

MINUTES

WATERTOWN ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2008 - 7:30 P.M.
WATERTOWN HIGH SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY CENTER

APPLICATION #882 – TAFT SCHOOL

PRESENT: Mr. Enrico Sarandrea, Chairman
Mr. John Griffith, Vice Chairman
Mr. Phil Roger, Interim Secretary
Ms. JoAnna Abraham

ABSENT: Mr. Roger Mitchell

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Mr. Jeff Franson
Mr. Gary Swingle (In for Roger Mitchell)

ALTERNATES ABSENT: Mr. Jason Aldridge

OTHERS PRESENT: Moosa Rafey, Assistant Zoning Enforcement Officer

1. Call Meeting to Order

Mr. Sarandrea, Chairman, Called the Public Hearing to Order at about 7:30 PM (7:56 PM)

2. Roll Call

Mr. Roger executed the Roll Call.
Mr. Sarandrea read the ground rules for the public hearing.

3. Hearing of Cases

C. Application #882 of the Taft School requesting for a height variance of 15 feet to permit renovation and expansion of an existing building at 110 Woodbury Road, Watertown, CT in an R-20F Residential Zoning District.

The public hearing must be closed by April 2, 2008 unless applicant grants an extension of time.

Mr. Roger read the Legal Notice as follows:

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“Town of Watertown Legal Notice

The Zoning Board of Appeals of the Town of Watertown will hold a public hearing at 7:30PM on Wednesday, February 27, 2008 at the Watertown High School Technology Center 324 French Street Watertown, CT to hear and act upon the following applications:

Application #882 of the Taft School requesting a height variance of 15 Ft to permit the renovation and expansion of an existing building with a maximum height of 50 foot located at 110 Woodbury Road, Watertown Fire District, Connecticut in an R-20F Residential Zoning District.

Section 83.21.5.2 of the Watertown Fire District Zoning Regulations allows maximum 35 foot height for any building in an R-20F Residential Zoning District.

At this hearing interested persons and written communications will be heard. A copy of the applications is on file in the Planning and Zoning Office, 51 Depot Street, Suite 502, Watertown, CT.

Dated in Watertown, CT this 14th day of February 2008

Dated in Watertown, CT this 21st day of February 2008

Rick Sarandrea, Chairman
Zoning Board of Appeals”

Gil Thornfeldt, Business Manager, Taft school

Mr. Thornfeldt explained the background of Taft School.

Eric Svahn, Project Manager for the Gunned Partnership

Mr. Svahn explained according to the zoning regulations 83-21.5.2 in terms of exceeding the maximum height of 35 feet in an R-20F residential zone and that’s one of the key hardships due to the school presently sitting in a residential zone. They are not residential buildings or residential uses. The commission members reviewed the photos. The Taft buildings all have well planted mature trees in front of the buildings. The dining hall to the west side is the existing Armstrong ding hall now. That was built in 1950. The current kitchen food service was last updated then. Currently on the new plan the seating is 650 seats and it’s not for adding any new students it to accommodate the entire student body and the faculty for a sit down dinner. The new addition is also shown and decided to put the kitchen in the basement. He stated one of the hurdles to make this project happen was the decision to put the kitchen in the basement. Most food service consultants would say

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they would like to keep the kitchen next to the server for easy access. In order to conserve and keep the dining hall in the center of the campus and to create the smallest footprint possible, the kitchen is below the server as noted on the drawing.

Mr. Svahn also stated that on the south of the plan which is the Woodbury Street and the view from the public as the cars drive by the important features of the new building is the face is approximately 10 feet back from the existing building. They are not encroaching anymore towards the public street. Secondly on the west hand side there is a courtyard which is currently paved and that's where all the trucks, food service, and trash hauling dumpsters drive in and around. That mixes trucks with students. So part of this project moves the loading dock to the south side and creates a pedestrian court yard which is easier getting service trucks in along the front drive of the building and secondly removes the students and the service trucks from passing each other. The north side is the pond side and with that being a new face to the building they did not want to build out or encroach anymore on the pond so the idea of putting a new dining space out towards the pond was rejected in favor of moving to the west.

Mr. Svahn then went on to discuss the height issue. They will keep the existing roof and second floor and put new bay windows and a new floor underneath it. The effort was to keep the existing roof structure and rebuild the wall below. The yellow tower towards the center is a fire exit stair and because of the existing building there are dorms up above on 3 floors and are providing a new stair to exit those 3 floors. This tower sits in an exiting foot print. The new stair tower doesn't encroach on anymore footprint than already previously existed. The bottom plan shows the west facing new dining room.

Mr. Svahn showed photographs of the models. The pitch on the roof is the same pitch of the existing roofs. He explained the first hardship is that the school is located in the residential zone. They are not residential scale buildings because it's a school building. Secondly they did not want to encroach on the pond. The school is in desperate need of the project. The other issue in terms of the towers they are serving egress functions. It's a life safety issue. The project is approximately 24,000 Sq. Ft of new and they are doing another 27,000 Sq. Ft of renovation in the upper floors because there are dorms in the tower area. Thirdly it's a project that fits into the school from the public view.

Mr. Franson asked if they have reviewed the plans with the fire marshal and fire chief as far as egress in with fire engines and equipment. Mr. Svahn explained that they maintained the existing access for the fire trucks. They did talk to the local and state fire marshal. Mr. Franson asked for a letter from the fire chief saying he approves with the plan. Mr. Rafey explained that he had visited the site the day before and did not see any problems with the plan. He also explained that they will be going to the Wetland Commission because they are in the 50 foot setback area. After that they will go in front the Planning and Zoning Commission for final review of the site plan. He also said that there were about 5 or 6 neighbors that came to the office and were concerned about some of the other buildings and thought some of the houses Taft school owned would be raised

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in height. Mr. Rafey explained to the neighbors and showed the plan and they were satisfied.

Motion was made by Mr. Roger to close the public hearing and seconded by Dr. Griffith.

Discussion: None Vote: 5 in favor Abstained: 0 Opposed: 0

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Attest:

Enrico Sarandrea, Chairman
Zoning Board of Appeals

Approved: _____
Jennifer Guerrero, Minutes Secretary