

Village of Lansing

Planning Board Meeting

February 27, 2001

The meeting of the Village of Lansing Planning Board was called to order at 7:30 P.M. by Acting Chairman Steve Halevy. Present at the meeting were Planning Board Members Doris Brown, Phil Dankert, Carol Klepack and Janet Waterman; Code Enforcement Officer Ben Curtis; Attorney Randy Marcus; and members of the public.

Public Comment:

Marcus spoke first about Audrey and Bill Edelman's gift of land to the Village. Marcus stated that in December when the Kensington property was offered to the Village, the Trustees were pleased to accept it but were also requesting acquisition by gift from the Edelmanns of the strip of property 70 feet wide along the southerly side of the Kensington Townhouse property. This would allow the Village to own the road between Kensington development and the Northwood Apts., with the ultimate goal of the Village also acquiring the Northwood Driveway through to Warren Rd. to provide a public road from Warren Road to the houses in the Kensington development. An express condition made when the Village accepted the property first offered was that the Edelmanns convey by gift the southerly portion of Kensington Townhouse property as soon as possible. This strip of land is approx. is about 800 ft. long by 70 ft. wide. The map has now been produced and Marcus is presenting it to the Board as the first step in the required subdivision process. At this time, Marcus is requesting the Board classify it as a subdivision so a Public Hearing can be scheduled. Curtis stated his concern would be whether this is classified as a minor or major subdivision. He stated when he met with the Edelmanns, he determined that such a subdivision would be a major subdivision because it involved the construction of infrastructure (a road). The provisions of a major subdivision permit the Village to require a security deposit for the road construction. Curtis feels this would continue to be a major subdivision even though the security deposit might not be required as the infrastructure would be built to Village specifications by the Village. Curtis feels this should probably be an exception from the Subdivision Regulations but at this time that is not a possibility without an amendment. Curtis stated that, in the alternative, it could be a major subdivision and then the Village could waive the security deposit. When the Village begins work on N. Triphammer Rd., this same situation will occur again with 28 properties when the Village acquires property to widen its right-of-way. The Planning Board recognizes these types of subdivisions do not fall within the intended scope of Subdivision Regulations and advised Marcus to draft a Local Law to amend the Subdivision Regulations to provide for an exception.

Attorney Marcus next spoke on the Board's approval of the amendment of the Special Permit for the Pyramid Mall Expansion. Pyramid's Attorney has spoken with Marcus and they are concerned about the next step in the expansion. The lender for the construction loans and the major tenant will not go any further until they know the time has run for anyone to bring an Article 78 action against the Village in connection with the approval of the Special Permit Amendment. It is a 30 day period from the day the decision is filed. The decision was made on Feb. 12 and the Village has no provision for a filing date although it is usually considered to be when the minutes are approved. Pyramid has requested the Board confirm that a decision was made on Feb. 12 approving the amendment to the Special Permit. Marcus provided the Board with the draft record of decision reflecting what occurred at the Feb. 12 meeting. Also Curtis is notifying the County that the County's concerns which resulted in their determination of adverse impact had been considered by the Planning Board, addressed to some extent and the negative determination superceded by a supermajority vote as required. Upon the receipt of that letter by County Planning, the 30 day period would begin. Pyramid is requesting a letter from the Village so the 30 day period could begin prior to the approval of the minutes at the March 12 meeting. Curtis will send a letter to the County thanking them for their comments and attaching the final plan and stating the findings and final actions of the Planning Board. This will begin the 30 days. Pyramid would also like to have a letter for their records stating the action taken at the Feb. 12 meeting. Waterman moved to adopt the statement for record of Feb. 12 decision as reflected in greater detail in the Feb. 12 minutes as follows:

VILLAGE OF LANSING PLANNING BOARD RESOLUTION

SPECIAL PERMIT NO. 1466 AMENDMENT, PYRAMID MALL EXPANSION (Home Depot/Parking Lot)

WHEREAS, on December 28, 1999, the Village of Lansing Planning Board (the "Planning Board"), approved the issuance of a Special Permit (subject to conditions) for a 150,000 square feet gla expansion of the Pyramid Mall; and

WHEREAS, on July 25, 2000, the Planning Board approved an amendment of the Special Permit (subject to conditions) to allow reconfiguration of the previously approved 150,000 square feet gla expansion; and

WHEREAS, one condition of amendment of the Special Permit was receipt of a determination of "no deleterious impact" from the County Planning Department based on their 239-m review; and

WHEREAS, the County's 239-m review did not recommend approval of the amendment as submitted and recommended various changes in the project, including with regard to internal traffic circulation; and

WHEREAS, in part as a result of the County's recommendations, the Planning Board requested Pyramid submit plans showing the reconfiguration of the parking lot in front of the proposed Home Depot building.; and

WHEREAS, Pyramid Company of Ithaca (the "Applicant") has submitted the required parking lot and building reconfiguration site plan;

NOW, THEREFORE, based on all prior proceedings, and the entire record in this matter, the Planning Board hereby determines that:

1. The Planning Board completed the required SEQRA review of this amendment at its July 25, 2000 meeting, and approved a Negative Declaration for this amendment, and the proposals for satisfying the conditions of this amendment do not impact that determination.

2. Based on the entire record in this matter, the general conditions set forth in Section 304.05 of the Zoning Law have been satisfied with regard to this Special Permit amendment .

3. The proposed amendment of the Special Permit, including the parking lot layout and building configuration, is approved.

4. The Special Permit for the 150,000 gla expansion of Pyramid Mall, as amended, is hereby ratified and re-approved, subject to all conditions previously imposed by the Planning Board, except as follows:

- a. Condition No. 5 of the December 28, 1999 approval is deleted because the required No. Triphammer Road traffic light improvements have been implemented and are operational;
- b. Condition No. 6 of the December 28, 1999 approval is modified to require a sidewalk on the north side instead of the south side of Graham Road;
- c. Condition No. 3 of the July 25, 2000 approval requiring a determination by the Tompkins County Planning Department of "no deleterious impacts" is deleted. The County Planning Department comments have been received and reviewed and, to the extent that the County's comments are inconsistent with the Planning Board's approval, the Planning Board has granted its approval of the Special Permit and the amendments thereto by supermajority vote.
- d. Condition No. 2 of the December 28, 1999 approval is modified to add parking lot and traffic signage to the items subject to approval by the Village Engineer.
- e. An additional Condition is added requiring the development, as part of this approval, of all parking, roads, and infrastructure indicated under cross hatch north of Catherwood Road on the approved plan.

And...

February 12, 2001

PYRAMID MALL EXPANSION (Home Depot/Parking Lot)

The relocation of the Home Depot building and reconfiguration of the parking lot on the Special Permit plan represents a modification of retail space for which this Board approved the issuance of Special Permit No. 1466 in December 1999. In connection with the amendment of the Special Permit to allow a detached Home Depot building, certain comments were made by the Tompkins County Department of Planning. These

comments have previously been reviewed and considered by the Planning Board, and the following is a summary of responses to those comments:

(a) Traffic. The Village traffic consultant has advised that trip generation per square foot from a home improvement center is less than for general retail, which responds to the concern over increased use of the Graham Road access to the shopping center. The Planning Board has also noted that increased use of the Graham Road access will take some pressure off Pyramid Drive and better distribute traffic. The traffic consultant has also advised that peak periods for home improvement centers differ from peak traffic flows on area roads. With the completion of the Triphammer Road traffic signal, no additional improvements will be required for the 150,000 sq ft GLA expansion.

(b) Drainage. Consistent with the County's comment, approval of the project includes a condition that Village Engineer approval of engineering details the drainage system and holding areas will be required prior to issuance of a building permit.

(c) Internal Traffic Circulation. The Applicant has provided a revised parking and site circulation plan which improves traffic flows and parking layout. Consistent with the County recommendation, this plan provides for adequate two-way traffic circulation through the parking lot aisles.

(d) Pedestrian Safety and Access. The suggestion regarding multiple internal sidewalks separated from parking areas by landscaped islands would result in significant maintenance problems in the parking lots, as well as the public safety and liability issues arising from the multiple grade changes at curbs. It is also the experience of the Planning Board that such sidewalks are not used and that pedestrians favor walking in the more open access aisles found in virtually all other parking lots. The proposed pedestrian walkways on the north side of Graham Road and from the fire access road to the YMCA are acceptable.

(e) Public Safety. The Village of Lansing Fire Department has provided comments on the proposal site plan and the Village Code Enforcement Office with respect to emergency vehicle circulation on the site.

Seconded by Dankert, all in favor.

InService Training:

The next item on the agenda was InService Training by David Fernandez, Cayuga Landscape. His topic was *Important Considerations When Evaluating Landscape Plans*.

Fernandez remarked on the spirited letter from Waterman in the Ithaca Journal which noted that Trowbridge and Wolf would be involved in developing guidelines for the N. Triphammer Rd. corridor. Fernandez's discussion tonight would focus on items which they do not usually cover. First, preservation of existing conditions should be considered. These include either natural resources or site features which should be saved. Some communities specify that developers must replace sacrificed trees. It is common to require replacement of cumulative caliper, so that if a 12" tree is removed four 3" trees might be required to replace it. Also protective construction fences should be utilized to preserve important trees. "Viewsheds" should be also be considered. Another consideration should be the percentage of the site to be left as greenspace. Fernandez feels the Village has specific guidelines for features such as buffers which are better than those of the City of Ithaca. Curtis stated the Village also has lot coverage restrictions which include maximum parking limitations and when combined with the setback restrictions for the building, that results in a minimum percentage of the lot to be left as greenspace. Fernandez recommends 12% of the lot as a minimum be required to remain greenspace..

Next he spoke on evaluating the proposed landscape plan. Screening and buffering considerations are usually spelled out in the Zoning Laws. Screen plantings should be approx. 10 ft. for a conifer screen; the Village requires 6 ft. in some instances. With conifer trees, design and layout are important as conifers will gradually dwindle in shaded areas. Having evergreens planted near the CFCU on Craft Rd. was not a good solution for that site and deciduous trees were added. Natural buffers should contain native plants of various species and mixed sizes in dense staggered clumps. Adequate screenings for dumpsters and utilities must also be reviewed. Fernandez recommended having a list of plants for various situations so they are ready when needed. Fernandez provided the Board with a copy of the City of Ithaca Recommended Street Trees which contains lists. Growth rate of plants need to be considered when comparing specie

choices. It has been noted that burning bushes have proven very successful along N. Triphammer Road. Evergreens, such as white and blue spruce, are fairly resistant to salt although white pines and hemlock are not.

Fernandez stated it is difficult to evaluate landscape plans as there are no standards. Many depict the tree diameter as it will appear in 15-20 years or bigger than they will ever be rather than the size they will be when the building is built. Curtis stated that due to unusual elevations the first view from N. Triphammer Road of Applebees is of the roof and trees probably should have been required as a screening. It was recommended that if they return for an amendment for signage, additional trees may be a requirement at that time. Fernandez recommended that site elevation be on a check list for site plan review.

Overall, aesthetic consideration should not be overlooked. One basic principle is to look for design consistency in the landscape plans with repetition of materials and plant species for a visual harmony. There should not be jumpy designs but rather restful groupings of plants with occasional accents. There should be a predominance of green foliated plants rather than variegated and purple leafed plants. A balance of evergreens and deciduous plants is desirable. Alternatives to boring cliched approaches to planting should be encouraged. In lieu of traditional foundation planting, suggest waves of grasses, Russian sage, blackeyed Susan and the like to wide groundcover planting with a few dramatic specimens or flowing groups of massed shrubs, or classical symmetry with hedges and matched specimen trees. Recreating natural conditions should be considered even in small commercial greenspaces. There should be a distribution of green space to provide a balance between the building, parking and periphery with more greenspace along the roadside.

It is important to note that many landscape planners are told not to plant trees along the roadside which may block the signage or front of the building. This should be balanced with the desires of the Village to have landscaping in the front.

The next segment of Fernandez presentation dealt with interpreting the plan. The plan and what you receive often do not jive. Since there is no standard for how large a tree is to be shown, it is critical to evaluate the spacing and proposed plant sizes. The Village should maintain a list of suggested spacings for plants by type. A landscape budget often dictates plantings to be limited although this might not be acceptable to the Village and the Village should stick to their guidelines. American Standards for Nursery Stock was recommended as the reference standard to use for plant sizing and Fernandez provided the Village with a copy of the book. He stated many plants, such as yews, are sold by spread or width and not height. Caliper is also important to understand as it has a big impact on actual tree size and cost. A 2 in. caliper tree of 12-14 ft. would cost \$300; a 3 in. caliper tree of 14-16 ft. would cost \$500 and a 4 in. caliper tree of 16-20 ft. would cost \$1000 or more. Conifers are sold by height rather than caliper. For example, a 6-8 ft. tall tree would cost \$125 installed. When replacing a tree, conifers in caliper inches are about half as costly as deciduous trees. Clump trees are graded by height and are less valuable if they have only two stems.

The City of Ithaca list of Recommended Trees is an invaluable tool which the Village should utilize with modifications to better fit the Village conditions. Plant shown on submitted plans should be evaluated in terms of the constraints of the site looking at the tolerance for drought, alkalinity and soil compaction; tolerance for poorly drained soils; performance in sun versus shade and wind; tolerance for road salt run-off; and resistance to deer browsing. Also native versus invasive non-natives should be considered. Over-used or insect and disease susceptible plants should be avoided. Often common native plants, such as hickories, black cherry, white oak, are not planted for that reason and should be considered as possibilities. Non-native invasive plants should not be chosen for plantings. Plants such as honeysuckle and buckthorn are good examples for this area. Fernandez recommended having a list available. Also, as plants age, certain plants like pine lose their lower branches unlike spruce and a mixture of conifers would provide a better screen. Some plants, like burning bush and rhododendron, are also easily destroyed by trampling or snow loads and others are susceptible to ice storm damage, such as Washington Hawthorn and Bradford pear.

Parking lot islands are a unique situation and it is important to prepare the beds. In Cayuga Mall by Big Lots, the tree pits were excavated 4 ft. deep and replaced with 3 ft. of bankrun gravel and then 1 ft. of topsoil and the trees have thrived. The City of Ithaca uses one island for every 12 parking spaces. Islands mean more work for snow removal but provides improved green space instead of maintenance cost reduction. Island beds with good soil berms 3 ft. above the parking lot is an alternate approach. Plant beds should have a minimum of 6 in. of good topsoil and then 2-3 inches of

bark or wood chips on top. Steep embankments also require special treatment to control soil erosion and to avoid long-term visual blights and need to be evaluated at the onset. Crown vetch might be a good plant cover for the bank behind McDonalds and would be inexpensive and low maintenance. Low grown bank plantings can be very high maintenance due to the necessity for weeding. Fernandez recommends plants about waist high instead such as fragrant sumacs, spirea and weeping forsythia which will fill together and shade and blanket the ground to hide the weeds. Vegetated drainageways will reduce downstream siltation and allow for water purification. Curtis noted this was a requirements for the new Tops and a list of plants that clean water would be useful for the Village. Southern Tier Wetland Mitigation Nursery would be a valuable resource.

Fernandez stated having a Design Guidelines check-off list would be beneficial for the Village. The City of Ithaca has a site plan review process outline which it utilizes. A check list would also help applicants. Halevy suggested that an inventory of trees in the Village should be done.

Halevy thanked Fernandez for his time.

Adjourn:

Waterman moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 PM. Seconded by Dankert. All aye.