

SITE PLAN REVIEW ADVISORY BOARD

NOTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING Thursday, October 29, 2015 PRINCETON MUNICIPAL BUILDING Meeting Room A –7:30 P.M. Princeton, New Jersey

PRESENT: Robert Cerutti, Harry Cooke, Dana Molina, Holly Nelson, Pamela Rew, Lydia Robinson, William Wolfe

ABSENT: Alyce Bush, Robert Freudenberg

ALSO PRESENT: Jack West, Municipal Engineer; Derek Bridger, Zoning Officer; Kerry A. Philip, Secretary

Secretary Philip called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. reading the Opening Statement as required by the Open Public Meetings Act, acknowledging that notice of this meeting was issued on the 22nd day of October, 2015.

MINUTES

a) August 11, 2015 (Revised) – Motion was made by L. Robinson and D. Molina seconded the motion to approve the minutes. The vote was 4-0 in favor of those eligible to vote. Motion carried.

b) September 2, 2015 – Motion was made by H. Cooke and R. Cerutti seconded the motion to approve the minutes. The vote was 4-0 in favor of those eligible to vote. Motion carried.

APPLICATION

- a) 254-258 Nassau Street, LLC
Minor Site Plan w/"D" variance and bulk variances
Nassau Street
Block 30.02, Lot 78
File #Z1515-181VUP
MLUL Deadline: 12/31/15

Representatives for the applicant: Robert Casey, Jr., Esq.; Stark and Stark; Stephen DeRochi, SDR Architecture; Russell Smith, Hopewell Valley Engineering; Jack Morrison, Applicant; Betsy McKenzie, Planner.

The applicant is proposing the construction of a covered porch along the Nassau and Pine Street façades; which will run along Nassau Street to include: Blue Point Grill, Nassau Seafood, and Small World Coffee. This will provide covered outdoor dining (24 seats) for the Blue Point Grill and 6 seats of outdoor dining for Small World Coffee. Features include fixed glass panes, roll up windows with articulated doors to allow the dining area to be used during the winter season. The area is currently heated with wall mounted heaters. Proposed lighting for the area will be provided by an LED linear strip. The applicant proposes to use its existing parking area (18 spaces located to the rear of the Ivy Inn).

Robert Casey, Jr., Esq., briefly described the project and introduced Russell Smith, Engineer for the applicant, to address the board.

Russell Smith, Engineer for the Applicant, addressed the board. A rendering of the site plan was presented showing the outdoor seating in place in front of the building on Nassau Street and also along the building on Pine Street. The proposal would provide a staircase on Pine Street to access the 2nd story. A total of 58 seats are proposed for the three businesses which is a net of 27 new seats. Additional parking would be needed. Six designated parking spaces are proposed in the adjacent parking lot, these spaces are currently assigned for use by the Blue Point Grill and Small World Coffee. Signage is needed to designate the spaces

Jack Morrison, applicant and owner, stated that a majority of the parking in that parking lot at night will be for the Blue Point Grill.

H. Nelson asked about truck parking. Mr. Casey advised that trucks will park behind the building off Pine Street. Mr. Morrison stated that typically the parking lot is not used for truck parking but he wishes to reserve the right to use that lot. Parking attendants for that parking lot are on site occasionally. Mr. Morrison stated that the tables on the second level may not be open during the day, offering seating upstairs would be a seasonal thing.

Chair Wolfe stated that when he visited the site he viewed 10 inside seats and 8 outside seats for Small World Coffee and not six as noted in the report. Mr. Smith stated that the permit history was a part of the report that they provided, approvals are in place for 31 seats and a total of 58 is proposed. Chairman Wolfe stated that every time there is a store remodel the seating changes. Derek Bridger, Zoning Officer, explained the history of the site involving seat counts. He advised that this zone requires 1 parking space for every five seats.

Mr. Smith then discussed the required variances, an FAR variance is needed because any expansion would result in an increased FAR. The project increases the FAR to 1.04 whereas only .6 is permitted. The FAR deviates from what is permitted by .44 but it is a .16 increase from what exists. A variance is needed for building coverage and another for front yard setback. He advised that all variances are pre-existing conditions so they are expanding on the existing variances with this project. Derek Bridger, Zoning Officer, advised that the building is already over the FAR, approval for that was granted in 1997.

Steven DeRochi, Architect for the Applicant, stated that the porch will enclose the entire area but it will appear as an open porch in order to provide outdoor seating for the Blue Point Grill, Nassau Seafood and Small World Coffee. Roll up garage doors are proposed so when they are down you can walk under the porch. He advised that the doors may stick out of the building a little but he is working on that detail so that does not happen. The porch would be steel columns and horizontal beams, when the garage doors of the patio are down there are windows on the top to provide daylight into the interior spaces. Radiant heating in the patio area will be provided. The outdoor seating area proposed on the rooftop of the building will be accessed by a stair on Pine Street. The stair will have its own closing gate so it can be secured, lighting is not proposed for the outside seating area on the street level, the lighting for the rooftop patio would be provided by LED strip lighting (300 lumen) beneath the protective railing around the entire porch area and beneath the individual stairs of the exterior staircase. Table lighting on the rooftop is not being considered.

H. Cooke asked about upstairs seating during inclement weather. Mr. DeRochi stated that no wait staff will be up there.

P. Rew advised that it is required that any egress stairway be covered, the proposed stairway is not covered.

L. Robinson stated that she has concerns about noise for the rest of the neighborhood from pedestrians walking on the stairs and noise from the activity on the roof top.

Mr. Morrison stated that there is already food being served at this location and the first floor noise would be diminished by the porch. The noise from the second floor would be anticipated with a second story open space. Mr. Morrison stated that he has asked the owner of the apartment complex across the street to advise if noise was a problem and no complaints have been received. When people are up twelve feet the noise would be diminished. The last meal at Blue Point Grill is served at 10:00 pm Monday through Friday and 11pm on weekends.

Mr. DeRochi state that the doors will remain open most of the time and will only close during bad weather. Mr. Morrison advised that he has been considering this improvement for years; he wanted something attractive that works. He likes the streetscape and does not wish to lose this.

P. Rew stated that projecting nearer to the streetscape sets a precedent and this not create an equally nice streetscape. The street would be very narrow and the rest of Nassau does not feel this narrow. She has concerns because the existing planters are most likely at the location of the patio exterior wall at a height of 12 feet. Mr. Morrison stated that the planted are in the right of way, beyond their ownership.

D. Molina stated that the improvements result in a solid wall on Pine Street so people walking on Pine cannot see Nassau Street. Mr. Morrison stated that the stairs can be made into an open staircase. D. Molina noted that trash is an existing problem and with additional tables this problem will increase. Mr. Morrison stated that food waste gets picked up daily, recycling is picked up 3 times per week.

P. Rew recommended benches along the sidewalk to create a community spirit. Mr. Morrison advised that he would be happy to do this.

Chair Wolfe asked if the applicant considered moving Small World Coffee into the Subway location. Mr. Morrison, owner of the Subway parcel in question, stated that there is a lot of interest of that in the town and they are happy to discuss this.

Chair Wolfe noted that a lot of seating is proposed with this application and 29 parking spaces would be needed although the zoning ordinance requires 18 spaces. Mr. Morrison stated that every seat he has received approval for and there were parking spaces already grandfathered from previous businesses. He adds parking as his spaces increase. Chair Wolfe stated that the dedicated parking spaces in the parking lot are for seats that already exist. Mr. Casey stated the parking has always been a problem in the downtown and this is why the parking lot was purchased in 1995 by Mr. Morrison.

P. Rew expressed concerns about the FAR variances and because the building would be projecting into the sidewalk a precedent would be set for the remaining businesses to do the same.

D. Molina stated that she has concerns about a permanent enclosed area, other businesses may be interested in the same treatment.

Mr. Casey stated that the board can recommend that the doors remain open when the seasons permit and that there be no walled off streetscape. He advise that the applicant is willing to take the suggestions and incorporate them into the plan

R. Cerutti asked the applicant if they considered a second floor addition with a staircase on the inside. Mr. DeRochi stated that this would require reconstruction of the whole building and would increase the existing variances.

Mr. West stated that there are eight buildings on that block, three of which go out to the right of way. P. Rew asked the applicant to make a drawing showing the setbacks for adjacent properties, the renderings presented do not really show the neighborhood. The project should retain the existing continuous width of 15 feet and this width is typical in the neighborhood.

R. Cerutti felt that the design is very elegant. He is less concerned about the FAR and parking and more concerned about the incursion into the sidewalk and wants to retain the 15 foot setback.

Chair Wolfe stated that the FAR and parking are his concerns, the street will get more crowded if this is allowed.

H. Cooke stated that the whole project is overwhelming in terms of when the garage doors are closed, this improvement will destroy the streetscape. He agrees with the suggestion for a 2nd story addition. Mr. Morrison stated that the doors will be closed only when it's raining or bitter cold, he would like to create a lot of activity in that section of the downtown.

D. Molina stated that right now there are people who use the outdoor seating for Small World Coffee and they bring their pets. She asked if this would be permitted. Mr. Morrison stated that Blue Point Grill does not permit this but this would be a Board of Health question. D. Molina recommended solar panels on the corner of the property if possible and the applicant should make sure that bike parking is provided.

P. Rew stated that the corner of the block is another concern, it's not just the stairs but the bulk of the structure is now at the corner of the block, and this increases the bulk of the feel.

R. Cerutti stated that new seats are proposed but no additional parking is being provided.

Chair Wolfe polled the members about a second story addition. The board members believe that a second story addition would be more palatable than what is being proposed. Mr. Casey stated that the applicant would like to come back with a plan that would be satisfactory.

D. Molina stated that the proposal has a nice feel but it encroaches into the sidewalk, she believes that during the winter it does not look inviting and this design would make it inviting. She also questioned the black coating on the metal. Mr. Morrison advised that other colors can be considered, the black coating was to replicate the Chelsea Market. Mr. Morrison stated that the panels of the garage doors are solid and this is helpful during the winter months for snow and salting.

There was a great deal of discussion about when the garage doors to the patio will be open. Mr. West suggested April through October.

D. Molina stated that the Pine Street building projection is a concern for her. Instead of the garage doors, she recommends open porch seating year round, upper glass would protect the area when it rains, with fans to use during the summer months and radiant heat during the winter months. This type of outdoor seating is popular in Europe.

Chair Wolfe suggested a minor change to reduce the closing of the corner of the building. He recommended that the canopy be extended four feet and attach the proposed staircase to the four feet in the back. This way the stair can be more open. He also suggested changing the metal color to a dark green instead of black.

Several SPRAB members recommended the redesign of the corner of the proposed structure at Nassau and Pine Streets. The current design creates a solid and tight condition at that corner which is inconsistent with the open pedestrian experience of the neighborhood. The enclosure should be cut back to the line of the existing building along Pine Street. The second floor deck should also be cut back, with only a four foot deep landing and the open stair cantilevered to the east of the existing structure.

The applicant was asked to return to the Board with minor changes to the plan and a rendering of the proposal and the other businesses that exist along the entire block.

With no further business before the Board, motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kerry A. Philip
Secretary