

PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

February 24, 2014

A regular meeting of the City of Cortland Planning Commission was held on Monday, January 27, 2014, at 5:15 PM in the Mayor’s Conference Room at City Hall, 25 Court Street, Cortland, NY.

PRESENT: Commissioners Jeff Gebhardt, Denise Bushnell, Joseph McMahon, Rafael Felix, Troy Beckwith

ABSENT: Chris Ryan

Staff Present: Deputy Fire Chief William Knickerbocker, Zoning Officer Bruce Weber, Secretary to the Mayor Shellie Blaisdell

Public Hearing No. 1 – 91, 93-95 Lincoln Ave (Jim Reeners) to discuss lot subdivision/moving the property line

A public hearing was called at 5:07 pm to hear comments or concerns from the public regarding the lot subdivision and moving the property line for 91, 93-95 Lincoln Ave.

Speaker Ann Doyle; not in favor of more college kids on Lincoln Ave however, if there is someone who can do some building for the college, I would certainly favor both Jim and Mike Reeners because you can believe what they tell you, and they try very hard to work with Planning Commission and if no agreement, they listen and come back as a compromise. They are both respectable.

The first public hearing was closed at 5:11 pm

Public Hearing No. 2 – 1 South Ave (Ed Bennedy) to discuss proposed property renovations

A Public Hearing was called at 5:12 pm to hear comments or concerns from the public regarding the proposed property renovations at 1 South Ave.

Speaker; Amanda Funk, coordinator and organizer of the Neighborhood Watch group (70+ members) and will be spokesperson. There are several concerns from the group on varying levels in regards to this property and the intent of its proposal.

The Neighborhood Watch has a strategic plan. The proposed use for this property goes directly against the plan for the community to increase “low income and transient population housing” – this Neighborhood Watch group feels this proposal specifically goes in the direction to becoming low income and transient housing.

There are several unanswered questions they have as a group:

First a statement in recognition of the quality of his current properties; lack of maintenance is to the point where it affects and de-values the neighborhood and possibly the whole community. Will he be putting as much money into existing properties as he is this new property?

NW would like to know the crime rate in the area and number of calls on the street. Wants to know from police department what this number is (unfortunately she was not able to get this information in time for meeting).

There are a number of suspected drug houses and dealers on the street and with the increased transient population with what this rental property will bring, what will happen with the drug trafficking in the area? Especially with no accountability, no back ground checks, and no leases or contracts for tenants to follow as they come and go, especially so close to three schools. NW does not want to build something so close to these schools where there are latch key kids and have these transient renters leave with no trace of them and leaving behind possible victims. (Schools close by: Barry, Randall, and the Cortland High School). There is concern about future tenants being sex offenders, what will be put in place to protect the neighborhood that currently does not have police presence?

There are safety concerns, lighting, traffic, parking, environmental impact of increased traffic, waste run off debris, trash etc..

What are the security measures for the building? Key card access, security cameras or is it come and go with no accountability as to who is on the property?

NW has several other ideas that this building could be used for that would improve the quality of neighborhood; there are other interests to make this property more attractive to community. The NW plan is to increase single family occupants this does to support that initiative.

What structures will be put in place from the city to assist the transient individuals to move from a temporary placement to permanent homes? He is looking to work specifically with low income tenants; what city resources will be put in place to support this?

NW would like to request the Planning Commission table this application for at least six (6) months until all these issues can be addressed.

In regards to the Historical Society – There was an application filed for this property – what happened to it? Was the application lost, ever filed, or not filed properly? NW requests due diligence with the 120 days to re-file the application.

The second Public Hearing was closed at 5:18 pm.

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission was open at 5:18 pm.

Item #1 (91 Lincoln/93-95 Lincoln) – (Reeners) (R2) – Site Plan Review

- Jim Reeners stated he is trying to make an R2 district and conforming an R2 lot – well beyond square footage necessary for a two family home.

Commission can act on the lot division request but will not be able to act on the SPR until ZBA takes action on the variances.

A motion was made by Comm. Felix to approve the subdivision request contingent upon ZBA approval of variances.

Motion by: Comm. Felix
Seconded by: Comm. McMahan

Ayes – 4
Nays – 0

Item #2 (1 South Ave) – (Bennedy) (R2) – Site Plan Review

Zoning received new plans at the meeting. Reminded Mr. Bennedy that the requirements are to have application and submission turned in two weeks before the meeting. His drawings were delivered on Thursday prior to this meeting.

Mr. Bennedy stated he has been doing business for (ten) 10 years and has turned abandoned, vacant properties, which were a deterrent to the neighborhood, into affordable housing. A total of seven (7) houses with \$750,000+ into those vacant houses with renovations and working with cooperation with the code department. Mr. Bennedy feels that for someone to say that his properties are a deterrent to the neighborhood is not true. He has 22 signatures from the neighborhood in support of his project.

Mr. Bennedy indicated changes in the drawing include curbing and lighting. Planning Commission does not recognize any changes in the new diagram.

A motion was made by Comm. Felix to take this project off the table until Mr. Bennedy can return with his architect or the person who is able to answer the questions. Commission feels Mr. Bennedy does not have a clear understanding of his own project. With the significant negative feedback fro the community, feels he needs to refine his project and return when he has a better scope and can return with his architect.

Motion by: Comm. Felix
Seconded by: Comm. Bushnell

Ayes – 4
Nays – 0

Item #3 (20 Reynolds Ave) – (Baccile) (R2) – Site Plan Review – putting crushed stone over area of driveway

No one in attendance to present application request – Tabled until March 24, 2014 meeting.

Item #4 (5-7 Wheeler Ave) – (Cute) (R1) – Site Plan Review – Running a shelter and sanctuary for stray cats

No one in attendance to present application request – Tabled until March 24, 2014 meeting.

Item #5 (22 ½ Main Street) – (Warren) (GB) – Site Plan Review – Property Renovation from 2 office spaces to single bedroom apartments

No one in attendance to present application request – Tabled until March 24, 2014 meeting.

Minutes of January 27, 2014 approved as read

Motion by: Comm. Bushnell

Seconded by: Comm. Felix

Ayes – 4

Nays – 0

Adjournment: (6:34 pm)

Motion by: Comm. Felix

Seconded by: Comm. McMahon

Ayes – 4

Nays – 0

I, JEFF GEBHARDT, CHAIRPERSON OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF CORTLAND, NY, DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT SAID RESOLUTION(S) WERE ADOPTED AT A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF CORTLAND, NY, HELD ON January 27, 2014.

JEFF GEBHARDT, CHAIRPERSON