

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NO. MAIN ST.
6:30 PM MONDAY, JUNE 6, 2022

Approved 9.7.2022

Board Members Present: Tanner McCuin, Vice Chair (Acting Chair for this meeting; via Zoom); Becky Manahan, Alternate; Emily Biron (via Zoom); Denis LaPointe, Alternate (via Zoom).

Board Members Absent: Rebecca Pfeiffer, Chair; Matthew Preedom; Dick Thayer.

City Staff Present: Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development; Sara Gabaree, Property Services Manager; Angela Bernard, Minute Taker.

Members of the Public Present: Paul Biron (via Zoom); Erika Hamlin; Brian Croteau, Jr.; Grant Butterfield; Eric Jutras; Heather Garceau (via Zoom, arrived at 6:45 PM); Peter Smiar (arrived at 7:03 PM); Jim Cameron (arrived at 7:39 PM).

A. OPEN MEETING – T. McCuin opened the meeting at 6:29 PM.

1. Pledge of Allegiance – pledge was recited
2. Assignment of Alternate(s) – B. Manahan and D. LaPointe were appointed alternates.
3. Consider any additions or deletions to agenda - none

B. DEVELOPMENT REVIEW SEGMENT – PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Case #2022-010 / Paul Biron, Nick Daley, & Mike Conn / 120 North Main Street / Parcel 22063120. Applicant Seeks Conditional Use Review. This property is located in the B1 Business 1 Zoning District and the DR1 Traditional Downtown Design Review District.

T. McCuin opened the hearing for case #2022-010

T. McCuin asked if any Board members have any conflicts of interest. E. Biron explained that she has a conflict of interest for this hearing and recused herself from this case.

The oath was administered.

S. Gabaree presented the City report detailing the plans for the property and previous permits that were granted on it.

T. McCuin asked if Board members have any questions from City staff. B. Manahan asked how many parking spots are located on the property. S. Gabaree said there is no parking requirement for the building but that the applicant may be asked that later in the hearing.

T. McCuin asked the applicant to testify. P. Biron explained that he would like to turn a series of offices upstairs from a commercial space into four apartments / rental units. He explained there is parking

located behind the building although it's not completely clear how it is divided up because it shares the space with nearby buildings.

D. LaPointe asked how the residents of the units would find parking if there aren't enough spots. P. Biron said they would follow all zoning regulations for the area.

D. LaPointe asked what the square footage is planned for each unity. P. Biron said each would be around 1100 square foot per unit.

T. McCuin asked if members of the public had any comments. None.

C. Sawyer said the City would like to make a comment. He explained that there are a lot of residences in the downtown historic area and many don't supply parking for tenants, but that the tenants can buy a pass to the garage or find private spaces.

T. McCuin closed the hearing at 6:42 PM.

2. Case #2022-011 / Erika Hamlin / 5 Finn Ave. / Parcel 22035005. Applicant Seeks Conditional Use Review. This property is located in the LDR Low Density Residential Zoning District.

T. McCuin opened the hearing for case #2022-011

No conflicts of interest were reported among members of the Board.

The oath was administered.

S. Gabaree presented the City staff report on the case , including staff notes and a history of the permits previously taken out on the property.

T. McCuin opened the floor to questions from the Board for City staff. None.

E. Hamlin testified on her own behalf, explaining the project and the business that she wishes to open. She explained that the home business would be woodworking, primarily door hangers made out of plywood. She presented the board with images of her supplies and the types of projects she makes.

B. Croteau explained that the property does not have a garage right now to store their materials in but that if the business gets bigger, they plan to build one in the future.

E. Hamlin explained that she will not require additional parking for the small business because she meets clients out in the field and rarely at home.

D. LaPointe asked what kind of materials she uses, the noise that it makes and where she disposes of the dust and waste from her projects. E. Hamlin said she cuts everything at once, so noise is kept to a minimum. She explained that her plywood is kept in a shed and that her sander has a vacuum attachment that handles dust and waste and then she disposes of it properly.

D. LaPointe asked where she produces her projects during the winter without a garage. E. Hamlin explained that her parents live in Essex, VT and she travels there to use their garage.

E. Biron asked if people are coming to her home to pick up projects. E. Hamlin said sometimes, the occasional close family or friends will come over but that the business does not mean a large increase in traffic.

T. McCuin asked for public comment.

S. Gabaree presented the board with a written statement that was emailed to City staff by a neighbor. Sheila Brown, the neighbor, said she doesn't want to stop plans for a small business but would like the applicant to keep her materials in the house and not on the porch.

T. McCuin closed the hearing at 6:56 PM.

3. Case #2022-012 / Almond Blossoms Schoolhouse / 235 Lake Steet / Parcel 23059235. Applicant Seeks Site Plan Review. This property is located in the B1 Business 1 Zoning District and the DR2 Downtown Expansion Review District.

T. McCuin opened the hearing for case #2022-012

No conflicts of interest were reported among members of the Board.

The oath was administered.

S. Gabaree presented the City staff report, explaining that the business owner would like to change parking and an exterior fence. It requires changing of landscaping and parking, but it doesn't involve any construction. S. Gabaree reviewed the case and highlighted staff notes on the property regarding several subjects, including lighting and stormwater runoff, and recommended that the building owner consult an engineer regarding a handicap accessible parking spot. S. Gabaree then reviewed previous projects and permits associated with the property.

T. McCuin asked if Board members had any questions for City staff. D. LaPointe asked about the number of items brought up concerning missing information from the initial report. He noted that the applicant submitted updated paperwork and images late in the day on 6/6/22 and asked if the staff had a chance to review the new documents. S. Gabaree explained that she had not had a chance to review it yet.

H. Garceau testified on her own behalf and explained that she would like to create on large playground area for her school, instead of two smaller playgrounds. Then she would like to use the space in the rear that is currently used as a rear playground and turn it into parking. This would require changing the fencing and installing a cedar hedge barrier between the property and the neighbors.

T. McCuin asked if any Board members have questions for the applicant. D. LaPointe asked if the applicant had discussed the project with neighbors. H. Garceau said yes and that is where the idea for a cedar hedge came from, which the neighbor liked and approved of.

D. LaPointe asked about ADA accessibly parking. H. Garceau explained there is one spot planned in the lot and that she asked Cross Consulting about the ADA spot and they sent an updated proposal that included one.

D. LaPointe asked about lighting. H. Garceau explained that there is a light over the door and a motion light on the stairs, in addition to plenty of exterior lighting from a neighboring structure.

No further questions from the Board.

No public comment on the case.

T. McCuin closed the hearing at 7:15 PM.

4. Combined Review: Case #2022-013 for Conditional Use Review & Case #2022-014 for Site Plan Review/ Grant Butterfield / 191 Lake Steet / Parcel 23049191. This property is located in the B1 Business 1 Zoning District and the DR2 Downtown Expansion Review District.

T. McCuin opened the hearing for case #2022-013

No conflicts of interest were reported among members of the Board.

The oath was administered.

S. Gabaree presented the City staff report. The request involves a multi-unit apartment building. S. Gabaree explained that the City staff recommendations involve getting a specific number of exactly how many units are planned. S. Gabaree reviewed staff notes and recommendations on the property, including a note that this property is not included in the City Historic District.

T. McCuin asked if Board members had any questions for City staff. D. LaPointe asked if S. Gabaree had a chance to review the late-arriving documents that were submitted by the applicant on the afternoon of 6/6/22. S. Gabaree said she had not had a chance to review them yet.

G. Butterfield testified on behalf of his project. He explained the exact number of planned units is 72 apartments of mixed sizes. He invited the architect and the engineer, E. Jutras and P. Smiar, on his project to also answer any questions that came up.

C. Sawyer presented the full plan for the property on the screen for Board members to review. P. Smiar testified and explained where the proposed building will be located on Lake Street. He explained that, currently, the lot consists of a fenced-in asphalt parking lot. He explained where a new parking lot and building would be constructed. There would be ground level parking under the building, with a surface parking lot on the north side of the property, with a formal driveway access off of Maple Street.

D. LaPointe asked where the entry and exit for the building would be. P. Smiar explained that it would all be on the north side of the property, off of Maple Street.

P. Smiar then went through the plans in detail, including the landscaping plan and the location of the dumpster. He then showed the Board the lighting plan for the property.

D. LaPointe asked about the number of parking spaces. P. Smiar explained there would be 47 spots in the parking lot. G. Butterfield said there are an additional 13 spots on the street on Maple Street. Plus, there is also a parking garage under the building.

D. LaPointe said it doesn't seem as if there would be enough parking for all of the units and asked how they came up with the number of spots. G. Butterfield explained that a lot of the units are one-bedroom or studio apartments and that not every unit will have need for a parking spot. G. Butterfield explained that if the need for more parking spaces arises, they have an abutting property that could be turned into a parking lot that is not included in this project.

T. McCuin asked if there are bike racks planned for the building. G. Butterfield said yes there is a bike rack that is included near the amenities for the building.

D. LaPointe asked to go over the list of concerns that were raised by the Design Advisory Board. G. Butterfield addressed the DAB concerns, including a request that the lighting be dimmable, which G.

Butterfield said they would do. G. Butterfield said the DAB also asked for a bike maintenance room, which has been included in the latest version that was presented on 6/6/22.

E. Jutras testified that he is the architect for the project. He explained that existing electric wires along the Maple Street side of the project mean they can't plan big trees, to ensure that they don't grow into the wires. He showed various elements of the project using drawings on the screen for the Board to see. He pointed out where the entrance on Lake Street would be, where a bank of elevators will be located, an in-building gym for residents, and several additional elements of the building. E. Jutras also showed the Board drawings of the design that is planned for the exterior façade.

D. LaPointe asked if there is a list of the types of materials included in the packet of materials. E. Jutras said yes and said they also submitted a panel of material samples.

T. McCuin asked about the ground-floor amenities (such as a planned coworking space and a gym) and wondered whether they are for tenants or members of the public. G. Butterfield explained that everything in the building would be a tenant-only amenity.

D. LaPointe asked about the noise level that is expected for the rooftop equipment. E. Jutras said there won't be a lot of equipment on the roof, but that what is planned is small and not expected to make excessive noise.

C. Sawyer explained that an applicant needs special permission to go above 60 feet tall and the maximum cap is 72 feet. This structure is planned for 65 feet including the height of the building plus rooftop equipment.

D. LaPointe said he is surprised that neighbors from the Maple Street side of the project didn't show up to make a comment and asked if the neighbors have expressed any concerns. G. Butterfield said he hasn't talked to local residents, only local business owners, and that no one has reached out to him with concerns. S. Gabaree explained that all abutters were notified. One person reached out to City Hall with questions or concerns, and that person only wanted to see samples of the materials planned. She said she sent it off and there was no further comment. T. McCuin asked if the notices go to property owners rather than tenants. S. Gabaree said the notices only go to property owners.

T. McCuin asked if Board members had any other questions. None.

T. McCuin asked for public comment. None.

C. Sawyer provided comment from the City for the project. He said this is a large structure and will be unique for the neighborhood but that this area of the city was marked as a possible area for future development a decade ago. He said it could also kick off more buildings and developments similar in the area, so that it will not be unique. He said the City plan includes the need to encourage developments like this and increase housing throughout the city.

The Board debated whether they had everything they need to make a decision and whether they should close the hearing or recess it pending additional information.

T. McCuin asked the applicant whether the units are considered affordable housing and what the average rental unit will cost. G. Butterfield said the structure will be about 50/50 for affordable housing to market rate rental units ratio. T. McCuin asked if studies show that studio units and one-bedroom

apartments are the trend right now. G. Butterfield said yes that the majority of sought-after units in Vermont and across the country are one-bedroom.

T. McCuin closed the hearing for case #2022-013 at 8:16 PM.

T. McCuin opened the hearing for case #2022-014.

Refer to the evidence presented for #2022-013. T. McCuin asked if the Board had any further questions for the applicant. None.

T. McCuin closed the hearing for case #2022-014 at 8:17 PM.

5. Combined Review: Case #2022-015 for Conditional Use Review & Case #2022-016 for Site Plan Review / Jim Cameron / 45 Kingman Street / Parcel 23048035. This property is located in the B1 Business 1 Zoning District and the DR1 Traditional Downtown Design Review District.

T. McCuin opened the hearings for case #2022-015 and case #2022-016 concurrently.

No conflicts of interest were reported among members of the Board.

The oath was administered.

S. Gabaree presented the City staff report. Applicant is looking to update a building with 8 new apartment units. S. Gabaree presented staff notes on various parts of the application, including that there is no required number of parking spaces need for the building.

T. McCuin asked if Board members had questions for City staff. D. LaPointe asked if the applicant has received a document detailing / asking for more information. S. Gabaree said yes, the applicant knows what he needs to provide.

J. Cameron testified on his behalf and provided a summary of the proposal for the Board. T. McCuin asked him to explain briefly what the project is and what is planned. J. Cameron explained that he bought a historic building on Kingman Street and detailed some of the progress of the project so far, including restoring old windows, rebuilding street-facing stairs, and demolition inside the building. He explained that the second and third floor will each be renovated to include four apartments on each floor for a total of eight. A new elevator is also being installed. J. Cameron explained that the building will have a full sprinkler system installed as well.

J. Cameron then told the board that the exterior of the building will mostly be the same, with the exception of a new ADA compliant access ramp on the Federal Street side of the structure and he wants to put flags up on the Kingman Street side. The large flagpole that is there now will be moved elsewhere in the city, and the front lawn and tree will be replaced. The parking lot will be excavated with 12 inches of new fill so that it will be pervious. Electric car chargers are also planned for the exterior of the building, which will be open for use by both the public and residents.

T. McCuin opened the floor to questions from the Board for the applicant.

T. McCuin asked about sections of the application from the City staff report that needed more information. J. Cameron said his engineer sent it in the previous week. S. Gabaree said she would go back and double check to see if she got them.

D. LaPointe said if there is anything missing when they review all of the documents they will reach out to him. D. LaPointe asked if there is a floor plan for the apartment units and second and third floors. J. Cameron said they would be submitted electronically.

T. McCuin asked if J. Cameron has detailed his lighting plan as requested by the Design Advisory Board. J. Cameron said the plan for lighting is preliminary for now.

E. Biron asked about the surface for the parking lot and how it would survive plowing. J. Cameron said there is a plan in place with the materials that is supposed to help it be plowable. He explained that they are willing to try it out and if it doesn't work they will come back and ask for permission to pave it in the future.

C. Sawyer presented the Board with new / updated site plans that were submitted by the applicant after the packets were put together by City staff.

J. Cameron said the projected finishing date they're aiming for is December 2022.

T. McCuin opened the floor for public comment. None.

T. McCuin closed the concurrent hearings for both cases at 8:54 PM.

C. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Planning & Development update – None.

2. Enforcement update – C. Sawyer said they are tracking some parking violations and following up with buildings around the city that need to be cleaned up, wrapping up construction projects.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes – Minutes for three meetings were tabled until there are enough board members present at a future meeting. Three members from each meeting are needed to approve December 2021, January 2022 and May 2022.

4. Confirm next meeting date and time - Wednesday, July 6, 2022, at 6:30 PM

5. Other – None.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

E. ENTER DELIBERATIVE SESSION

Motion by D. LaPointe. Second by E. Biron. Deliberative session entered at 9:00 PM.