



**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 26, 2023**

45 Lyon Terrace
Bridgeport, CT 06604
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ATTENDANCE: Mel Riley, Chair, Robert Morton, Secretary, Cesar Cordero, Johanna Dorgan, Robert Filotei, Jackie Martoral

OTHERS: Paul Boucher, Zoning Official; Jackson Strong, Design Coordinator; Atty. Russ Liskov

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Riley called the meeting to order at 6:27 p.m. A quorum was present.

Commissioner Riley announced that Agenda Item (23-25) 3369 & 3375 Fairfield Ave. – Petition of Nutmeg Southwest JV, LLC – Seeking a certificate of location approval for a cannabis sales retail establishment in the MX1 zone would not be heard at the meeting.

CONTINUED BUSINESS

C-1 (23-08) 2600 Madison Ave. – Petition of SIMCOVE, LLC – Seeking a special permit and a site plan review to allow a self-storage facility in the previous retail supermarket building in the MX2 zone.

Atty. Sullivan came forward and introduced herself to the Commission. She distributed updated site plans to the commissioners present. The current property is under-utilized and this project will revitalize it. She said that the MX2 allows multiple uses. Atty. Sullivan then listed the various requirements that the property meets along with the Master Plan of Development.

Mr. Scott Hughes, the developer, came forward and said that they had purchased the property two years ago after having almost no interest in the property. They have met with the neighborhood groups and others who have made comments. He explained that the storage unit would serve a 3 mile radius and this area is underserved. It is a very low traffic generator with 34 trip per day which was drastically lower than when Stop N Shop was there. There have been complaints that self-storage units are detrimental to the neighborhood. Norwalk has one and it has been very successful.

Commissioner Filotei asked about trucks being parked there. Mr. Hughes said that they would not have trucks. Commissioner Riley asked if they would be renting parking spaces. Mr. Hughes said that this was not part of the plan.

Mr. Hughes said that there would be someone on site probably from 9 to 7 and that there would be extensive security. He added that they were willing to work with the City. Mr. Hughes said that they would probably have 300 units and the primary users are small retail businesses. There will be two small retail establishment in the development. He said that he has already spent 6 million dollars on the project.

Commissioner Riley asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak in favor of the application. No one came forward. Commissioner Riley asked if there was anyone opposed to the application. There were 47 people who were opposed in the audience.

Mr. Coleman, the deputy Director of OPED came forward and introduced himself. He then spoke about having a better design that would work with the community. [18:00]

Mr. Thomas Gaudett of Capital Avenue and the City's Deputy Chief of Staff came forward and said that as a taxpayer he wants to see development, but the area is entirely single family homes and condos. He agreed with Mr. Coleman about having a better design that would work with the community. He reminded everyone that Stop N Shop was no longer on the parcel and hasn't been there for some time. He said that the administration would prefer to see housing or a senior center. He said that this was a storage unit that the neighbors don't want and would work with the developer to come up with something acceptable to everyone.

Council Member AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia came forward and said that she was a Council Member and represented the District where this project was proposed. She said that the area could not handle that type of traffic. She explained that the City was not at fault for the 10 years of vacancy because it had to do with the lease that Stop N Shop had with the landowners. She said that there were a number of projects in the North End and the quality of life has gone down. The residents have made investments in their homes. She said that the neighborhood would look forward to having something else on the property.

Ms. Eva said that she lives at the end of the street where the proposed project was. She said that she felt that they did not need this project and there would be many problems associated with it. She said that she could not afford to have her property lose value.

Ms. Sue Portroy of Main Street came forward and said that storage units would be fine in another area but not in this location. This is not a good decision. She would support affordable housing or a senior center. It's important to make the correct decision. She thanked them for their time.

Council Member Michelle Lyons came forward and greeted the Commission. She said that when these type of projects usually have a traffic report and asked if one had been done. She mentioned another issue that was not addressed and reminded everyone that the project was located in a residential area. They cannot dictate who can rent the units. She said there had been a number of incidents on the site. She said that the best use would be for senior housing and said

that there was a major fire at a senior residence on Jewett avenue. she encouraged the commission to consider the residents and the seniors over storage units. She asked how much storage people needed.

State Representative Marcus Brown of Capitol Avenue and said that he was present to express his strong opposition to this project. He said while Stop N Shop was handy but the store was not supposed to be located in that area either. He said that people do not move to an area because they have good storage units. He said that storage units often have bugs, squatters and many other issues. The residents are here to let the Commission know how much they oppose this project.

Ms. Laura who lives directly across from the property. She said that there were many other storage units in Bridgeport but they do need senior housing or a senior center. They don't need another storage unit facility

Mr. Chris Caruso of the North End and Madison Avenue, came forward and said that there was no traffic study or the viability of the development have not been submitted before the public has a chance to comment.

Mr. Caruso went on to quote the late Winston Churchill who was the Prime Minister of England during the nation's most challenging time. In 1948, Churchill stated that "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." He said that the Planning and Zoning Commission had been presented with a proposal from the Planning Department six months earlier to allow storage units within residential communities. He then reviewed the details and noted that the Commission had discussed coming up with some type of procedure. However, now the Commission was being faced with placing storage units in residential zones. Other communities have moratoriums on storage units.

Mr. Caruso pointed out that there was no hardship on the property. The developer stated that he had already invested \$6 million dollars in the project. That is not a reason for land use policy.

It was also stated that there would be 34 vehicles coming onto the property versus the 800 vehicles that were arriving when the store was open. There is no record of that and there is no traffic study to show those numbers. The numbers don't add up and there is no proof.

Developers often use an argument about other storage units in other towns. By Federal standards, Bridgeport is not a mid-sized city, which has over 250,000 rather than 148,000. It might have been different at the turn of the century. The city is 17 square miles which happened during a water legislation. Bridgeport is smaller than Stratford or Trumbull. Comparing this city with other cities across the nation is not right because Bridgeport is so small. There is a commercial strip about six blocks away, which is where the storage units should be.

Mr. Caruso then gave a brief overview of how the property came to be approved for a Stop N Shop and noted that removing the graffiti was the City's responsibility. The taxes on the property are also an issue. He said that Black Rock was the highest District for taxes. Senior housing will pay taxes and would receive State support during construction. He also mentioned parking spaces, lights, cameras and fencing. There is already a prison in Bridgeport. There are over 26,000 residences in that area. Why change the character of that neighborhood?

He asked the Board to deny the application and noted that there was a shortage of senior housing. The Senior housing complexes have long wait lists. He also suggested that having a Senior Center would be better for the area. He said that he had proposed a moratorium on storage units to the City to the City Council. He repeated his request that the Commission deny this request.

Mr. Bill Garrett came forward and said that he opposed the project because the location was a high quality neighborhood and storage units did not belong there. He asked the Committee to deny the request.

Commissioner Riley asked if there was anyone else who wished to speak in opposition to the application. He then stated that the applicant should come forward for rebuttal.

Mr. Hughes came forward and said that they had set out to work within the boundaries. He said that there was a desire for residential rather than retail with residential over it. No one wants bugs or other problems on the site. He said that he did not have strong feelings about gates, but he would put them in if the Committee wished to have them. He was not asking for a hardship. Even if they do have 1,000 units, people will not be going to their units on a daily basis.

Atty. Sullivan said that during the public meetings, the residents asked about having a day care center or a deli on the site. Atty. Sullivan said that they had spoken to people a number of times about this project. Senior housing is not allowed in the zone but the residents were opposed to the storage units.

Commissioner Riley closed the hearing on 2600 Madison Avenue.

NEW BUSINESS

(23-24) 881 East Main St. – Petition of Hiren Chapatwala – Seeking a certificate of location approval for a liquor package store in the MX1 zone.

Atty. Sullivan came forward and greeted the Commission. She said that she was representing the applicant who was asking for a package store in 881 East Main Street in an existing building. She described the location and cited the regulations involved. She said that the use was consistent with the Master Plan. She said that they had supplied the appropriate documentation.

Commissioner Riley asked if there was anyone in favor of the application.

Mr. Ken Chang of 75 East Main Street came forward to speak in favor of the application.

Commissioner Riley asked if there was anyone in favor of the application. No one came forward.

Commissioner Riley asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak in opposition to the application. Hearing none, Commissioner Riley closed the public hearing on 881 East Main Street.

(23-25) 3369 & 3375 Fairfield Ave. – Petition of Nutmeg Southwest JV, LLC – Seeking a certificate of location approval for a cannabis sales retail establishment in the MX1 zone.

This item was not heard during the meeting.

(23-26) 305 Knowlton St. – Petition of The Knowlton, LLC – Seeking a certificate of location approval for a café liquor permit for the existing assembly hall in the RX2 zone.

Atty. Rizio came forward and greeted the Commissioners. He said that the applicant has an existing business and wished to do his own catering rather than using an outside catering business. He said that there is a hookah lounge there and they have not had any complaints in three years. The applicant has done a wonderful job of turning a derelict location into a thriving business. There are people from out of town coming to the business. Atty. Rizio said that this was an improvements because the owner would be on site supervising the food and beverage. Nothing has really changed except the catering will be done on site. The Holiday Inn is being turned into apartments, so the City has lost an event space, but this will help address this issue.

The building was finally functional and been restored. The owner provides security and there have been several weddings held there.

Commissioner Riley asked if there was any one present in favor of this. No one came forward.

Commissioner Riley asked if there was anyone presence who was opposed to this application. Hearing none, he closed the hearing on 305 Knowlton St.

RECESS

Commissioner Riley announced a recess at 7:50 p.m. He reconvened the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

(23-27) 143 Bennett St. – Petition of 143 Bennett Street, LLC – Seeking a coastal site plan review and a site plan review for a 27-unit row building along Fox Street and a 39-unit row building along Bennett Street in the RX1 zone and coastal area.

Atty. Rizio came forward and greeted the Commissioners. He reminded everyone that they were seeking a Coastal Site Plan Review and Site Plan Review. He distributed a location site plan to the commissioners and gave a brief overview of the various site plans. There should be no impact on Coastal Resources. He then distributed copies of the regulations to show that the project was compliant with the requirements.

Atty. Rizio gave a brief overview of the DEEP recommendations, along with the landscaping plans and the zoning compliance table. there is no special permit required. The state has found that they are consistent with all applicable regulations. Atty. Rizio then distributed a packet of photos showing the location.

Atty. Rizio said that Mr. Gaucher's reports are now handled by a staff member named Tracey.

Commissioner Filotei asked about the Bridge to the Train station. Atty. Rizio said that he was familiar with it but it would not have any impact on the project.

Commissioner Riley asked if there was any one present in favor of this. No one came forward.

Commissioner Riley asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak in opposition to the application.

Council Member Scott Burns came forward and said that they had expected to hear from any applicant so they could review the project. they only had about 2 weeks to review the plan.

Council Member Burns said that there had been a long standing plan to build a pedestrian bridge over Ash Creek to the Trains Station . He asked the Commissioners for a month's delay.

Mr. David Barlow came forward and said that he was the chairman of the Black Rock NRZ Land Use and Design Committee. He said that they had not had an opportunity to submit any comments. He said that he understood that this was zoning compliant. the front of the building is 243 feet long and this was inconsistent with the neighborhood. He said that they liked many of the features but was asking that they delay the application so they can review the application.

A resident of 231 Fox Street came forward and spoke about the pedestrian bridge. He noted that there were five houses near the project that have sump pumps and there are flooding issues, including a nearby sink hole and rainfall run off. He said that he was not against the project, but was concerned that they need to be sure they think things through.

Ms. Denise Salbigol of 165 Bennett Street came forward and noted that the location was the highest elevation on the street. She spoke about a retaining wall and said that they were unclear on the details. While the scale of the project is appropriate, but there needs to be more clear communications. She has her design studio in the area and said that she was familiar with Bridgeport's industrial aesthetics.

Over the years, she has invested a number of improvements on her property. She said that they need to reduce the building height to match the surrounding homes. Having fewer units would reduce the amount of parking needs. The materials should also be upgraded in order to have more consistency. Her garage is located about four feet from the property line and wished to know what kind of mitigation measures would be taken.

Mr. Michael Curtain of 191 Bennett Street came forward to address the Commission. He said that there were flooding issues and one of the corners can easily flood. They lost six to eight parking spaces when the boys and Girls club renovated their parking lot. Bennett Street is very narrow and two cars can barely pass one another. Mr. Curtain spoke about the traffic concerns and said that the aesthetics of the neighborhood would be impacted.

Mr. Ramsey of 160 and 162 Bennett Street came forward and said that this would directly impact his property. Parking is an issue.

Commissioner Riley asked if there was anyone else who wished to speak in opposition to the application. He then stated that the applicant should come forward for rebuttal.

Atty. Rizio came back and said that there was nothing to rebut. He said that according to the State, they were improving the area and noted that the City is requiring the street frontage. The site plan review would be solely based on the zoning code. There were no statements that were made against the Zoning Code.

RECESS

Commissioner Riley announced a recess at 8:40 p.m. He reconvened the meeting at 8:43 p.m.

DECISION SESSION

C-1 (23-08) 2600 Madison Ave. – Petition of SIMCOVE, LLC – Seeking a special permit and a site plan review to allow a self-storage facility in the previous retail supermarket building in the MX2 zone.

Commissioner Riley said that the parcel was zoning as MX2 and MX2 does not allow for housing.

**** COMMISSIONER FILOTEI MOVED TO DENY AGENDA ITEM C-1 (23-08) 2600 MADISON AVE. – PETITION OF SIMCOVE, LLC – SEEKING A SPECIAL PERMIT AND A SITE PLAN REVIEW TO ALLOW A SELF-STORAGE FACILITY IN THE PREVIOUS RETAIL SUPERMARKET BUILDING IN THE MX2 ZONE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:**

- 1. THE PROPOSED USE WILL DECREASE PROPERTY VALUES.**
- 2. THE PROPOSED USE IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD.**
- 3. THE PROPOSED USE WILL HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC.**
- 4. THE APPLICANT DID NOT FULFILL THE SPECIAL PERMIT CRITERIA OF SEC. 11.50.6 #6.**

**** COMMISSIONER DORGAN SECONDED.**

Commissioner Filotei said that it was not compatible with the neighborhood.

Atty. Liskov said that they have to be very specific on how this does not fulfill the Special Permit requirements.

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR (CORDERO, MARTORAL, DORGAN AND FILOTEI) AND TWO OPPOSED (MORTON AND RILEY).**

**** COMMISSIONER MORTON MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM C-1 (23-08) 2600 MADISON AVE. – PETITION OF SIMCOVE, LLC – SEEKING A SPECIAL PERMIT AND A SITE PLAN REVIEW TO ALLOW A SELF-STORAGE FACILITY IN THE PREVIOUS RETAIL SUPERMARKET BUILDING IN THE MX2 ZONE.**

**** THE MOTION FAILED DUE TO LACK OF A SECOND.**

(23-24) 881 East Main St. – Petition of Hiren Chapatwala – Seeking a certificate of location approval for a liquor package store in the MX1 zone.

Commissioner Martoral pointed out that there were a number of houses of worship and daycare within the 750 foot radius. The Commissioners examined the overall site plan. Commissioner Riley pointed out that there was no opposition to the application.

**** COMMISSIONER MARTORAL MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM (23-24) 881 EAST MAIN ST. – PETITION OF HIREN CHAPATWALA – SEEKING A CERTIFICATE OF LOCATION APPROVAL FOR A LIQUOR PACKAGE STORE IN THE MX1 ZONE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON:**

THE APPLICANT FULFILLED THE REVIEW AND APPROVAL CRITERIA OF SEC. 11.120.

**** COMMISSIONER CORDERO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

(23-25) 3369 & 3375 Fairfield Ave. – Petition of Nutmeg Southwest JV, LLC – Seeking a

certificate of location approval for a cannabis sales retail establishment in the MX1 zone.

This item was not heard during the meeting.

**** COMMISSIONER MORTON MOVED TO DEFER AGENDA ITEM (23-25) 3369 & 3375 FAIRFIELD AVE. – PETITION OF NUTMEG SOUTHWEST JV, LLC – SEEKING A CERTIFICATE OF LOCATION APPROVAL FOR A CANNABIS SALES RETAIL ESTABLISHMENT IN THE MX1 ZONE TO JULY 31, 2023.**

**** COMMISSIONER DORGAN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

(23-26) 305 Knowlton St. – Petition of The Knowlton, LLC – Seeking a certificate of location approval for a café liquor permit for the existing assembly hall in the RX2 zone.

**** COMMISSIONER DORGAN MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM (23-26) 305 KNOWLTON ST. – PETITION OF THE KNOWLTON, LLC – SEEKING A CERTIFICATE OF LOCATION APPROVAL FOR A CAFÉ LIQUOR PERMIT FOR THE EXISTING ASSEMBLY HALL IN THE RX2 ZONE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:**

- 1. THE PROPOSAL IS CONSISTENT WITH THE ASSEMBLY HALL USE.**
- 2. THERE IS NO DETRIMENTAL IMPACT ON THE AREA.**
- 3. THE APPLICANT FULFILLED THE REVIEW AND APPROVAL CRITERIA OF SEC. 11.120.**

**** COMMISSIONER MORTON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

(23-27) 143 Bennett St. – Petition of 143 Bennett Street, LLC – Seeking a coastal site plan review and a site plan review for a 27-unit row building along Fox Street and a 39-unit row building along Bennett Street in the RX1 zone and coastal area.

**** COMMISSIONER MORTON MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM (23-27) 143 BENNETT ST. – PETITION OF 143 BENNETT STREET, LLC – SEEKING A COASTAL SITE PLAN REVIEW AND A SITE PLAN REVIEW FOR A 27-UNIT ROW BUILDING ALONG FOX STREET AND A 39-UNIT ROW BUILDING ALONG BENNETT STREET IN THE RX1 ZONE AND COASTAL AREA WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITION:**

THE PROPER INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF ADEQUATE SEDIMENTATION AND EROSION CONTROLS DURING CONSTRUCTION.

FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON:

THE APPLICANT FULFILLED THE REVIEW AND APPROVAL CRITERIA OF SEC. 11.80 AND SEC. 11.70.

***This coastal site plan approval, as required under Sec. 11.80.7 of the Zoning Regulations of the City of Bridgeport, CT shall expire July 3, 2024.**

**** COMMISSIONER CORDERO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OTHER BUSINESS

There were no additional items to consider at this time.

CONSENT AGENDA

There were no additional items to consider at this time.

OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

There were no additional items to consider at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

• **May 30, 2023**

**** COMMISSIONER MORTON MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 30, 2023 MEETING AS SUBMITTED.**

**** COMMISSIONER DORGAN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 30, 2023 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** COMMISSIONER MORTON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COMMISSIONER FILOTEI SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Bridgeport
Planning and Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting
June 26, 2023