



City of Lowell - Planning Board

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 1, 2021 6:30 p.m.

Conducted via Zoom

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For a recording of the meeting, visit www.ltc.org

Members Present

Thomas Linnehan, Chairman
Gerard Frechette, Vice Chairman
Richard Lockhart, Member
Robert Malavich, Member
Caleb Cheng, Member
Sinead Gallivan, Associate Member

Members Absent

Russell Pandres, Associate Member

Others Present

Fran Cigliano, Senior Planner
Jess Wilson, Associate Planner
Dylan Ricker, Assistant Planner

A quorum of the Board was present. Chairman Linnehan called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

I. Minutes for Approval

February 18, 2021

G. Frechette noted that in the discussion for 60 Fletcher Street, he is recorded as having asked about vertical granite curbing and sidewalks, but that T. Linnehan had actually discussed this. Later in the minutes, David Gray is recorded as having discussed 60 Fletcher Street, but Alan Kazanjian was actually speaking.

II. Continued Business

Special Permit and Site Plan Review: 60 Fletcher Street 01854

Kazanjian Enterprises has applied for Site Plan Review and Special Permit approval to rehabilitate the existing structure at 60 Fletcher St. and convert it into a bank and office building. The property is in the Urban Neighborhood Mixed-Use (UMU) zoning district and the Downtown Lowell Historic District. The conversion requires Site Plan Review approval per Section 11.4 to modify a parking lot with more than fourteen (14) parking spaces, and Special Permit approval per Section 12.4.g(2) for the proposed drive-through teller.

On Behalf:

Brian Milisci, Applicant's Representative

B. Milisci said that the applicant has reached out to a traffic consultant. They do not have any additional information tonight, so they are requesting a continuance to give the traffic consultant more time.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

G. Frechette said that we've handled this different ways before. He is inclined to have a third party engineer hired rather than one from the client. We may get recommendations from the contractor that make sense to the Board. He is more inclined to have the city select a traffic engineer. They could provide the report, and then have a peer review.

T. Linnehan said it would become a big intersection because of the Lord Overpass project. It is the gateway to the Acre. He noted that it will be challenging to get a true traffic count with COVID and with the construction going on in the area.

R. Lockhart agreed with G. Frechette's assessment. He would be in favor of evaluating the applicant's information from their engineering firm and reacting to that. That is a good starting point. They will be paying particular attention to the drive-through teller, and pedestrian safety and access. He would be willing to listen to what they have to offer first.

R. Malavich agreed with R. Lockhart on looking at what the applicant's traffic engineer comes up with. These are people who do this every day of the week. They will be calculating based on number of people in the building, peak hours, etc.

C. Cheng concurs with the rest of the board. Good to get objective look. Challenge not having a traffic engineer at the moment. Critical to look at pedestrian safety. This is part of the site plan review criteria. He is particularly interested in the pathway to Dunkin Donuts knowing that will be a major route from the subject property.

S. Gallivan said it is a wonderful opportunity for the building to get redeveloped. How will the facades be improved? Also the main entry is on Dutton Street, but how are you activating streetscape on Fletcher Street?

B. Milisci said that he does not have a presentation available. He will talk to the architect and get an answer. We will continue with hiring the consultant, and coming up with a report.

G. Frechette noted that they may also be requesting a peer review. This is unusual because we don't have a traffic engineer. There is a lot going on at that intersection. We may be fine with their recommendations, but they do look through a certain lens since they are hired by the applicant.

Motion:

R. Linnehan motioned and R. Malavich seconded the motion to continue the hearing to the April 5 Planning Board meeting. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0). S. Gallivan recused herself from the vote.

III. New Business

Proposed Zoning Amendment: 4 Wiggin Street & 153 Willie Street 01854

The applicant is seeking to amend "The Code of Ordinances City of Lowell, Massachusetts," with respect to Chapter 290, thereof entitled "Lowell Zoning Code" by extending the existing UMF zoning district (Urban Neighborhood Multifamily) to include an area presently zoned LI (Light Industrial) at 4 Wiggin Street and 153 Willie Street.

On Behalf:

George Theodorou, Applicant's Attorney

G. Theodorou explained the context of the proposed rezone. The goal is to develop underutilized parcels and make them usable residences. This will provide additional tax revenue for the city.

T. Linnehan clarified a question regarding the slope issue at the property.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

R. Lockhart said that the proposal makes sense. The property in question has no value in the LI zone. Extending the zone to the UMF makes sense and will turn the area into a residential community.

R. Malavich said that he agrees with R. Lockhart's comments. He thinks that this project is consistent with the Acre's redevelopment plan and will improve the Acre by offering new housing; hopefully affordable housing.

C. Cheng asked if the idea was to consolidate the lot, or remain separate lots.

G. Theodorou said that the lots would be combined and the whole lot would be developed. C. Cheng thinks this is a good idea. He is in support of the zoning change.

S. Gallivan said that redeveloping the parcel would be an improvement to the site and to the street.

G. Frechette said the LI zoning district has historically been valuable in the city. However, in the zoning map, it's interesting to look at this area. It looks like a piece of a puzzle. Changing to residential appears to be very logical. Looking at potential use conflicts down the road - what's nice with this is that Willie St is the buffer between a change from LI to residential zones. He think it's logical and certainly makes sense. He appreciates what we got from Joe Giniewicz. Meets the spirit of the Acre Plan. Certainly in favor.

T. Linnehan said that over the years, we have discussed the LI zoning district because we don't have a lot of it in the city. This piece of land has been in tax title since 1939. He thinks it would be good for the zoning change.

R. Lockhart said the LI zone is not just manufacturing - it can be open auto repair garages. The lot itself does not look like it is meant for these types of uses. It would be better for residential.

Motion:

G. Frechette motioned to issue a positive recommendation to the City Council endorsing the proposed zoning change at 4 Wiggin St & 153 Willie St from the LI zoning district to the UMF zoning district for the following reasons:

1. The proposed zoning amendment meets goals and objectives of the Acre Urban Revitalization and Development Plan;
2. The proposed zoning amendment maintains the intent of the zoning in the surrounding area; and
3. The subject property is a logical extension of the UMF zoning district.

The motion was seconded by R. Lockhart and passed unanimously, (5-0).

IV. Other Business

V. Notices

VI. Further Comments from Planning Board Members

R. Lockhart said that the 'Doors Open Lowell' event, which would ordinarily be held in May, is cancelled due to COVID for the second year in a row. They identified 24 new markers to be developed/installed as Downtown Lowell historic building markers; to date, there's 44. The Historic Board is doing well on social media. The Facebook page has over 5,000 likes, and individual posts have likes in the 1000s. This is an indication of the level of interest people have in the history of the city.

G. Frechette discussed Rourke Bridge planning updates.

S. Gallivan met with the Community Preservation Committee on February 11. They elected a chair, Adam Baacke, and a Vice Chair, Eric Slagle. The schedule for this year's applications will be different than for years going forward. The City has to publish a plan before applications can be accepted. The next meeting is on March 25. There is over \$1 million in the account. Projects must contribute to the areas of historic preservation, open space, and affordable housing. She is looking forward to reviewing applications.

VII. Adjournment

G. Frechette motioned and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0). The time was 7:16PM.