

**PLANNING BOARD, CITY OF GARFIELD
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
Conducted on June 27, 2019**

The regular meeting was called to order by Vice Chairwoman Visotcky at 8:35 p.m. who thereupon read the statement required by the Open Public Meeting Act. Secretary called the roll.

ROLL CALL:

Vice Chairwoman, Lou Ann Visotcky
James Clark
Michael Garcia
Michael Wisnovsky
Gerald Walis
Peter Santacroce, 1st Alternate
Jack LoBue, 2nd Alternate

Absent:

Mayor Richard Rigoglioso
Councilwoman, Erin Delaney
Chairwoman, Gracie Williams
Richard Derrig

Others present were:

Alyssa A. Cimino, Esq., Attorney/Secretary of the Planning Board
Susan Bischoff, Certified Court Reporter

(Flag Salute)

SUNSHINE LAW: Read by Chairwoman Gracie Williams
PUBLIC LAW 1975 CHAPTER 231 "OPEN PUBLIC MEETING ACT" PUBLIC
HEARING: December 27, 2018 Council Chambers, City Hall Commencing at 8:00 p.m.

Old Business

NONE.

New Business

Hearing on 2019 Passaic Street Redevelopment Plan regarding property located at 100 Passaic Street, also known as Block 14.02, Lot 4.01 and 95-109 Passaic Street, also known as Block 23, Lots 25, 28 and 29 as shown on the Official Tax Map of the City of Garfield ("Property").

Robert Benecke addressed the Board regarding the Redevelopment Plan for 100 Passaic Street dated May 28, 2019. Mr. Benecke stated that the building height would be 72 feet (6 levels). The Redevelopment Plan is for 2 buildings with a total of 100, 1 bedroom apartments (700 sq. ft.

per unit), and will include onsite parking providing 1 parking space per unit. Mr. Benecke also stated that a major selling point for these apartments is that there is a train platform across the street, which would be very appealing to people who work in New York City. He emphasized that the properties are in an Economic Opportunity Zone designed to attract capital investment into the areas of the country most in need of economic turnaround.

The Board asked Mr. Benecke whether he has considered that some of the tenants will have 2 cars. The area is already congested with very limited street parking. Mr. Benecke responded that they are providing 1 parking space per unit on-site.

Vice Chairwoman Visotcky asked Mr. Benecke how many units will be in each building? Mr. Benecke stated that there will be 60 units in 1 building and 40 units in the other for a total of 100 units. The Vice Chairwoman then asked if there would be any retail space on the ground floor. Mr. Benecke responded that there would not be any retail space because the garages will be using the ground floor space. The Vice Chairwoman stated that we also need to be concerned about the fire department access. Mr. Benecke stated that Fred Sujic would meet with city fire officials to provide a fire protection plan. The Vice Chairwoman asked Mr. Benecke if any of the apartments that are not rented would be referred to Section 8. Mr. Benecke answered no, they would not. The Vice Chairwoman then asked if that decision was up to him. He stated that is was not up to him it was up to the Redeveloper. The Vice Chairwoman asked Mr. Benecke the name of the Developer. He responded that it is Meridian LLC.

Vice Chairwoman Visotcky opened the meeting to the public.

Dolores Capizzi from the public stated that you cannot limit the number of cars that a person has, and some residents renting in these buildings will have 2 cars. The concern is where are those extra cars going to park in an already densely populated, high traffic area. She also stated that community based planning means that any redevelopment should reflect what the community looks like. Six or seven stories doesn't reflect what this community looks like. It is too high for this area. Ms. Capizzi stated that she has been questioning the structural issues of the rail road tracks, which have been presented to the City Council. The spikes in the tracks are very loose and she has witnessed the spikes coming out when a train goes by which is a huge safety issue. She then pointed out that rentals were not part of the original redevelopment plan for Passaic Street. That plan was for ownership. This plan is for rentals which makes transiency a concern.

Mr. Benecke stated that regarding the character of the community, that is the exact balance that he is trying to achieve. The traffic issue cannot be addressed at this hearing. A traffic study will be conducted. He stated that the criteria was met for redevelopment and the City Council and the Planning Board both agreed. In terms of the economic impact there will not be any school age children in these apartments. One reason is that the rent starts at \$2,000.00 a month. The second reason is because they will stipulate in the redevelopment plan that there will be no sleeping quarters in the living room. He expects people renting these apartments will be millennials and empty nesters with 1 car that they will park in the on-site garage.

The Board asked if a couple with a school age child moves in, does that mean that they are in violation of their agreement and have to move?

Mr. Benecke stated that would be addressed in the lease agreement. The lease agreement will state that there is to be no living arrangements other than in the bedroom and it will state occupancy – 2.

Dolores Capizzi from the public asked Board Member, Gerald Walis if Garfield has a rule regarding square footage per person.

Mr. Walis stated that according to the State Housing Code under the dwelling certificates enforces 70 square feet per person for the bedroom. Children up to age 4 are not included in that number.

Joan Banez from the public expressed concern about the lack of street parking on Passaic St. for tenants in these buildings that have 2 cars. She is not against the redevelopment, but is afraid that the parking situation will get worse. Ms. Banez stated that at the Redevelopment Meeting they were told that the buildings would be 7 stories high.

Mr. Benecke stated that the buildings will be 72 feet high, 6 stories. It has always been 6 stories, 72 feet high.

Ms. Banez pointed out that Wallington built studio and 1-bedroom apartments with 58 units on 2.5 acres and 168 parking spaces. The Garfield plan is 100 units on about a half an acre and only 100 parking spaces. Ms. Banez stated that the buildings are too high and parking and traffic are already bad so why can't they build a lower building with less units.

Michael Ferlall from the public stated that he does not understand how the developer is able to by-pass the Zoning Board.

Vice Chairwoman Visotcky stated that the Board would refer to the Council Meeting minutes. She pointed out that there will be a site plan review and a traffic study, but that cannot happen until the Planning Board votes to advance the redevelopment plan. The Vice Chairwoman asked Mr. Benecke if there was any way to lower the number of units.

Mr. Benecke answered that the number of units was pretty much set unless they are not able to come up with the \$5 million investment part in which case, the process would start at the beginning again. He gives the Planning Board discretion with respect to design and height. The buildings cannot be higher than 72 feet.

Motion to adopt Redevelopment Plan dated 5/28/2019 (100 Passaic St. and 95-109 Passaic St.).

Moved: Jack LoBue, 2nd Alternate
Second: James Clark

Vice Chairwoman, Lou Ann Visotcky – Aye
James Clark - Aye
Michael Garcia - Aye
Michael Wisnovsky - Aye
Gerald Walis - Nay
Peter Santacroce, 1st Alternate - Aye

Jack Lo Bue, 2nd Alternate – Aye
Motion Approved.

The Chairwoman then opened the meeting to the public.

Joan Banez from the public stated that there is 1 hour parking in front of the businesses on Passaic St. and no off street parking and makes it difficult for people to shop at these stores. These stores are losing business because of this. Is it possible for the Planning Board to address the parking for this part of Passaic St., even if it is metered parking, so that we don't lose these good businesses.

The Board responded that it comes down to the issue of who is going to buy property and pave it without getting any revenue from it. The City would have to own the property.

Ms. Banez asked if parking for the businesses could be included in the redevelopment of Passaic St.

The Board stated that she would need to go to the Redevelopment Agency so that they could address her concerns about parking.

The Vice Chairwoman stated that no one else from the public came forward.

The Vice Chairwoman then asked for a motion to close the Public Session.

Motion to close the Public Session.

Moved: Gerald Walis
Second: Jack LoBue

Vice Chairwoman, Lou Ann Visotcky – Aye
James Clark - Aye
Michael Garcia - Aye
Michael Wisnovsky - Aye
Gerald Walis - Aye
Peter Santacrocce, 1st Alternate - Aye
Jack Lo Bue, 2nd Alternate – Aye
Motion Approved.

The Chairwoman asked for a motion to close the meeting.

Motion to close meeting.

Moved: Michael Garcia
Second: Vice Chairwoman, Lou Ann Visotcky

Vice Chairwoman, Lou Ann Visotcky – Aye

James Clark - Aye
Michael Garcia - Aye
Michael Wisnovsky - Aye
Gerald Walis - Nay
Peter Santacroce, 1st Alternate - Aye
Jack Lo Bue, 2nd Alternate – Aye
Motion Approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Alyssa A. Cimino
Planning Board Secretary

Approved at the meeting on July 25, 2019

ALYSSA A. CIMINO
Planning Board Secretary