



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 28, 2023

Opening:

The regular meeting of the City of Lackawanna Planning and Development Board was called to order at 6:00pm.

Present: Galanti, Spahn, Zambron, Friend, Clark

Excused: Algawani, Smith

Motion to approve minutes for the meeting held on 5/31/23: Galanti: Second: Friend

All yeas carried 5-0

New Business

Item #1

Special Use Permit

Arthur Nowak

126 Cleveland Ave

Requesting private detached garage micro-gym

Arthur Nowak representing

Mr. Nowak explained he is proposing to operate a small micro-gym in his detached garage located at 126 Cleveland Ave. He described the business model as selling single or joint family memberships with a three (3) -person maximum at a time in specified slots. Members can choose available time slots online and workout for 1 to 2 hours maximum. He added that upon request of a membership, applicants submit their driver license and go through his background check. If a membership is denied no other information about the micro-gym is shared, including the address. If a membership is approved, six (6) -digit access code is automatically forwarded which will direct members to the payment form. Once payment is received members then receive the address and rules for the gym. Mr. Nowak added that everything is controlled remotely

from his phone or I-Pad. He is notified through the motion detected security cameras when a member unlocks the door or enters the premises.

Chairwoman Galanti asked if this is similar to a personal training scenario and to elaborate on the member access to the premises.

Mr. Nowak affirmed and stated there were three (3) tenants living upstairs years ago with three (3) additional cars parked on the street without issues. He added that he doesn't see any issues currently with having a family membership for a few hours throughout the day. Mr. Nowak added that the garage is sound proof and he might seal the windows and doors. As far as security he added that he has four (4) cameras in the garage with plans to add fifteen (15) more around the entire property.

Member Zambron inquired about the hours of operations and asked if Mr. Nowak would be present while members are working out.

Mr. Nowak stated he would not be there all the time and added the hours of operation will be from 7AM to 10PM.

Member Zambron asked if there are bathroom facilities.

Mr. Nowak replied yes, there is a bathroom about ten (10) feet from the garage with a smart-lock on the door. Members will have access to the bathroom through the side door of the primary residence.

Member Zambron inquired about signage.

Mr. Nowak replied there will be none.

Member Zambron asked about parking.

Mr. Nowak replied on-street parking or in the driveway until he arrives home.

The Board asked about how many people will be there at one time.

Mr. Nowak stated three (3) people maximum adding should anyone show up to the property without permission it is trespassing.

Member Clark inquired about public safety and medical emergencies.

Mr. Nowak explained there is a company on the internet to handle emergency response efforts.

Member Clark inquired about calling 911.

Mr. Nowak stated that he is able to view on camera and if a member is immobile and on the ground.

Member Clark asked how long of a process from the point the emergency button gets pushed for Mr. Nowak to look at the camera and call 911.

Mr. Nowak replied about five minutes.

Member Zambron asked about smoke alarms.

Mr. Nowak replied that he has smoke alarms, a fire extinguisher, and a heating and cooling split system which he can control from his phone. He then showed the Board pictures and invited them on a tour of the premises.

Member Spahn inquired about handicapped access and ADA accessibility.

Mr. Nowak replied that most likely there will be no one who is handicapped that joins the gym.

Member Clark stated that Mr. Nowak cannot deny or prevent someone access to the gym based on a handicap.

Mr. Nowak stated he can provide that information on the website.

Member Spahn stated that the issue is with the ADA law.

The Board discussed disability law.

Chairwoman Galanti stated the garage is not a new build.

The Board discussed handicapped requirements in accordance with the law.

Neighbor Glen F. spoke briefly stating that he was originally opposed to the micro-gym but is now in support of it.

Motion to table: Clark: Second: Friend

All yeas carried 5-0

Item #2

Site Plan Review

Bylent Jashari

677 Ridge Rd

Requesting revitalization of the store front with installation of new awning, lighting, graphics and windows

Jill Nowicki representing

Ms. Nowicki states she is from an Erie County appointed architectural firm for the Store Front Revitalization grant program.

She continued that Broadway Bobby's is a recipient of the grant. The restaurant is revamping the storefront by installing new doors, new windows, an awning, and vinyl graphics showing more of the inside of the establishment (shows the proposed design to the Board).

Member Clark asked if this drawing is consistent with similar businesses in the façade program.

Ms. Nowicki stated that each one is unique because each storefront has different needs however this drawing is common for a two- story "main street" building.

Member Zambron asked if the grant includes cleaning the bricks above the storefront.

Ms. Nowicki stated that it does not and explained why: Broadway Bobby's is a tenant of the building and does not own it. The storefront grants are only awarded to the business applying for improvements. She added that the building maintenance is the owner's responsibility. She furthered that there are limited funds and limited things her firm is able to do.

Member Spahn stated that the drawing indicates lighting above the awning and asked if there is lighting intended to be placed below the awning.

Ms. Nowicki replied not at this time.

Chairwoman Galanti asked if the lights on either side of the business will remain there.

Ms. Nowicki stated the security lighting will remain.

Member Spahn asked if the awning is intended to be opened from underneath.

Ms. Nowicki stated that it will be opened from underneath and from the sides.

Chairwoman Galanti inquired about a time frame for the project.

Ms. Nowicki stated she would like to start something before the winter season however the design is currently under a municipal review. She added that the market is flooded with storefront projects and contractors are scheduling about three months out.

Motion to approve: Zambron: Second: Clark

All yeas carried 5-0

Item #3

Site Plan Review

Daniel Lewis

33-34 Wilkesbarre Ave

Site Plan Review for rooming house

Daniel Lewis representing

Mr. Lewis stated that he is seeking permission to continue to lease the building to Sweet Life to house their employees.

Chairwoman Galanti asked if Mr. Lewis hired an architect to review the property and prepare the revised plan in accordance with the city codes, specifically modifying the original washrooms.

Mr. Lewis replied yes.

Chairwoman Galanti asked if the property is currently vacant.

Mr. Lewis answered yes.

The Board reviewed the site plans.

Member Spahn asked if the rooming house will provide handicapped parking spaces, how many spaces there will be, and inquired about the handicap accessibility for the building.

Mr. Lewis replied yes, the parking lot is wide open. He added the handicap accessible parking spots haven't been painted yet because he wanted the city's permission to go forward first.

Member Spahn stated that all he sees on the floor plan is stairs; he asked how Mr. Lewis plans to address handicap accessibility and asked how many parking spaces will be designated accessible.

Mr. Lewis replied the parking lot is as large as the building. He added the parking spots are not currently painted but there is plenty of parking in the rear of the building.

Member Spahn stated that Lewis identifies a number of occupants in his submission to the Board. He then asked how that number relates to the number of parking spots.

Mr. Lewis said there is adequate space in the rear, estimating about twenty to thirty (20-30) spaces.

Member Zambron stated there are twelve (12) bedrooms listed on the site plan. She asked if Mr. Lewis expects one (1) person per room.

Mr. Lewis replied that there actually has never been more than ten (10) people in the building.

Member Clark asked Code Enforcement Officers Steve Balon and Scott Hayes if the number of bedrooms relative to bathrooms are in accordance with the city code.

Mr. Balon and Mr. Hayes both replied yes.

Member Spahn asked if this application is for a special use permit.

Chairwoman Galanti stated that it is only for site plan review, adding that the rooming house does not require a special use permit because it is zoned appropriately.

Mr. Balon explained the mixed residential zone for housing (showing to the Board).

The Board discussed Sucro employees and future of the building.

Member Clark informed the Board of the time the workers are at the building during the day.

Chairwoman Galanti stated the handicap accessibility and parking spots are not shown on the plans.

Member Spahn inquired about the parking requirements for twelve (12) bedrooms.

Mr. Balon replied 1.2 parking spaces.

The Board discussed parking spaces.

Member Clark as about the parking lines being identifiable and painted.

Mr. Lewis stated he can have lines painted.

Member Clark stated that while none of the workers are handicapped, the long-term issue is to be able to accommodate all people with disabilities.

Member Spahn asked about the exterior.

Mr. Lewis said they will paint the exterior.

Member Zabron asked about green space.

Mr. Lewis stated they have someone cutting the grass and taking care of garbage and maintenance.

Chairwoman Galanti stated the Board is missing indication of the handicap accessibility on the site plan. She added that Mr. Lewis will need the architect to revise the plans and show such, in addition to a larger picture of the property showing the entire parking lot and parking spaces.

Mr. Lewis stated the original plan had handicap in the front.

Kimberly Lewis Pastor wife asked why the Board is tabling it for parking spaces and handicap accessibility being that neither of those are necessary for the occupants right now.

Chairwoman Galanti explained that the Board approves the site plan that is presented to them. She added the site plan is what is reviewed and approved and a Planning and Development Board must make sure that all approvals are adequate, appropriate and in accordance with the city code, as well as the law, for the future use.

First Ward Councilwoman Amira Muflahi asked where the parking is located.

Chairwoman Galanti replied it is on the rear of the building with access from Lebanon St.

First Ward Councilwoman Amira Muflahi asked that if the Board votes today, once the Surco employees move out or the lease is ended the space is already established as a residence Monday through Sunday at all hours of the day, and any future occupant or lease can utilize the space accordingly.

Chairwoman Galanti replied that is correct.

First Ward Councilwoman Amira Muflahi stated that historically the Planning Board can recall the issues that direct neighbors (including herself) had based on former proposals from the Potters House Church including a domestic violence shelter and transient housing for recently-released prisoners. She furthered that her concern is this approval could open the gateway for such when it was previously denied.

George Halsey stated that the church has met all the housing requirements for this property.

Chairwoman Galanti replied not until the parking and accessibility requirements are met.

George Halsey affirmed once all code requirements are met. He added that this doesn't have anything do to with the future of who will live there.

Chairwoman Galanti stated it's a matter of the site plan; adding that a Planning Board needs to ensure that what we are approving and what is needed is represented on the site plan presented to the Board.

George Halsey stated once all requirements are met and it conforms with the rules and regulations of the City that should be the only issue.

Chairwoman Galanti stated it will come back before the Planning Board and be put to a vote at that point.

George Halsey stated that First Ward Councilwoman (Amira) has gone back to the primary issue about a proposal submitted by Potters House years ago. The City of Lackawanna under no circumstances would allow that facility to go there and it is not going to happen this time around either. Mr. Halsey stated for the record there will be no housing of that nature on that site. This should not be a recurring issue bringing doubt into hearts and minds. The Church is proposing something that is an asset to the community and city as a whole. Mr. Halsey continued that individuals that walk up and down the streets in Glover Gardens, Baker Homes, and other various first ward side streets are from far worse backgrounds than the occupants in question here. He furthered that we all have neighbor issues and problems, but a city should not throw dirt on them. The Potters Church is trying to work with the community so the residents' lives are enhanced as well as the City of Lackawanna as a whole.

Vanessa Huff Brown stated she is a neighbor who resides at 65 Wilkesbarre. Ms. Brown stated that she was there throughout all of the turmoil with the Lackawanna Six. She added that through it all she still feels her neighborhood and the community is safe had no problem with any of the occupants residing there.

Tahar Albana stated he is a neighbor residing at 32 Wilkesbarre. Mr. Albana added that since he was little he has seen Catholic Charities helping people in need. When Catholic Charities sold the building, he thought the building would be condemned and developed into a new housing development. He added that he hopes nothing goes there that would cause problems for the neighborhood in the future.

Stacy Pettigrew stated that the Potters Church supports all; the Church has an opportunity for these men to come to America, live in decent housing, and do respectable work. The Potters House has no intention of harming the community.

Member Clark stated that the occupants work a very long day; adding that Mr. Lewis as landlord ought to consider where tenants can go to hang out or sit in the back yard.

Mr. Lewis stated he would like to put a picnic table in the rear and the building has cameras.

Motion to table to for a revised site plan showing handicap accessibility including the submission of a larger site plan showing the property with the parking lot entrance off Lebanon indicating adequate parking for the building for (14.4 spaces), and green space:
Clark: Second: Friend

All yeas carried 5-0

Motion to adjourn: Clark: Second: Friend

All yeas carried 5-0