PLANNING BOARD

February 6, 2019

Minutes to the Meeting

Held in the Planning Dept., 12 Methuen St., 1st floor, Lawrence, MA

Upon a Roll Call the following members were present.

Members Present:

Tamar Kotelchuck, Chair
Antonio Reynoso
Brenda Rozzi
David Quarrell

Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Mr. Quarrell, the members unanimously voted to open the public meeting.

Fulton Street Corp. Patria Aristy
Re: 264 Lowell St.

A request to continue was received.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Mr. Quarrell, the members unanimously voted to continue this matter until the next meeting.

Gamal Salama
Re: 582-590 Essex St.

The applicant was accompanied by Mr. Marcos Devers.

Mr. Devers stressed that Mr. Salama was a great investor in the City. He told of the location being at the corner of Essex St. and Broadway. The first floor currently houses businesses such as a fashion store and a church. The two upper floors are empty. He said that it is a Type 3-A construction type building and is sprinklered.
Mr. Devers told the members that a site visit was conducted last week with Department Heads and the Land Use Planner. Twenty eight apartments are proposed with the potential of acquiring White Street Paint Store for further improvements. Mr. Salma owns 387 Methuen St. which is adjacent. That project is almost completed according to Mr. Devers. A lease for parking spaces with City of Lawrence has been negotiated and the Zoning Board awarded a variance to Mr. Salama.

Mr. Reynoso noted that this matter was before them for a Special Permit.

Mr. McCarthy stated that a Special Permit is needed for the multi-family use.

Mr. Reynoso asked if the parking lot that will be used was located on Methuen St. or Franklin St.

Mr. Salama stated that it was on the corner in front of 7 Franklin St. Eighteen spaces are available.

Mr. McCarthy stated that this is Mr. Salama’s third project in the same vicinity, noting 525 Essex St. and 387 Methuen St. and now this one. He told of the agreement that the developers of PAC 5 has to make improvements to the lot across the street. The city does not maintain that lot and the idea is to put a full-time person in it to man it.

Mr. Salama pointed the lot out on the plan.

Ms. Kotelchuck asked if there was a lease.

Mr. McCarthy said yes, for 525 Essex Street. He said that the City supports this project. The smaller unit on the second floor at a size of 400 square feet will be used by the superintendent of the building. The smaller unit on the third floor was thought to be too small however. He suggested that perhaps Unit #1 on the third floor could be turned into a two bedroom.

Mr. Salama stated that his son would like to use this unit.

Ms. Kotelchuck stated that it is not about one person but rather about the size of units that we would like to see within the City.

Mr. Salama stated that we need somewhere to stay when we come up from New York.

Mr. McCarthy stated that one of the stairwells needs to be reoriented into the hallway.

It was pointed out that this egress opens up to Methuen St.

Mr. McCarthy also stated that there needs to be cameras that are hooked up to the Police Dept. Another condition suggested by Mr. McCarthy was that the applicant must work with the Water Commissioner to come up with a plan so that the roof runoff will appropriately disperse into an appropriate separated system.

Ms. Kotelchuck stated that she had a concern with a number of the units being quite small. She felt that they should be reconfigured or combined with other units to increase the number of bedrooms.
Mr. Salama stated that there is 14,000 square feet per floor. He said that he needs to have a certain number of units in order to make a profit. He noted that 525 Essex St. has 6000 square feet per floor and has 8 apartments each at a size of 500 square feet.

Mr. Devers stated that when the demolition of the insides starts to take place then there may be more space to increase the size of the units.

Mr. Salama said that there are 14” to 15” high ceilings.

Mr. Devers stated that the cubic feet contributes to the comfort of the apartment. He reiterated that these are preliminary building plans.

Ms. Kotelchuck expressed concern that there is no assurance that the units may become larger.

Mr. Quarrell asked when is the inside going to be demolished as it is wide open space now.

Mr. Salama explained that there are really four buildings being joined together.

Mr. McCarthy noted that there is a wall that encases the entire four buildings together.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Reynoso asked if there were going to be any trees.

Mr. Quarrell felt that there was no room.

Mr. Salama stated that he was waiting for the Methuen St. project to be done which would include sidewalks, etc.

Mr. Reynoso asked about the lighting.

Mr. Salama stated that there are two flood lights on each side of 387 Methuen St. so the entire lot will be lit up as well as the sides of the building.

Mr. Reynoso stated that he has seen the change on the corner.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Mr. Quarrell, the members unanimously voted to open the public hearing.

There were no speakers.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Mr. Quarrell, the members unanimously voted to close the public hearing.

Ms. Kotelchuck asked what was the pleasure of the Board. She said that she remained concerned about the size of the units.

Mr. Reynoso suggested that perhaps the applicant should come back with a revised plan that shows a reconfiguration.
Mr. Devers stated that the design could be reconfigured with an analysis of the code in order to satisfy the Board.

Mr. Salama stated that parking is always the biggest concern. He said that this building is built with steel and if smaller units are designed then he would need another floor and thus would need more parking.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Reynoso asked how much the rent was.

Mr. Salama stated that he had no idea yet. However, he wants nice floors, cabinets, kitchen tops, etc.

Mr. Salama’s son noted that with a nicer product a different clientele is sought. He said that the mortgage has to be met.

Mr. Reynoso asked how soon Mr. Salama would like this project to start.

Mr. Salama stated “yesterday” as the 7 Franklin St. project will finish soon with 300 units.

Ms. Kotelchuck stated that she was hearing that the number of units will not be reduced but there may be some limited opportunities to reduce or the plan will remain as is.

Mr. Reynoso told Mr. Salama that Ms. Kotelchuck had a point about the size of the unit. There are two one bedroom units that are less than 500 square feet.

McCarthy stated that the windows are enormous and there is a lot of natural light. They are approximately 8’ long. He said that while he understands the square footage concern, the natural light availability mitigates that concern.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Mr. Quarrell, the members unanimously voted to approve the request subject to the following four conditions:

1. One of the stairwells that egresses to Methuen St. will need to be reoriented into the hallway.
2. A Security Plan including video cameras placed in strategic locations shall be designed and implemented, with review by and input from the Lawrence Police Department.
3. The applicant will work with the Water Commissioner regarding the roof runoff that will be dispersed into an appropriate separated system.
4. Every effort will be made to increase the size of the units.
Zoning Amendment

The following zoning amendment was offered for consideration of the Board.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

In accordance with M.G.L. Chap. 40 Sec. 5, notice is hereby given that the Lawrence Planning Bd. will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, February 6, 2019 at 7:00PM in the Office of Planning and Development, 12 Methuen St., 1st floor, Lawrence, MA to consider a proposed amendment that would affect the Use Table Sec. 29-11 by revising it to allow “Telephone exchange building, electric substation, or other similar public utility facility” in a B-3 zoning district by Special Permit from the Board of Appeals with Site Plan Review by the Planning Board.

In addition, the proposed amendment would delete the following Section 29-23(q), General or specific provisions for “Telephone exchange building, electric substation, or other similar public facility”:

Section 29-23. General or specific provisions

(q) Public transit passenger stations, telephone exchange buildings, electrical substation, and other similar public facilities

(1) There is an acceptable buffer, either fenced or landscaped, around all boundaries of the premises.
(2) All trucks and delivery vehicles shall be out of view and screened from abutting properties.

And insert in its place and stead the following new Section 29-23(q), General or specific provisions for “Telephone exchange building, electric substation, or other similar public utility facility”:

Section 29-23. General or specific provisions

(q) Public transit passenger stations, telephone exchange buildings, electrical substation, and other similar public utility facilities

(1) There is an acceptable buffer, either fenced, landscaped or appropriate enclosure wall, around all boundaries of the premises. the proposed buffer around the boundaries of the premises shall take into account the character of the neighborhood and shall be subject to review by the Planning Board under Section 29-27.
(2) All trucks and delivery vehicles shall be out of view and screened from abutting properties.

Atty. Marisa L. Pizzi, Senior Counsel, New England Siting and Permitting, National Grid was present to address the Board. She was accompanied by Jenny Saenz, Lead Project Engineer, Andrew Hruby, Substation Engineer, Shimat Kamal, Community & Customer Management.

Atty. Pizzi explained that National Grid was proposing this amendment before the Planning Board to seek support of the rebuild of a substation on Common St. She presented an overview of why it was needed and why the zoning amendment was needed.

Pictures were distributed.

Atty. Pizzi stated that 316 Common St. is currently under agreement and they expect to close at the end of March assuming this zoning amendment passes. The existing substation has been there since the 1920’s and there is a need to increase the capacity. She explained the key benefits which are detailed on the attached slide presentation.

Insert handout.
Atty. Pizzi told the members that a meeting was held to discuss the characteristics of the wall that will surround the substation.

Mr. McCarthy told the members that the City endorses this amendment. He said that the Planning Dept. worked with National Grid to draft the wording. It was before the Ordinance Committee last month. He explained that the existing substation is grandfathered since it was constructed in the 1920’s. With new building codes and Fire codes, thought is that it is outdated and not safe. There are other substations on West St., South Canal St. and Lawrence St.

Ms. Kotelchuck stated that the change in zoning will be to make them legal in B-3 zoning districts across the Board for similar projects.

Mrs. Doherty told the members that they still need a Special Permit.

Ms. Kotelchuck asked if there is any restriction on what can be built near a substation.

Ms. Saenz stated no and she referred to the benefits that were explained in the handout.

Mr. McCarthy stated that this amendment as not to service only National Grid but rather it could be any public facility.

Mr. Reynoso asked what happens if something goes wrong.

Atty. Pizzi stated that there is a control center that monitors the substation 24 hours a day. She felt that it was a huge improvement over what is currently there. She also noted that routine maintenance will occur when needed.

Ms. Kotelchuck asked Mr. McCarthy if the City wants this use downtown.

Mr. McCarthy answered yes as it is a great benefit to modernize the 1920 existing substation.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Ms. Rozzi, the members unanimously voted to open the public hearing.

There were no speakers.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Mr. Quarrell, the members unanimously voted to close the public hearing.

Mr. Reynoso noted that he still was not comfortable.

Mr. McCarthy compared the safety of it to a cell phone. He noted that we all use electricity.

Ms. Rozzi stated that she was in favor of the upgrade.

Mr. Quarrell agreed.
Ms. Kotelchuck stated that she had no concerns with this particular substation on Common St. however, she was concerned with the amendment opening it up for other projects across the B-3 zoning district.

Atty. Pizzi stated that the research was done for other options and locations to relocate this one but this is the only option at this time. She stressed that the existing substation needs to be replaced.

*Upon a motion made by Mr. Quarrell and seconded by Ms. Rozzi and upon a roll call, the members voted to recommend the approval of the aforementioned amendment to the City Council.*

C & D Signs, Inc. dba Metro Sign and Awning, Brian A. Chipman, President  
Re: 210-500 Merrimack St.

Ms. Gerrilyn Darcy, Senior Vice President of Lupoli Companies was present to address the Board. A comprehensive sign package had been sent to the Board members as part of the application.

Ms. Darcy explained how the complex has grown since 2003 and now comprises the entire block from Route 495 to South Union Street. She noted that one of the challengers is people struggling to find a particular business, medical facility and the like. She stated that they are trying to holistically tie in the entire parcel for continuity and ease of use for visitors. She said the internal marketing and design team have developed a brand for continuity of the wayfinding signs.

Ms. Elaina Berry and Mr. Mark Conserva, Metro Signs were also present.

Mr. Conserva explained the handout. Three monument/free standing signs are replacing four existing monument/freestanding signs. All will have a brand with the accent of the River with building numbers and tenant slots. Only the copy will light. He said that the accent piece will tie together with all the others.

Mr. Conserva explained the building address wraps. He noted that each building is branded with a specific color.

Ms. Darcy stated that typically a person’s vision goes up thus the placement of the wraps.

Further explanation took place on the signage package.

Mr. Reynoso stated that he recently visited 354 Merrimack St. and had a hard time finding the correct location. He said that it would be great to improve a way to find certain addresses within the complex.

Ms. Darcy pointed out that the signage and locations will also tie into a web-mobile application. She said that there is also a whole new signage package for the inside of the buildings as well.

Ms. Darcy stated that the east side monument will create a front entrance into the City.

Ms. Berry pointed out the stone on the monument signs will tie them together as well, specifically #14 and #15.
Mr. McCarthy stated that the City feels that this is an improvement as the lighting will not be as bright as the existing monument signs noting that there are residential homes across the street.

Mr. McCarthy noted that he along with Ms. Parks and Ms. Doherty walked the site. He said once on-site the size of the signs is diminished.

Mr. Reynoso felt that this was a great idea.

Ms. Kotelchuck expressed concern with the signage at the South Union Street location as well as the building wrap. She said that no other mill residential building has a back lit wrap.

Ms. Darcy stated that she understood, however, the 210 Merrimack St. building needs to be identified. She noted that this building has a historic restriction and it needs Massachusetts Historic approval but they wanted to make sure that the City was on Board.

Discussion ensued.

Ms. Kotelchuck stated that the wayfinding makes sense but she would be happier without the signage at the South Union St. corner.

Ms. Darcy stated that she did not feel that it would minimize its historic integrity and she stressed that she is always cognizant of the historic importance of the building.

Ms. Rozzi stated that she liked the project.

Mr. Reynoso agreed and felt that it was making the area better.

Mr. McCarthy stated that the number came into our discussion at the Planning Dept. and the aesthetics versus the functionality. It was determined that it would be easier on the eye than just a number on a building.

"Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Ms. Rozzi, the members unanimously voted to open the public hearing."

There were no speakers.

"Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Ms. Rozzi, the members unanimously voted to close the public hearing."

"Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Mr. Quarrell, the members unanimously voted to approve the Special Permit for the signage package as presented."

**BOARD BUSINESS**

*Minutes*

Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Ms. Rozzi, the members unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the October 15, 2017 meeting.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Quarrell and seconded by Ms. Rozzi, the members unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the January 2, 2019 meeting.
With no more business before the Board,

_Upon a motion made by Mr. Reynoso and seconded by Ms. Rozzi, the members unanimously voted to adjourn this meeting continuing the matters as so noted._

Minutes approved _April 3, 2019_