

City of Binghamton Planning Department

SUMMARY OF MINUTES CITY OF BINGHAMTON PLANNING COMMISSION			
MEETING DATE: October 3, 2023 LOCATION: City Council Chambers, City Hall			
CALLED TO ORDER: 5:15PM RECORDER OF MINUTES: Shalin Patel			

ROLL CALL			
COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	PRESENT:	ABSENT:	
Nicholas Corcoran (chair)	X		
Joseph De Angelo	X		
Christopher Dziedzic (vice chair)	Х		
Mario DiFulvio		X	
Steve Seepersaud	X		
Kelly Weiss	X		
Emmanuel Priest	X		
STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:	TITLE & DEPARTMENT:		
Tito Martinez	Assistant Director, Planning	Assistant Director, Planning Department	
Shalin Patel	Planner, Planning Departme	Planner, Planning Department	
Greg Buell	Zoning Officer, Planning De	Zoning Officer, Planning Department	
Elisabeth Rossow	Corporation Counsel	Corporation Counsel	

APPROVAL OF MINUTES			
MOTION to approve the September 12, 2023 meeting minutes as written			
FIRST: De Angelo	SECOND: Weiss	VOTE: Carried (6-0-1)	
AYE(S): Dziedzic, Weiss, Corcoran, De Angelo, Seepersaud, Priest	NAY(S):	ABSTENTION(S): DiFulvio	

SEQR DETERMINATIONS			
ADDRESS: 439 Court St CASE NUMBER: PC-2023-0029			
DESCRIPTION FROM AGENDA: Site Plan Review and special use permit for the establishment of a Cannabis Retail			

APPLICANT: AOW Construction
REPRESENTATIVE(S): No name given

DISCUSSION POINTS:

Proposal of a retail cannabis dispensary within the OCM guidelines

business in an existing commercial building in the C-1 Service Commercial District

- No site modifications will be made, bulk of the renovations will be on the interior (~2500 sq. ft of the space will be renovated).
- Additional vacant space left for future expansion or other uses
- AOW (applicant) is hired by DASNY to carry out the construction and design phase(s)
- There is adequate parking on site, dumpster location will not change
- Chair (Corcoran) asked about the utilization of the drive-thru window in the back
 - **Representative replied**, the existing Drive Thru window in the back will utilized and used for pick-up orders

- There is a reinforced with wire mesh and abuse resistant sheet rock vault that will store the product; customers are only allowed on the sales floor
- Vice-chair (Dziedzic) inquired about the interior conditions of the building.
 - Representative replied, it is in great condition, have toured the building, the roof is great, the existing
 mechanicals are great. It looks like if you just clean it up, you can open it right back up, it is in good
 condition.

VOTING MOTION that the Planning Commission intents to act as Lead Agency in SEQR review and that the action is Type II under SEQR FIRST: Corcoran **SECOND:** Priest VOTE: Carried (6-0-1) AYE(S): Corcoran, Priest, Dziedzic, NAY(S): **ABSTENTION(S):** DiFulvio De Angelo, Weiss, Seepersaud MOTION to schedule a public hearing at the November regular meeting FIRST: Corcoran **SECOND:** Seepersaud VOTE: Carried (6-0-1) AYE(S): Corcoran, Seepersaud, NAY(S): **ABSTENTION(S):** DiFulvio Dziedzic, De Angelo, Weiss, Priest

SEQR DETERMINATIONS				
ADDRESS: 33-41 Whitney Ave CASE NUMBER: PC-2023-0030				
DESCRIPTION FROM AGENDA: Site Plan Review for the construction of a 5,520ft2 Social Services building in the I-3				
Heavy Industrial District.				

APPLICANT: Mothers & Babies

REPRESENTATIVE(S): Mike Maciak (Owner of Robinson St Plaza)

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Houses located on these parcels in question were demolished weeks back to make room for the resource center
- Will have adequate parking
- Vice-chair (Dziedzic) commented, the staff recommends the parcels for 33-41 Whitney Ave be combined.
 - Representative (Maciak) commented, they will be combined.
- Chair (Corcoran) asked about the area titled "play area" on the site plan
 - **Representative (Maciak) replied**, that is a future area, the applicants are talking about putting in a playground for the kids. In the end result, it should be known whether the play area will be put in front while moving the building back a little and create extra parking or leave it in the back where it is.
- **Staff (Martinez) commented**, for new construction (except for residential buildings), parking lot in front of the building(s) is not permitted.

VOTING MOTION that the Planning Commission intents to act as Lead Agency in SEQR review and that the action is Unlisted under SEQR **SECOND:** Priest VOTE: Carried (6-0-1) **FIRST:** Corcoran AYE(S): Corcoran, Priest, Dziedzic, NAY(S): ABSTENTION(S): DiFulvio De Angelo, Weiss, Seepersaud MOTION to schedule a public hearing at the November regular meeting SECOND: Dziedic VOTE: Carried (6-0-1) **FIRST:** Corcoran AYE(S): Corcoran, Dziedzic, NAY(S): **ABSTENTION(S):** DiFulvio Seepersaud, De Angelo, Weiss, Priest

SEQR DETERMINATIONS		
ADDRESS: 43 Riverside Dr CASE NUMBER: PC-2023-0027		

DESCRIPTION FROM AGENDA: Site Plan Review and Special Use Permit to allow a Home Bed and Breakfast in the R-1 Residential Single-Unit Dwelling District.

APPLICANT: Jeanne Van Buren

REPRESENTATIVE(S): Jeanne Van Buren

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Will usually only host just one guest, for 1-20 days; only professionals
- Only plans on using one of the 3 bedrooms (for this use) listed on the 2nd floor
- There was discrepancy in number of bedrooms, as reported by vice-chair Dziedzic looking at the staff report and hearing the application: Parcel mapper listed 4 bedrooms, applicant's floorplan listed 5, but the applicant said there were 6 bedrooms there.
 - **Applicant (Van Buren) commented**, one bedroom was converted into a laundry room on 2nd floor. While the two bedrooms on 3rd floor are not being uses as bedrooms but as a storage
- *Vice-chair (Dziedzic) asked* the applicant to amend the floorplan and submit it to the Planning Department before November's public hearing for the application
- Staff (Martinez) commented, a special use permit is required, because the applicant is applying for a Bed +
 Breakfast use in a residential neighborhood
- **Commissioner (Priest) asked** if a conditional approval could be made that states the applicant cannot rent more than 2 bedrooms.
 - **Staff (Martinez) replied**, yes, that could be a conditioned approval.
- **Chair (Corcoran) asked** about the parking requirements. Would going from 5 bedrooms to 3 bedrooms change the requirements? And do we have the ability to wave the parking requirements?
 - **Staff (Martinez) replied**, the applicant will still need 3 parking spaces. Yes, the Planning Commission can wave up to 50% of the parking requirements.
- **Staff (Martinez) commented**, the code allows a complete waiver of the parking requirement for local landmarks, which this is.

VOTING MOTION that the Planning Commission intents to act as Lead Agency in SEQR review and that the action is Type II under SEQR **SECOND:** Weiss **FIRST:** Corcoran **VOTE:** Carried (6-0-1) AYE(S): Corcoran, Weiss, Dziedzic, NAY(S): **ABSTENTION(S):** DiFulvio De Angelo, Priest, Seepersaud MOTION to schedule a public hearing at the November regular meeting **SECOND:** Weiss **FIRST:** Corcoran **VOTE:** Carried (6-0-1) AYE(S): Corcoran, Weiss, **ABSTENTION(S):** DiFulvio NAY(S): Seepersaud, De Angelo, Dziedzic, Priest

PUBLIC HEARINGS & FINAL DELIBERATIONS			
ADDRESS: 23 E. Clinton St CASE NUMBER: PC-2023-0025			
DESCRIPTION FROM ACENDA: Site Dian Poview and special use normit for the conversion of a portion of the ground			

DESCRIPTION FROM AGENDA: Site Plan Review and special use permit for the conversion of a portion of the ground floor of an existing building into 2 two-bedroom dwelling units, resulting in 5 total dwelling units in the C-1 Service Commercial District

APPLICANT: Charlie Ackerman

REPRESENTATIVE(S): Charlie Ackerman

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- No new exterior changes planned
- Applicant has a contract with Taylor Garbage to acquire roll behind trash cans that will be provided in the back yard of 25 E. Clinton St (which applicant Ackerman owns), with a common alleyway between them, so it is accessible by everyone.
- Vice-chair (Dziedzic) commented, looking at the staff report and the application, the proposal

- requires 2 parking spots. And based on the photos of the lot, there is a paved parking lot facing water street and Clinton Street directions, which has at least 2 spaces on it, which meets requirements for this application alone.
- Staff (Martinez) commented, the existing building is a legal non-conforming building, 23 E. Clinton St has 3 units in it and commercial space that does not have parking, it is a 0-lot line building on that parcel (which is legal non-conforming, it was grandfathered it). The expansion (which this application is) needs to meet the current code. Adding 2 bedrooms per unit, each of those units needs a parking space, equaling 2 spaces. The land usage is not outside the purview of the Planning Commission, because the existing 3 units are added along with the request 2 units, which gets the applicant to 5 units, which requires a special use permit.
- *Vice-chair (Dziedzic) asked* the applicant to address some of the concerns that were raised about tenants of 23 E. Clinton St removing, moving, and damaging the tree timbers on neighboring property parking lot.
- Applicant (Ackerman) commented, it is absolutely true. There were tenants on the first floor (commercial space) who had gone on and removed the tree timbers. Had reached a verbal agreement with Mr. O'Neil to lease his parking lot, so could hopefully add a café. Right now, there is such limited parking at 19 E. Clinton St, there are only 6 spots. Neither on Clinton nor on Water St, there is absolutely no street parking at all. The closest parking is around the street in front of city church or at Double Tree. Mr. O'Neil went into an agreement with Ray's Auto to lend his lot to have a wrecking yard there.
 - Applicant (Ackerman) commented, he is willing to write an easement to allow storage of garbage cans in the backyard space of 25 E. Clinton St to be used for tenants of both 23 and 25 E. Clinton St, should a sale of 25 E. Clinton St were to occur in the future.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

• Tim O'Neill (Owner of 280 and 286 Water St) spoke in opposition of the project. Mr. O'Neill had following to say about the project: By putting this property in the historical context, the Commission or the city has waived certain number of parking spots that this building requires. If this project does finish 1, 2, 3 years from now and there are 40 people without places to park, you are going to give this project a waiver for parking where it can only support 5 vehicles but needs 12 spaces, now you have so many people that do not have a place to park. Mr. Ackerman's tenants were removing the supports to pass through to his parking lot. Had to file a police report several times against the tenants because they keep damaging my property. There is no amount of parking available to support that type of expansion – student housing there. His tenants have thrown trash into my parking lot. Have spent estimated \$10,000 to get parking lot re-surfaced and clearing debris but cannot keep people out of there.

Response to public comments were mentioned in the discussion points.

VOTING

MOTION that the requirements for Site Plan Review and Special Use Permit have been met and therefore the application has been met and conditionally approved, subject to the following:

- A revised site plan be submitted to the Planning Department that shows garbage can storage on 25 E. Clinton St backyard space
- A proposed easement leading to the garbage storage area
- A fence on the northern property line of 19 E. Clinton St as discussed in the meeting

FIRST: Corcoran	SECOND: Dziedic	VOTE: Carried (6-0-1)
AYE(S): Corcoran, Dziedzic, Weiss,	NAY(S):	ABSTENTION(S): DiFulvio
Priest, De Angelo, Seepersaud		

PUBLIC HEARINGS & FINAL DELIBERATIONS

ADDRESS: 53 Chenango St CASE NUMBER: PC-2023-0020

DESCRIPTION FROM AGENDA: Site Plan Review and special use permit for the conversion of the upper stories of an existing commercial building to 56 dwelling units in the C-2 Downtown Business District

APPLICANT: James Slocum

REPRESENTATIVE(S): James Slocum

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Existing sub-basement was added to the site plan for perspective
- On the basement level, there was an addition of
- Staff (Martinez) asked, just to clarify, below grade and 1st floor are not at all part of the proposal, no modifications are proposed, and there won't be any amenity space on those floors that caters to the residential tenants?
- Representative (Slocum) replied, we are requesting to put a laundry room and a gym in the basement.
 - The newer plans (A200 as mentioned by Representative (Slocum)) were never submitted to the Planning Department for review before the meeting, this was the first time the staff and Commission were made aware of it.
 - Staff (Martinez) commented, there was an amendment that was passed recently about residential amenity spaces below grade and any assembly spaces other than amenity spaces that are accessory. The only amenity spaces that would be allowed for multi-unit dwelling for these many units would be laundry space, storage, and structured parking. Laundry and storage spaces have to be partitioned, so that they do not have an occupancy limit above 10 people.
 - Commission (Weiss) asked about the gym in the basement.
- **Staff (Martinez) replied,** the gym has to go, it will not be permitted in the basement. That space would have to be partitioned, so it is smaller. The gym would be allowed above grade.
 - Representative (Slocum) commented, we currently do not have any use for the space on ground floor facing Henry St. We are currently waiting on an existing tenant to see if they need more space, if not then at a later date that would be a good space for a gym.
 - Counsel (Rossow) asked, what is in the sub-basement?
- Representative (Slocum) replied, in the sub-basement, there is an establishment called 'The Cave', it is a pre-existing nightclub. They are open Friday and Saturday night.
- Vice-chair (Dziedzic) asked about the representative's plans for garbage disposal situation (referring back to first meeting). Are you increasing the volume of the dumpster or adding a larger one?
- Representative (Slocum) denotes the location of a dumpster on the updated site plan. There is room
 to expand the capacity of the dumpster, if need be, could certainly get a larger dumpster in that
 space.
 - Staff (Martinez) commented, the code requires a multi-unit dwelling to have a dumpster and it has to be enclosed with certain criteria it has to be opaque and at least 6' tall.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Nate (lives at 21 Frederick St) spoke in opposition to the project. He had following to say: Is this supposed to be a student housing project? (Was answered by representative Slocum saying that it is not strictly student housing, it will be market rate housing). Thinks about housing a lot and that this area is in a housing crisis. Talks to a lot of residents in the area to find out what their housing needs and experiences are like. A resident was quoted saying "housing in Binghamton is hell." This would be agreed by a lot of people that the issue is partly due to the expansion of student housing. Need to make sure that there is housing available for other people, non-students. Jim

- (representative Slocum) and Bearcat housing typically caters towards students. Really likes the idea of converting old office spaces into residential dwelling units, because there is such high demand for housing this is great for local businesses that rely on foot traffic. However, everything being catered towards student housing makes it a seasonal economy, it makes it harder for smaller businesses to thrive or survive.
- Terry Weathers () spoke in opposition to the project. She had following to say: began by asking about possible zoning change from C-2 Downtown Business District to a residential district. There is no place to park down there as is. In order to put apartments in there, that means people are going to live there, people will need places to work, more bathrooms, etc., understand that it is already zoned for residential, but it does not make sense. Because there will be so much more water/sewer usage, garbage, etc. It does not make sense to put 83-bedroom units in a building that currently has very few commercial tenants. Urged the commission members to postpone their votes and give the public a chance to speak about it.

APPLICANT RESPONSE TO THE PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Part of this project is coming from sale of other properties that we were told were no longer in a student housing eligible zone. It is harder to fill larger houses in Binghamton with families. There are tax incentives for owner occupied housing and landlords make money. Families that typically pay their rent on time and do everything right unfortunately do not see the financial see the benefit of the homeowner tax credit. They pay a premium that goes to the landlord. This is not a student housing development; it is a market rate development. Does not thing putting housing in this building negatively affects anyone. Prior to this housing development, it would have been 3 years before the owner was able to find a commercial tenants in time, he lost over half of his tenants from the ones remaining in the building. A lot of commercial buildings downtown are half full due to Covid and majority of work being shifted to working from home and hybrid setup.
- Vice-chair (Dziedzic) asked, what is the parking requirements for an application like this?
 - **Staff (Martinez) replied**, for existing buildings downtown, there is no parking requirements, unless it is a residential unit with 4 or more bedrooms. This building abuts a public parking garage.
 - **Representative (Slocum) commented**, part of the building that was occupied did have 60 parking spots reserved in the neighboring parking ramp.
- Vice-chair (Dziedzic) asked, what are the rules in regard to water/sewer usage when there are different use changes – going from commercial to residential? Is there appropriate coverage for this change in use?
 - **Staff (Martinez) replied,** everything will be handled through the permitting process, the building, code, & construction department would handle that.
- Staff (Martinez) commented, the plans that Mr. Slocum gave shows units on the 1st floor, the
 plans that are in basement do not. The 1st floor should not have residential uses facing a street.
- Applicant (Slocum) commented, there is a retail office space located on ground floor, on the plans
 it states it is in the basement, but it the ground floor.
- Commissioner (Priest) asked, does the 15' elevation comply with city and zoning code?
 - **Staff (Martinez) commented,** what the code says is at ground level, at grade cannot be residential.
- Applicant (Slocum) commented, it would be hard to believe that more than 60 people would need parking at the ramp. The building owner previously had an agreement with the State St parking ramp to reserve 60 spaces of parking for its tenants at 53 Chenango St. A lot of the parking issues people are upset about is the parking on the street, but none of the parking around the street is

overnight parking, it is metered parking.

- Commissioner (Priest) asked, as part of a conditional approval, would you (the applicant) agree to enter into a similar agreement with the parking ramp for new tenants? You are effectively taking office space that would have had parking spaces and replacing it with residential units, and if we are being honest a good deal of them will require parking. It is not unreasonable for the Planning Commission to require some kind of mitigation efforts to tackle increase in tenants.
 - **Applicant (Slocum) replied**, "we act as a pass through for the current commercial tenants, we would not want to be in charge of collecting rents for the residential tenants, it is an electronic system, the person at the parking ramp can zap their car if it is not paid and we do not want to be in the middle of purchasing or forcing parking or determining the number of spaces that they will actually need.
 - **Staff (Martinez) commented**, when the use in questions requires a special use permit, the Planning Commission (PC) within reason can go beyond the code and require things that the PC deems will mitigate any potential impacts from the project.
- Commission (Priest) commented, if this was a new residential building, there would be a parking requirement and the parking that was previously spoken for was for workday office tenants, who would leave by night. But this new project involved residential tenants, people are going to park overnight, it is not going to be a 1:1 difference in terms of the parking needs based on the new usage. Would be okay with the 50% reduced requirement, about 30 spaces.

VOTING

MOTION that the requirements for Site Plan Review and Special Use Permit have been met and therefore the application has been met and conditionally approved subject to the following:

- Applicant must secure a minimum of 28 monthly parking permits in the State Street Municipal Parking Garage, to be provided to residential tenants of 53 Chenango St. The parking permits must be maintained in perpetuity for the proposed dwelling units. No Certificate of Occupancy shall be issued until proof of an adequate parking agreement is submitted to the Planning Department.
- The applicant must submit a revised floorplan with no gymnasium in the basement. The proposed gymnasium space must be partitioned such that it complies with the requirements in § 410-19. M. of the Zoning Ordinance.
- The applicant must submit a revised site plan noting a 6' tall opaque enclosure surrounding the proposed dumpster

FIRST: Corcoran	SECOND: Seepersaud	VOTE: Carried (6-0-1)
AYE(S): Corcoran, Dziedzic, Weiss,	NAY(S):	ABSTENTION(S): DiFulvio
Priest, De Angelo, Seepersaud		

PUBLIC HEARINGS & FINAL DELIBERATIONS ADDRESS: 33 Court St CASE NUMBER: PC-2023-0028

DESCRIPTION FROM AGENDA: Site Plan Review for the conversion of the second floor of an existing mixed-use building into 3 two-bedroom dwelling units and one office, resulting in 5 total dwelling units in the C-2 Downtown Business District

APPLICANT: Owen Bly

REPRESENTATIVE(S): Mark Yonaty

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Rectangular space labeled as studio apartment was changed into an office space since it was deemed too small for a studio apartment
- No other changes made

PUBLIC COMMENT:

 No one spoke in favor nor in opposition of the project 			
VOTING			
MOTION that the requirements for Site Plan Review and Special Use Permit have been met and therefore			
the application has been met and approved			
FIRST: Corcoran SECOND: Weiss VOTE: Carried (6-0-1)			
AYE(S): Corcoran, Dziedzic, Weiss,	NAY(S):	ABSTENTION(S): DiFulvio	
Priest, De Angelo, Seepersaud			

OTHER BUSINESS

Robinson Street Rezoning

DESCRIPTION: Proposal is to rezone 9 parcels on Robinson St, at the intersection of Robinson and Whitney Ave. A review of the zoning in this area was prompted by the Mothers & Babies project; the use they are proposing is social services, which is not permitted in the I-3 Heavy Industrial district. A deep look into zoning, comprehensive plan, and facts on ground was made once the applicant asked if they could locate their resource center at the aforementioned address (33-41 Whitney Ave). Planning Department is proposing to rezone that district from I-3 Heavy Industrial to C-4 Neighborhood Commercial District. The Comprehensive Plan calls for it to be commercial, it is also already a commercial plaza in the near surrounding, and it is believed that it is zoned inappropriately and should be rezoned.

MOTION for recommendation of approval to the City Council

FIRST: Weiss SECOND: Seepersaud VOTE: Carried (6-0-1)

AYE(S): Weiss, Seepersaud, Dziedzic, Priest, De Angelo, Corcoran

AYY(S): MAY(S): ABSTENTION(S): DiFulvio

ADJOURNMENT			
MOTION to adjourn TIME: 7:10 PM			
FIRST: Dziedzic	SECOND: Seepersaud		VOTE: Carrie (6-0-1)
AYE(S): Dziedzic, Seepersaud, Priest,	NAY(S):		ABSTENTION(S): DiFulvio
Weiss, Corcoran, De Angelo			