

Planning Board Public Hearing Minutes
Site Plan Review & Special Permit Parking – Library Commons
(meeting is being recorded)

On Tuesday, January 12, 2016, the Holyoke Planning Board held a Public Hearing regarding a Site Plan Review and a Special Permit for a reduction from the parking requirements (Section 6.1.7) for the property located on 193-203 Chestnut Street (005-02-004); 117 Essex Street (005-02-006); 210 Elm Street (005-02-008) submitted by HAP Housing. The meeting was held in the 4th Floor Conference Room, City Hall Annex, 20 Korean Veterans Plaza, Holyoke, Massachusetts at 6:00 p.m.

Attendance:

Planning Board

Mimi Panitch Chairperson
Christian LaChapelle..... Vice-Chairman
Eileen Regan Secretary
John Kelley Member
Harry Montalvo Associate

Planning Staff

Marcos Marrero Director
Jeffrey Burkott Principal Planner
Sharon Konstantinidis Head Clerk

Others Present

Peter Serafino 47 No. Canal St. Michael Moriarty Olde Holyoke Development
Dan Delany Fuss & O'Neill Aimee Bell Fuss & O'Neill
Marc Sternick Dietz & Co., Savali Page HAP Housing
Cassandra Holden The Care Center Olivia Mausel Holyoke Historic Commission
Joseph Paul 18 Florence Ave Kathleen McKean 57 Martin Street
Gladys Lebron-Martinez .. Ward 1 Councilor Thomas Creed Redevelopment Authority
Steve Huntley Valley Opportunity Council Attorney Plum 70 Pinehurst Street
Cassandra Holden ... The Care Center

MIMI PANITCH, at 6:12 p.m., called for a motion to open the Public Hearing. A motion was made by EILEEN REGAN and seconded by CHRIS LACHAPELLE. The motion carried 4-0. MIMI PANITCH explained the Public Hearing procedures for the evening.

MARK STERNICK provided an overview of the project noting that 47 units in total were proposed at the existing site: 16 units at the building formerly known as the Carlton & Randolph, 10 units at the new addition, 9 units in the former Barlow Building, and 12 new living spaces in the former Providence nurse’s residence. Also proposed was the creation of 44 parking spaces located on the west side and 10 parking spaces located at the east side of the alley. The exterior design would keep with the architecture and character of the surrounding area. Amenities on the site would include a fence, a playground, walking path, green space and benches.

PETER SERAFINO stated that the proposed development would have 39 affordable housing units and 8 market-rate units. The development of Library Commons was sparked by the recent renovations to the Library. This development would impact the vitalization of the downtown similarly as did the Churchill and Chestnut Park projects; HAP intends to acquire the property later in 2016. He added that 10 of the apartments would be managed by The Care Center and includes a classroom, art room, laundry area, and common space. An interior and exterior security system would be present.

PETER SERAFINO stated that the project being situated in the heart of public transportation would not be impacted by the parking reduction request. The 15,600 square foot vacant lot being created at the corner of Appleton and Elm Street, would be earmarked for future development and not negatively impact the area with a parking lot.

GLADYS LEBRON-MARTINEZ, as a Ward Councilor and resident, spoke in favor of the project and parking reduction noting that this abandoned area is a concern of the residents of Ward 1. The proposed development would bring revitalization and pride to its residents which will be beneficial to the City. An empty building was not safe as many “opportunists” have taken them over. Parents are concerned for the safety of their children; they cannot even walk to the Library.

OLIVIA MAUSEL spoke in favor of the project on behalf of the Historic Commission noting that there have been many changes in that area; at one time Chestnut Street was a very wealthy neighborhood. She was encouraged to see that HAP was moving forward on the development plans as the area is in current disrepair.

CASSANDRA HOLDEN spoke in favor of the project on behalf of The Care Center noting that The Care Center has been a 30 year educational institution. The goal of the Center was to support students from High School to College. She added that the majority of the students do not drive a car which minimizes the need for parking.

KATHLEEN MCKEAN spoke in favor for the parking reduction and encouraged the Board to assist the development to come to fruition. HAP has a successful reputation which speaks for itself.

MIKE MORIARTY spoke in favor of the project on behalf of Olde Holyoke Development noting that they would be providing support for the development of this project. He added that the development of the empty lot to a parking lot would not enhance the site.

THOMAS CREED spoke in favor of the project on behalf of the Redevelopment Authority noting that the proposal mimics the intent of the Urban Renewal Plan. He was impressed with the diversity of the proposed specifically the involvement of The Care Center and Career works; it contributed to the project being sustainable. He noted that the Urban Renewal Plan encourages developments to connect each neighborhood within the City which minimizes the need for parking.

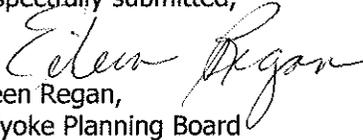
STEVE HUNTLY spoke in favor of the project noting that residents are worried about the "undesirables" that would hang around at those buildings if there is no plan in place. He noted that it was the norm that tenants do not have vehicles as only 2 out of 18 tenants at the Elm Street HAP location have a vehicle.

ATTORNEY PLUM spoke in favor of the project on behalf of the Library Board of Directors noting that the City was very instrumental in assisting that the Library project comes to fruition. He suggested that perhaps the diagonal parking on Essex Street could be useful. The Library Board appreciates the synergy between the project and the community that this project is generating. He hopes The Care Center will collaborate with the Library to create a community where the residents will walk to educational and recreational services.

EILEEN REGAN asked if The Care Center students would be pregnant and/or new moms, and how long would they stay at that location. CASSANDRA HOLDEN responded the students would mostly be parenting as they would have recently graduated from high school. Over the course of 2-3 years the students would be earning their Associates Degree, finding a job, and becoming self-sufficient.

At 6:45 p.m., there being no further business to come before the Planning Board, a motion was made by JONH KELLEY and seconded by CHRIS LACHAPELLE to continue the Public Hearing until January 26 @ 5:30 p.m. The motion carried 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,


Eileen Regan,
Holyoke Planning Board