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Planning Commission
433 River St., Ste. 5001
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Meeting Minutes
August 20th, 2020 @ 6:00 pm

The Planning Commission of the City of Troy, New York conducted a public hearing on Thursday, 20 August, 2020 at 6:00pm via Zoom Conferencing, in order to hear and decide on proposals for development as follows:

6:00pm – Meeting called to order

Commissioners in Attendance

Deirdre “Dede” Rudolph (DR), Sara Wengert (SW), Suzanne Spellen (SS), Barbara Higbee (BH), Anthony Mohen (AM)

Commissioners Absent

None

Also in Attendance

Andy Brick (Planning and Zoning Attorney), Aaron Vera (City Engineer, Executive Secretary)

PLPC 2020 0024 – 515 First Street (111.52-6-8)

Change of Use

Veterans Program, Inc. & Capital District Women is proposing to convert a single-family residence into a community residential facility. The applicant is represented by Dr. Christine Rem.

Vera: Brief discussion of the project.

Rem: Brief discussion of the project.

Motion to open public hearing SW, SS seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

Motion to close BH, SS seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

Motion to approve the change of use as presented AM, SW seconded.

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain
Deirdre Rudolph		X		
Sara Wengert		X		
Suzanne Spellen		X		
Barbara Higbee		X		
Anthony Mohen		X		

Passed 5-0.

PLPC 2019 0004 – 438 Fourth Street (112.29-5-8)

Site Plan Review and SEQR Determination (Unlisted)

Finelli Development, LLC is proposing a new 11-unit apartment complex. The applicant is represented by Maurizio Cassano.

Vera: Applicant not present.

Wengert: Physical samples of materials to be used, digital photos acceptable.

Motion to table BH, SS seconded.

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain
Deirdre Rudolph		X		
Sara Wengert		X		
Suzanne Spellen		X		
Barbara Higbee		X		
Anthony Mohen		X		

Passed 5-0.

PLPC 2020 0020 – 3 East Industrial Parkway (111.51-1-3)

Site Plan Review

Capital City Produce is proposing to convert a vacant warehouse into a wholesale produce distribution center. The applicant is represented by Christopher Longo, P.E. of Empire Engineering, PLLC.

Motion to open public hearing SW, SS seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

Longo: Project update provided.

Motion to close public hearing SS, BH seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

Motion to approve SW with conditions:

1. Ten (10) northern spaces are banked. The applicant shall coordinate with the City Engineer’s office prior to future construction
2. Department of Public Utilities (DPU) approval shall be obtained.
3. The applicant shall submit an application for a Building Permit within six (6) months of approval.

AM seconded.

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain
Deirdre Rudolph		X		
Sara Wengert		X		
Suzanne Spellen		X		
Barbara Higbee		X		
Anthony Mohen		X		

Passed 5-0.

PLPC 2020 0026 – 2377 Burdett Avenue (101.32-7-6)

Site Plan Review

Ayman Khalil is proposing to create off-street parking for residential tenants. The applicant is represented by Edward Esposito, R.L.A. of Monarch Design.

Motion to open public hearing SW, SS seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

Motion to adjourn public hearing SW, SS seconded.

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain
Deirdre Rudolph		X		
Sara Wengert		X		
Suzanne Spellen		X		
Barbara Higbee		X		
Anthony Mohen		X		

PLPC 2020 0011 – Kings Landing II (101.38-9-10)

Site Plan Review and SEQR Determination (Unlisted)

BDC Holdings, LLC is proposing to demolish three (3) existing structures and construct a new five-story building with 62 residential units and two levels of parking (68 spaces). The applicant is represented by Nicholas Costa, P.E. of Advance Engineering.

Marfione/Costa/Olson: Reviewed changes per Commission and Third-Party Consultant comments; including additional sidewalk connections and revisions to traffic patterns. Context was provided in the form of photo renderings to show how the proposed building may appear in the existing streetscape.

Motion to open public hearing SW, SS seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

Drea Leanza - 2227 5th Ave. – Concerns about traffic exiting onto 5th Ave. Scale/Height of the buildings is too imposing. If the tenants have to pay for parking, may not use it and instead park on the street.

Trudy Hanmer – 2142 5th Ave – Seconds comments of Drea.

James Rath – Asked about the similarities between the architecture of King’s Landing I and King’s Landing II as well as traffic flows/pattern.

Marie Gavazzi - 1922 5th Ave. – Sewer capacity is an issue during large storms. Salvage of historic architecture from the buildings to be demolished should be considered.

John Waite - 1920 5th Ave. – This area is eligible for historic registry. The building is out of scale with the neighborhood at five (5) stories. The parking on the first level limits the traditional activity of a city street. SEQR should identify the historic nature of the area.

Doris Day – 11 Stannard Ave. - This development will close-in the neighboring church, Bethel Baptist. Parking will be an issue when church services are held. The area is over developed. This looks like City Station and Troy is supposed to be historic. This is a rapid change of Troy’s neighborhoods.

Barbara Higbee (recused) – 2167 5th Ave. – Please keep the public hearing open.

Motion to adjourn public hearing made by DR, SW seconded.

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Recused
Deirdre Rudolph		X			
Sara Wengert		X			
Suzanne Spellen		X			
Barbara Higbee					X
Anthony Mohen		X			

Passed 4-0.

Wengert – Recognizes the comments of Waite and the architectural contributions of the site to the City. This project has a prominent location. There is an opportunity for this building to be a remarkable piece of architecture and at this point I do not believe it does that. The building does not respond to its context and nor does it present a forward thinking landmark.

Spellen – Reiterates Wengert’s comments.

7:00pm – New Business

PLPC 2020 0031 – 101-119 County Garden Apartments (112.-4-36.411)
Site Plan Review and SEQR Determination (Unlisted)
Country Garden Acres Limited is proposing 21 new low rise structures containing 150 new dwelling units. The applicant is represented by Roger Keating, P.E. of Chazen Companies.

Keating – Provided a general overview of the site.

Motion to open public hearing SW, SS seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

City Staff Comments regarding trail connectivity and area projects.

Joe Durkin – Rensselaer Land Trust – This proposal will make several critical connections for overall walking trails and systems. This is also part of the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Troy.

John Johanson - 152 Mill St. – Appreciate the coordination of the applicant and seconds Durkin’s comments.

Hezzie Philips - 107 Mill St. - Second Durkin and Johanson comments.

Kevin Vandenburg - 430 Ninth Ave. – The applicant will continue to work with the Rensselaer Land Trust. Additional lands (non-contiguous) may be donated as well.

Dan Phiffer - 143 9th St – Seconds Johanson comments. Would like to see trail connection.

Guy Schaffer – 161 Second St. – Avid fan of the narrows.

Eric Siemens – 71 Mill St. – In support of project.

Tess Myer – 50 Springwood – In support of project.

Motion to close public hearing SS, SW seconds. **Passed 5-0.**

Motion to declare the Planning Commission lead agency for SEQR and that review be coordinated SW, AM seconded.

	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain
Deirdre Rudolph		X		
Sara Wengert		X		
Suzanne Spellen		X		
Barbara Higbee		X		
Anthony Mohen		X		

Passed 5-0.

Motion to table by SW, SS seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

PL 2018 0004 – 144 Ninth Street (101.39-6-11)

Site Plan Review and SEQR Determination (Unlisted)

IQ Troy, LLC (Neal Kurzner) is proposing to convert a church into eight (8) apartments. The applicant is represented by Mary Elizabeth Slevin, Esq. of Stockli Slevin, LLP and Luigi Palleschi of ABD Engineers, LLP.

Motion to open public hearing SW, AM seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

Amy Halloran – 221 10th St. – [reads letter signed by several neighbors] Concerned about zoning and offered suggestions to applicant to improve neighborhood with the project.

Dan Phiffer – 143 9th St. – Seconds letter.

Jack McGuy – 221 10th St. – Character of neighborhood will be impacted. Would like the applicant to work with the neighborhood to arrive at a plan which mitigates concerns.

Motion to close public hearing SW, SS seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

SS – Concerns about the floor plan and tight space in building for so many people.

DR – Asked for a new site plan with all internal and external improvements from applicant.

SW – Parking lot concerns. Recommends new sidewalk and fencing if fencing is to be included. Wants to see a garden implemented for the neighborhood.

Motion to declare lead agency for SEQR review SW, SS seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

Motion to table to next meeting SS, BH seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

Motion (AM) to adjourn. (SW) seconded. **Passed 5-0.**

To the Planning Commission:

The neighbors of the Armenian Church have been concerned about this proposal since it materialized. We are zoned R-2, Two-Family Residential, meaning only 1 and 2-family residences are allowed, so to have a dormitory style apartment building situated in our neighborhood is less than ideal. We regret the ZBA's decision, which was controversial and contested, because of the negative impact of cars, traffic, and likely student lifestyle habits that will come with allowing this variance. In order to mitigate these interruptions to the character of our neighborhood, we came up with a few suggestions.

First, signage on sidewalks and striping on the street for suggested parking spaces will ameliorate the influx of vehicles. Painting the street with specific parking spots, and having signs to keep cars from blocking visibility at corners are steps that protect walkers. There is no stoplight at either intersection on this site, and only stop signs for the North-South traffic, so the developers should be responsible for inviting a safer environment for the many pedestrians who use this area. As many as 27 cars could come with 27 new residents; please help cushion the danger of that many more cars here by planning for the parking and walking issues that will arise.

Second, we'd like full sidewalk replacement around the site, and decent sized street trees shading and greening these new sidewalks. Installation of pedestrian-level lighting to replace existing street lights will be a general improvement for everyone who walks here, too. Repaving the parking area(s) with porous pavement to lessen the amount of runoff would be an environmentally sensitive upgrade. Using deflection guards to keep parking lot and other lighting from shining in neighbor's windows is requested.

Last but not least, we propose a garden in the upper lot on the corner of Tenth and Eagle Streets. The Armenian Church was a quasi-public space, and is being converted to a private space. A garden can soften the impact of this new style and scale of housing on our neighborhood. A garden space is a bridge between the old function of this property and the new one, and there are examples of similar gardens elsewhere, like Leslie's Garden at the School Ten apartments in South Troy. A garden will invite the new residents and the existing community to enjoy nature, and maintain the quasi-public nature of the church space. Without such an opportunity, it is unlikely that students and community members will have any reason to connect with each other, which has been part of our concern. A garden would bridge the worlds that this apartment building is bringing together.

A garden could be planted with cherry and plum trees, fruits that reflect the Armenian heritage of this site and our neighborhood. A garden would also be a nod to the memory of Chico Christopher, an architect with TAP and board member of Capital Roots; Chico lived beside the church for decades, and this would be a lovely way to remember him and his love for plants and people.

Amy Halloran, Felix & Jack Magai 221 Tenth Street

Beth Steckley & Mary Corrigan 115 Ninth Street

Emily Luddy 45 Eagle street

Joshua Childs 2221 13th street

Ellie Irons & Dan Pffifer 143 Ninth Street

Maura Marcks 28 Eagle Street

Liza Rodriguez, 15th Street

Kyra Garrigue, Lola Garrigue and Justin Baker 115 11th Street

Jesse Marshall, 221 Tenth Street

Amy Klein, Capital Roots

Barb Nelson, TAP