

**MEETING OF THE ST. ALBANS CITY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD REGULAR MEETING  
6:30 PM, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2017  
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NO. MAIN ST.**

**MINUTES**

**Board Members present:** Chair Megan Manahan Bliss, Vice-Chair Rebecca Pfeiffer, Owen Manahan

**Board Members Absent:** Jackie DesLauriers, Judith Leonard (Alternate)

**Staff Members Present:**

Dave Southwick, Planning & Permitting Administrator; Wendy Coy, Minute Taker

**Public Present:**

See Sign-in Sheet

**A. Call to Order** - Chair called meeting to order at 6:34

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Discuss Additions or Deletions to Agenda

**B. 2. Development Review Segment – Public Hearings:**

1. **Case#2017-017 / 33 Barlow Street / Parcel # 25006033** - Board member R. Pfeiffer has reviewed this case for the State of Vermont but doesn't believe that this creates a conflict. Chair M Manahan Bliss reviewed the rules for speaking to the Board. D. Southwick reviewed the case including staff comments and the relevant previous Zoning Actions. The Case has been publicly warned with certified letters to the abutters. Brandy Coolum was present to represent the applicants. She stated that they would like to remove the back deck and add a mud room. There were no questions from the Board. The Chair opened the case for public comment.

**David Flood - 29 Barlow St.** Mr. Flood sent an email explaining his concerns about permeable and impermeable surfaces. Chair summarized the email that Mr. Flood sent to the Board. The main concerns were

- An additional deck would create more impermeable surfaces in the flood zone. He is directly affected by any and all storm water that flows from the 33 Barlow St. property to the brook. The more impermeable surfaces that exist the more risk to his property.
- The applicant already has a slab with a shed that, he believes, was constructed without a permit. This contributes to the impervious surfaces on the property.
- The applicant widened their driveway which also contributes to the impermeable surfaces on the lot.
- A dumpster has been placed in the green space that the City has asked her to remove and she hasn't complied.

The Chair gave the applicant an opportunity to respond to the email. Ms. Coolum stated that they did erect a shed that was purchased from Home Depot but she didn't know if it was anchored to the slab. They did put gravel down next to the driveway when the driveway started to cave in. She stated that they would be willing to move the dumpster but that is where Casella wants it. She also stated that a representative from the City was going to get back to her about it but no one has. Member R. Pfeiffer asked if the applicant knew how much gravel was placed on the property. Ms. Coolum stated that she thought it was half a truck but she wasn't sure as she wasn't there when it was delivered.

2. **Case #2017-019 / 239 – 241 North Main Street / Parcel # 11063239**– No Board member has any conflict with this Case. The Case has been publicly warned with certified letters to the abutters. No letters have been received. D. Southwick reviewed the case including the staff comments and the relevant previous Zoning Actions. Staff calculated the requirement for “contiguous acres equal to three times the minimum lot size for the district” as for a two-family dwelling in a B2 District being 7,500 sq. ft. and three times that being 22,500 sq. ft. The lot is 45,993 sq. ft. Staff commented that a twenty-five (25) percent density increase would allow 45,993 sq. ft. to increase to 57,491 sq. ft. or enough room for 11 units at 5,000 sq. ft. per unit. Benjamin Avery with BlackRock Construction in South Burlington was one of the people representing the applicant. His company saw this as an interesting opportunity as an infill project and that this project is unique as it preserves the existing house and street visibility. The only change in the street view is that the garage would be removed. The design takes into account the design of the existing buildings that surround the property. The company has spoken with the neighbor to the South side and has agreed to put in an eight-foot fence on the property line. Paul O’Leary with O’Leary Associates was the next to speak for the applicant. He spoke of the more technical aspects of the build. These included:

- Adding four units (eight duplexes) behind the original building that will be reverted to single family home. They calculated that each of the new units will need 5,000 square feet. This would require a density increase of 3%.
- Each unit would have two parking spaces – one garage spot and one outside. There will be 9 additional spaces for overflow and visitors. Chair Manahan questioned the nine additional spaces. Two of them are for the existing building so there would only be 7 overflow. O’Leary Associates estimated that these units would increase traffic by half a trip per unit.
- Trees in the back will need to come down due to construction with no plans to replace.

Member O. Manahan asked how the common area would be maintained. Mr. O’Leary stated that a contractor would maintain it. Chair Manahan Bliss asked about snow storage. Mr. O’Leary responded that the snow would be plowed into the green space. This will be a condominium plan. Member R. Pfeiffer asked if there are dumpster areas. Mr. O’Leary stated the expectation to be roll out style canisters – no dumpsters. Member R. Pfeiffer asked about group lighting. Mr. O’Leary stated that there would be typical lighting for each individual unit. The Chair M. Manahan Bliss asked about traffic calculations. Mr. O’Leary reviewed the calculations and clarified them. Member O.

Manahan asked the applicant to review how they came to the calculations of the lot size. Application refers to this as a set of duplexes; however, this project should be referred to as a multi-family. It is considered one lot with multiple buildings on it. Mr. O'Leary stated that they it was yet to be determined if they would sell the units as individual entities or maintain the property as a whole. The Board had no more questions so the Chair opened up the meeting for public comment.

**John Morrie** – A member of the Design Advisory Board. This project has come before the DAB twice and it was approved. As a local builder, he stated that he thinks this project is a good one.

**Cassie Gordon - 112 Messenger Street** – She has lived there for 60 years. This is a very quiet private area due to the trees. She has problems with who might be renting the property. She has already had issues with people crossing her property. She was wondering if the property taxes will increase / decrease. She is also concerned with the resale value of her property.

**Chris West – 235 North Main Street** – Mr. West owns the abutting property to the South. Mr. West presented a detailed PowerPoint presentation. He stated that the privacy of abutting homes are going to be massively impacted. The homes surrounding the property have trees that line the backyards of their homes. There are more than a dozen trees from 7" up to 50" in diameter. Significant privacy will be lost with a fence as the fence will only be 8'. He asked for fencing and trees all along the side boundary and around the back. He asks that the trees that are being removed be replaced with mature evergreens such as 12' Aborvitae Niga. He would also like a commitment to replace the new trees if they die within 10 years. He maintains that the concept of the planned unit development is ignoring some of the regulations. The properties in this area are split between B2 and LDR. This plan is to build in a backyard not a separate lot. The proposed density is not keeping with the neighborhood or the District. A short petition was signed by the residents around the property. Mr. Avery stated that the northeast corner had a proposal for open garden space that could be removed so that more trees could be preserved.

**Shelley Morris – 114 Messenger Street** – Ms. Morris finds this project to be out of size and out of character for the neighborhood. The plans has overlooked many trees that need to be preserved.

**Kevin Morris – 114 Messenger Street** – Mr. Morris understands that they are trying to preserve the streetscape for Main street but the back of the property is their Main Street. The plan would have a momentous impact on the canopy of trees. How many trees would be left? He can't tell which trees will be removed. Could the trees being removed be marked so there is a better idea of the impact? He thinks that the plans show a long rectangular space with a lot of paved area but very little green space. Mr. Avery testified that the snow would be pushed into the green space on the South side between the driveway and the fence.

**Ken Johnson – 116 Messenger Street** – Mr. Johnson moved there because of the backyard. It allowed he and his wife to be in town without feeling like they are in town. This is a small residential neighborhood and this would be adding a family unit building. His lot sits above the property. The families will be able to look up at him and he would

be looking down on them. It also seems like a lot of stuff in a really small space. This will be in his backyard.

**Connie Warden – lives one lot over from the Wests** - Ms. Warden states that all the properties have open lots. If the property owners lose the enjoyment of their property do the taxes go down? Three bedrooms in each unit will be adding kids; families. This will increase the amount of traffic coming out of that driveway. It already takes 5-10 minutes to cross Main Street. The backyard as it exists is waterlogged. Increasing the impervious surfaces will increase site runoff. Do the existing sewer systems have the capacity to take on the extra buildings? Chair asked if any of the applicants had discussions with VTrans about traffic going out onto Main Street. Mr. O’Leary stated that they did not need to.

**David Flood – 29 Barlow Street** – Mr. Flood asked about drainage of water when there is snow accumulation. Chair stated that there is a catch basin proposed in the plans. Mr. Flood asked where is the development to go? Mr. O’Leary responded that he certainly hears and appreciate the comments of the neighbors. This company looks for projects where they can bring new and affordable housing stock. He does not consider these units high density units. There is barely significant impacts on the side lots. He maintains that this is a good and appropriate project for this location.

**Ken Johnson – 116 Messenger Street** – This property will go from having 8 eight people living on that lot to 30. He maintains that it will be a high impact.

**Ed Schumer – 85 High Street** – Mr. Schumer feels that the statement of abutting properties not really being impacted is not correct. He feels that many properties in St. Albans have long backyards and that this opens the door for many property owners to do the same.

3. **Case#2017-020 / 99 High Street / Parcel # 1140099** - No Board member had any conflicts with this Case. D. Southwick reviewed the staff comments on the case as well as the relevant previous Zoning Actions. The Case has been publicly warned with certified letters to the abutters. Three letters of opposition were received by the City. Chair stated that an evaluation was in process to ascertain whether the existing house could remain and be reconditioned or if it would need to be removed. Due to the evaluation not being complete, this was a sketch plan review / minor subdivision review. Anthony Gamache, the applicant, stated that he bought the property as an investment property. It was a four unit building. Now there are structural concerns. He is proposing removal of the current building and replacing it with two dual family homes. He feels that doing this will allow for more infill in the City. The plans will stay within the character of the neighborhood and he is working with an architect so that the new buildings will match the style of the neighborhood. He understands that it is important to maintain the proper setback to match the other properties on High Street. Member R. Pfeiffer asked if there would be an easement of lot one or two? Mr. Gamache stated that it would be for both. The second sketch plan shows same building placement just different access points. As the existing building has two or three cars per unit, Mr. Gamache doesn’t anticipate an increase in cars. He is looking at selling one

duplex and possibly maintaining one as a rental depending on the financial numbers. The Board had no more questions. The Chair opened the meeting for public comment  
**Katie Kittell – 62 Brainerd Street** – Ms. Kittell asked if there was a proposed fence line? She would like one included in the plans.

**Joel Benware – 105 High Street** – Mr. Benware had concerns about splitting the lot into two separate lots.

**Nancy LaPointe – 95 High Street** – Mrs. LaPointe stated that the lot was grandfathered into a low density area. Subdividing the lot doesn't make sense on High Street as it is a low density residential area.

**Dennis LaPointe – 95 High Street** – Mr. LaPointe presented and referred to his letter that he submitted to the board. Mr. LaPointe pointed out that this would be a demolition of the oldest masonry building in St. Albans. It would reduce the character of the neighborhood; diminish the quality and charm of High Street and diminish the property values around it. He maintains that a precedent was set when the proposal of tearing down 100 High Street and putting up duplexes was denied. The owner had to replace it with a single family home. He stated that more and more properties were being broken up with more and more density on the properties. Many older trees would need to be removed to create the proposed plans. Mr. LaPointe came to St. Albans six years ago and found it charming due to the architectural aspects.

**Raymond Scott - 104 High Street** – Mr. Scott has lived there for over 30 years. All houses on east side of the street are single family homes that are set back from the street. This proposal would not fit in with the rest of the neighborhood.

**Susan Prent – 35 Bank Street** – Ms. Prent stated that St. Albans City would be losing another great old historic house to short-term profits and adding a new structure that would never fulfill the promises that were made. Once it is gone, it is gone. The City is slowly eating away at the valuable aspect of these historic homes. She feels that the City needs to work with the owner to restore the building. A historic building should never be demolished if it can be saved. It is part of our heritage.

**Edward Schumer – 85 High Street** – Mr. Schumer stated that this area has lovely homes. This plan will have a negative impact on the surrounding homes. He stated that just because it has the square footage for two lots doesn't mean it needs to be two lots. Each duplex is to have three bedrooms each; roughly 1300 square ft. per unit. He asked if the Design Advisory Board would be reviewing the plans.

Mr. Sawyer, Director of Planning and Development for St. Albans City, responded that this property is not part of the Design Review District. The design of the new building does not need approval but the demolition of the old building does.

**John Casavant – 67 Brainard Street** – Mr. Casavant would like to see a fully fleshed out plan before any decision is made. He thought that this plan was a pretty dense use of the property. There are no other lots in that neighborhood that are duplexes. He would like to see the decisions for this property happen all at once.

**Chip Sawyer – 92 High Street** – Mr. Sawyer disclosed that he works for St. Albans City and is also a resident of this neighborhood. He feels that the Board needs to focus on the character of the area. He also stated that the purpose statement of low density residential district is to have single family homes.

**Raymond Scott - 104 High Street** – Mr. Scott asked if the proposed developer owns the current house and let it get run down, what assurances does the City have the new building will have the character of the neighborhood and that he will maintain it?

Mr. Gamache replied that he grew up around the corner and cares about the character of that neighborhood. He is meeting with an architect on plans for the property. He has developed other properties in the City that have been maintained.

**Joel Benware – 105 High Street-** Mr. Beware stated that the proposal for more bedrooms will add to the density of the property and that he opposes more bedrooms.

**Nancy LaPointe – 95 High Street** – Mrs. LaPointe reiterated that duplexes do not fit into the character of High Street.

**C. Other Business**

1. **Planning & Development Updates** – Mr. Southwick is attending a lister and assessors training. The City has decided on a software called CitizenServe to digitize all of the permitting.
2. **Enforcement Updates** – Due to the information provided by Mr. Flood, there will be a visit to 33 Barlow Street to see if any of the City rules need to be enforced.
3. **Approval of August 7, 2017 Meeting Minutes** – Member O. Manahan moved to approve the minutes as presented. Member R. Pfeiffer seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.
4. Confirm next meeting date and time **Monday October 2, 2017 6:30 p.m.**
5. Other

**D. Public Comment - None**

- E. **Enter Deliberative Session** – Member R. Pfeiffer made a motion to enter deliberative session. Member O. Manahan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.