

**CITY OF NORWALK
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
BY VIDEOCONFERENCE AND TELECONFERENCE
NOVEMBER 16, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Andrew Conroy, Chair; Lee Levey, Secretary; Thomas Farkas;
Steve Ferguson; Benjamin Hanpeter; Keith Lyon; Danielle Sanchick

STAFF: Tammy Maldonado, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Planning and Zoning

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Conroy called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Conroy called the Roll as indicated above.

Mr. Conroy mentioned the following link: <https://www.norwalkct.org/1913/Meeting-Notices>

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. 23-1116-01 AG Real Estate I LLC – Variances for residential density and parking requirements for an existing 9 unit multi family residence. Property located at 11 Bouton St.

Mr. Conroy explained that the applicant requested that this hearing be postponed to the December 21st meeting.

**** MR. CONROY MOVED TO POSTPONE THE HEARING TO DECEMBER 21, 2023**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

- B. 23-1116-02 Equity One (Norwalk) LLC – Variances for: number of wall signs, wall sign height, and wall sign letter height for new tenant “Target” in existing commercial building. Property located at 680 Connecticut Ave.

Mr. Levey read the application.

Mr. John Schmitz introduced himself as well as the applicant’s team members and reviewed the application. He explained that Target intends to make internal and external changes to the former Walmart building. He said they were here to discuss signage variances and noted they submitted revised signage requests. These revised signage requests are scaled back from their original requests.

Ms. Allison Mathern shared her screen and presented the revised signage. She noted they are completely renovating the 115,000 sq. ft. store. She described the signage as typical, but a little less than they would ask for. The proposed Target sign is within about six inches of the Walmart sign.

Mr. Levey commented that it is an improvement over the Walmart façade. He noted that when Walmart asked for additional signage for a drive up area they were denied. Mr. Conroy noted that request was made pre covid. He said the only difficulty he has is that the signs on either side of the building are over size. Board members discussed the alignment of the signs.

Mr. Farkas asked if CVS is going to be a full service CVS within Target. He was told it would be a full service pharmacy, but without a drive through.

The signage for the drive up in the parking lot was presented. The signage will be halo lit. The Target sign proposed letters will be six feet. Mr. Conroy said he did not think Target needed signage lettering that high and expressed concern it would result in a shopping mall feel. He asked about landscaping and asked to have plantings along the street. Mr. Schmitz described the landscaping in the parking lot, but noted there is a sanitary sewer line along the street, but they will take street planting into consideration.

There were no members of the public who wished to speak in favor of the application.

There were no members of the public who wished to speak in opposition to the application.

The public hearing was closed.

C. 23-1116-03 David E. Keelan Revocable Trust – Variances for: front yard setback, height, number of stories and lot coverage for proposed additions to an existing single family dwelling. Property located at 16 Rocky Point Rd.

Mr. Levey read the application.

Attorney Liz Suchy, representing the applicant introduced herself and the team. She reviewed the application and proposal to renovate and elevate the dwelling. She said they are aware of Ms. Williams' memo, and it has been reviewed and will be addressed.

Mr. Grinstead, Sr. Project Manager shared his screen and presented the project. The home was built in 1875 and has had additions made to it over the years. The number one prerogative of this project is to lift the house six feet which provides an opportunity to transform the home. He also presented existing elevations of the home and the proposed elevations of the home. Mr. Grinstead showed photos of the existing home and how it fits in the neighborhood.

Mr. Grinstead described what would be involved in lifting the house and said it would need a new foundation to comply with FEMA. Mr. Levey said he came across a memo from the City requiring an additional foot in elevation and asked if this had been taken into consideration. Ms. Suchy explained that Mr. Levey was referring to a proposed regulation change, that has not been adopted by Planning and Zoning. This design meets the current regulations and she said she did not believe at this point, there is a need for an additional foot. Mr. Levey noted that his first house that was raised to comply with FEMA regulations was done 30 years ago and found they were required by insurance to raise the home again. He said this was something to consider.

There was discussion regarding the number of bedrooms.

Mr. Conroy asked if there was any consideration given to tearing down the house. Ms. Suchy said the client wanted to keep the house for a variety of reasons.

Mr. Levey said the architecture on the north east side of the house is very blocky and does not have a lot of architectural interest. Mr. Grinstead presented renderings of the proposed plans. Mr. Conroy said it looked like a municipal building in San Francisco. Mr. Levey said the mass on the right side does not work and bothers him. It is far more massive.

Mr. Ferguson asked about the alignment of the windows. Mr. Grinstead said there will be enough light.

There were no members of the public who wished to speak in favor of the application.

Ms. Maldonado said she received five letters of support. Mr. Levey read one of the letters of support that was submitted by Ms. Cristina von Bargen. Other letters of support were from, Robert Bayne III, Edward Waters, Adam Derrick and Merrick Kleeman.

There were no members of the public who wished to speak in opposition to the application.

The public hearing was closed.

Ms. Suchy said she appreciated Mr. Levey's concern about the style of the home, but noted that the City does not have architectural review. Mr. Conroy said this application eliminates a number of different variances; this makes sense as a whole.

IV. BOARD ACTION ON: A-C

B. 23-1116-02 EQUITY ONE (NORWALK) LLC – VARIANCES FOR: NUMBER OF WALL SIGNS, WALL SIGN HEIGHT, AND WALL SIGN LETTER

HEIGHT FOR NEW TENANT “TARGET” IN EXISTING COMMERCIAL BUILDING. PROPERTY LOCATED AT 680 CONNECTICUT AVE.

Mr. Levey said the façade signage is an improvement over the Walmart sign. He expressed concern about the height of the main Target sign and the bullseye and would like to see them a foot smaller. Mr. Conroy said that with the distance they are from the road, they almost qualify for three foot letters. He added that he has trouble approving the height of the signs. Ms. Sanchick agreed and said she would like to restrict the height of the signs. Mr. Farkas said the letters do not need to be pronounced because the brand is so successful.

The Board discussed the height of the signage and asked that the applicant work with staff. They suggested that the CVS sign should be two feet and the pickup sign should be three feet.

Mr. Conroy, Mr. Levey, Ms. Sanchick, Mr. Farkas, and Mr. Ferguson voted on this item.

**** MS. SANCHICK MOVED TO APPROVE 23-1116-02 EQUITY ONE (NORWALK) LLC – VARIANCES FOR: NUMBER OF WALL SIGNS, WALL SIGN HEIGHT, AND WALL SIGN LETTER HEIGHT FOR NEW TENANT “TARGET” IN EXISTING COMMERCIAL BUILDING. PROPERTY LOCATED AT 680 CONNECTICUT AVE WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:**

- **THE TARGET LETTER HEIGHT BE NO MORE THAN 4’**
- **THE BULLSEYE LOGOS FACING CONNECTICUT AVE. BE NO MORE THAN 6’ DIAMETER**
- **THE BULLSEYE LOGO FACING RICHARDS AVE. BE NO MORE THAN 4’ DIAMETER**
- **THE CVS LETTER HEIGHT TO BE 19 ½”**
- **THE DRIVE UP LETTER HEIGHT BE NO MORE THAN 3’**

**** MR. CONROY SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

C. 23-1116-03 DAVID E. KEELAN REVOCABLE TRUST – VARIANCES FOR: FRONT YARD SETBACK, HEIGHT, NUMBER OF STORIES AND LOT COVERAGE FOR PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO AN EXISTING SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING. PROPERTY LOCATED AT 16 ROCKY POINT RD.

Mr. Conroy said he could support this item, because it makes sense. He said the owner is trying to bring the house into the current era.

Mr. Levey said that by the time the applicant puts in their request, this house may need to be elevated another foot based on the new Planning and Zoning regulation. Ms. Maldonado said the anticipated adoption of the regulation is probably February. Mr. Levey said it will be interesting to see how they will lift that wing without impacting the adjoining property owner. Mr. Conroy noted that the adjoining property owner submitted a letter of support. Mr. Levey said he believes the neighbor is ignorant of the possibilities and the applicant may be better off tearing down the house. Mr. Farkas said it is hard to believe they will do this and not encroach on the neighbor. Mr. Levey said this is a very difficult project.

Mr. Conroy asked the Board members how they felt about granting all of the variances as requested. Ms. Sanchick said it is very much in line with the other variances they granted for raising homes under FEMA flood regulations. Mr. Conroy added that they are required to stay within the existing footprint of the building.

Mr. Levey said 90% of the plan is ok, but the remaining 10% is very difficult. Mr. Hanpeter said he had no problem with the application. Mr. Farkas said they have a workable plan; it is tight in there, but overall he would approve this application.

Mr. Conroy, Mr. Levey, Ms. Sanchick, Mr. Farkas, and Mr. Hanpeter voted on this item.

**** MR. CONROY MOVED TO APPROVE ITEM 23-1116-03 16 ROCKY POINT RD. AS PRESENTED.**

**** MR. FARKAS SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) VOTE IN OPPOSITION (MR. LEVEY)**

V. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

A. Action on Hearing Minutes – October 19, 2023

**** MR. CONROY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MS. SANCHICK)**

B. Status of Training – Board members serving as of January 1, 2023 must complete initial land use training by January 1, 2024

The Board members provided an update on the status of their training.

The Board members discussed and agreed to a 7:00 p.m. start date for 2024 meetings.

VI. ANNUAL ELECTION

Mr. Conroy reviewed the procedures for the Annual Election.

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Mr. Levey nominated himself as Chair. There were no other nominations.

**** MR. CONROY MOVED TO ELECT MR. LEVEY AS CHAIR**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE REGULAR MEMBERS OF THE**
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Mr. Levey nominated Ms. Sanchick as Secretary. There were no other nominations.

**** MR. LEVEY MOVED TO ELECT MS. SANCHICK AS SECRETARY**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

VII. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. LEVEY MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** MOTON PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:41 p.m.

The next meeting will take place on December 21st. Mr. Levey wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services