

**Borough of Caldwell  
Planning Board  
May 10, 2017  
Minutes**

The Planning Board was called to order by Mr. Gardner at 7:00PM in the Municipal Building, second floor Council Chambers.

**ROLL CALL:** Mr. McGowen, Ms. Martin, Mr. Mihalik, Mr. Gardner, Mayor Dassing, Councilman Hauser and Mr. Byrne

**PRESENT:** Robert Cosgrove, esq.

**ABSENT:** Ms. Finnegan and Ms. Santiago

**STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** The statement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act was read.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The public minutes of January 11, 2017 were approved.  
Councilman Hauser abstained.

**APPROVAL OF INVOICES:**

*ARH Associates*, invoice dated April 4, 2017 for application P16-001, Dr. Vito Mazzoccoli, 73 Bloomfield Avenue in the amount of \$325.00. *ARH Associates*, invoice dated May 2, 2017 for application P17-001, 333 Bloomfield, LLC, 333 Bloomfield Avenue in the amount of \$745.00.

Motion to approve ARH Associates invoices by Mr. Mihalik, seconded by Mr. McGowen. All in favor.  
Councilman Hauser abstained.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Application P17-001, 333 Bloomfield, LLC, 333 Bloomfield Avenue, Block 22, Lot 16.  
Preliminary Major Site Plan and Final Major Site Plan Approval**

Mr. Robert Gaccione, Gaccione Pomaco is representing the applicant in this matter 333 Bloomfield, LLC the applicant is a contract purchaser of 333 Bloomfield Avenue in Caldwell. The site is currently vacant but was previously used as a bank. His client is seeking a Preliminary and Final Site Plan approval in addition to certain bulk variance relief in order to add a floor to the existing building. The property is located in the B General Business Zone and all tenant spaces will be occupied by the permitted uses in the zone. In addition to the Bulk variances there are also parking variances for the number of spaces and parking stall side two spaces. The witnesses you will hear from are Bob Silver of 333 Bloomfield LLC, Paul Sionas, Architect, Elizabeth Dolan, Traffic Engineer and Peter Steck, Planner. Mr. Silver will briefly discuss some of the other buildings he has converted and give a short history of 333 Bloomfield Avenue. We will discuss his application and assure the Board of the attractiveness of the changes to this building. Mr. Sionas will give a power point presentation of the building and the proposed changes around the area. Mr. Sionas will also respond the comments from Mr. England's report. Mrs. Dolan will discuss access and parking and the final witness Mr. Steck will discuss the subject property and surrounding area. Also, he will review the Master Plan considerations and the reexamination report. He will also discuss the zoning considerations and his planning conclusions.

**Exhibit**

**A-1 Power Point Presentation**

Mr. Robert Silver was sworn in as the applicant.

Mr. Silver gave summation:

- His business is at 105 Grove Street, Suite 5, Montclair.
- He is the CEO of Bravatis.
- They are in the business of repurpose old neglected buildings.
- Their sole business is buying empty buildings in great downtown areas and usually repurposing them into boutique office space and a little bit of retail.
- Mr. Silver went through the power point slide of buildings that were repurposed in Montclair area.
- Bravatis is the contract purchaser of 333 Bloomfield Avenue and they plan to close on May 31<sup>st</sup>.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the building at 333 Bloomfield Avenue has a soaring banking floor that soars to 19 ½ feet. It has been maintained better than some of the buildings he has repurposed in the past.
- There are marble columns with gold fluting, series of beautiful stained glass windows in the ceiling and in the back to the rear there is a row of safe deposit boxes with a beautiful vault door.
- On the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor in the rear on the Northside of the building are business offices.
- On this site prior to this building being built was a house that hosted for the Rev. Stephen Grover.
- It was called the Grover house which was a boarding house and hotel. If this application is approved they will be branding this location as the Grover House.
- The Grover House was demolished to make room for the Citizens National Bank in 1915. In 1926 it had doubled in size.
- There were six mergers in a very short period of time.
- Wells Fargo had owned it and closed this building in 2016.
- They plan to bring back the beautiful south façade on Bloomfield Avenue to its original glory.
- On the Small Avenue façade they plan to keep intact.
- The interior banking floor will be left as a two story with the original details. On the front they will put one retail suite with the entrance from the left hand door.
- They plan to have a maximum of nine go to office suites and retail.
- We are asking that the Board grant approval of a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.
- In order to make the building ADA Accessible we will need to add an elevator on the front side of the southeast corner. We will also need to add another egress there to meet all the code requirements.
- It will be a LEED Certified Green Building and ADA Accessible.
- The front of the building there will be a retail space; a coffee shop, restaurant, a high end boutique. Offices spaces will run a gamut of professionals such as attorney's, software developers, graphic designers those kinds of professionals.
- We own the buildings that we repurpose and we are long term investors.

**OPEN TO PUBLIC:**

None

Mr. Sionas was sworn in and qualified as an Architect.

Mr. Sionas gave a summation:

- Mr. Sionas began with slide number 6 of the power point exhibit.
- The property is located at 333 Bloomfield Avenue Block 6, Lot 22.
- The property is a Zone B – General Business Zone.

- The application is to restore the existing building and to adapt and re-use turning from a bank to office and retail use.
- The property is located at the northeast corner of Bloomfield Avenue and Smull Avenue.
- This property is right in the heart of the business district.
- The existing building is a vacant two-story and the front of the building faces Bloomfield Avenue and the side of the Building is on Smull Avenue.
- The property is 60 feet wide and 125 feet deep. The area is about 7510 sq. feet.
- The property slopes from east to west. It also slopes from the rear of the property up to Bloomfield Avenue.
- The building occupies 77.7% of the lot.
- At the rear of the building there is an unmarked paved parking area.
- Mr. Sionas goes through the exhibit on the surrounding retail stories on Bloomfield and Smull Avenue.
- The design of this building was made to be stately and monumental and was to convince the public that the banking industry was strong.
- The building has been vacant since last August.
- The interior in the front the ceiling is 19 feet 9 inches and this was the grand banking hall and they intend to preserve this.
- The vault and the safety boxes will be kept and highlighted and it will be part of the design of the first floor of the building.
- The point is to restore what is there but also to adaptively reuse it and at the same time add a new 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to the building.
- The new addition is to be light and airy and not take away from the original heavy monumental architecture on the first two floors.
- Mr. Sionas continues to discuss the interior and exterior as shown in the presentation.
- Mr. Sionas continues to discuss the lighting and the signs in the presentation. Mr. Steck will be going over in detail the signs.
- This will bring new life into the downtown Caldwell and it will especially bring new life into this gem of a building that has been vacant since last year.
- He has responded to Mr. England and has submitted a new site plan and a cover letter that responded directly to Mr. England comments. They also submitted an amendment topographic survey map to coordinate with our revised site plan.
- Items 1 – 4 on Mr. England's comments have been provided.
- Item #5 asks for details and cut sheets for all proposed lighting and provide an isolux light level plan all fixtures should be shielded.
- Item #6 they will obtain permission from the Borough Engineer and the Borough Council to do work on municipal property where necessary.
- Item #7 there is no landscaping or planters proposed.
- Item #8 was revised to show the rear elevations showing the trash and recycling enclosure.
- Item #9 Mr. Sionas showed the signage in his presentation and none of the proposed signs are to be eliminated.
- The signs are 39 inches and Caldwell's ordinance allows a sign to project at 8 inches. The variance is to use the blade signs.
- The lights on the back of the building will not encroach on the neighboring properties.

#### **Exhibit**

A-2 Luminaire Schedule

A-3 XSP Series (LED Wall mount Luminaire)

- Mr. Sionas discussed the signage on the outside of the building.

Mr. Gaccione testified that the applicant does not have definitive tenants at this time and they are going to put tenants in there that comply with the requirements of the Caldwell ordinance.

Mr. Gardner asked what the hours of the boutique office spaces would you envision and Mr. Silver responded that most of the tenants will be working the normal business hours.

Councilman Hauser asked Mr. Silver what his concept of a restaurant is if there are no kitchens and Mr. Silver responded that he will not rent to a full kitchen venting it will have to be a quick serve. He doesn't want a full service restaurant because it doesn't go with the office clientele.

Mr. Mihalik responded that the town is a very traditional classical type architect and he is a little concerned about the contemporary look of this he asked Mr. Sionas how he feels about that. Mr. Sionas responded that he feels good about that. The fact that it is light and airy and we are mimicking and matching the column lines with lighter material.

Mr. England responded up against Flowerland you are putting in a new walk and an existing concrete wall is there now can you talk about the relationship of that existing concrete wall and handling on your property. Mr. Sionas responded that right now there is a mound of dirt on this subject property of Flowerland and wrapping around the corner of the public parking area. They are proposing to regrade the paving on the property and restack a retaining wall on the common property line. On the Flowerland side they will see a finished wall.

**OPEN TO PUBLIC:**

**Ms. Hilda Moore, 23 Personette Street** asked about the bathrooms and whether they were gender friendly. She asked about the elevator and staircase. Ms. Moore has concerns about deliveries and where the trucks will park.

**June Cowell, 29 Brookside Avenue** asked about the drainage on the Flowerland property side.

Ms. Elizabeth Dolan was sworn in and qualified as the Traffic Engineer.

Ms. Dolan gave a summation:

- The previous use was the Bank use with offices on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.
- Side streets provide access to local parking lots throughout the area.
- They will be formalizing the parking arrangement and maximizing the parking on the subject property.
- There will be five (5) uniform parking spaces.
- These spaces will be assigned to tenants.
- The primary parking demand is going to be weekdays, workdays because the majority about 85% of this building will be occupied by Professional offices.
- The peak parking demand will be during the business day so we performed a series of parking counts.
- There were four specific lots that were counted to find out how much parking was available during weekdays.
- The Smull Lot is behind the building, the Personette lot is to the East, the lot behind the Diner and the lot at the Super Food town.
- The Smull Lot was average 50 - 55 parking spaces available. This lot appears to be under-utilized.
- The Personette lot is pretty active and on average maybe 10 to 14 spaces open.
- The lot at the Supermarket up until recently there are a good number of permit spaces available but currently that lot is under construction.
- The lot at the diner is under-utilized about 40 spaces.
- Bloomfield Avenue has parking on both sides of the Street. They looked at the block on the side of the bank and they found 8 to 10 spaces available during the peak hours.
- The required number of spaces for the proposed property is 59 parking spaces.
- The existing use of the bank and office space requires 72 parking spaces based on the ordinance requirement.

- The applicant has arranged with the police department 40 spaces in the Smull Lot and they would be reserved for tenant us Monday through Friday from 8AM – 6PM.
- The counts that were performed in four parking lots and Bloomfield Avenue show that if this applicant uses 40 spaces in the Smull Lot there is still available parking as well as in the other parking in the general vicinity of the building.
- The proposed use will not impair the intended purposes of the zone plan of Caldwell from a traffic standpoint.

Board members discussed their concerns with the parking and how many spaces will be utilized.

**OPEN TO PUBLIC:**

**Hilda Moore, 23 Personette Street** asked about the parking in front of the building and how deliveries will be made if the parking isn't available.

Mr. Steck was sworn in and qualified as a planner.

Mr. Steck gave a summation:

- The building is on a corner lot.
- 7,517 Square feet.
- The building is vacant but has a handsome interior and exterior.
- The inside of the first floor is 4,915 square feet.
- The second floor is 2,412 square feet.
- Specialized design with 9 feet ceilings.
- The application is a adaptive reuse of the building.
- The applicant is preserving both the interior and exterior of the building.
- The applicant is adding a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.
- Instead of 3 parking spaces in the rear they will have 5 spaces now.
- When the building is converted it will be fully handicap accessible.
- Handicap space on the property.
- 1,505 square feet will be non-rental space on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor.
- 418 square feet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor breaking up to multiple users.
- This building is in the heart of your commercial corridor.
- It's in a B Zone.
- Most buildings do not have code compliance onsite parking.
- The master plan in 1998 recommended a B General Business Zone designation for the property.
- There was a drop in assessed value of commercial properties in the town. There was a need to expand the municipal parking.
- It was recognition that many of the commercial buildings have limited rear yard parking.
- There was a recommendation to have more municipal parking to eliminate parking on Bloomfield Avenue.
- The building is in the corridor zone which permits retail stores, restaurants and other eating and drinking establishments, banks and business and professional offices.
- It allows coverage of 100% of the site by buildings and pavement.
- It allows three story buildings and 48 feet in height.
- A maximum building coverage of 60% of the lot.
- Mr. Steck explained the variances needed.
- One of the variances needed is a rear yard setback 20.31 feet in lieu of the minimum requirement of 30 feet.
- The building covers 77.7% of the lot which will not change but the maximum is 60%.
- The code requires 9 x 19 foot parking spaces and the applicant is doing 9 x 18.
- They are not providing 59 onsite parking spaces.

- There are five projecting signs on the building each is nine square feet and the total area is 45 square feet.
- Mr. Steck went over the signs.
- C1 Hardship relating to existing conditions and a C2 argument where the benefits both esthetic and economic development substantially outweigh the detriments.
- They also have to demonstrate that the application can be approved without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantial impairment to the zone plan and zoning ordinance.

Robert Kaplan, Chair Historic Preservation reported that there 2016 annual report identified three historic buildings in Caldwell that were in the greatest danger and one of those buildings was 333 Bloomfield Avenue. They were afraid since the building was vacant that a new owner might strip all the features that made the bank a significant building. The Historic Preservation met with the developers and saw the same presentation that you have seen tonight and the Historic Preservation found that the proposal was attractive and a sensitive repurposing of this architectural masterpiece and the commission last night voted unanimously to support it.

**OPEN TO PUBLIC:**

**June Cowell, President Caldwell Merchants Association** and the Board fully support this project the developers will be historically sensitive to the building and will bring more vitality to the downtown.

**CLOSED TO PUBLIC**

Mr. Gaccione gave a brief summation on the application.

Board members discussed the application.

Mr. Cosgrove advised the Board that a motion would be that the applicant has met the burden of proof under a hardship variance and a C2 variance and that the applicant has shown that a variance can be granted without a substantial detriment to the public good and will not substantially impair the zone plan and zoning ordinance. This motion would be for a preliminary and final site plan approval and to grant the six (6) variances presented as part of the application. The resolution will incorporate Mr. England's letter and any representation made by the applicant.

Motion to approve application P17-001 by Mr. Mihalik, seconded by Ms. Martin.

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Mr. Gowen         | yes |
| Ms. Martin        | yes |
| Mr. Mihalik       | yes |
| Mr. Gardner       | yes |
| May Dassing       | yes |
| Councilman Hauser | yes |
| Mr. Byrne         | yes |

Approved 7 - 0

The meeting adjourned at 9:42PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa O'Neill  
 Planning Board Secretary