

**City of Schenectady
Board of Zoning Appeals
Meeting Minutes
July 1, 2020**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Gleason called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Due to the closure of City Hall because of the Covid-19 Virus, the meeting was conducted online via WebEx.

After calling the meeting to order Mr. Gleason explained to the members of the public present how the consideration of the applications would proceed. He stated that the applicants would have an opportunity to make their presentation to the Board, followed by any members of the public who would like to speak in favor of the application. Next any members of the public in opposition to the application would be invited to speak, followed by any further discussion or questions the Board Members wished to put forth prior to the vote. He added that after the initial presentation of the proposal the applicant would not be given another opportunity to comment unless directly questioned by a Board Member.

Prior to taking the first item on the agenda Mr. Gleason announced to any members of the public present that the application by Redburn Development for a Use Variance for 1 North Church Street had been withdrawn by the applicants.

II. ATTENDANCE

PRESENT: James Gleason, Chair; Fred Clark; David Connelly; Mary D'Alessandro-Gilmore; Brendan Keller; Helene Lester; Krystina Smith; Avi Epstein, Neighborhood Stabilization Coordinator; Jennifer Mills, Secretary

III. CONFLICT OF INTEREST CHECK

None.

IV. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Keller, seconded by Mr. Connelly, to approve the Minutes of the June 11, 2020 meeting as submitted.

Motion carried unanimously.

V. NEW BUSINESS - APPLICATIONS

A. CITY MISSION OF SCHENECTADY requests an area variance for 302 & 306 Lafayette Street (39.80-3-9.1 & 39.80-3-10) located in the C-4 Downtown Mixed Use Zoning District, to allow for 20 dwelling units to provide 10 parking spaces where 30 is required pursuant to Schedule F of the Zoning Ordinance.

Tim Castle, Attorney for the City Mission, and Dave Kimmer of ABD Engineers appeared before the Board.

Mr. Castle explained that the City Mission plans to build twenty transitional housing units on the site, which has parking for ten vehicles where thirty are required. He stated that if they were to add an additional twenty parking spaces on the site the size of the building and the number of units would have to be greatly reduced, an outcome which they do not believe meets the City's or the Mission's goals for the downtown area. He noted that as these are transitional housing units the vast majority of the residents do not own vehicles, and most work downtown within walking distance. Mr. Castle stated that if they were to need more than the ten spots on any given day the Mission owns other parking lots close by and there is plenty of on-street parking available in the immediate area.

Mr. Connelly asked Mr. Castle if the City Mission owns that entire block. Mr. Castle responded that they own all of the property except the former OTB building and the Re4orm Architecture office building. Mr. Connelly asked if either of those building have onsite parking. Mr. Castle replied that the OTB building does have some parking behind it. Mr. Connelly asked if the overflow parking that Mr. Castle was referring to was the parking lots on Hamilton Street. Mr. Castle stated that he was referring to those, and also the parking lots at two of their other residences on the block, an 8-unit building and a 16-unit building, whose combined twenty-four parking spaces are never more than 50% in use.

Mr. Epstein noted that this project had recently received site plan approval from the Planning Commission.

Ms. D'Alessandro-Gilmore asked Mr. Castle if he knows approximately how many of the tenants in the building will own vehicles. Mr. Castle responded that this tenant group has not been finalized yet so he could not say for certain, but on average about 80% of transitional housing residents do not own vehicles.

PUBLIC COMMENTS IN FAVOR

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS IN OPPOSITION

None.

CONTINUED DISCUSSION

Mr. Gleason stated that the City Mission has done an excellent job thus far in their development in the area and he believes that they know best what their demand for parking will be in this type of housing. Mr. Connelly agreed,

stating that there is also plenty of on-street parking available on Hamilton street, and not many other properties around except those owned by the Mission. Ms. Smith stated that because this is transitional housing and the City Mission has stated that most of the tenants will not have vehicles, she has no objection to the variance in this case. Mr. Keller agreed, stating that he believes that the number of spaces being provided is reasonable for this building and the proposal also supports the City's goal of creating a more walkable downtown, as opposed to one dominated by paved parking lots.

SEQR RESOLUTION

Motion by Mr. Connelly, seconded by Mr. Keller, to declare the project a Type 2 SEQR action, with no significant adverse impacts on the environment.

Motion carried unanimously.

AREA VARIANCE APPROVAL

Motion by Mr. Connelly, seconded by Mr. Keller, to approve the Area Variance based on the following findings of fact:

1. No undesirable change will be produced in the neighborhood.
2. The benefit sought by the applicant cannot be achieved by another method. There are significant alternative parking options in the immediate area, including on-street parking and other lots owned by City Mission that are close by.
3. The variance is not substantial.
4. There will be no adverse effect on physical or environmental conditions in the neighborhood.
5. The alleged hardship is not self-created.

Motion carried unanimously.

VII. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Motion by Mr. Connelly, seconded by Ms. D'Alessandro-Gilmore, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.