

**MINUTES OF BUSINESS MEETING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MARCH 7, 2016**

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Eric Prause, Chairman
Andy Kidd, Vice Chairman
Michael Stebe
Jessica Scorso

Alternate Member Sitting: Teresa Ike

Alternates: Patrick Kennedy
Julian Stoppelman

Absent: Timothy Bergin

Also Present: Mark Pellegrini, Director
Renata Bertotti, Senior Planner
Karen Logan, Recording Secretary

Time Convened: 7:03 P.M.

NEW BUSINESS:

LA IGLESIA DE DIOS, INC. - Pre-Application Review to discuss a proposed church at 93 Wells Street (a.k.a. 93-97 Wells Street).

MOTION: Since the representatives of this group were not present, Mr. Stebe moved to table the first item and Ms. Scorso seconded. All members voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

SHANTOK MOTORS MANCHESTER, LLC – Pre-Application Review to discuss a proposed used automobile sales and repair business at 22 Spencer Street.

Attorney Steven Penny, the agent for Shantok Motors Manchester, LLC, presented a brief summary of the background and important information regarding this pre-application review. He said 22 Spencer Street is over 0.5 acre in area and rectangular in shape, 150' per side. He noted that an easement from Channing Drive provides property access in addition to the direct access off Spencer Street. The overall layout of the site, a former Jiffy Lube location, will remain fundamentally the same, with substantial cosmetic improvements being planned for the building, which is approximately 1,872 sq. ft. in size. The site is zoned General Business and used automobile sale and repair is a permitted use in this zone subject to special exception approval by

the Commission.

Attorney Penny then introduced Mr. Yost, of New London, Connecticut as the potential applicant. Mr. Yost said he and his wife Kim (who is originally from Manchester) had been in the used auto sales and repair business for 17 years with two locations, currently in the Groton/New London area. They provide 200 services per month in these locations and expect similar business in Manchester. Mr. Yost said he anticipates hiring two or three employees for the business, which will operate from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. He asked the Commission members for their feedback regarding the prospect of this application.

Mr. Prause asked if the easement to Channing Drive would be an entry or an exit. Mr. Yost replied that it could be either an entrance or an exit.

Mr. Pellegrini asked where the display vehicles for sale would be parked. Mr. Yost said he was thinking perhaps five cars along the front of the building and some more along the side.

Mr. Kennedy asked if staff had any regulatory issues needing interpretation by the Commission or if the Commission was only looking at the physical attributes of the site or proposed use. Mr. Pellegrini responded that it was a special exception approval, so the applicant will have to meet the criteria. This is a permitted use, subject to the special exception criteria.

Mr. Kidd asked what criteria were for a special exception, other than traffic, utilities, and neighborhood compatibility. Mr. Yost replied that they were planning to have an 8' landscape buffer between the cars in the front of the property and the street. He continued by pointing out specific landscape locations, as well as the required opaque fence around the perimeter of the building in back.

Mr. Kidd stated that the site is currently an eyesore and from that perspective, it would be attractive to have a viable business there to clean up the site. From the standpoint of neighborhood compatibility, however, he would take the apartment complex next door into consideration.

Ms. Bertotti informed Mr. Yost that the Town of Manchester has new sign regulations that would apply to his business. Mr. Yost replied that he doesn't believe in lots of signs and he didn't think he would have any problems with the new regulations.

Mr. Kidd noted some potential concerns regarding the parking lot and having a lot of cars there. He said he would want to have a conversation during the application process regarding parking and traffic flow.

Mr. Stebe suggested creating a green buffer between the sidewalk and the street which would match the neighboring properties, creating continuity in the neighborhood. He went on to ask what kind of lighting Mr. Yost was planning to have on the site. Mr. Yost said he would install lighting on the roof of the building, as well as a light pole to illuminate the lot and the sidewalk.

Mr. Prause stated that the property needs a lot of work. Mr. Yost replied that he has renovation

plans in mind. Mr. Prause asked how customers would find the business. Mr. Yost replied that his businesses would drive people to the sites.

Mr. Prause then asked what about this specific property Mr. Yost found the most appropriate. Mr. Yost replied that the property was already established as an automotive use; he liked the location and felt he could drive business to the location.

Attorney Penny noted that the chain link fence in the photos was a temporary security fence and not part of the project plan. Mr. Yost thanked the Commission for their time.

LA IGLESIA DE DIOS, INC. - Pre-Application Review to discuss a proposed church at 93 Wells Street (a.k.a. 93-97 Wells Street).

Mr. Neal Tidhar, an attorney in the law office of Bruce E. Bergman, in Hartford, Connecticut spoke on behalf of the potential applicant, La Iglesia De Dios, Inc., which is a small congregation seeking to turn the property at 93-97 Wells Street into a church and housing for the pastor. There are two existing buildings on the property. One is a three-family home of approximately 3,000 sq. ft. and the other is a commercial building, approximately 3,500 sq. ft. in size. The applicant does not seek to build any additions to the existing buildings on the property, other than necessary rehabilitation to make the buildings safe and functional.

The church currently occupies a shared space in East Hartford and seeks to establish its own location. There are approximately 20 active members and the largest attendance anticipated is 25 people. The existing parking lot has 16 parking spaces, which will easily accommodate the required parking spaces. The church has roughly five members who will travel to church as pedestrians and five members who will use private automobiles. The church anticipates transporting the rest of the members in a shuttle van.

The church will be open on Sunday from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., on Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and Monday through Thursday from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. for religious services and religious education.

Mr. Prause asked what the church layout of the lot would be. Mr. Tidhar pointed out the location of the commercial building and the three-family home, noting that the commercial building would be the church and the three-family home would be housing for the pastor. Mr. Prause went on to inquire about the location of parking spaces on the lot. Mr. Tidhar indicated parking areas behind the residential building and in front of the commercial building.

Mr. Prause asked Ms. Bertotti for the current zoning for this property and she responded that it is zoned Residence B. Mr. Prause noted that the church needs a special exception.

Mr. Stoppelman asked about the taxes for this property, stating that the church would not pay taxes as a non-profit, but he anticipated that the residence would be taxable, as two of the apartments would be earning rental income. Mr. Tidhar agreed that this would be the case.

Mr. Stoppelman asked what type of signage was planned for the church and Mr. Tidhar indicated

that there would be a sign on Wells Street.

Ms. Scorso asked if there is potential for growth in the size of the congregation, which would require more parking. Mr. Tidhar replied that the church had held steady at about 20 attendees and did not anticipate any growth.

Ms. Scorso asked if the operating hours were subject to change. Reverend Eric Lopez answered that the hours noted in the presentation are the hours they anticipate being open, but they are flexible, should the need arise to change normal hours.

Ms. Scorso inquired about the impact that traffic flow and activities might have on surrounding properties. Mr. Tidhar noted that the greatest activity would occur on Sundays when other businesses and residential activity is quiet.

Mr. Kennedy suggested it might be beneficial for the church to contract with a nearby business for permission to use their parking area in case of high attendance. Mr. Tidhar agreed that would be a good idea.

Mr. Stoppelman asked if the commercial building is empty. Mr. Tidhar replied that the commercial building is empty and there is one tenant in the three-family home.

Mr. Stebe stated that when the church makes their application, the Commission will be interested to see clearly defined parking spaces, following the defined formulas for both the church and the residences. He noted that having that lot occupied will be a bonus for the neighborhood.

Mr. Kidd agreed with Mr. Stebe that this is a reasonable proposal for this site and it would be compatible with the neighborhood. When the church comes back before the Commission they would need to know about traffic flow, parking, and areas of ingress and egress, he said.

Mr. Pellegrini added that as a history of the property, the Commission should know that it is currently a non-conforming commercial site in a residential zone. The use that would be changing is the place of worship. As far as the classes are concerned, the Commission would need information on floor plans, classrooms and sizes or classes that might be anticipated. He went on to state that there would have to be a public hearing and the neighbors would be notified of the application.

Mr. Kidd asked Mr. Pellegrini if the size of the congregation could be made a condition of the application. Mr. Pellegrini replied that the congregation size would be limited by the building capacity and fire codes. The Commission would need to see the areas of assembly, how many seats there are, and the maximum number of occupants at any given time. Parking would be based on the number of seats available.

Mr. Prause summarized the main concerns, which were parking, site layout, curb cuts and clarification of traffic flow. It would be nice to see which parking would be allocated for the residence and which would be available for church attendees.

Ms. Bertotti added that there are also specific requirements for places of worship regarding screening and landscaping that need to be shown on the plans submitted with the application.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Sports Venue Development, LLC – Lot Line revision (2016-008) – 460 & 480 Hillstown Road

Ms. Bertotti presented an administrative approval of a lot line revision at 460 and 480 Hillstown Road.

Correspondence Regarding Sign Regulations

Ms. Bertotti shared an email from Ms. Mary Fish, 19 Strickland Street, who had four specific requests for the Commission regarding the recently adopted sign regulations. The items she raised were:

1. Hours of illumination for signs
2. Sign maintenance
3. Reduced sign area for wall signs displayed on buildings that are located less than 50' from the road
4. Restrictions on size, type, and illumination on signs in the rear of businesses when they face residential zones

She asked the Commission if these items are something the Commission would like the Planning staff to research further.

Mr. Stoppelman said he would like to know more about the first two items, hours of illumination and maintenance, and whether there was anything the Commission could do to better address the issue.

Mr. Pellegrini responded that the first two items should be researched more. Those, he said, could be problematic when adopting new zoning regulations because the zoning regulations cannot be applied or enforced retroactively. He said that he was not sure how the regulations can be enforced and would need to do more research. He mentioned the property maintenance code and wondered if these items might be covered under the anti-blight ordinance. Regarding the size of the sign relative to the distance from the street and the size of signs on the backs of buildings abutting residential zones, Mr. Pellegrini stated that the department would need to look into those issues as well.

Ms. Scorso agreed that the Commission should investigate what other municipalities have done to deal with these types of issues.

Mr. Kidd said he felt the Commission should revisit the regulations and address these concerns. He wondered if the issue of Item 1 might be handled through a town ordinance. Ms. Bertotti replied that addressing the issue as an ordinance might be a better solution.

Mr. Kidd asked what exactly does abutting mean in regards to zones. Mr. Pellegrini stated that

when the Planning Department uses the term abutting, they mean any lots touching a property on any side. The problem with lighting is that the illumination does not respect property lines.

Mr. Prause stated that he understood the concern about the issue of illumination. He said he was glad Ms. Fish spoke to the Board of Directors. He then asked the Planning Department to further research the issues raised in Ms. Fish's email.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 1, 2016 – Business Meeting

MOTION: Mr. Kidd moved to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2016 Business Meeting as written. Mr. Stebe seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

February 1, 2016 – Workshop

MOTION: Mr. Kidd moved to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2016 Workshop as written. Mr. Stebe seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

February 17, 2016 – Business Meeting

MOTION: Mr. Kidd moved to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2016 Business Meeting as written. Ms. Ike seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

RECEIPT OF NEW APPLICATIONS

JIN YOUNG PARK – Zoning Regulation Amendment (2016-022) – To amend Art. II, Sec. 22.02 and 22.04 to permit health and recreation facilities as a permitted and special exception use in the Special Design Commercial Business Zone.

The Chairman closed the business meeting at 8:13 p.m.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

April 4, 2016
Date

Eric Prause, Chairman

NOTICE: A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THIS BUSINESS MEETING CAN BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.