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**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City of Rensselaer Planning Commission  
First Floor Conference Room, City Hall, 62 Washington Street  
April 8, 2019**

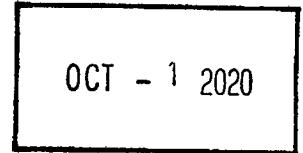
**Members Present:**

George Farrell, Bob Campano, Ray Stevens, Christine VanVorst, Ed Schillaci, Farrel Salsbury

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**Staff Present:**

Charles Moore, Director (Planning Office)  
Ketura Vics, Assistant Director(Planning Office)  
Jack Spath, Corporation Counsel



**Call to Order:**

Christine Van Vorst (Chair) called the meeting of the City of Rensselaer Planning Commission to order at 6:30 PM. Roll call was taken; quorum was established

**RENSSELAER CITY CLERK**

**Election of Officers:** G. Farrell makes a motion to elect C. VanVorst as chair of the Planning Commission, R. Stevens seconds the motion. Motion passes unanimously. C. VanVorst makes a motion to elect R. Stevens as the Vice Chair, E. Schillaci seconds the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

**Communications:**

There will be a mandatory safety training held by Human Resources on the following 2 Wednesdays (4/10 and 4/17) at 5:30 in the conference room, all members must attend. The Mayor has requested a public hearing be held for this application.

**New Business**

**212 and 214 Washington Avenue** – Tracy Pitcher is seeking approval for SEQR Lead Agency status for the construction of a 2-story, 6 unit apartment building at 214 Washington Avenue and the redevelopment of the building at 212 Washington Avenue into a 4 unit apartment, where the property manager will reside. The property is an MU-1 district, which allows “Dwelling – Multi-family”. Nancy Kupiec introduces herself as the construction manager and Steve Hard introduces himself as the architect. Jack Spath interjects, reminding the commission that the only subject tonight is SEQR Lead Agency status, not project approval or rejection and follows up that because the public comment period is not mandatory, the Commission can do no more than accept comments and thank the public for speaking. Steve continues to explain that there is an existing abandoned building they hope to renovate and a lot where they hope to erect a second building with 10 parking spots. About 50% of parking is on existing asphalt and the remaining would be on new asphalt. The site plan also shows existing fencing, the fencing will be discussed with abutting neighbors to determine options to either keep or replace it. There are existing sewer and water connections and the plan includes new connections as part of the new building. The site has been remediated from its prior use as a gas station and the applicants have done additional digging and soil testing to confirm the quality of the soil is suitable for residential development. Steve comments that they have met with Jim Thomas from the water department to coordinate all new water and sewer connections. C. VanVorst asks about how many parking spots there are in total, Steve replies with 10 (one per unit) but mentions that while on the topic of parking, Nancy hopes to reduce the required number of spaces by preparing them for asphalt paving but instead planting grass until there is a proven need for all

10 parking spaces. This is suggested in the hopes of providing additional green space for the families who will be living in these apartments, as the families will not have cars. Steve comments on the proposed lighting, adding that the applicants are keenly aware of the impact lighting can have in residential areas and they will be considerate of this when designing the final space. Steve then adds that part of the application is a 3ft lot-line adjustment to address the existing NYS codes for building safety in the event of a fire. Nancy adds that she has historic photos and newspaper articles regarding the land and buildings in question. She notes that the environmental engineer for the project is present and has gone to great lengths to ensure the suitability of the soil. All clearing of trees was required to be done before a certain date by the DEC to ensure the protection of long-eared bats. The applicants have a permit in place on 214 to remove the stumps pending site plan approval. C. VanVorst asks if apartments will be going in in the site in question and N. Kupiec replies there will be 4 in the existing building and 6 in the proposed building and they will all be affordable. She continues to explain that the location was selected due to the proximity to the school as well as the nearby public transit lines. Most tenants would be using public transit and after reading our zoning, these principles are consistent with the regulations as they pertain to encouraging pedestrian friendliness and discouraging automobile reliance as well as impervious surfaces. She adds that the project's attorneys are working on mutual easements for the driveway to prevent an additional curb cut, which explains the single driveway in the site plans. All sidewalks will be replaced as well, this includes the addition of street trees. Additionally, the existing site plan includes an encroachment and they will also seek to coordinate permissions to have that encroachment. R. Stevens comments that he reviewed the short form and attached documents and didn't see anything that struck him as a red flag. N. Kupiec adds that this building will have no basement, so excavations will not go below 6 feet in order to lay the foundation. F. Salsbury asks about how many bedrooms will be in each unit, N. Kupiec says the existing building will have two 3-bedrooms and two 2-bedrooms in the rear – this includes a unit for an on-site property manager. In the proposed building, there would be six 3-bedroom apartments. E. Schillaci clarifies that the property manager's unit will be one of the four proposed unit, not an additional fifth unit. C. VanVorst asks if the property manager will maintain the property, N. Kupiec says yes that is the property manager's job. C. VanVorst attempts to clarify that the property manager has an additional day job, N. Kupiec explains that the property management is the full time job as an employee of the St. Paul's Center and will take care of the property while living there and managing both properties in Rensselaer (3<sup>rd</sup> St. as well as the proposed Washington Ave site). R. Stevens asks about the timeline, N. Kupiec says work started on one building first and they realized the lot adjacent was for sale, so they have gutted the existing building and after assessing the costs, applied for grant funding to complete the job to a higher standard and construct a second building. E. Schillaci asks about parking if the property manager has a car and that the applicant seems to think that 6 spaces is adequate for 10 units. N. Kupiec replies that it should be enough, as this is affordable housing and the tenants are not expected to be able to pay for a car, insurance, and costs associated with a car, but that they are able to fit all 10 spaces if the Commission thinks it's necessary. Rather, she hopes to see less underutilized parking and more green space. She adds that Steve Hart will be designing an infiltration system, so the property will not be contributing to the city's stormwater and whether they include the extra 4 spots or not, there will be no concern for runoff. C. VanVorst explains that she can't wrap her head around the idea of more affordable housing when there's already two facilities in the city that offer affordable housing. N. Kupiec explains her definition of affordable housing and says there is a general shortage in the area. C. VanVorst contests the point, saying we already have two facilities with vacancies so she doesn't understand how there can be a shortage. N. Kupiec clarifies that this is housing for working families, not young

professionals. C. VanVorst asks what the rent would be, N. Kupiec says she doesn't have this information as she is only the construction manager but this will be affordable for high quality apartments, which is not what is going up with all of the luxury housing. C. VanVorst says that she owns properties and rents for about \$500/month so she doesn't understand the need for more affordable housing. K. Vics comments that there is a difference between federally subsidized housing and housing made affordable by landlords, and this is the distinction that is being made. E. Schillaci asks about the square footage of the units. N. Kupiec said they're about 1000 sq. ft.. R. Stevens asks about green space, S. Hart answers that that is the reason why they're hoping to reduce parking. C. VanVorst says she is concerned that there will not be enough green space for families with children. N. Kupiec says with the trends moving towards pedestrian friendliness and public transit, she hopes there is no need for additional parking. E. Schillaci asks if the owner has experience managing properties, N. Kupiec says they have over 15 years of experience and they manage one property as well as assist people in finding other properties. C. VanVorst asks if this is a non-profit, E. Schillaci comments that on the Short Form, it says "St. Paul's Center Inc." is the applicant. E. Schillaci asks if Rensselaer residents would have priority, N. Kupiec guesses that there is probably already a waiting list but those people currently live in Rensselaer. E. Schillaci asks if there are income requirements, N. Kupiec replies there are guidelines. Jack Spath interjects that the conversation is getting off track and this application is only for Lead Agency status. C. VanVorst says they knew nothing about the application prior to this meeting and this was just dumped on the Commission. J. Spath says if they have no further questions, the Commission can open the floor to public comment but may not reply.

**Public Hearing** – A non-mandatory public hearing is to be held at the request of the Mayor. Public comment opens at 7:15 and is closed at 7:32. A recording of the public comment has been filed with the City Clerk.

**E. Schillaci makes a motion to declare the Planning Commission Lead Agency. G. Farrell seconds the motion. Motion passes unanimously.**

**Adjournment:**

Motion to adjourn made by Commission member G. Farrell and was seconded by B. Campano. Meeting was adjourned at 7:33 PM

**Next Meeting:**

The next regular meeting is scheduled for **Monday, May 13, 2019 at 6:30 PM**

**Record of Decisions:**

An official record of decisions noting the details of motions and votes from this meeting along with any conditions & stipulations of approval has been filed with the City Clerk and a copy maintained in Planning Department records.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ketura Vics, M.R.P., Assistant Director  
Office of Planning and Development