

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
APRIL 1, 2019**

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Michael Stebe, Acting Chair
Jessica Scorso
Timothy Bergin

Alternate Members Sitting: Julian Stoppelman
Teresa Ike

Absent: Eric Prause, Chairman
Patrick Kennedy, Vice-Chairman
Charles Sabia

Also Present: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning
Matthew Bordeaux, Senior Planner
David Laiuppa, Environmental
Planner/Wetlands Agent

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing at 7:00 P.M. The Secretary read the legal notice when the call was made.

WOODBIDGE MILLS, LLC – Request a special exception per Art. II, Sec. 22.04.10 for multifamily historic mill conversion with 24 units of senior housing at 501 Middle Turnpike East. – Special Exception (2019-007)

Mr. Steve Kowalski, Manager of Woodbridge Mills, resident of Hebron, Connecticut, introduced himself. Mr. Kowalski reported the challenges with the conversion regarding parking, a waterway and the fact that the building is recognized by Manchester as historic but is not recognized at a state level. He explained the issues have been resolved.

Mr. Kowalski noted that the building has been vacant for approximately five years. He explained that the plan aligns with Manchester's goals as it will conserve and restore cultural and historic resources, concentrate development near major transportation corridors, and expand housing.

The design was detailed by Mr. Kowalski, who reported the completed design will offer more than 32,000 sq. ft. including various amenities. He stated the developers plan to recreate the historical look of the 1890s, based on numerous old photos. Mr. Kowalski detailed the areas that will be demolished to allow a green area, which would remove much of the building over the waterway.

Mr. Andrew Bushnell, Professional Engineer and Licensed Land Surveyor, Bushnell Associates, introduced himself. Mr. Bushnell reported that his firm prepared the site plan. He detailed the site and surrounding properties. The water flow of the underground culvert that runs under the building was described. Mr. Bushnell explained the parking, including handicapped parking, the landscaping plan, and the various building improvements and utilities.

Mr. Stebe requested information on the property's wetlands and the discharge from the culverts into the brook.

Mr. Bushnell described the details of the waterway, noting that there may be additional erosion control required. He explained that the discharge will simply flow into the stream at a different location than it does currently, and should have no effects on the neighboring properties. At Mr. Stebe's request, Mr. Bushnell reported who owns the fencing to the rear of the lot.

Mr. Arthur Hall, Architect, 49 Hartford Turnpike, Vernon, introduced himself. Mr. Hall displayed historic photos of the property, and explained the steps that will be taken during the renovation. The plans for the building exterior and property were shown and described in detail, as well as the interior plans for the building. He conveyed the efforts being made to maintain the historical nature of the building and property in addition to the beautification plans.

Mr. Stoppelman inquired about the plans for the tower. He also noticed that some of the apartments will have bathtubs.

Mr. Hall explained that the main purpose of the tower is for historic preservation. He commented that the bathtubs noted on the plans are only preliminary.

Ms. Scorso, referring to the right side elevation design, inquired about what appear to be French doors. Mr. Stebe interjected that those doors are garage doors. Mr. Hall reiterated that, in these preliminary plans, those are the garage doors. The material would most likely be fiberglass with a wood look.

Ms. Scorso asked for clarification about the exterior, part stone and part stucco. Mr. Hall explained that those are the existing conditions. Where stone is on the preliminary plan, there is currently fieldstone.

Mr. Stebe commented that the property is in the Special Design Commercial zone and is a historic building, and the Commission would like to know what materials and colors will be used. He stated that the more detail that is provided, the better, noting that it is difficult to envision at this point.

Mr. Kowalski reported that the details cannot be provided at this time, but the intent is to be as historically accurate in appearance as possible. He and his partner, Pete Bonzani, have debated about the colors. Mr. Kowalski is in favor of restoring the building to its original red color, which can be seen behind the siding. The renderings, he explained, give a much better indication of what the building will look like. He addressed the garage doors, noting that the building is wood construction and the intent would be to have doors that would be similar in character.

Mr. Stoppelman questioned Staff about previous regulations under which apartments could not be on the first floor. Mr. Anderson reminded him that the regulations were changed by the Commission approximately a year ago.

Mr. Bordeaux related that the application is combined; i.e., a preliminary and detailed plan request. He explained that the Commission could approve the preliminary plan and ask for additional information at a detailed plan level at a later date.

Mr. Stebe stated that he would need more detail and more confirmation regarding color, style and windows, though he praised the plan itself. He asked for options from Staff on whether to keep the public hearing open.

Mr. Anderson informed Mr. Stebe that the two options were to leave the public hearing open and request more information from the applicant, or act on the preliminary plan.

Mr. Stebe pointed out that a level of windows will be uncovered and replaced. He is concerned that there is no indication of what the materials and colors would be. In his opinion, the public hearing should be left open. Mr. Stebe questioned how many pieces of the application could be broken out if the public hearing is left open; i.e., what the Commission could act on.

Mr. Bordeaux informed the Commission that the Inland Wetlands Permit could be acted upon. Without making a decision on the preliminary plan, the Commission could request the information and it could be acted upon at the next meeting, he commented.

Mr. Bergin reported that he would be comfortable approving the application as-is, noting that the intent is to restore and uncover original features, which would be a remarkable upgrade.

Mr. Stoppelman stated his opinion was that the Commission should close the public hearing, accepting the preliminary plan. He was interested in what the developer gains from the State designating the building as historical and whether other approvals would be necessary.

Mr. Kowalski explained that the advantage is that the property would be eligible for historical tax credits, which would help bring the plan to fruition. He said that with the designation, certain windows would need to be installed, giving the appearance of the original windows while being energy efficient. Additionally, there is a set of criteria that must be followed when restoring the building to a given time period.

Mr. Anderson interjected information about the affordability of the units. The Historic Mill Conversion regulation requires that 10% of the units in the mill conversion be affordable, he explained, with the remainder market rate apartments.

There were no members of the public to speak.

Mr. Peter Bonzani, 58 Watrous Road, Bolton, Connecticut, introduced himself and reported that he is one of the owners of the Woodbridge Mills project. He agreed that the Commission raises valid concerns, but assured the members that the team is very sensitive to the fact that it is a prominent building in town. The intention, he assured them, is to bring the building back to what is seen in the old photos from 100 years ago. Mr. Bonzani assured the Commission that the applicants are willing to submit color choices as well as other details at a later date.

Mr. Stebe requested clarification from Mr. Bordeaux about splitting the approval, given the published notice's wording. Mr. Bordeaux explained in detail.

Mr. Anderson concurred with Mr. Bordeaux's detailed explanation.

Ms. Ike asked Staff whether there were any outstanding comments.

Mr. Bordeaux reported that the only outstanding comments were from the Engineering Division, which he then reported. He noted that the Engineering Division has agreed to make a recommendation that the Commission make a decision on the item at a detailed plan level, and additional information could be determined at a later date.

Mr. Stebe questioned Mr. Bushnell about particulars in the inland wetlands permit application, which Mr. Bushnell detailed. He sought Mr. Kowalski's input on what the best course of action would be for all parties.

Mr. Anderson mentioned one more option, which would be for the Commission to act on the combined application. There is a regulation for a minor modification to approved detailed plans, and in his opinion, the colors and materials would be a minor modification, which would be handled by the Chair and the Director of Planning.

Mr. Kowalski stated that final details are not difficult to present, and noted that it would be best for the developers to obtain the approval.

Mr. Stoppelman questioned Mr. Laiuppa about his opinion regarding the wetlands permit. Mr. Laiuppa responded that there will be minimal impact.

MOTION: Mr. Bergin moved to close the public hearing. Mr. Stoppelman seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The Acting Chairman closed the public hearing at 8:40 P.M.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

April 17, 2019

Date

Eric Prause, Chairman

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