



Village of New Paltz Planning Board
Regular Meeting of Tuesday August 29, 2017
Village Hall-7:00p.m.
APPROVED MINUTES

Present: Michael Zierler, Chair
John Litton
Denis McGee
Rich Souto
Rich Steffens

Also Present: Rick Golden, Planning Board Attorney
William Murray, Village Board Liaison
David Gilmour, AICP, Municipal Planner
Christena Carp, Planning and Zoning Secretary

Welcome

7:01-7:02

John Litton reviews the Agenda.

New Application

Site Plan Amendment

Driveway Reconfiguration

PB17-25, 64 Plains Road

Applicant: Discovery Inst./Crocitto

Zoning District: R-2

SBL: 86.41-1-16.3

Mr. Steffens moves to set the Public Hearing for PB17-25, 64 Plains Road, Crocitto for September 19, 2017 at 7 p.m. Mr. McGee seconds. Chair Zierler is recused. 4 ayes. Motion carried

Ongoing Applications

Special Use Permit/Site Plan

Potential determinations regarding Part 3 of the Environmental Assessment Form

PB 16-02: 87-91 & 93 N Chestnut

Applicant: Net Zero Development LLC/David Shepler

Zoning District: NBR

SBL: 86.26-1-14.110, 86.26-1-14.210

7:03-7:46

Chair Zierler explains that, based on tonight's discussion, the Board will not be voting tonight on a

determination of significance. Rather, that decision will be drafted by the Planning Board Attorney based on the comments of Board members this evening, and will be voted on at the Meeting on Tuesday, September 5, 2017.

Chair Zierler reviews the four areas of impact as previously noted by the Board for having moderate to large adverse environmental impacts and asks each Board Member to discuss their decision.

Chair Zierler asks for input regarding Aesthetic Resources and Visual Character.

Mr. Souto notes that it is hard to segregate visual character and aesthetic resources, so he considered them together. Mr. Souto relates that he attended both formal site visits and informally stopped by the project site regularly. Mr. Souto states that he considered the visual analysis presented by the applicant, the response from Planner Gilmour and the research by experts hired by the Planning Board. Mr. Souto explains that although the proposed plan is visible from several locations that are considered to be special resources in our community, the visibility is not a heavy impact - even in the winter season. Mr. Souto notes that the applicant mitigated the mass of the building by reducing the height, footprint and distance from Mulberry Street. Mr. Souto summarizes that the site plan addresses surrounding resources in a positive way and not a significantly adverse way.

Mr. Steffens observes that there has to be an impact when a building of this size is constructed, but rhetorically asks if it is significant enough to cause harm. Mr. Steffens relates that from hearing public testimony, developer presentations and expert research, he has decided that although there is an impact, it is not significant.

Mr. Litton notes that the scale of the project has been reduced and features such as plazas, landscaping and benches have been added that enhance community character. Mr. Litton observes, however, that although the height and mass have been reduced, the mass remains imposing and has a significant impact on aesthetic resources and visual character. Mr. Litton adds that the impact will last for as long as the building exists.

Chair Zierler observes that the overall mass looms large against surrounding resources and it will have a significant impact on the aesthetic resources and visual character of the Rail Trail. Chair Zierler adds that the impact will last for as long as the building exists.

Mr. McGee notes that he runs on the Rail Trail daily, has visited the project site a number of times and has taken photos documenting the buildings adjacent to the Rail Trail that are similar in size. Mr. McGee has found that little to no impact will occur in terms of aesthetic resources and visual character. Mr. McGee adds that the applicant has reduced the building length by 11%, reduced the building mass by 10%, reduced the building height by 5%, reduced the retail floor space and added a larger community space that brings the building more into scale with its surroundings.

Chair Zierler asks Board Members to speak about the Transportation and Traffic Impact.

Mr. Steffens observes that you can't add cars to Route 32 and not have an impact. However, Mr. Steffens notes that he does not find the impact on transportation or traffic to be significant.

Mr. Litton does not think that further study is required and notes that there is little to no impact on

transportation and traffic.

Chair Zierler notes that Alta Planning & Design completed a thorough review and noted that most of the areas of concern were mitigated. Chair Zierler does not feel that transportation and traffic impacts will be significant.

Mr. McGee notes that after reviewing the Maser Traffic Impact Study and the Alta Planning & Design Report, he feels there will be little to no impact on transportation and traffic.

Mr. Souto feels the transportation and traffic concerns were adequately mitigated. Mr. Souto refers specifically to the Trip Generation report and Parking Analysis report with data provided by Maser and confirmed by Alta Planning & Design. Mr. Souto recommends that the Town and Village revisit traffic issues separately from this project.

Chair Zierler asks Board Members to speak about Consistency with Community Plans and Consistency with Community Character.

Mr. Litton speaks solely about consistency with community character. Mr. Litton finds the project to have significant impact due to its height and mass. Mr. Litton adds that he would applaud efforts to reduce the mass of the building.

Chair Zierler addresses both consistency with community plans and consistency with community character. Chair Zierler notes that the project now provides a landscaped buffer around the parking lot that complies with NBR zoning; has reduced the height of the building and stairway and elevator shaft and has reduced the footprint; provides an alternative design for consideration that eliminates the rooftop deck; and repositions the building to create space that is utilized for a green community area along Mulberry Street. However, Chair Zierler observes, the building is more massive than any building in the area and will have a significant adverse environmental impact on community character and is inconsistent with community plans because it is taller than is recommended in any such plans. Chair Zierler adds that the impact will last for as long as the building exists.

Mr. McGee addresses both consistency with community plans and consistency with community character. Mr. McGee acknowledges that the building height is taller than surrounding structures as well as other buildings one might see in New Paltz. Mr. McGee notes, however, that the project complies with the NBR Zoning and is consistent with community plans. Mr. McGee references the thorough report provided by Planner Gilmour and notes that since this is the first building to be presented in the new NBR District, it is obvious that there are no other buildings to compare it with. Mr. McGee agrees with Planner Gilmour's observation that Net-Zero could be an architectural landmark for those entering New Paltz from the north. Mr. McGee observes that the view coming into New Paltz as one is heading south on Route 32 is the pits and is not indicative of how nice New Paltz is. Mr. McGee maintains that Net-Zero could be a real gateway entrance to New Paltz as well as an architectural landmark. Mr. McGee believes the project is consistent with community plans and community character and has little to no impact.

Mr. Souto addresses both consistency with community plans and consistency with community character. Mr. Souto observes that it is clear that the current landscape of the NBR District lacks aesthetic resources or appeal, let alone alignment with community plans. Mr. Souto notes that he

carefully reviewed the zoning for the NBR District and is aware that the project does not conflict with any code for the NBR District. Mr. Souto acknowledges that the primary concern is that the building is relatively oversized and conflicts with an historic impression of New Paltz. However, Mr. Souto observes, the project meets quite a few objectives for the Village by adding significant residential rental units to the community. Mr. Souto notes that there is a huge demand from seniors and people priced out of housing in the Village for residential rental units. By addressing this issue, the project is consistent with community plans. Mr. Souto observes that the project has attractive common spaces made available for community use.

Mr. Steffens notes that the NBR Zoning is relatively new zoning that was put into effect with little or no public controversy. Mr. Steffens adds that the project conforms to the NBR District Zoning and that the applicant did an admirable job integrating his project with the Rail Trail. Mr. Steffens observes that although the project is formidable in size, it is in keeping with community plans.

Mr. Litton notes that the project is not out of character with community plans and adds positively to the Village.

Chair Zierler asks for summaries from the Board.

Mr. McGee recommends a Negative Declaration based on a hard look at the 4 identified areas of impact - Visual Character and Aesthetic Resources, Consistency with Community Plans, Consistency with Community Character and Traffic and Transportation. Mr. McGee notes that it was a difficult and painstaking conclusion based on research of public documents. Mr. McGee observes that the project was opposed mostly due to the scale and not the project itself. Mr. McGee believes the four identified areas of impact were mitigated to the greatest extent practicable.

Mr. Souto appreciates the opportunity to have such a thorough and lengthy process due to the magnitude of the decision. Mr. Souto acknowledges the applicant's responsiveness to the concerns of the Board and the value inherent in the reports produced by experts. Mr. Souto notes that there will be further input to be received during site plan review.

Mr. Steffens supports a Negative Declaration and notes that the process still has a long way to go after SEQRA ends and the site plan review continues.

Chair Zierler believes that only the impacts on transportation and traffic have been sufficiently mitigated. Chair Zierler notes that he has asked the applicant to try various means of changing the building to bring it more into scale with the community.

Mr. Litton has no additional comments.

Chair Zierler notes that Attorney Golden will prepare a Decision based on the Board's discussion for review at the 9/5/17 Meeting. Chair Zierler thanks Planning Board Members for their rigorous preparation for and concise presentations at the Meeting and the Public for listening intently and for caring about what happens in their community.

Mr. Souto voices concerns over whether the Decision requires a lengthy review and, if so, should it be delayed until the second Meeting in September.

Attorney Golden notes that the 2 or 3 page Decision will either be a Negative Declaration or a Positive Declaration and will include a statement reflecting the rationale used in the Board's decision making process at tonight's Meeting.

The Board decides to continue with their plans to review the Decision at the 9/5/17 Meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. Steffens moves to adjourn. Mr. McGee seconds. 5 ayes. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourns at 7:47 p.m.

Respectively submitted by,

Christena Carp
Planning and Zoning Secretary