

Town of Plainfield, Vermont
Development Review Board Meeting
December 9, 2020
Approved Minutes

PRESENT: Janice Walrafen (DRB Chair), Sarah Albert (DRB Clerk), Alice Sky (DRB Member), Elaine Parker (DRB Member), James Volz (DRB Member), Karen Storey (Zoning Administrator), Ben Davis-Noe (Owner, 50 High Street), Sean Lee (Abutting Resident, 34 High Street), Cam Wrisley (Abutting Business, 70 High Street, present during site visit only), Timothy Morris (Informational Meeting on Mancini/Country Club of Barre), Alexandra Thayer (Select Board), and Cindy Wyckoff (Minutes Recorder).

NOTE: At 2:30pm, site visit participants assembled at 50 High Street to supplement information regarding proposed changes to the multi-dwelling building. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, participants practiced social distancing and wore masks. At 7:00pm, the DRB convened its meeting/public hearing remotely via Zoom to take public comments on the application.

Janice Walrafen called the meeting to order at 7:06pm.

AGENDA

- Call Meeting to Order
Review Agenda; Make any Adjustments
- Hearing 2020-19 CU Bristol Holdings 5, LLC Ben Davis-Noe for Multi-Dwelling Unit and Historic Site Review for Property Located at 50 High Street
- Timothy Morris from Chase and Chase Informational Meeting on Mancini/Country Club of Barre Boundary Line Adjustment
- Review and Adopt Meeting Minutes of November 11, 2020
- DRB Report for the Town
- DRB Budget Discussion
- DRB Zoom Account
- *Times Argus* Hearing Notice Payment
- Adjourn

HEARING 2020-19 CU BRISTOL HOLDINGS 5, LLC BEN DAVIS-NOE FOR MULTI-DWELLING UNIT AND HISTORIC SITE REVIEW FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 50 HIGH STREET

- Walrafen called the hearing to order and administered an evidence affirmation oath, to which Sean Lee and Ben Davis-Noe affirmed.
- Zoning Administrator Karen Storey provided a review of the permit application, noting that it requires a conditional use hearing based on the building's designation as an historic site in the Village District. New owner Ben Davis-Noe is requesting a change in use from the current duplex to a triplex. Storey noted that the detached garage is also an historic building. Regarding the parking

requirement of 4.5 spaces for the proposed triplex, Sarah Albert stated her preference that the space in front of the house not be part of the parking arrangement. Abutting neighbor Sean Lee added that the front parking situation is typical of the general objections he and his wife have to the historic character of the building being changed dramatically by it being turned into a triplex for maximum occupancy and profit. Davis-Noe responded that the modifications being proposed do not represent a significant change from its current duplex status. Storey noted that historically, even though it is a duplex, it has largely been a single-family home for 50+ years. Walrafen noted that since there are no significant historical changes to the exterior of the building, there is no need for further review of that aspect of the hearing.

- Walrafen began a review of the provisions of Section 2.8 Conditional Uses in the Town of Plainfield Zoning Regulations. Alice Sky voiced her concern regarding the lack of a plan for storm water management, noting that accommodating the expanded parking requirement might result in the increase of impermeable surfaces and thus an increase in runoff onto Route 2 and into the Winooski River. Sky suggested possibly digging swales or creating rain gardens as a means of managing runoff. Elaine Parker asked how such a plan might fit in with the idea of an historical building and what should be expected from the owner. James Volz noted that leaving the parking surfaces in their existing grass state would avoid having to make any changes that would increase runoff, to which Davis-Noe stated would be acceptable. Lee noted that parking on grass turns it into dirt. Given that the area of discussion was centering on parking, Walrafen screen-shared the revised parking plan that Davis-Noe had submitted following the site visit earlier in the day. Davis-Noe explained that the seven spaces indicated in the new plan allow for leeway in the parking arrangement given that only 4.5 spaces are required. Albert noted that there are permeable pavers that have been used in similar situations that allow for both drainage and grass to grow up between the spaces. Volz stated that with this new parking arrangement of two cars on the side of the driveway, one to the left of the garage, and one inside the garage, there is need for only one additional space that could be directly behind the house. Walrafen added that the new configuration would negate the need for the earlier proposed parking space in front of the house, to which Davis-Noe agreed. Albert asked that it be added to the record that whenever cars are parked in front of a building, between the building and the sidewalk, it diminishes the ambience of the entire neighborhood. Lee requested that there be as little parking behind the house as possible because of the added nuisance of noise from people and cars. Walrafen continued reviewing the Conditional Use provisions. Lee raised the issue of needing to install a six-foot fence between the two backyards due to his concern for the safety of those who may venture onto his property as well as for privacy, the distance of which is 178 feet. Upon completing review of the Conditional Use provisions, Walrafen stated that they have been met. Storey noted that abutting business owner Cam Wrisley had requested that one of the conditions for granting the permit be that tenants and visitors may not park in his lot. Albert noted that the condition need not be included because tenants or visitors have absolutely no right to park in Wrisley's lot. Albert asked for clarification on the number of bedrooms that now exist in the two units and the number that will exist after the conversion to three units, to which Davis-Noe responded seven. In addition, every apartment will have a second floor, which will be directly above the first floor. Albert asked about the room attached to the house labelled "garage" in the floor plan, to which Davis-Noe responded that it was actually a storage area. After hearing that there was no more discussion, Walrafen asked for a

motion to be made on the permit application. **Albert made a motion to approve the conversion of the duplex to a three-unit building with the conditions that the parking be arranged such as is shown on the submitted drawing except that there will be no parking allowed between the house and the front sidewalk, and that there also will be no parking on any adjacent properties. In terms of the parking in back, no more than one parking space be allowed between the house and the garage and that either gravel or permeable pavers be used in that space. Volz seconded the motion.** Discussion ensued with Sky noting that requiring the applicant to install gravel or pavers seemed a bit onerous, however, she requested that the property owner make serious efforts toward storm water management. Albert noted that her intention in mentioning gravel or permeable pavers in the proposed motion was not to say that they *had* to be put there, but rather if anything was to be put down, it should be in the form of gravel or permeable pavers that would have the least effect on runoff. Discussion ensued with the motion amended **to approve the conversion of the duplex to a three-unit building with the conditions that the parking be arranged such as is shown on the submitted drawing except that there will be no parking allowed between the house and the front sidewalk, and that there be no parking on any adjacent properties. In back of the house, no more than one parking space shall be allowed between the house and the garage with a surface treatment, if needed, of gravel or another permeable surface, such as permeable pavers. No additional asphalt or blacktop paving or other impermeable surface treatment shall be used in the back or side yard in order to minimize storm water runoff and maintain a maximum absorption area for runoff from the hill behind the house.** Regarding the possibility of people parking or turning around in Wrisley's parking area, Parker asked if some kind of no-parking notification might be posted. Walrafen noted that the DRB did not have the purview to do that and that Davis-Noe had stated that he would make the parking issue clear in his tenants' leases. Lee added that such issues, including the increase of noise, need to be made clear in the motion and that what is being proposed is a characteristic change to the neighborhood that affects the investment people will make in their properties as well as their continued presence in the community. Davis-Noe stated that he would be making significant improvements to the building beyond merely dividing up the inside space and adding a new kitchen. Regarding the noise issue, Albert noted that there is a Town noise ordinance, to which Lee responded that he has tried, in previous situations, to act upon that but to no avail. Walrafen called for a vote on the motion. **The motion as amended was approved by Walrafen, Parker, Volz, and Sky with Albert opposed.**

- A brief follow-up discussion occurred later in the meeting concerning noise in the community and the difficulty in addressing complaints, especially with the Constable position currently being vacant. Alexandra Thayer from the Select Board noted a previous discussion she had with Lee's wife about noise emanating from the Town Hall Opera House during events and the Town's responsibility in addressing such issues concerning its rental properties.

TIMOTHY MORRIS FROM CHASE AND CHASE INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON MANCINI/COUNTRY CLUB OF BARRE BOUNDARY LINE ADJUSTMENT

- Timothy Morris from Chase and Chase was present for a preliminary discussion regarding a proposed boundary line adjustment on Country Club Road. The adjustment would transfer a 10-acre portion of the Barre Country Club property to the existing 20 acres of the adjacent property owned by Thomas Mancini. Storey noted that because the size of the property transfer in the area

exceeds five acres, it needs to be reviewed by the DRB. In response to a question by Albert, Morris confirmed that no new lots would be created. The property proposed for transfer is a wooded area. Albert asked if a waste water permit or waiver was needed, to which Morris responded that they will be getting an exemption because it is more than 500 feet away from the main buildings of the Country Club, a fact that was verified by the regional engineer from the State of Vermont. Storey noted that if the public hearing is scheduled for the 1/13/21 DRB meeting, the permit application would need to be submitted to the Zoning Administrator by 12/20/20.

REVIEW AND ADOPT MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 11, 2020

- **Parker made a motion to adopt the minutes of the 11/11/20 as written. Albert seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

TIMES ARGUS HEARING NOTICE PAYMENT

- Walrafen and Storey briefly discussed a hearing notice payment. Discussion continued regarding whether the DRB should recommend to the Planning Commission, which sets permitting fees, that there should be an increase in conditional use permit fees given the cost of running hearing notices in the *Times Argus* as well as covering Storey's hours when processing permits. Volz asked Storey to submit a proposal by email for increasing conditional use permit fees for the DRB to consider at its 1/13/21 meeting. Albert noted, and Volz agreed, that the fees charged should support the cost of providing the service so that all the taxpayers are not subsidizing someone's subdivision development.

DRB ZOOM ACCOUNT

- Discussion centered on whether Walrafen should purchase a personal Zoom account at \$15 plus tax per month for use by the DRB. It was decided that Walrafen would purchase an account on a month-to-month basis and submit the bills to the Town for reimbursement until it can be determined how to provide a license for DRB use under the Town's account.

DRB BUDGET DISCUSSION

- Discussion centered on what areas in the budget might be reduced in the fiscal year 2021-22 budget. It was decided that since several items already had been reduced during last year's budget discussions, only the Training line item would be lowered by \$100 with all other line items level funded. Walrafen noted that payment for the Zoom account could come out of the Office Supplies line item.

DRB REPORT FOR THE TOWN

- Noting that the submission due date for the DRB's section of the Town Report is 12/31/20, Walrafen stated that she will draft it after receiving information from Storey regarding hearings and other issues that have come before the DRB during the year. Walrafen will send it out to the DRB for review prior to submitting it.

OTHER BUSINESS

- After a brief discussion regarding website posting protocol stemming from confusion regarding a revised agenda that was posted the day of the meeting, it was agreed that Storey will continue posting Zoning Administrator-related documents and that DRB minutes recorder Cindy Wyckoff will post agendas received from Storey no earlier or later than two days prior to that meeting. If other items are added after that, those items will be discussed under “Other Business” rather than revising and reposting a new agenda. Wyckoff will continue to post both draft and approved minutes as well as posting the dates of DRB meeting on the website calendar.

ADJOURN

- **Albert made a motion to adjourn at 8:59pm. Volz seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted by Cindy Wyckoff