

Auburn Planning Board Meeting Minutes September 10, 2019

ROLL CALL:

Regular Members present: Evan Cyr – Presiding, Brian Carrier, Katherine Boss, Dan Carroll, Stephen Martelli, Mathieu Duval and Sam Scogin

Regular Members absent: None

Associate and other Members present: Kyle Pepin

Associate and other Members absent: John Engler

Also present representing City staff: Audrey Knight, Auburn City Planner and Megan Norwood, City Planner II

Chairperson Cyr called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and asked for a roll call. He introduced 2 new members on the Board, Dan Carroll as a Full Member and Kyle Pepin as an Associate member. He stated there were no minutes available to vote on at this time and explained that meetings may be viewed on YouTube.

MINUTES:

None

Chairperson Cyr explained the process of Planning Board meetings and asked for the staff report of the 1st item on the agenda

NEW BUSINESS and PUBLIC HEARING:

Proposed conversion of a 12,000 square foot nursing home to 12 residential units at 185 Summer Street, (PID 260-217), in the Multi-Family Urban Zoning District.

Audrey listed the items that were provided in the Board member's packets for this proposal. She then went over the staff report and answered questions from Board members.

(47:15 on Recording)

Albert and Christy LaValley, owners of the property and applicants, stated the following:

- Want to market these apartments for professionals
- Don't accept Section 8 in any of their properties
- Don't allow pets on their properties
- Smoking is prohibited in their units and have evicted tenants that did not abide to that
- Do not allow illegal substances as defined by Federal Law
- Do not allow unregistered vehicles on their property

- They do screen potential tenants – obtain credit score and history to make sure they don't have any wants or warrants
- Verify they aren't a sex offender – contact references and check employment
- Building is nicely suitable for apartments – has a serviceable elevator
- Building is fully sprinkled with central fire alarm system and plans are to expand the system
- Plan to make the exit onto Turner Street a right-turn-only to help alleviate traffic congestion
- Discussed eliminating the 2 units in the basement making it a 10-unit building
- Sent letters to abutters including those across the street totaling 11 letters
- Building that was demolished had been vacant for 20 years and was in a sad state of disrepair
- Wants residents to feel safe as far as lighting is concerned
- Want to avoid having tenants parking on Summer Street
- Focusing on rehabbing properties instead of building new
- Spoke about existing trees being Maple trees and want to keep new planting similar
- Will consider having a fence if that's what the neighbor wants
- Currently there are 4 driveways that exist on the property and it will be reduced to 3
- Spoke about thru traffic in the site
- Lights would be motion detected and shine down from a light pole
- Not opposed to shrubbery as a barrier
- There will be onsite laundry facilities so would lessen vehicle trips

(1:05:52 on Recording)

Open Public Input

A motion was made by Brian Carrier and seconded by Dan Carroll to open the public input part of the hearing. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.

Kathy Turbyne of 393 Turner Street stated the following:

- Lives directly across from this proposed project
- Asks the Board to consider the neighborhood impact this project will have on the 6 houses behind the project and the 2 on either side of the project site
- Not excited about looking at the parking lot and the extra traffic in and out
- Not knowing the quality of the tenants, worried it would turn into 24-hour urban noise in a very peaceful neighborhood
- Noise suppression could be achieved with fencing, trees, bushes, landscaping and should be maintained.
- Concerned about poor walking conditions, children crossing the street
- Concerned there will be more all-day traffic and accidents will increase – (32 accidents between Dennison and Rowe Streets area)
- Very concerned about neighborhood land values
- Recommend whatever is put in place should mirror and complement the existing beauty of the surrounding area
- Apartments should be limited to 8 units which would mean less parking and more green space
- Should not receive a variance

(1:15:50 on Recording)

Bill Horton of 401 Turner Street stated the following:

- Appreciates that the Board is listening and wants what's best for the neighborhood
- Applicants are nice people, but this is a business for them
- The difference between the applicants and us is we live there
- Rowe Street is narrow and in bad shape
- Calculated that 20 people will be living on this small piece of property
- Wondering where these people will be able to barbeque and spend other time outside
- Green space is important to this neighborhood
- Did not see any drainage on the plot plan
- Snow removal will be difficult
- No other property between Walmart and the funeral home will have as many parking spaces as they are proposing on this property – Does not meet compatibility
- Spoke about and compared the proposed curb cut on their Washington Street property
- Diminish value of properties in the area
- Appreciate that the old ugly building is gone but did not know that it was tied to the nursing home
- Completely throwing the greenspace criteria out the door with 23%
- Too high a density
- Too many accidents on Turner Street

(1:25:10 on Recording)

Matt Marris of 369 Turner Street stated the following

- Blown away that 9,000 vehicles travel that section of road
- Has had to call 911 2 dozen times in the last 3 years for motor vehicle accidents
- Suggests it should be entrance from Summer Street and exit on to Turner Street
- Concerned that there aren't any cross walks on Turner Street for Washburn School foot traffic
- Concerned about lighting on the property
- Concerned about basement apartments – should be removed for safety reasons and to increase green space
- Prefers low to the ground shrubbery as opposed to maple trees

Craig Woodard of 393 Turner Street stated the following:

- Agrees with all the issues mentioned so far
- Previous allowance for the nursing home to exist has changed in the last 40-50 years
- 30 plus accidents occurring each year and adding more traffic will increase
- Suggested traffic pattern to and from the property
- The higher the density the worse it is to the neighbors - will absorb the green space from the neighbors
- Keeping it down to 8 units is keeping it compliant to the plan
- Will be retarding future development in the area

Matt Marris of 369 Turner Street wanted to mention that he did not receive a letter from the applicants. He only found out about this from his neighbor next door.

Bill Horton of 401 Turner Street said as far as shielding the parking lot, he would like to see a high cedar fence and plants that will mature over time.

(1:36:25 on Recording)

Close Public Input

A motion was made by Brian Carrier and seconded by Dan Carroll to close the Public Input part of the hearing. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.

Re-open Public Input

A motion was made by Dan Carroll and seconded by Brian Carrier to re-open the public input part of the hearing. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.

Albert and Christy LaValley, applicants, said they wanted to address the neighbor's concerns and stated the following:

- Will be adding more green space
- People mentioned loving the nursing home being there, but there were 97 signatures against having the nursing home there
- Having less units will mean there will be more bedrooms since the 12,000 sf is still there
- Yes, this is a business for us but it's an investment. If we let the property deteriorate, we won't get our investment back
- There's always been an entrance on Turner Street, so this wasn't added recently
- Traffic is based on the national averages – may be more and may be less
- Spoke to the City about a right turn only on to Turner Street
- Cross walk near Dennison is not that much further
- No problem putting up a fence – just didn't want the compound look

Craig Woodard of 393 Turner Street wanted it to be clear that the 2 driveways were single car driveways and never came out on to Turner Street.

Close Public Input

A motion was made by Dan Carroll and seconded by Stephen Martelli to close the Public Input part of the hearing. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.

Chairperson Cyr commented that the Board has a difficult decision to make with several competing factors. He said the Board should consider the following: plantings that are being proposed for screening, the idea of greenspace and suggestions to bring the density more in line with Comprehensive Plan. The blighted home has been removed and when we are thinking about the reduction in units, that we also recognize that these improvements to the property are being done solely through private investment so we shouldn't make it a non-viable investment while we try to balance the concerns of the neighbors.

Sam Scogin said he agreed the screening should be evergreens, arborvitae and a fence should be erected in the meantime to allow the trees to mature. In terms of greenspace, there's a very large parks complex that runs through that neighborhood, so he's less concerned about that. He said he's more concerned about ensuring that the proposed project is in keeping with the rest on Summer Street. He said he disagreed with the notion that larger apartments may mean less vehicles and gave the example of one of the buildings next door to where he resides.

Brian Carrier said he was happy with what the applicants came back with. He said residents expect to have safe streets to drive on and the reliance falls on the police department to enforce the laws that we have. He said we have to realize the change in elevation when it comes to the plantings that will be providing a barrier and said he was concerned about the apartments in the basement.

Dan Carroll agreed about the 2 positive items the applicants were considering; removing the basement apartments and installing a fence. Going from 12 to 10 apartments opens up a couple of parking spots for greenspace. Agrees with right-turn only on Turner Street.

Katie Boss echoed Board members concerns about the basement units and said they should be removed. She mentioned that being only 5 feet tall, she would find it difficult to climb out of a basement window and said if there's a better form of egress for shorter people to access then she would be open to suggestions. She said if a fence were installed on the Turner Street side, she would like it to be set back so as not to reduce visibility when exiting the site and to have signage on the inside of that fence that states right-turn only.

Stephen Martelli said he would like to make the following 5 recommendations: 1) 8 units maximum with no basement apartments, 2) Arborvitae type of screen with a fence, 3) Cross walk with flashing lights, 4) Down facing LED lights on short poles and 5) Add a stipulation that there would be no renovations to increase the number of apartments for future years.

Chairperson Cyr said we would be approving the site plan including a specific number of units which would be locking in the number.

Mathieu Duvall echoed concerns about the basement units and making sure they have adequate visibility making a right-turn only onto Turner Street.

Kyle Pepin said it was a good idea to eliminate the units in the basement for safety reasons and adding more green space would be great. He added that the trees and fence on the Turner Street side were pretty important to the neighbors so is in favor of that.

(1:54:35 on Recording)

Chairperson Cyr said he's heard a few points of consensus from the Board and said at this time, we need to decide if we want to discuss more to pin down some specific conditions or if there's an individual that feels comfortable in making a motion with the understanding that there may be some friendly amendments. He commented that this was a complex project and whoever makes a motion should follow a model that was provided by staff. A lengthy discussion followed amongst Board members and staff about number of units, parking spaces, curb cuts, lighting, etc...

(2:10:45 on Recording)

A motion was made by Sam Scogin to approve the conversion of a property to a total of 13 residential units at 185 Summer Street, (PID 260-217), in the Multi-Family Urban Zoning District and further grant a variance to green space requirements to allow lot coverage of 70% impervious surface and further find that the proposed project is in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan per Section 60-1365 with the following Findings and Conditions:

- Due to settling associated with the recently demolished nursing home facility, the Applicant may use temporary pavement in the parking lot until Summer of 2021. A Conditional Certificate of Occupancy shall be issued contingent upon final pavement being installed in accordance with Sec. 60-607(12)(a) of the City Code of Ordinances.
- Applicant will remove 2 parking spots on the Turner Street side of their project
- Applicant will reduce the curb cut on Summer Street to 50 feet total on the north side
- Applicant will have a 25 ft setback for a stockade fence and evergreen screening on the Turner Street side
- Will create a right-turn only onto Turner Street
- Will have 10 ft downcast lighting in the parking area with motion sensors centrally located with full cut-off lighting only illuminating the south side of the property

Chairperson Cyr added a friendly amendment in regard to the curb cut, that the green space to the south of the duplex be increased to meet the 30% requirement.

Mr. Scogin accepted the amendment and Dan Carroll seconded the motion. Mr. Scogin asked if they should specify that it not have basement apartments?

Brian Carrier added a friendly amendment stating that it not have any basement apartments. Both Mr. Scogin and Mr. Carroll accepted the amendment. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.

Chairperson Cyr stated that before we go to the next item on the agenda, the Planning Board Policies and Procedures clearly states that no new item will be taken up after 9:00 pm unless agreed upon unanimously by the Planning Board. He then asked Audrey if there was a time constraint on this next item and she replied yes. Chairperson Cyr asked Board members to raise their hands if they were in favor of taking up an additional item and all the members raised their hand, so he then asked for the staff report.

PUBLIC HEARING: Request for determination that 32 Dunn Street, the St. Louis Church, be designated as a building of Community Significance, for the purposes of an Adaptive Reuse development application.

Megan Norwood presented the staff report. Chairperson Cyr commented that the Adaptive Reuse was developed because the City of Auburn has several properties like this and explained that there are criteria for what describes a property as being of Community Significance. He went on to say he has personal ties to the Church and pointed out how important this building was for him and the surrounding community. He spoke about the St. Louis Bells also being an important part of local history.

(2:22:45 on Recording)

A motion was made by Dan Carroll and seconded by Brian Carrier to determine the St. Louis Church located at 32 Dunn Street (PID 221-196-001) in the Multifamily Urban Zoning District to be a building of community significance for the purposes of an Adaptive Reuse application pursuant to Chapter 60, Article XVI, Division 3, Sec. 60-1335 of the Auburn Code of Ordinances. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.

Councilor Walker informed the Board that they had not opened the meeting for public input on this topic.

Chairperson Cyr apologized and said this is why we don't do things after 9:00 pm. He then opened the meeting for public input regarding the church.

Open Public Input

Larry Pelletier of 129 Second Street said he hoped the Board would approve this. He re-iterated what Chairperson Cyr said about the building being an important part of the community and spoke about the tower being erected to house the bells on November 2nd.

Chairperson Cyr closed the public input section of the public hearing and said it would be appropriate for Mr. Carroll to make the motion as he previously read.

A motion was made by Dan Carroll and seconded by Brian Carrier to make the motion that was previously read. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.

Board members voted to extend the meeting to hear the miscellaneous items on the agenda.

MISCELLANEOUS:

1. Upcoming items for October

Audrey passed around documents regarding upcoming AG Committee meeting and said this topic would be coming back to the Planning Board in October. She went over other items that would be on the agenda for the October meeting.

2. Planning Board Other Items for Discussion

Chairperson Cyr stated that he had been asked to present the Findings and recommendation in regard to the AG Zone text amendment

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

(2:30:20 on Recording)

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Sam Scogin and seconded by Stephen Martelli to adjourn. After a vote of 7-0-0, the motion carried.