

CITY OF AUBURN PLANNING BOARD
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2013 6:30 PM, MEMORIAL CITY HALL

Present: Sam Giangreco, Anne McCarthy, Tim Baroody, Crystal Cosentino, Sheli Graney

Absent: Frank Reginelli

Staff: Jennifer Haines, Director, OPED; Andy Fusco, Corporation Counsel; Greg Gilfus, APD Traffic Coordinator; Brian Hicks, Code Enforcement Officer

Agenda Items: Major Site Plan Review 1-7 State Street and Public to be Heard.

Chair calls the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance is recited. Roll is called.

Agenda Item 1: Approval of September 3, 2013 Meeting Minutes.

Chair asks for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 3, 2013 meeting. So moved by Crystal Cosentino, seconded by Sheli Graney. All members vote approval. No members opposed. Motion carried.

Agenda Item 2: Application for Major Site Plan Review for the construction of a 12,500 sq. ft. theater building at 1-7 State Street. Applicant: Cayuga Community College

Chair- Please take note that tonight no voting will take place. This is simply an opportunity for the applicant to introduce the project and allow the public to make comments.

Andy Fusco- I have had the opportunity to discuss one matter with one board member today. We have member Crystal Cosentino whose spouse is on the Musical Festival Theater Board. We wish to acknowledge that on the record. I think disclosure is warranted and if there are any further matters regarding it; those will be discussed on November 6th.

Chair invites the applicant to present the project.

Wendy Marsh, Hancock and Estabrook LLC, Syracuse, representing Cayuga Community College- We are here tonight to present details of the site plan and as you may recall there has been litigation associated with this project. City Council has issued a conditioned negative declaration pursuant to SEQRA and we are in the public comment period so the Planning Board will not be able to make a decision until the end of the comment period. Tonight we want to go through the details. Now, I will turn it over to Karin Green from JMZ.

Karin Green, JMZ Architects and Planners, Glens Falls- I am going to walk you through the site plans and some of the floor plans. The building is about 12,500 square feet, but the main part of the program is a 300 seat theater space. There is also 10,050 square foot stage, lobby and box office on the main level. The other spaces are the supporting spaces of the theater. In the basement there are dressing rooms, staff spaces, green rooms, storage rooms and mechanical spaces. On the catwalk level there are items for the theater such as lights and mechanical space. But, the primary part of the building is the theater space.

Displays Site Plan of 1-7 State Street proposed theater building for board members and audience.

Karin Green-To the left (of site plan) is State Street. The orange/beige portion shown on the site plan is the bulk of the theater.

Displays Ground Floor and Egress Court.

Karin Green- The egress court is located on the South side and that is one of the emergency exits from the theater. Identifies an alley to the back. Loading for the stage is oriented to the back. Identifies the entrance from State Street. We will be restoring part of the alley on State Street that will be disturbed in order to construct the building (dotted area on plan).

Displays Perspective View.

Karin Green- This is a view from State Street. The building mass is about 38 feet tall and as you can see in the rendering, it matches the other buildings on State Street. The main entry is in the middle of the facade. On the right end of the perspective there is a gate for egress from the theater space.

Displays First Floor Plan.

Karin Green- To the left is State Street. As you come in off the main entry of State Street into the lobby (vestibule and lobby are in yellow) there are entry ways to the theater space on either side. The green is the theater space and the lighter green is the stage. The box office appears as pink in the corner and then there are stairs, that go down to the basement or up to the seating in the upper part of the house, which is in the southern corner of the building. Also points to the elevator. The grey coloring indicates storage/mechanical space. Emergency egress is to State Street.

Displays Basement Floor Plan.

Karin Green-This is where the support spaces are located. The stair in the south corner the public would use. There is a lower lobby; the public toilets are at the front of the basement. At the back of the house there are dressing rooms, wardrobe, storage and orchestra and instructional space. The stair in the back corner is egress and access for the back stage for staff and actors. This is also where all of our services come in including electrical, water and storm sewer.

Displays Upper Level Floor Plan.

Karin Green- The auditorium is tiered seating that starts at ground level and goes up about 15 feet. The stair in the south corner, if you were a patron and you wanted to access the seats above, you would either use the elevator or the south stairs. There is a living marquee that would allow you to see the activity of the theater on State St. The tech booth is in the middle for support of sound and lighting. On either side of the stage there are ladders up to the lighting galleries. There is a platform to the south side that could be used by musicians or might be used by certain parts of performance, like a balcony scene or something similar (green area to the south). We also have some mechanical space here (grey area).

Displays Catwalk Level Floor Plan.

Karin Green- Only technical staff would be here for lighting positions and so on. There are ladders from two areas in the back of the stage. The catwalk is donut shaped and colored brown on the plan. There are mechanical spaces as well.

Chair opens public to be heard.

Justin Hoffman, Camardo Law Firm, 127 Genesee St.- Distributes a document to Planning Board members regarding the site plan review of the proposed Schwartz Theater. This document details are concerns with the Theater's current site plan. We have various concerns relating to the fire code. Mr. Neapolitan will be talking in more detail about that but in short State St. is not wide enough to comply with accessibility requirements and the City seems to have claimed some sort of exception but the City cannot deviate from the code without approval from the State. Our other concern relates to the consistent

refusal from the City, College and County to conduct soil and groundwater testing. We have constantly pleaded for these tests to be done. Judge Polito even inquired in why these tests were not being done. Soil conditions affect development and the failure to tests the soils could have grave consequences. I urge all of you to read our letter in detail and require that our concerns be addressed before approving the site plan.

James Neapolitan, Registered NYS Professional Engineer – I am a traffic and transportation engineer with 20 years teaching at Syracuse University. I am the one that raised the issue to Mr. Camardo concerning the fire access and the ability of State Street to satisfactorily and safely handle the crowds that will be attending the theater. What I see is that the present configuration of State Street allows parking on both sides of the street and that narrows the street down to barely the width of one more vehicle. In other words, should something happen in the theater and a fire truck pulls up to the front of the theater, there would not be the ability for the fire truck to have the clearance required by the State fire code and there would be no ability for any other emergency vehicle to have access to the building. A second fire truck would be impossible. It would have to be in front of or behind the first fire truck. There would be no ability for police to access the building. There would not be access for an ambulance to be close enough to get to the building, to pull into State Street and attend to an injured person. Primarily those are my concerns, and it has to do with the safety of the people who will be at the theater.

Kim Pearson, 12 State Street- Lives across from the theater project. I can't speak to any of the issues about fire safety. I know that from my experience from the fact that there are a lot of fire trucks that come down the street, there does not seem to be any problem but I realize that it may be different when a lot of people are there. I mostly wanted to speak and encourage this project to continue. It is great for Auburn, it is going to bring a lot of commerce to Auburn and it's going to bring a lot of people. Everyone complains about too many taxes, you have to bring more business. It is not going to be manufacturing. This project is crucial to the development of downtown.

Andy Fusco- Asks Chair if he can ask Mr. Neapolitan a question.

Chair- Yes.

Andy Fusco- Mr. Neapolitan, I thought I heard you say that there is some type of fire truck clearance regulations in the State building code. Do you have the citation for that?

James Neapolitan- Yes. Appendix D 104 reserved talks about buildings that are in excess of more than 30 feet in height and it states that there must be a clear width of 26 feet for access for fire equipment. At present, that does not exist.

Andy Fusco- Any others besides that Appendix D?

James Neapolitan- Most of the code talks about buildings less than 30 feet tall but I specifically made reference to D 104 which talks about taller buildings.

Tim Baroody- I worked at Syracuse University for 25 years. They just finished a large expansion on University Ave and Irving Ave. where the traveling was 11 foot 4 for two years. You have 30,000 people that walk there every day. How can you differentiate that? I am talking about the quads, the Sheridan, the Health Center. The new dorms had 10 foot and had to re-route traffic and they are 102 feet high. I am trying to find the logic behind nonconforming pre-existing and what you are saying now. We are talking about 30,000 people a day, this is 300.

James Neapolitan- I believe they are talking about 300 seating.

Tim Baroody- Okay 300 people and 100 employees.

James Neapolitan- I am not familiar with what Syracuse University did there so I really cannot comment about that.

Sheli Graney- Refers to the first floor drawing. The alley on the left side (facing the building) the back is entirely closed, there is no exit at all back there.

Karin Green- Yes, the back is a dead end.

Sheli Graney- It strikes me as a little unsafe if people are coming out, if they go the other way that could be a hazard. Where they exit the theater and can go out toward State Street but in the back it is just a dead end.

Tim Baroody- The general public is not going to be exiting out the side. I am assuming that this area is for utility structures and space between the buildings. You show a structural façade tying the two buildings. The exit for theater is to the rear going out, not to the side.

Karin- There is an exit toward the rear for the performers and the exit to the side is an emergency exit only and is for audience. The other two exits toward State Street are also available for the audience. Everything exits towards State Street. The exit off the side would continue through the egress court to State Street.

Jennifer Haines- Our Fire Chief has looked at this design and we can make sure he is here and can give you information on that before the next meeting.

Andy Fusco- I think Sheli's question was- Say I happen to be standing in the alley, where can I go?

Sheli Graney- Or if there is an emergency in the building and folks are fleeing out that door, what if they happen to go the other way? Then they are trapped in the back.

Karin Green- So there is a concern that we need to more proactively direct them to State Street.

Sheli Graney-Can a door or gate be placed from the emergency exit to the alley that dead ends?

Karin Green- Yes, that is possible. We have also provided extra means of safety if there was an emergency to happen in the building. The stair case to the south goes all the way through the building to the top of the roof. This is not something that would normally be done with a building of this size. We have also done a standpipe in that stairway with hose connections that each intermediate level of the stair, all the way up to the roof. The stair is also in a protective 1 hour rated fire enclosure to protect that space from the remainder of the building. These are some of the things we have done to increase the level of fire protection and safety in the building. I also want to mention that the building is made of non-combustible construction. It is steel frame and the exterior walls, three sides are concrete masonry units and the front façade is metal studs with brick as a veneer. The building is also fully sprinkled.

Sam Giangreco- How wide is the alley, opposite of State Street?

Karin Green- The egress court is about 11 feet wide.

Sam Giangreco- Thank you.

Other Matters:

The date of the November Planning Board meeting is rescheduled for Wednesday, November 6, 2013 at 6:30p.m.

Motion to adjourn by Sheli Graney, seconded by Crystal Cosentino. All members vote approval. None opposed. Meeting adjourned.

Respectively Submitted by Renee Jensen