage house to the rear of the lot that is proposed to be renovated with a more historic character and the partial second story converted to a studio unit. The renovation and additional unit is aligned with Master Plan Policy 6A "Maintain Residential Neighborhood Character" and Strategy 6A.1, "Balance new development with preservation of existing residential communities."

Zoning allows a one-family primary dwelling. The two-family primary dwelling is legally nonconforming. The Applicant is using the historic preservation to get an additional unit, for a total of three (3) units. This strategy is aligned with Policy 6D. "Preserve Historic Buildings and Districts" and Strategies 6D.3(a) and (b) "promote zoning incentives for historic preservation and adaptive reuse" and "authorize local designation of historic landmarks." Master Plan Category #2 is intended to provide for and protect a suitable environment for single-family dwellings and compatible uses (i.e., schools, clubs). While three (3) units in one home is not aligned with the single-family dwellings only nature of this Category, the character of the property - the bulk, architecture, relationship to the street - remain the same and all gives the appearance of a single-family dwelling. Staff does have reservations about the number of cars able to be accommodated off-street.

With the additional unit, the total required parking is six (6) off-street parking spaces. Preliminary conversations with the Transportation, Traffic and Parking Bureau revealed similar concerns over maneuverability of the parking area with the number and configuration of spaces provided. The Walk Score says the area is somewhat walkable, somewhat transit accessible, somewhat bikeable. Given the small size of the additional unit, Staff recommends the Applicant revise their application to request a reduction in required parking as part of the historic preservation Special Permit. In addition, the parking area is noncompliant with respect to setbacks.

John Leydon, Esq., along with Alfred Candido, Principal; Ed Davis, Architect; Matt Popp, Landscape Architect, Environmental Landscape Solutions and Ed Piro, Surveyor, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After some discussion, Mr. Subramanian recommended **approval** of ***ZB Application #225-11*** and that this request is in general harmony with the Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family); Mr. Levin seconded the motion and passed with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Godzeno, Levin, Linder, Salit and Subramanian).

2. **ZB APPLICATION #225-12 - JASON KLEIN, TORRANCE SANDAK HENNESSEY, LLP representing ESS PRISA, LLC - 35 COMMERCE ROAD - Site & Architectural Plans and/or Requested Uses and Special Permit:** Applicant proposes to construct a new self-storage building with parking, site landscaping and storm water systems.

Explanation of applications: A Self-Storage Facility is permitted as of right within the M-L Zone. However, Large Scale Development Review is required as the New Building is proposed to be larger than 20,000 sq. ft. As such, a Special Permit and Site Plan Approvals pursuant to Sections 2.C and 2.D of the Zoning Regulations are required. As part of Site Plan review, the Applicant is seeking approval to provide a sidewalk with a 3 ft. planted buffer in lieu of 4 ft. required on Harvard Avenue pursuant to Section 12.K.5 of the Zoning Regulations.

Staff comments: The property and abutting properties are in Master Plan Category #13 (Industrial - General) in Stamford's West Side neighborhood. The lot is already developed with a self-storage facility and is proposed to infill with additional storage space where there is currently parking. Surrounding uses are also large-format commercial retail properties with small-lot residential to the east of Harvard Avenue.

MP Category #13 is intended to "provide for and protect existing industrial development and preserve opportunities for new industrial uses…and such other uses that are ancillary of subordinate to industrial activities." A self-storage facility is an industrial use type aligned with this category. The residential-industrial land use mix is acknowledged by this category. The exterior of the building is not active or transparent, which is not a requirement but is a concern for the visual appearance of a neighborhood when industrial uses are mixed with residential uses. Anything that can be done on the east side of the building to enhance the visual appeal would benefit this mix of uses.

Infilling with such a use is aligned with Policy 7H, "Encourage infill development." One of the benefits of infill developments is the additional design requirements associated with redevelopment. The proposed project will result in street trees along each of the three frontages and interior landscaping. The proposed project will add ADA accessible sidewalks and crosswalks to the street network and will benefit residents to the east, walking to the stores west of the site. Building lighting will not spill off the site such that it will impact residential areas to the east of Harvard Avenue.

Jason Klein and Karina Arredondo, Torrance Sandak Hennessey, LLP, representing the applicant, made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After some discussion, Mr. Levin recommended **approval** of ***ZB Application #225-12*** and that this request is in general harmony with the Master Plan Category #13 (Industrial - General); Mr. Subramanian seconded the motion and passed with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Godzeno, Levin, Linder, Salit and Subramanian).

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS REFERRALS:

1. **ZBA APPLICATION #011-25 - JOSEPH J. CAPALBO II, ESQ. representing JORGE & SONIA LOPEZ - 25 CARROLL STREET - Variance of Table II, Appendix B:** Applicant owns a single family, 1½ story cape style dwelling on a corner lot built around 1925 which is in a significant state of disrepair. Applicant is proposing to renovate the existing structure and add a second story over the existing footprint. Applicant is requesting: **[*a*]** a front yard setback on Carroll Street of 24.45 ft. in lieu of the 30 ft. required; **[*b*]** a street center setback on Carroll Street of 44.45 ft. In lieu of the 55 ft. required; **[*c*]** a front yard setback on Knapp Street of 15.2 ft. in lieu of the 30 ft. required; and **[*d*]** a street center setback on Knapp Street of 35.2 ft. in lieu of the 55 ft. required.

The property is in Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family). The surround-ing properties to the north, west, and south are also in MP Category #2. Properties to the east are MP Category #3 (Residential - Low Density Multifamily) and MP Category #6 (Commercial - Neighborhood Business). The property was built prior to the enactment of the Zoning Regulations and is on a corner lot. The Zoning Regulations applied as-of-right make this lot undevelopable. The Applicant is not expanding the building footprint or encroaching further into the setbacks than is already existing. The Applicant is maintaining the same roof style as the existing home which will contribute to maintaining the character of this lot. MP Category #2 is intended to provide for and protect a suitable environment for single-family dwellings. This property is compliant with the Category whether the Variances are approved or not.

After some discussion, Mr. Levin recommended **approval** of ***ZBA Application #011-25*** and that this request is in general harmony with Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family); Mr. Linder seconded the motion and passed with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Godzeno, Levin, Linder, Salit and Subramanian).

2. **<u>ZBA APPLICATION #012-25 - GEORGE ZAKI & YANA ROZMAN - 31 HOBSON STREET - Variance of Table II, Appendix B</u>:** Applicant owns a single-family dwelling with an attached garage and shed and is proposing to widen the existing garage to accommodate storage of larger-sized SUVs and to construct a second story over the new garage footprint. Applicant is requesting: **[*a*]** a front street line setback on Brightside Drive of 16.7 ft. in lieu of the 40 ft. required; and **[*b*]** a front street center setback on Brightside Drive of 41.7 ft. in lieu of the 65 ft. required.

The Applicant presented a similar application at the Planning Board's regular meeting on January 28, 2025 and the Planning Board recommended approval of the application. The Zoning Board of Appeals did not approve the application because of insufficient hardship. The Applicant has substantially changed the application to allow them to re-submit by removing the portion of the addition on the northwest side of the building, between the existing structure and Hobson Street, which significantly reduced the number of variances needed. The property is in Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family). The existing home is legally noncompliant with respect to the secondary front yard setback along Brightside Drive, which is where the Applicant proposes an addition requiring variances. MP Category #2 is intended to provide for and protect a suitable environment for single-family dwellings. This property is compliant with the Category whether the Variances are approved or not.

George Zaki made a presentation and answered questions from the Board.

After some discussion, Mr. Subramanian recommended **approval** of ***ZBA Application #012-25*** and that this request is in general harmony with Master Plan Category #2 (Residential - Low Density Single-Family); Mr. Linder seconded the motion and passed with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Godzeno, Levin, Linder, Salit and Subramanian).

3. **<u>ZBA APPLICATION #013-25 - CHRIS RUSSO, RUSSO & RIZIO, LLC representing McDONALD'S REAL ESTATE COMPANY - 1103 EAST MAIN STREET - Variance of Section 13f, Section 12.D.10.b & Section 10.B.1</u>:** The site contains an existing two-story masonry building for a McDonald's fast-food restaurant with drive-through facility. The applicant proposes the addition of a second drive-through lane with associated signage and site improvements. The existing restaurant will remain. Applicant is requesting the following:

   <u>Section 13-f</u>: Allowance of a springboard canopy, a digital pre-browse menu board of approximately 10 sq. ft. and an outdoor digital menu board of approximately 21 sq. ft. along the second drive-through lane.

   <u>Section 12.D.10.b</u>:

   - Reduction of the off-street parking requirement for a drive-through fast-food restaurant from the existing sixty-one (61) to thirty-seven (37) spaces where sixty-five (65) spaces are required.
   - Modification of a prior zoning approval which was conditioned as being approved per plans to modify the Site Plan to install a second drive-through lane, a springboard canopy, a digital pre-browse menu board and an outdoor digital menu board.

   <u>Section 10.B.1</u>: Allowance to enlarge an existing nonconforming drive-through facility where drive-through facilities are no longer permitted.

The property is in Master Plan Category #7 (Commercial - Arterial). The property is bounded by Master Plan Category #3 (Residential - Low Density Multifamily) and located near an entrance to Interstate-95. This application was before the Board in February 2023 (unanimously recommended approval) and again in October 2024 [unanimously Tabled until the Transportation, Traffic and Parking Bureau (TTP) provided comments], however it was pulled due to concerns regarding traffic. TTP requested an updated traffic report at that time. The traffic report received with this application is now two years old and has still not been updated. TTP has not provided comments at the time of writing this Memo beyond requiring updated traffic data. TTP is generally opposed to drive throughs in Stamford because they encourage car dependency and

often result in traffic flow issues. This is one way the applicant is not mindful of community design considerations as required by MP Category #7. The Applicant's stated purpose for the second drive-through lane would be to make more room for queuing on the site, as opposed to on East Main Street. The traffic report speaks more about how adding a second drive-through lane would increase the number of customers McDonald's could process, but it does not speak to how it would impact traffic on East Main Street.

MP Category #7 is intended to encourage retail distinct from the Commercial-Neighborhood Category #6 ("Main Street" environment) and Downtown Category Nos. 9, 10, 11 (pedestrian-oriented). A drive-through facility is distinct from those and would not be compatible with those Categories because it favors the car over the pedestrian. MP Category #7 is also intended to be mindful of traffic, safety and community design considerations. Bringing the queue onto the site is mindful of traffic and safety, however, if an additional drive-through line encourages additional drive-through users, it would be counterproductive. Additionally, encouraging expansion of drive-throughs is not aligned with traffic and community design considerations.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Salit made a motion to ***TABLE ZBA Application #013-25*** to the June 10, 2025 meeting due to the applicant not able to join the meeting because of technical difficulties and no updated traffic report provided along with comments from TTP; Mr. Levin seconded the motion and passed with eligible members present voting, 5-0 (Godzeno, Levin, Linder, Salit and Subramanian).

Next regularly scheduled Planning Board meetings are:
- June 10, 2025 (Regular Meeting & Public Hearing)
- June 24, 2025 (Regular Meeting)
- July Hiatus - No Meetings

There being no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Godzeno adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
May 22, 2025

Jennifer Godzeno, Chair
Stamford Planning Board

NOTE: These proceedings were recorded on video and are available for review on the Planning Board website at ***http://cityofstamford.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=20***