

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
OCTOBER 30, 2013**

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Eric Prause, Chair
Horace Brown, Secretary
Michael Stebe
Chirag Thaker

Alternates: Julian Stoppelman (sitting)
Donald Palmer

Absent: Andy Kidd, Vice Chair
Susan Shanbaum

Also Present: Mark Pellegrini, Director of Planning
Renata Bertotti, Senior Planner
Matthew Bordeaux, Environmental Planner
and Wetlands Agent
Ginger MacHattie, Recording Secretary

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing at 7:08 p.m. The Secretary read the legal notice for the application when the call was made.

CHR CAPITAL INC. – request a special exception for a use which requires automobile parking in excess of 60 spaces, and a special exception to allow 5 or more residential units above the first story with a combined gross floor area of all residential units exceeding 5,000 sq. ft. at 469 Center Street, Business II and Design Overlay zones. – Special Exception/Preliminary Site Development Plan (2013-062)

Attorney Tim Hollister spoke on behalf of the applicant, CHR Capital, Inc. He distributed supplemental materials to the Commission members. The property is 0.92 acres, located at the intersection of Center Street and Alexander Street and located in the Business II and Design Overlay zones. In 2008, the Planning and Zoning Commission approved the construction of a three-story mixed use building with first floor offices and 20 residential units in the two stories above. There were 55 parking spaces approved as well. The building displayed is what is currently on the site. The proposal is to construct a second building with the parking lot expanded from the existing 55 spaces to proposed 111 spaces.

Jill Benson, Community Health Resources (CHR), explained that CHR is a leading provider of mental health, addiction, supportive housing, and recovery services. Several years ago, CHR developed affordable and supportive housing to meet an identified need with its clients and to target local homelessness. CHR currently provides housing to 123 individuals and families and housing support to 574 individuals and families in communities north and east of Hartford. Most have remained housed and many have been able to further their education or obtain employment. Despite original concerns from the neighborhood, the current building has operated without incident. Having a safe place to live has made a substantial difference in the lives of the CHR residents. The proposed building will build on the successes and bring additional attractive, high

quality, affordable housing to Manchester for families and veterans who are ineligible for other housing assistance. Residents will be a mix of those requiring support and those who meet the income requirements for affordable housing. Services will be available to all residents and programming will be combined with the original building.

Paul Bailey, Architect, displayed the site plan and noted that it exists in a mixed use neighborhood. To the north are single family homes; to the west is a mix of commercial, single and multi-family. The area to the east is a mix of commercial and residential and to the south is mostly commercial. The current building has offices on the first floor and residential units on the upper floors. The lower level is brick with large windows. The upper levels have small windows with clapboard siding and sloped roofs giving the building a residential facility look. The building is close to the street to reinforce the street frontage. Parking entrance is off of Alexander Street.

Mr. Bailey explained that the proposed plan for the second building extends the parking with a one way traffic loop. There is a community garden, which he pointed out. In between the buildings, the residential entrances will face each other with a nice courtyard. The second building will have the same materials as the first; brick on the first floor with large windows, the gable forms, clapboard siding, and smaller residential windows. This building is a little larger than the first building in order to accommodate some two-bedroom units.

Mr. Bailey displayed the floor plan of the first building, which has 4,560 square feet of office space. He then displayed the new building's first floor layout, which is somewhat larger. The entrance is on the west side with a smaller lobby. There will be less support services in the second building due to the use of the first building. The second floor of the new building will have eight two-bedroom units, with laundry on the floor. The third floor will contain twelve one-bedroom units, again with a laundry on the floor. The roof will have a large flat section in the middle for mechanical equipment, which will be hidden from view.

In response to a question from Mr. Thaker, Heather Gates, CEO of CHR explained that some programs will be held in the common space on the first floor of the new building and there will be offices for outreach staff for children and families.

In response to a question from Mr. Stoppelman, Mr. Bailey said the setback for both buildings is 15 feet.

In response to a question from Mr. Brown, Mr. Bailey said the lighting in the parking lot will be addressed.

Mike Galante, Traffic Engineer, summarized the traffic study dated September, 2013. He reviewed the site location on the map and the existing traffic conditions at the area intersections. The traffic count for the morning peak hour was 700 vehicles and the traffic count for the evening peak hours was 500 vehicles. Based on the traffic handbook general trip generation rates, an additional 22 or 23 vehicle trips could be added to the roadway system. There will be no changes in the level of service. There has been one accident at the intersection of Center and Alexander Streets in the last three year period.

Mr. Galante said the parking plan will utilize the existing 55 spaces and add additional spaces for a total of 111 parking spaces. He noted an earlier comment about the building being pushed back and noted at least a dozen parking spaces would be lost and the handicap spaces would

need to be relocated.

Derek Dilag, Professional Engineer, displayed the current site plan and located the watershed area on the existing site. He pointed out two discharge spots; one toward Center Street and the second to the adjacent property owner to the north. Peak stormwater runoff will be mitigated through infiltration and detention. Soils on the site were tested and they are very good for infiltration as demonstrated by deep test pits. Clean roof water will be infiltrated into the ground water system. The stormwater surface flows will be treated in a hydrodynamic separator and directed into a detention system. Mr. Dilag said he considered the pervious pavement as an alternative means of infiltration, however the result would be too much infiltration that potentially could, through soils, flow beyond their property lines and onto abutting neighbor's property.

Mr. Dilag said he has conferred with the Town's Water and Sewer Department, which indicated there is adequate capacity. Town staff provided comments, which the applicant feels can be easily addressed.

Earl Goven, Landscape Architect, said he tried to maximize the site in terms of screening and providing the correct amount of parking. Existing circulation patterns were maintained. Refuse containers have been relocated for easy access. Paving materials are suitable to handle refuse truck traffic. The community garden has been relocated. A courtyard has been created between the two buildings. The refuse area will be a masonry structure with gates. Screening will consist of a 6' stockade fence with finished portion toward the neighbor.

Mr. Goven said there will be a courtyard between the two buildings. Existing benches and pedestrian scale lighting will be reused. Landscaping will be hardy materials, including perennials, shrubs, and shade trees. Lighting will be located in the island of the parking lot, consistent with the existing fixtures which are sharp cut-off, down lit, dark sky compliant fixtures. They are between 14' and 16' tall. There is a series of bollards along the courtyard and pathway from the parking. Overall, the site will maintain the same feel. Plant materials will be consistent. The gazebo will be relocated near the garden.

In response to a question from Mr. Stebe, Mr. Goven said the fencing will be cedar and stained. It will be stained every three to four years.

In response to a question from Mr. Brown, Mr. Goven said the vinyl fencing doesn't hold up well during inclement weather. The wood fencing has gaps.

In response to a question from Mr. Prause, Mr. Goven said the landscape plan will be a little more vigorous than the existing landscaping. It will provide an upgraded look.

Mr. Hollister explained that the Connecticut Housing Finance Association has come out with a new round of financial support for supportive housing. He referred to tab 2 of the materials he handed out, which is a chart of criteria for special exception approval as well as how the applicant meets that criteria.

In response to a question from Mr. Prause, Mr. Bailey explained that this site is located in a mixed use neighborhood and is surrounded by both residential and commercial uses. The design is intended to be reflective of that. Modern urban planning encourages buildings to be close to the street.

Mr. Prause asked if any member of the public wished to comment either in favor of or in opposition to this application.

Carl Hohenthal, 44 Ridgewood Street, is an abutting property owner. There is an existing fence which he believes belongs to the applicant. His main concern is his privacy. Right now, the existing lot behind Burger King that abuts his property is completely wooded, which is a great barrier. Looking at the plans, it looks like it will be clear cut which means the existing trees and natural barrier will be gone. The fencing and shrubs installed behind building one are inadequate. The shrubs have had little growth. There is a 10' differential in the elevation between the upper portion and the low spot. If there will be fencing and shrubs, there should be some type of retaining wall. Shrubs should be dense to protect residential from commercial. This is a multi-million dollar project and some money needs to be invested into shrubs and fencing. There is a pipe that runs through the applicant's property across Mr. Hohenthal's property and out into Ridgewood Street. It is not adequate to tie into. There have been backups in the past and he is concerned that his property will flood. He would like his concerns addressed.

As related to the neighbor's comment and in response to Mr. Brown question, Mr. Goven described existing and proposed slopes in the topography. He said the parking lot will be approximately 4' higher than the abutting property. The proposed parking lot is relatively flat with a low spot and a catch basin on the north side. He would be happy to further look into mitigation.

Mr. Hollister said the applicant has an overwhelming desire to work with the neighbor on screening.

Ms. Bertotti said Town staff has reviewed the application and only minor and technical comments remain. They can be addressed as modifications on the final plans.

The Chairman closed the Public Hearing portion of the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

NOTICE: A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THIS PUBLIC HEARING CAN BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.