

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 20, 2014**

- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Diane Clemens (Chairwoman); John Alden, Nick Meyer, Amber Thibeault. (Aaron Martin, Andrew Boutin, and David Nistico were absent.)
- ADMINISTRATION:** Robin Pierce, Development Director.
- OTHERS PRESENT:** Paul O'Leary, John Stawinski, Monique Crete.
- AGENDA:**
1. Call to Order
 2. Audience for Visitors
 3. Additions/Amendments to the Agenda
 4. Minutes
 5. Public Hearing
 - Site Plan, Change of Use from Church to Residential, 56 Main Street, John Stawinski
 6. Other Planning Commission Items
 7. Adjournment
-

1. CALL TO ORDER

Diane Clemens called the meeting to order at 6 PM.

2. AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS

None.

3. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

None.

4. MINUTES

February 6, 2014

MOTION by Nick Meyer, **SECOND** by Amber Thibeault, to approve the February 6, 2014 minutes as presented. **VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.**

5. PUBLIC HEARING

Site Plan Review for a change of use from a church to four residential units at 56 Main Street in the R-O District by O'Leary-Burke for JGS Development c/o Steven Sokalski, agent for John Stawinski, owner

Paul O'Leary and John Stawinski appeared on behalf of the application.

APPLICANT COMMENTS

Paul O'Leary noted the following:

- The original applicant, JGS Development, withdrew from the original proposal. The approval for the original proposal has expired. John Stawinski decided to proceed with an application for four residential units in the former

church building at 56 Main Street as shown on the site plan. One unit will be accessible.

- The parking lot at 56 Main Street has been constructed per the original approval. There are 10 gravel parking spaces.
- There are minimal exterior changes to the building. Windows in the back of the building have been uncovered.
- An accessible ramp is being added to the building.
- There are two building mounted lights and two small lights over the entrances. The lights are semi-cutoff fixtures which require a waiver from the village standard for full cutoff fixtures.

STAFF REPORT

The Planning Commission received a written staff report on the application, dated 2/20/14. Robin Pierce noted the following:

- A number of new windows have been added which enhance the appearance of the building.
- There is no change in lot coverage, only windows and interior wall changes to the building.
- The temporary parking spaces in the easement on the side of the building will not be necessary because there are 10 parking spaces in the lot which exceeds the requirement of nine spaces (two per unit and one guest space).
- Landscaping will be done as part of the current application.
- The building structure is large and could be a blight on the area, but the application for four residential units is making the structure productive.

John Alden made the following comments:

- The village lighting standards should not be relaxed so full cutoff fixtures should be used for lighting on the site.
- The language in the Land Development Code for the district allows office buildings in the residential district. With the current application the building is trying to look more residential in character and maintain the residential character of the neighborhood.
- There are discrepancies in the elevations on the plan. The west elevation is not as well treated as the others. There are larger windows over smaller windows on the west elevation which looks unbalanced.
- The opening for the front door into the tower facing the street should remain in arched form because this is a major feature on the building.
- The former choir loft in the church will be eliminated because a floor will be added for the residential units.
- The Vermont energy code will apply to the building.
- The accessible ramp located along the building will collect snow from the roof. The roof overhang could be extended over the ramp or the width of the ramp could be narrowed to be less than the width of the landing. (Paul O'Leary noted the ramp is 5' wide, wooden, and attached to the side of the building.)

There was discussion of landscaping. Paul O'Leary noted the hedgerow along the front of the property has not yet been planted. Nick Meyer advised changing some of the plantings to avoid invasive species or trees that will overgrow the site. John Alden said better landscaping in front of the building is needed. Robin Pierce said the landscape requirement of 2% of the total project cost applies to the application and can include plantings or other site improvements.

There was discussion of snow removal/storage. John Alden pointed out the area on the Grove Street side of the property to the right of the ramp has space for snow storage.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Monique Crete, Grove Street, asked about the following:

- Description of the apartments, noting past problems with residents in the house on Main Street next to the applicant's property - John Alden said according to the plans the apartments are 1,425 s.f. and it is not known if the units will be affordable housing or market rate. Robin Pierce noted the Planning Commission cannot make a decision on the application based on cost because that would be discriminatory. The application must meet the standards outlined in the Land Development Code.
- Plan for the back door to the basement of the building and if the basement will become a housing unit - John Alden said the entrances to the building will be the door for the tower and the door on the corner of the building. The number of units in the building is the maximum so the basement cannot be converted into another residential unit.
- Expansion of the parking lot – Diane Clemens said the parking lot will remain as it is now.
- Landscaping/screening between the properties – Robin Pierce reiterated landscaping will be done as part of the application.

DELIBERATION/DECISION

Site Plan, Change of Use from Church to Residential, 56 Main Street, Stawinski

MOTION by John Alden, SECOND by Amber Thibeault, to approve the site plan for a change of use from a church to four residential units at 56 Main Street in the Residential-Office District by O'Leary-Burke for JGS Development c/o Steven Sokalski, applicant, and John Stawinski, owner, with the following stipulations:

1. All staff comments shall be addressed and satisfied prior to any permits being issued.
2. The applicant shall provide accessible parking space(s) per the village Land Development Code.
3. All work shall comply with the Village Land Development Code.
4. All exterior light fixtures shall be dark sky compliant and meet village lighting standards.
5. Landscaping shall comply with the Village Land Development Code.
6. The final landscape plan shall be subject to approval by staff.
7. All work shall comply with the Vermont energy code.

8. The potential of snow falling from the roof on the accessible ramp shall be addressed (perhaps extend the roof overhang or narrow the width of the ramp).
9. A snow storage area shall be designated and marked.
10. The original tower entry door opening shall be retained in the original arched shape.

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

6. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

Historic Buildings in the Village

There was discussion of adding to the village comprehensive plan the requirement of design review of buildings at least 50 years old or older regardless of the district in which the building is located. The historic building list for the Village needs to be reviewed for accuracy and the list, once confirmed, should be included in the comprehensive plan.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Amber Thibeault, SECOND by John Alden, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 PM.

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