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Planning Commission
433 River St., Ste. 5001
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DRAFT

MEETING MINUTES

The Planning Commission of the City of Troy, New York, conducted a public meeting at **6:00 P.M. on Wednesday, May 17th, 2023**, in person for the Board and available via Zoom conferencing, to act upon the following requests, referred by the Bureau of Code Enforcement of the City of Troy, for review and approval.

6:05 pm – Meeting called to order.

Commissioners in Attendance

James Rath (JR), William Comiskey (WC), Suzanne Spellen (SS), Roddy Yagan (RY), Anthony Mohen (AM), Sara Wengert (SW)

Also, in Attendance

Andy Brick (Planning and Zoning Attorney), Eric Ferraro (Assistant Planner), Steven Strichman (Commissioner of Planning & Economic/Community Development)

Administrative Items

Adoption of Meeting Minutes from April 19, 2023 by Resolution

- **B.C. Motions to: Adopt April PC meeting minutes** . **S.S. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath	X				
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Adopt April PC meeting minutes** . **passed** _

*Commissioner Rath enters at 6:07

*Chairman acknowledges new zoning, procedures, and clarifies a 3 minutes time limit for public comment.

*Andy Brick clarifies new zoning code/ordinances/procedures.

Comment by the Troy Fire Department: Has serious safety concerns about the number of apartment units on PC agendas and being approved, TFD staffing.

“Troy Uniform Firefighters Association Local 86 requests a building moratorium until the staffing shortfalls created by all this new development be addressed by making staffing increases to the department that coincide with the development increases of the last 25+ years.”

Written by Eric Ferraro, On Behalf of the Executive Secretary

Additional information regarding the above listed actions is available by contacting the Planning Commission’s Assistant Planner, eric.ferraro@troyny.gov.

As required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, auxiliary aids and services are available upon request. Please give one-week advance notice for services needed.

- Applicant presentation: TFD
- Commissioner comments and questions to applicant:
 1. S.W. asks about staffing equipment; commends the specifics detailed. Addresses wood frame vs concrete aspects of code. Identifies other measures that would assist in fire safety within the building code, that should be presented to the Dept. of State.
 2. R.Y. clarifies TFD request, elaborates on board’s jurisdiction; Suggests a recommendation letter or petition by the PC to send to the City Council.
 3. A.M. supports TFD and measure to inform City Council and Administration of TFD concerns.
- Request for public comment:
- Commissioner deliberation:
- Applicant response:
 1. Responds to S.W. comment on building codes and standards and how that corresponds to fire safety

New Business

*(PLPC 2023 0030 moved ahead of ‘New Business’ due to size of proposal)

PLPC 2023 0030 –302 Ninth Ave (101.23-2-9) [MF/Neighborhood III]
 Site Plan Review –SEQRA (Type II)

The applicant, Adel Abuzaid, wishes to build a new 24’ 4” x 16’2” wood frame addition at rear of building for additional storage of product. Additional accessories to this proposal include a stockade fence along the north side of the property, and a newly paved surface for off-street parking and garbage storage.

- Applicant presentation: Liza Rodriguez from TAP/Mr. Abuzaid
- Commissioner comments and questions to applicant:
 1. A.B. clarifies “extensions” to be under the authority of the Planning Department.
 2. R.Y. addresses asphalt on site plan; wants replaced with concrete. Requests re-painting exterior. States conditions for approval
 3. J.R. requests street tree plantings
 4. S.W. asks applicant to ensure windows coverings/signage are to code.
- Request for public comment: No
- Commissioner deliberation:
- Applicant response: Addresses commissioner comments

• **R.Y. Motions to: Declare application as complete** . **S.S. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

• **Motion to: Declare application as complete** . **passed 6-0**

• **R.Y. Motions to: Declare PC as lead agency under SEQRA and determine the proposal to be a Type II action** . **J.R. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			

Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Declare PC as lead agency under SEQRA and determine the proposal to be a Type II action . passed 6-0.**

- **A.M. Motions to: Adjourn proposal for a public hearing on June 21st . R.Y. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Adjourn proposal for a public hearing on June 21st . passed 6-0**

Old Business

[PLPC 2022 0097](#) –1818 Fifth Ave. (101.53-6-1) [DMU/DT II]
 Concept Review –SEQRA (Type I)

The applicant, The Rosenblum Companies c/o Bohler, proposes to redevelop the current site of a single story, former and vacant bank building into a 4-story, 71-unit, apartment complex that seeks to restore the continuous pre-urban streetscape. The building will be the city’s first zero-emission multifamily building and will provide residential amenities, bicycle infrastructure and limited onsite parking with additional off-site parking.

- Applicant presentation: Jeff Mirel
- Commissioner comments and questions to applicant:
 1. B.C. Is offsite parking earmarked for this project?
 2. S.S. Doesn’t see how any study can show that 70+ apts aren’t going to generate substantial parking concerns. “People are going to have cars.”; Comparative analysis of cost effectiveness for tenants absent cars ensues. Asks if there’s any way that project could be reduced by 1 story?
 3. A.M. Acknowledges complexities of development and neighborhood sensitivities. Commends applicant’s engagement.
 4. R.Y. Thinks the number of units and the numbers to make project work needs to be substantiated. Loves the environmental/green initiatives of the project. Commends efforts to address parking. Acknowledges neighbors’ concerns about density. Doesn’t like the volume of micro units. Believes people want more space. Asks whether developer would change the proposal to address density; In regards to applicants position of disclosure of numbers, “If you don’t feel like substantiating it from that angle, why should we consider the aspect of that, at all?”. Asks about stormwater runoff and talks with city DPU.
 5. J.R. Asks about on-street parking advocacy for changes. Asks for more detail for rear of building. Parking on Union Street and asks about that portion of the project’s consideration (infrastructure on the Union street side). Asks for street trees to be shown on new site plan.
- Request for public comment: Yes
 1. Steven Buche-neighbor-opposes in its current form.
 2. Gerry DeSeve-neighbor-opposes..”Again”...
 3. Jim DeSeve-neighbor-opposes. “As I said”. “Again”
 4. Norris Pearson-President of the Rensselaer regional chamber of commerce-supports.
 5. Vic Christopher-local business owner-supports
 6. Unnamed citizen-
 7. Emily Menn-councilwoman for district-supports
 8. Bruce Reuben-neighbor-opposes in its current form.

- 9. Jeff Betts-resident of Lansingburg/Troy IDA-supports.
- Commissioner deliberation:
 1. A.M. Can we declare application complete if additional material is requested to address items within packet; cites 3rd party P.E. review.
 - A.B. Mutually independent items; you can have a complete application and still require additional information.
 2. S.W. → R.Y. – “I wonder if the applicant, in preparation for next month’s hearing, could prepare some case studies from other projects in other markets. Will that satisfy the feasibility of this unit type.
 - R.Y. →The question of whether it “satisfies” is a good point. Question of whether this fits the neighborhood/community character and if the density count could create an adverse impact to the ENV.
 - S.W. → “you mean the character of the people; that’s dangerous.”
 3. J.R. States he recently stayed with a friend with a 500 sq ft micro unit. Said it worked for them. Respects neighbors’ points on sunlight and parking. Is also thinking about the needs of business owners trying to keep their businesses open and what it means to have 70-100 new residents on 5th. Agrees with A.M. about the amount of asphalt around downtown.
- Applicant response:
 1. To Neighbors:
 - project seeks to find balance and support of residents, by honoring their suggestions into design as much as possible and be respectful to neighborhood and its character.
 - Shares concerns with TFD staffing and ability to safely do their job. Correlates project to their wellbeing.
 - Project in its current form is the best way to make numbers work.
 - This project hits desired characteristics stated in the Comprehensive Plan
 - Committed to long term management of property.
 2. (B.C.) Off site parking is not earmarked. Holding it in reserve should it be necessary.
 3. (S.S.) References the TDMP study. Contends cost effectiveness for tenants is suitable for demographic; There is no possibility of project being reduced in size by 1 floor. Clarifies points.
 4. (R.Y.) We wouldn’t have come up with this project if there wasn’t enough data available to substantiate the numbers. Project isn’t about profit. More about hitting environmental factors and conformity to comprehensive plan. Thinks providing account details is outside the purview of the PC. Responds to R.Y. about provision of numbers/PC purview.; Ongoing talks with City DPU.
 5. (J.R.) Has not followed up on advocacy of parking changes to 5th. Union street side will be in keeping with what we did with the News Apts. Will provide a more in-depth detail about use of rear of building; They will be making some infrastructure improvements on Union St. side.

• **R.Y. Motions to: Declare application to be a complete application . A.M. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

• **Motion to: Declare application to be a complete application . passed 6-0**

• **R.Y. Motions to: Set public hearing for June 21st . A.M. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Set public hearing for June 21st . passed 6-0
PLPC 2023 0011 – 625 Seventh Ave (80.56-3-1) [MU-1/Neighborhood II]
 Concept Review –SEQR (Unlisted)**

The applicant, 625 7th Ave, LLC, wishes to convert the former Catholic Central High School building in Lansingburgh into 74 market-rate apartments. Upgrades include new interior amenities and exterior site improvements.

- Applicant presentation: Joe Pernicero
 1. Clarifies that the Gym is part of the proposal as well and to update for next month’s agenda. Gym to be converted to a mixed-use building. 35 additional apartments.
- Commissioner comments and questions to applicant:
 1. S.S. thinks it’s a great project.
 2. R.Y. Asks about the alignment of the parking lot and number of spots.
 3. J.R. Thinks the project could benefit with more trees; Would like to see a detailed management plan.
 4. S.W. thinks the Gym’s exterior could use a cleaning. Replace exterior light fixtures.
 5. A.M. Thinks the ‘landbank approach’ to parking could be a good fit for this. Asks about commercial tenant.
- Request for public comment: Yes
 1. Mark Speedy-neighbor-supports
 2. Gerry DeSeve-neighbor-supports
- Commissioner deliberation:
 1. J.R. talks about ‘land bank parking’ Thinks it might be applied to this project.
- Applicant response:
 1. (R.Y.) Responds to questions about parking lot.
 2. Prefers the ‘land bank parking’ approach.
 3. Will provide more trees on project site plan.
 4. Have an exterior scope. Brick will be cleaned. Will provide a breakdown of that scope next time.
 5. Doesn’t have a commercial tenant yet.

- **J.R. Motions to: Declare the application to be complete . R.Y. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Declare the application to be complete . passed 6-0**

- **R.Y. Motions to: Set hearing date for June 21st . S.S. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to Set hearing date for June 21st . passed 6-0**

New Business

PLPC 2023 0009 –21 First St –YWCA (100.60-4-2) [DMU/DT II] Site Plan Review –SEQRA (Type I)

The applicant, Spring City Development Group, LLC, wishes to construct a 5-story residential building to support the YWCA of the Greater Capital Region. The proposed construction will include parking, offices, residential amenities on the ground floor with units above and site enhancements to surrounding sidewalks and curbs.

- Applicant presentation: Spring City Development Group, LLC
- Commissioner comments and questions to applicant:
 1. R.Y.-Requests clarification of the nature of ownership of the project and division of groups involved to start.
 2. S.W. questions regarding the playground. Concerned for the neighbor to the south as windows will be rendered useless. Would like to see more renderings of the project. Is not sold on architectural features.
 3. R.Y. shares concern for S.W.'s comments.
 4. J.R. wants to understand how the project/building will be managed. Thinks the downtown area can handle the buildings size/scale. Encourages applicant to advocate for change to parking requirements (2-hour).
 5. A.M. Wonders if this should be allocated to a special hearing date that's not on the 21st [of June]; Delegates to City Staff for a date TBD for the project hearing.
- Request for public comment: Yes
 1. David Graham-neighbor-opposes.
 2. Keith Pickard-neighbor-opposes.
 3. Clark Foley-neighbor-states suggestions for consideration by the board
 4. Harriet Graham-neighbor-states concerns.
 5. Russel Brooks-neighbor– opposes in its current form.
 6. Phil Farnaci-neighbor-opposes.
 7. Amy Halloran-district resident-supports
 8. Emily Menn-neighbor/district councilperson-states concerns
 9. Mark Speedy-Lansingburg resident-supports
 10. Jeff Betts-Lansingburg resident/IDA-makes recommendations
- Commissioner deliberation:
 1. E.F. confirms authorization to act as agent forms were received for A.M.
 2. S.S. Doesn't think it's a complete application.
 3. J.R. Wants further clarification about what constitutes a complete application and what the benefit would be by not accepting it as "complete". A.B. responds/clarifies.
 - Thinks the application is complete and can ask for additional info to move proposal forward.
 - Agents are not uncommon for owners. Doesn't have a concern about ownership.
 4. R.Y. wants to ensure Susanne has an understanding of what was explained and current application.
 5. S.W. to A.B. what rights does a neighbor have with consideration to the setbacks? Thinks the 0-setback requirement will result in apartments being rendered unrentable due to lack of sunlight.
- Applicant response
 1. (R.Y.) The YWCA is the owner and will be throughout. SCD was improperly listed as applicant. They are the 'agent' for the applicant. Another detail needs to be corrected. Narrative says 68, it's 53 units. Clarifies title issue.
 2. Says they will submit a title report to city to clarify ownership.
 3. Responds to community/public comments/concerns.
 4. Will provide details on the management of property.
- **A.M. Motions to: Declare the application to be complete . J.R. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen			X		
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Declare the application to be complete . passed 5-1**

- **R.Y. Motions to: Act as lead agency under SEORA . B.C. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Act as lead agency under SEORA . passed 6-0**

- **A.M. Motions to: Adjourning proposal to a date TBD by city staff & in coordination with the availability of the Planning Commission and the applicant . R.Y. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Adjourning proposal to a date TBD by city staff & in coordination with the availability of the Planning Commission and the applicant , passed 6-0**

PLPC 2023 0028 –285-289 River Street (101.45-5-3) –The American Theatre (DMU/DT II)
 Site Plan Review –SEQRA (Type I)

The applicant, Arts Center & Theatre of Schenectady, Inc (dba Proctors), proposes to refurbish and restore the former American Theatre as such and re-open as a daily venue for movies and contemporary music. The proposed seating provides for 100 people and the venue anticipates hosting an estimated 200 events a year.

- Applicant presentation: By SWBR Associates
- Commissioner comments and questions to applicant:
 1. R.Y. Rooftop activation; Questions about façade, street space and A/V for performance viewings. Asks about dumpster/garbage plan.
 2. S.W. asks about the planters in front. J.R. asks if there’s a plan for it. S.W. thinks it can go.
 3. Steven Strichman agrees [about planters] but will have to look into the grant requirements.
 4. J.R. thinks a street tree would be appropriate and some degree of bicycle parking/infrastructure. Site plan doesn’t include sidewalk.
- Request for public comment: No
- Commissioner deliberation: General approval
- Applicant response:
 1. We can’t activate rooftop due to structural and HRC.
 2. Responds to questions about façade and street space. States have no plans to activate windows to pedestrian amenities due primarily to historical review. Addresses questions about interior seating layouts and screen productions/tech. Garbage will be stored in basement until trash night.

- **A.M. Motions to: Declare the application to be complete . **R.Y. seconded.****

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Declare the application to be complete . passed **6-0****

- **R.Y. Motions to: Declare PC as lead agency under SEORA . **J.R. seconded.****

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Declare PC as lead agency under SEORA . passed **6-0****

- **. . Motions to: Set hearing date for proposal to June 21st . **S.S. seconded.****

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan					
Sara Wengert					
Suzanne Spellen					
Anthony Mohen					
James Rath					
William Comiskey					

- **Motion to: Set hearing date for proposal to June 21st . passed **6-0****

PLPC 2023 0031 –1776 Sixth Ave (101.54-2-16) [DMU/DT II]
 Concept/Change of Use/Site Plan Review –SEORA (Type I)

The applicant, First Columbia, LLC., seeks a change of use of the existing 2 story office building from commercial to residential & to construct an additional 4 floors, creating 64 residential units (184 bedrooms) for graduate student housing.

- Applicant presentation: Nate Bette
- Commissioner comments and questions to applicant:
 1. J.R. →A.B. Are pilots within the purview of the PC. Answer: no
 2. S.W. Likes building. Suggest architectural language of building to carry ‘up’ as a cohesive building out to the fenestration. “; make it look like 1 building instead of 2”
 3. J.R. Thinks there’s more they could see within the application. Would like more elaborate details, renderings, something in color. Asks about connection to the approach [up the hill]. Thinks they should advocate for parking changes on 6th (eliminating 2-hr parking) and to provide management details for next meeting.
 4. R.Y. wants to see more street views. Ask if they’ve had preliminary discussions with R.P.I. and/or Sage. Asks about communal space for amenities, asks for details.
- Request for public comment: Yes
 1. Gerry DeSeve-Asks about zoning and if project will get pilots.
- Commissioner deliberation:
- Applicant response.

1. We can provide renderings/more details. Will also provide details as requested by R.Y.
2. We have had very preliminary discussions with institutions.
3. We are conducting interviews with national management firms.

- **R.Y. Motions to: Declare the application as complete . A.M. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Declare the application as complete . passed 6-0**

- **R.Y. Motions to: Declare PC as lead agency under SEORA . A.M. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Declare PC as lead agency under SEORA . passed 6-0**

- **R.Y. Motions to: Set hearing for the June 21st PC meeting . J.R. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Set hearing for the June 21st PC meeting . passed 6-0**

- **J.R. motioned to: Adjourn April PC meeting at: 10:19 PM . S.S. seconded.**

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Roddy Yagan		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Anthony Mohen		X			
James Rath		X			
William Comiskey		X			

- **Motion to: Adjourn meeting at: 10:19 . passed 6-0.**