

PLANNING & ZONING SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, October 27, 2009

REGULAR MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Papp, Chairman
Mrs. Grzelecki, Secretary
Mr. Goodwin
Mr. Hunziker
Mr. Rothballer
Mr. Scannell
Mr. Turner
Mr. Ward

REGULAR MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Wendell

ALTERNATE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ms. Boyd
Ms. DeLuca

ALTERNATE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Redman

Also in Attendance:

Steve Kleppin, Town Planner/Senior Enforcement Officer
Glenn Chalder, Planimetrics

1. Presentation and discussion of draft findings with Glenn Chalder of Planimetrics regarding downtown rezoning - 3D Build-out, proposed Zone D.

Chairman Papp opened the special meeting at 6:00 p.m. He explained that this was a presentation of what kind and size of buildings could be expected under the current regulations with regard to Business Zone B. Of the two main factors, the FAR (Floor Area Ratio) and the parking, the latter will likely be the most restrictive in the plan. Chairman Papp briefly explained the process by which the plan would be reviewed and approved.

Mr. Chalder's presentation involved the build-out potential of Grove Street under different scenarios. The area includes 14 parcels of land totaling 6.63 acres of private property or 288,000 square feet overall. Analysis revealed the following:

15-21 Grove Street: If this property were to be developed anew, analysis shows that 163 parking spaces can be placed in this area, allowing 38,000 square feet of floor area based on the current parking regulations. The FAR resulting from that is 0.3. This achieved FAR is much less than the regulations allow but the current parking standards don't allow an applicant to achieve the regulatory FAR.

27-37 Grove Street: 4 separate parcels and buildings, 21,000 square feet of land area and 18,000 square feet of floor area in single story buildings. The resulting FAR of 0.86 is roughly double the regulatory FAR of 0.4. These parcels rely on parking at adjacent sites. If this property were to be developed anew, analysis shows that 23 parking spaces are possible on this "T" shaped site, and this would support a 5,000 square foot building based on the current parking regulations. This would be a decrease by 13,000 square feet of what currently exists. Redevelopment here is not considered likely.

45 Grove Street: 3 parcels, 90,000 square feet of land area; racquet club, fitness facility, some office space; 70,000 square feet of floor area, FAR of 0.8. If this property were to be developed anew, analysis shows that 119 parking spaces could be laid out, supporting 28,000 square feet of building based on the current parking regulations. This is a decrease of 42,000 square feet of existing building. However, the new buildings may be a "higher and better" use of the property.

59-65 Grove Street: 2 parcels, 20,000 square feet of land area; 8,000 square feet of floor area, FAR of 0.4. If this property were to be developed anew, the 32 parking spaces would support 7,500 square feet of floor area based on the current parking regulations.

Chairman Papp had inquired earlier as to a parking garage. Mr. Chalder said that if a parking deck or structure were to be placed underneath this site, there could be 46 parking spaces in a garage. This might support 11,000 square feet of building based on the current parking regulations.

69-73 Grove Street: This is a narrow fronted parcel, wider in the back. Current buildings on the site are approximately 4,000 square feet of floor area. If this property were to be developed anew, 36 parking spaces are possible in the back, supporting 7,000 square feet of building based on the current parking regulations. This is roughly 3,000 square feet of floor area more than what currently exists.

Overall development potential in this area is considered to be moderate to high over the long term. Analysis also included assemblage of the parcels on the north side of the railroad tracks. There would be 9 parcels in total, 236,000 square feet of floor area; 116,000 square feet of floor area currently. If these properties were to be developed as an entire unit, the 369 possible parking spaces in this lot would support approximately 74,000 square feet of building space. This is not the maximum according to the FAR. If the FAR goes to 0.4, 94,000 square feet of floor area is possible.

Mr. Chalder went on to say that the current parking ratios in the New Canaan regulations are “suburban” in nature and probably higher than New Canaan really needs. In fact, this suburban parking ratio could hold back compatible economic development. Mr. Chalder described ways to resolve conflict between parking and FAR. If parking standards are reduced to get to the FAR, building heights and fee-in-lieu-of parking can be considered to allow for floor area and compatible development. Parking ratios could limit the types and sizes of buildings that could be considered as part of the Downtown Plan for Redevelopment. Mr. Chalder recommended updating the Downtown Plan.

Chairman Papp inquired as to how buildings in the residential area behind the proposed site can remain protected. Mr. Chalder suggested land buffers, using landscaping techniques to increase the buffered area paying attention to land grades, and decreasing the intensity of the types of activities in this area.

Mr. Goodwin asked Mr. Chalder to consider what the advantages and disadvantages of assemblage are and to give that information to Mr. Kleppin.

Richard Stowe, 12 Mead Street, suggested shutting off Grove Street so that it no longer crossed the train tracks and building a bigger train platform. Tanya Bickley, 249 Old Stamford Road, encouraged mixed residential use and possible senior housing.

Chairman Papp thanked Mr. Chalder and closed the special meeting at 7:17 p.m.

Jean Grzelecki, Secretary