



CITY OF RENSSELAER

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY BUILDING & ZONING

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Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City of Rensselaer Planning Commission First Floor Conference Room, Rensselaer Community Center, 62 Washington Street January 10, 2011

Members Present:

Charles Moore – Chair, Christine Van Vorst – Vice-Chair, Frank Adams, Bob Campano, Tom Cardamone, George Farrell.

Members Not Present:

James Ahlemeyer.

Staff Present:

Sarah Crowell – Planning Director, Kevin McLoughlin – Assistant Director, Jack Spath – Deputy Corporation Counsel

Others Present

David Rossetti, Melissa Currado, Tim Pierce, Dan Proper, Kim Powers, Marilyn Dyer, Lou Lourinia, Dave Gardner

Call to Order:

Acting chair Moore called the regular meeting of the City of Rensselaer Planning Commission to order at 6:32 PM. Roll call was taken, and it was determined there was a quorum.

Adoption of Past Meeting Minutes

The special meeting minutes of December 20, 2010 were approved as submitted and with amendment to the last page to change 'Scott Moore' to 'Scott Miller.'

Communications

Mr. McLoughlin submitted a recent invoice from Chazen for the DeLaet's Landing project was submitted for addition to the agenda.

Mr. Campano notified the board of public update presentation regarding the Regional CSO Plan scheduled for 1/13/11 at 7:00 PM at Hudson Valley Community College.

Old Business

1. Cottage Hill Landings, 96 Partition Street – Discuss / review Supplemental FEIS for completeness consideration under SEQRA.

a) Review / approve invoice#55238 (B&L) & invoice#349453 (Whiteman)

Mrs. Van Vorst asked if their escrow was up to date, noting that the Planning Commission had stipulated a minimum balance be maintained in the account. Mr. McLoughlin responded that while this was true, the project was in a slow point as far as consulting review work and the applicant was keeping up to date with invoices approved for payment by the board.

Mrs. Van Vorst moved to approve the invoices for payment. Mr. Farrell seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. DeLaet's Landing / Marx Properties Redevelopment, 555-575 Broadway

a) Review / approve invoice #73961 (Chazen)

Mr. Farrell moved to approve the invoices for payment. Mr. Adams seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

New Business

1. St. Paul's Center, 950 Third Street – Request for Recommendation to the ZBA for Use Variance to allow renovation and use of the former Open Bible Baptist Church as a transitional housing shelter for families in a multi-family (R2) zoning district.

Mr. Moore explained to the board members that this matter was before them again owing to a bureaucratic oversight. Deputy Corporation Counsel Spath had confirmed that in order to have standing before the ZBA, the applicant required an official denial from a city official. Having recently been denied a building permit, they are now free to re-proceed through the process.

Mrs. Van Vorst expressed a concern she heard from some neighborhood residents that individuals would be coming to the facility because of evictions from non-payment of rent or criminal acts, leading to a concentration of 'less desirable' community residents.

Mr. Rossetti responded that his program had limited information about new clients. The majority of residents accepted are homeless for eviction for non-payment of rent, fire, or closure of a unit for code violations. A St. Paul's board member added that the reason rent is unpaid is due to job loss or loss of social services benefits not simply willful neglect.

Mrs. Van Vorst stated that while St. Paul's Center had done a great job across the street her concern was that as a small city there was a desire to bring up the income median, and locating a homeless shelter in the middle of the city might deter good people from buying the homes left on Third Street and accelerate the deterioration there.

David Rossetti responded that there are other apartment buildings near St. Paul's where behavior problems with individuals there have prompted him to contact police officials and these landlords reside out of town, making resolution of ongoing issues difficult. He noted that he or his staff are there 24/7 and are very responsive, noting that they repeatedly emphasize to center residents that they live in a community.

Mr. Campano stated that his sense in re-reading the application was that the center was essentially expanding services by adding fathers, but not changing the nature of their clientele. David Rossetti confirmed this.

Mrs. Van Vorst said she had thought it was a domestic violence shelter. David Rossetti responded that they are not a domestic violence shelter and stated that if it is discovered that a client's domestic situation puts the community, that resident, other residents, or staff at risk they are moved immediately to a dedicated 'safe house'.

Ms. Crowell noted that the board might want to keep in mind the realistic alternative uses for the property. She said that the current property owner would relate that they have not been able to do anything with the building, and any use would require some kind of variance. Ms. Crowell added that a large building like this sitting vacant would not be good for neighborhood property values. She observed that the current center building does not indicate its current use and most people still think it is a well-maintained church.

Mr. McLoughlin stated that in a conversation with Deputy Chief Frankoski it was pointed out that an apartment property across the street from the center received only 5 fewer police calls in a four-year period while averaging fewer residents.

A St. Paul's Center board member said that the proposed new facility across the street would be independently staffed and fully monitored as with the existing building. Mrs. Van Vorst asked if there was a curfew to be in the building and David Rossetti responded that it was 6:30 PM year-round.

Mr. Campano noted that it spoke very well for their application that the police department was strongly in support and did not simply remain neutral. He added that the improvement to the building was a benefit to the city as opposed to it possibly sitting idle as a white elephant.

David Rossetti responded that while the center did not pay property taxes, they did contribute to the local tax base in using services such as Yankee Doodle Taxi and residents' snacks and cigarettes from convenience stores as well as paying regular water, sewer, and garbage fees (or reducing city costs by contracting for private carting).

Mr. Moore stated that he looked on the project with even more favor than the last time.

Mr. Campano moved to make a positive recommendation to the ZBA for the requested Use Variance. Mr. Adams seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. Annual Meeting

Mrs. Van Vorst moved to nominate Charles Moore for the position of Chair. Mr. Adams seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Moore moved to nominate Mrs. Van Vorst for the position of Vice-Chair. Mr. Adams seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Other Business

NONE.

Adjournment:

Hearing no objections, Mr. Moore adjourned the meeting at 7:02 PM.

Next Meeting:

The next regular meeting is scheduled for February 14, 2010 at 6:30 PM.

Record of Decisions:

An official record of decisions noting the details of motions and votes from this meeting along with any conditions & stipulations of approval has been filed with the City Clerk and a copy maintained in Planning Department records.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sarah Crowell
Secretary