

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
AUGUST 14, 2017**

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Andy Kidd, Acting Chairman
Michael Stebe, Secretary
Timothy Bergin
Jessica Scorso

Alternates: Julian Stoppelman

Absent: Eric Prause, Chairman
Patrick Kennedy
Teresa Ike

Also Present: Renata Bertotti, Senior Planner
Gary Anderson, Director of Planning &
Economic Development
Katie Williford, Administrative Secretary

The Acting Chairman opened the Public Hearing at 7:01 p.m.

Mr. Kidd said an article in the newspaper incorrectly implied that the pre-application item for Kimlar, LLC would involve a public hearing. He clarified that that was not the case, but if an actual zone change application is later submitted, there would be a public hearing and members of the public could comment on the application at that time.

The Secretary read the legal notice for the application when the call was made.

ARMORY GROUP, LLC – Request a zone change from Residence B to Business III for the rear portion of the property at 330 Main Street, Residence B, Business III, and Design Overlay zones. – Zone Change (2017-054)

Mr. John Gasper, one of owners of Armory Group LLC, 330 Main Street, Manchester, Connecticut, presented the request for a zone change. He explained that the front portion of the property is zoned Business III (“B3”) and the rear portion is zoned Residence B (“RB”), and he would like the entire property to be zoned B3 to match similar properties on Main Street. Many prospective tenants for the property would be interested in portion of the building that is located in RB zone, he said.

Mr. Kidd asked what types of activities Mr. Gasper anticipated on the property. Mr. Gasper replied it could be any type of business, such as massage therapy, dance studios, or yoga studios. Changing the zoning to B3 would help eliminate the need to request variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals each time a new use is proposed, he said.

Mr. Stoppelman asked about the parking at the building. Mr. Gasper displayed a map showing the Armory building and Building B on the rear of the property. He indicated there was parking to the north of Building B and south of the Armory building. He said a substantial portion of

property is parking and there are 62 parking spaces, but there is no parking in between the buildings because it is a pass-through.

Ms. Scorso requested information about the surrounding zoning. Mr. Gasper displayed a map showing the zoning. He stated that the area along Main Street is retail and is zoned B3. Some nearby properties are zoned Residence C (“RC”), he said, but those are off of the road, not right along Main Street. Manchester Memorial Hospital is behind the Armory property and there are three residential homes on Armory Street, Mr. Gasper said.

Mr. Kidd asked whether Mr. Gasper envisioned making improvements to the property. Mr. Gasper replied they are using the existing buildings. He said he had taken out permits to demolish staircases that were unsafe, and he hoped to make aesthetic improvements to the exterior, but there were no plans to add to the building or tear anything down. He noted that the Armory building is a historic structure and he would like to try to keep it that way if possible.

Mr. Kidd asked whether Mr. Gasper had spoken with the three residents to the north of the property. Mr. Gasper said he had only spoken to the son and granddaughter of the former occupant of 25 Armory Street, who has moved out. He had not met the occupants of 19 and 17 Armory Street, he said, but he believed they were renting. Mr. Gasper said he had also spoken to some of his contacts at the hospital.

Mr. Kidd noted that RC zoning would allow some uses beyond just residential, and asked if Mr. Gasper felt that B3 would allow more capabilities that would be more amenable to using the entire property. Mr. Gasper said that was correct.

Mr. Kidd indicated an RC-zoned property at the corner of Guard Street and Haynes Street, with a medical building and associated parking. He said, in his opinion, perhaps that whole block should be the same zone.

Ms. Bertotti said the applicant’s property may lend itself to a change of zoning district because of the Armory building, the size of the property, and the historic use of the property. A portion of the property is already zoned B3, she said, and the property abuts Main Street and the hospital to the back. RC zoning would allow some additional commercial uses, but not necessarily uses that would fit this particular site, she explained. She added that the Armory building has been identified as a potential building to place on the historic asset registry, and a zone change could help to facilitate better use of the building by making it less difficult for the owners to rent it. If a zone change is not granted, most proposed business uses for the back of the property would require a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals, Ms. Bertotti said. She concluded that staff would recommend this zone change.

Mr. Stebe asked whether there is any separation between the B3- and RB-zoned portions of the property. Mr. Gasper replied that there is no separation; the building is one piece. Mr. Stebe said, if the zone change is not approved, the applicant would have to follow different rules for what is permitted on different sides of the building. Mr. Gasper agreed, saying he would have to request a variance every time a new use was proposed. Mr. Stebe said, although RB zones permit a few uses that are the same as B3, in general the RB zone is focused on residential uses, which this building is not suited for. He said he thought it made sense for the entire property to be zoned consistently. Mr. Stebe also referred to the Plan of Conservation and Development and said, when the applicant is able to get tenants into the building, it will be a nice addition to that walkable area.

Mr. Stoppelman inquired about the Design Overlay zoning on the property. Ms. Bertotti explained that the entire property is in the Design Overlay zone. Regardless of whether this application is approved, the Design Overlay zoning will remain on the entire property, she said. In the Design Overlay zone, the changes to the outside of the building would need some sort of review, by either the Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman or by the full Commission. In response to a question from Mr. Stoppelman, Ms. Bertotti clarified that building elevation changes require Design Overlay review, but parking lots and landscaping do not.

Acting Chairman Kidd asked that any member of the public that wished to speak either in favor of or in opposition to this application come forward at this time. No member of the public came forward.

Mr. Bergin moved to close the public hearing. Mr. Stebe seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The Chairman closed the Public Hearing portion of the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

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

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