

HPC, Planning boards table urgent care proposal

Sign regulations set to resume in new year

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

A proposal to build a new structure on vacant land at 860 Center St., Lewiston, was tabled Monday by both the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Commission. This action was at the request of architect Jim Fittante, who said his client needs additional time to consider crafting a structure more in keeping with the village's preferred aesthetic.

"Without dealing with a corporate national company," which Fittante cannot name, "we have not been able to update any of the building plans yet, and shore up the rear access," he said. "I'm going to probably just ask to be tabled until the next meeting," in January.

HPC Vice Chairman Peter Coppins was filling in for an excused Loretta Frankovitch. He said, "I would like to do that, Jim. We're going to table it, because a lot of this has to do with planning. As far as the building goes and the aesthetics, once you're sure of what you want it to look like, I'm sure it's going to be great."

Fittante did update his first site plan submission, which was originally presented Nov. 29. The new schematic shows landscaping around the perimeter, which is intended to screen parking and shield building lights from Onondaga Street neighbors living below what was previously described as an urgent care center.

HPC member David Giusiana

expressed apprehension over an attached new drawing, which depicts a generic building design this unnamed company has used elsewhere around the country. Particularly, he noted the large blank space those going down Center Street would see.

"When you do have your conversation with corporate, my biggest concern is the wall that faces the (next-door) mini-mart," Giusiana said. "That's going to be our front door to the village. ... I'm uncomfortable with it being a solid facade. Hopefully, they can do something to soften that facade."

Fittante said, "I'm going back and forth. I'm just doing the site plan for them. They have their own architect that's doing all their building drawings."

Coppins said, "They're probably all the same."

HPC member Susan Hofert said the look of the buildings surrounding the vacant lot "is not always what we're going for."

"Across the street is the Chamber of Commerce, which was on that site. A historic building.

"To me, I feel like this is a building I might see on Military Road, or I might see it on Niagara Falls Boulevard by Barnes & Noble."

She added, "I would really hope that some changes would be made that would make it really fit with our village."

Fittante said, "They're working on those plans right now."

He noted the company hasn't deviated from its prototype build-

ing model, but is facing a similar request with a proposal in the Albany area.

"Hopefully, we get a better rendering the next time around," Coppins said.

Fittante is a member of the HPC. He recused himself from the motion hearing.

At a special Planning Board meeting two weeks earlier, Fittante said a quick-care medical center would provide "very low traffic."

His first submission called for a 3,546-square-foot building with a peak height of 22 feet sitting adjacent to a 36-space parking lot, and ingress/egress points at both Center and North Ninth streets. That second proposed driveway would utilize an existing, unused pathway directly behind the Sunoco gas station/APlus mini-mart.

This update shows a handful of parking spaces removed to accommodate foliage, but the size of the building increased to 4,262 square-feet.

Fittante again addressed the Planning Board this week.

Chairman Norm Machelor doubled-down on his previous opinion that a secondary driveway sloping behind the mini-mart and down to North Ninth Street isn't advisable.

"The back in and out is just not going to fly," he said.

"That could be the deal-breaker right there," board member Tasia Fitzpatrick said.

Fittante said a controlled access point – a gate, for example – could

be a suitable compromise.

He also noted hours of operation at this site would be 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily.

This parcel of land has been vacant since April 2012, when the building that now houses the Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce office was uprooted and moved across the street to Academy Park. It is owned by Emery Simon. A sale is contingent on site plan approval.

Sign of the Times

Planning Board members voted to rescind special sign privileges granted to business owners at the start of the coronavirus pandemic last year. As of Jan. 31, 2022, non-approved markers – including, but not limited to cones, flags, banners and balloons – will not be permitted.

Former Art Council Office Historic After All?

When a portion of the "Big Yellow House" Ridge Street property was subdivided from the "Little Yellow House" Center Street site at the Nov. 29 special meeting, it was said the former was not historically significant.

That might not be the case.

In fact, when the multistory building hits the real estate market, it might have a new designation.

In a letter to Frankovitch, read aloud at this week's meeting, Lewiston Museum Curator Tom Collier wrote the following: "I would like to advise you that, while I do not see an historic designation

for this house, it is certainly historic and should be considered as such. This home is over 100 years old. It was the former Border Patrol house that was at the foot of Tuscarora Street on the river during prohibition. It was manned 24 hours a day to search for (people) being smuggled across the river.

"Lewiston played an important role in smuggling during this period of history, and there are many documented stories on it here in Lewiston.

"After prohibition, it was no longer needed, and was bought by Gaetano Antoline in 1927. He moved to its present location in the winter of 1928 by horse and sled.

"It is my hope that the HPC will take this into consideration and put this important Lewiston historic building on the designation list before the home is sold, or at least make the new owner keep the outside as it exists now."

The HPC set a public hearing for its next meeting to discuss the merits of adding this property to the list of historically designated sites. That session begins at 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 10, at the Red Brick Municipal Building.

Trustees intend to sell the "Big Yellow House," which recently served as the Lewiston Council on the Arts office. All Lewiston real estate companies were said to be invited to find a commercial-use occupant.



Lewiston No. 1 announces winner of fundraiser

Lewiston Fire Co. No. 1 recently completed its yearly fundraising drive by drawing for a large-screen smart TV. Don Cosentino of Lewiston was the winner.

The company would like to thank all the residents for their generous donations. Although not eligible for the TV, donations are still being accepted.

All residents were asked to consider making a donation to the all-volunteer fire company to help purchase much-needed fire equipment and supplies. As a side to the fund drive, entries were obtained to conduct the TV drawing.

Pictured are Fire Company President Barry Beebe, Don Cosentino and Fire Chief Les Myers. (Photo by W. McEvoy)

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The Water/Sewer Department is accepting applications for two (2) positions.

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