

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COHOES PLANNING BOARD HELD VIRTUALLY  
JANUARY 10, 2021 at 6:30PM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**      **Mr. Mark DeFruscio, Chairperson**  
                                 **Mr. Bob Bucher**  
                                 **Mr. Joe Nadeau**  
                                 **Ms. Stephanie Couture**  
                                 **Ms. Kizzy Williams**

**ABSENT:**                      **Mr. Jack Carroll, Vice Chair**

**ALSO PRESENT:**            **Joseph Seman-Graves, City Planner**  
                                 **Sharon Butler, Administrative Assistant**

Chairperson DeFruscio called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and asked for roll call.  
Roll Call; Vice Chair Carroll was absent

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 8, 2021 MEETING**

Chairperson DeFruscio; first order of business is review and approval of the meeting minutes from November 8<sup>th</sup>. Are there any changes or additions that any member has for those minutes? If not I'm looking for a motion to either approve or deny those meeting minutes.

Member Couture; I'll make a motion to approve 2<sup>nd</sup> by Member Bucher  
Motion carried.

	YES	NO
Bob Bucher	X	
Joseph Nadeau	X	
Mark DeFruscio	ABSTAIN	
Jack Carroll	ABSENT	
Stephanie Couture	X	
Kizzy Williams	ABSTAIN	

Chairperson DeFruscio; ok the meeting minutes for November have been accepted.

Joe Seman-Graves; Mark just an introduction by Ron Stein and Peter Tyron from Blue House Companies.

Chairperson DeFruscio; so do you want to go there first or do Platt Street?

Joe Seman-Graves; we can do them first then the last thing will be Capital Region Construction for 195 Saratoga Street.  
We'll add that as the last item.

Chairperson DeFruscio; ok

**INTRODUCTION/DISCUSSION REGARDING 45 JOHNSTON AVENUE REMODEL PROJECT;  
PRESENTERS; RON STEIN AND PETER TYRON**

Chairperson DeFruscio; Gentlemen welcome and why don't you just give us an overview of what you're looking to do?  
Mr. Tyrone; absolutely. Hello and Happy New Year to everyone. We are gearing up to do a historic remodel to 45 Johnston Avenue. Currently, well it's the old St. Agnes School. Ron and myself, we're partners, we have developed some properties in the Capital Region, we have a track record of doing ground up construction, and also several other historic remodels. We would be looking to convert this property into fifteen (15) market rate apartments.

Mr. Stein; just to follow-up, we've been working together over the past almost 5-6 years, mostly in the Albany area. This would be our third historic conversion or rehab. The one that is currently being done, many people know it as the Old Ralph's or Red's on New Scotland and Madison Avenue, where the hospital is, the bar there. Albany Med came to us and asked us to specifically help them take the property from them but also do the historic preservation of it. We're at third

stage with that, we fixed up the apartments now we're working on the restaurant this year. So, we know it's some tedious work, we also know that when it's done it really will look fabulous. We've done other brownstones around the park on Madison as well from 1903. The Ralph's is actually 1870, so we know it's a lot of extra work and there's a lot of things that you find when it happens, but we've been finding the value of bringing back some of the historic. And also the repurpose of this school would be I think, a fantastic signature piece for Cohoes and us.

Chairperson DeFruscio; yes, I guess we look forward to seeing your plans. Some of the things that we're going to be looking for in your plan is; a parking plan, outside lighting, where you're going to collect and store trash, snow storage and the general size and footprint of the apartments that you're going to be renting, things of that nature. Any other members have any comments or input?

Member Bucher; yes, Mr. Chairman. Good evening gentlemen. Just so, we're assuming there's going to be a civil engineer doing your site plan design?

Mr. Tyrone; yes, Venture Engineers

Member Nadeau; when you say a restoration, just how deep will you get into the restoration? Let me be a little more specific. I know the building intimately because I actually went to school there and I did the maintenance in that building for a few years, I pass it very often. On Mangham Street, that small front entrance is kind of imploding, so will that be part of the restoration?

Mr. Stein; so we're looking into that now, and again part of what we'll present Mark along with the items you mentioned that was very helpful. And Bob we use Venture Engineering as well as other groups. We do things locally within the Albany region, so our architects are C2 Architecture and Design out of Schenectady. Joe one of the architects working on the project, her mother went to school there, or her grandmother. We looked at that front, and we're in the process of evaluating that right now; what it would take to restore it exactly the way it was or if there's an alternative plan that would it would meet. We wanted to go here and introduce ourselves and then obviously work with historical to figure that out. We're also, we worked about 6 months with historical in Albany, and hopefully it doesn't take that long here, to come up with a façade. Our other building we are doing right now is 191 N. Pearl in Albany, and that's a ground up, but it's a historical ground up. So we had to work with them to come up with facades that make it. And we're very good working with everyone because we want to have something that comes through but as you said Joe, if it's too costly it doesn't make the project, it doesn't add to the value. But we're looking at alternatives to pursue as well.

Member Nadeau; I'm not suggesting that you need to restore that front, I was just curious about it. By all means you need to do what you need to do to save the building which is nice. Another thought, would be parking might be a little bit of an issue there. I'm sure you're familiar with the area but right across the street there's a house that sits considerably back, that has quite a bit of property in front of it. Just a thought, you might approach them for leasing part of that.

Mr. Stein; and we've been working with Joe and presenting several different ideas and that is one of the first things obviously that we would want to present to this board. A couple of ideas that we came up with and we think it would match pretty well with what you're looking for there, given that there are one way streets there, we're going to work with you and come up with a plan. We know those are usually one of the biggest issues in all towns, parking it's always the P word and we know that's obviously an issue here. But something that I think we feel confident and we can work with you and the town on coming to an acceptable solution that allows parking there.

Member Nadeau; great, I'm personally looking forward to seeing what you've got to present.

Mr. Stein; we're very excited and I know Pete has been spearheading this, but I know personally I'm very excited to work outside of the county, outside of Albany, so very excited.

Chairperson DeFruscio; we're happy with repurposing the buildings and restoring them making sure they get used before falling down. Any other members have any other questions or comments? Ron or Pete do you have anything else you want to share with us at this point in time?

Mr. Stein; no just wanted to say hi

Chairperson DeFruscio; welcome and happy new year and we hope to see your plan in the future and see if we can mitigate all the issues and get you rolling.

Mr. Stein; thank you we're looking forward to working with you all.

**CONSIDERATION OF A SUBDIVISION AT 4 PLATT STREET**

Chairperson DeFruscio; next item on the agenda is consideration of a 2 lot subdivision at 4 Platt Street. I believe, I hate to butcher your last name Roman Nizhikioyskiy, so can you explain to us what you're looking to do?

Mr. Nizhikioyskiy; I have pretty much a half acre lot, I have a house on the corner. So what I'm looking to do is subdivide the lot in half, as you guys can see on the proposed drawings (on screen) that I did. And eventually once the lot is subdivided, I want to put up a small single family house, roughly 15-1700 square feet, nothing big and kind of as a nice house to live in. So as of now just try to see if it's sub dividable, if I can build on it and stuff like that.

Chairperson DeFruscio; and as submitted, all the zoning requirements for both lots are met, it look good. You know you'll have to come back to us with the single family house or come back to Joe to get that taken care of, right now what we're looking at doing is approving the minor subdivision so you can go forward. Other members do you have any questions or comments?

Member Couture; I just wanted to compliment Roman on the work that he did on that single family home, that came out beautiful.

Mr. Nizhikioyskiy; thank you so much

Member Couture; a lot of detail went into that and it really paid off

Mr. Nizhikioyskiy; thank you

Chairperson DeFruscio; thank you for making the investment there and hopefully this will open it up so you can do some more work in Cohoes. So if there aren't any more questions, comments or things like that, I'm looking for a motion to approve or..oh I'm sorry we've got to do that public comments. Is there anybody in the meeting that wants to make any comments on this minor subdivision on Platt Street?

Joe Seman-Graves; no one in the chat room

Chairperson DeFruscio; alright, I don't hear anybody or see anything so we're going to close the public comment period. Now I'm looking for a motion to either approve or deny the minor subdivision at 4 Platt Street.

Member Nadeau; I'll make that motion to approve the minor subdivision

Member Bucher; I'll 2<sup>nd</sup>

All in favor, motion carried

	YES	NO
Bob Bucher	X	
Joseph Nadeau	X	
Mark DeFruscio	X	
Jack Carroll	ABSENT	
Stephanie Couture	X	
Kizzy Williams	X	

Chairperson DeFruscio; alright so the minor subdivision passed, you'll work with Joe Graves to get that all taken care of, thank you very much, and we look forward to you building another one family house there.

Mr. Nizhikioyskiy; thank you. So I don't need a second meeting any more:

Joe Seman-Graves; you don't need a meeting for the subdivision, you're still going to have to get the subdivision filed with the County and then should you just be putting up a single family home, you wouldn't have to come back to the Planning Board, so there would be no need for that at least at this point in time.

Mr. Nizhikioyskiy; ok, thanks Joe

**CONSIDERATION OF A SITE PLAN MODIFICATION AT 378 SARATOGA STREET**

Chairperson DeFruscio; ok next item on the agenda is consideration of a site plan modification at 378 Saratoga Street by Hoffman Car Wash. Their just proposing some modification to what we approved in August 2020. Is Tom, Mr. Hoffman did you want to describe what you're doing different or do you have somebody you want to describe what you're doing different?

Frank Plumbo from CT Male; we've been doing representation for Hoffman's, Tom is here and so is Marty Andrews if you have any detailed questions about operations. I think we met recently with Joe and Garry Nathan about the site and identified some, what we think are some very minor modifications to the site plan and Joe just thought it would be a good

idea to bring it forward to the board to make sure they're in concurrence that these are minor enough that we would be able to proceed. A lot of this came out of working with national grid, you may recall that at the time of the site plan and this happens on so many projects, you can't really get national grid to respond to quickly on things. Although we were finally able to hold of them with how they wanted some poles located, how they wanted guy wires adjusted for. That lead us to some changes, one in particular was, it wasn't just due to that, there were other factors involved. The building size we had on the first one was 140 feet long, it was determined that we could go with 120 feet long and still have a great operation here in Cohoes. When we reduced that, we reduced really the national grid fact we're affecting the entrance drive it was over as we percolate into the site to come down and into the entrance tunnel. There were a couple of poles there that they wanted us to avoid the guy wires, so we had to make a shift there and that precipitated in a few movements there, one of which meant we had to shorten the area that the vacuum spaces were, we moved a couple of the employee parking spaces and the flag pole was relocated per national grid request. And one thing I think Joe spotted this and we did add a heated shed and so we just wanted to inform you, it's in a location adjacent to the other fenced in areas that we had a transformer pad, got solidified with national grid and we added that. We added some guide rails at the retaining wall all a lot of detailed items involving the pay station and we moved the monument sign from one side of the driveway to the other. So I think we're very much in consistency with what the board had approved, we had no problem when Joe asked us to bring it forward to you giving you an update. A lot of work has gone on since we were before the board. We worked out an offsite stormwater sanitary water separation project that was required because of our water usage. That took some time to design, but we worked that out with Joe and Garry as I said we met with national grid there was some back and forth with the adjacent land owner but it really comes back to where we're just dealing with our site. So that's the nuts and bolts of it, glad to answer any questions. Tom and Marty if you have anything that you wanted to add to the board, but I think we're on a fairly simple change from what you'd seen before.

Chairperson DeFruscio; I was hoping you we're going to be taking over the whole property and make it a larger installation and move the roadway back to where it was proposed original, but...

Mr. Andrews; we tried hard, we tried hard to get that property and tried to work something out, but it was just never, we just couldn't come to an agreement where we could just get it finalized. We have now moved on from that unfortunately.

Chairperson DeFruscio; thank you very much for that. I wish it had worked out for you. So when are you looking to start to break ground at this site now? Originally we had you starting sometime last fall, of course COVID and everything else, it messed everything up.

Mr. Andrews; so we're looking to finalize these plans and get them out to bid last February with an April 1<sup>st</sup> mid-April start date, that's kind of what we're shooting for. It's a nine month build, all though we do have to raise the site some, we think it's a nine to ten month build on this site. We went with the little shorter building for us, we have several building that are 120 feet long, and so it will work fine. We're excited to get started, we have 4 under construction right now that are under construction, and we've opened the site so we are pretty, being done internally currently with all of our guys and so it's kind of has to fall into place, kind of really good for us, so we don't have to many things going on at one time.

Mr. Plumbo; and we will be in constant contact with Joe and Garry because one of the things that they brought to our attention when we last met was that the Columbia Street storm separation project which is parallel to some of the work that we're doing, to make sure that those projects are coordinated for construction so that we don't have to have every city street shut down at the same time. So our construction project, or off site construction project is going to be coordinated, we know we have to have the offsite work done when the onsite work is done so we can get our CO but that going to be carefully coordinated so it has the least amount of impact on the residents of the city.

Chairperson DeFruscio; we just had national grid putting in high pressured gas lines on Van Schaick Island and they made quite a mess.

Joe Seman-Graves; I'm sorry to say that their not done over there yet. But we have our yearly meeting with national grid tomorrow, so I'll give you an update at the next meeting.

Chairperson DeFruscio; thanks. Alright do any members have any questions on the adjustments or additions, minor changes that have been added to this site? So does that mean the car wash is not going, my car is not going to be quite as clean because it's now 20 feet shorter?

Mr. Andrews; no it's going to be exactly the same

Chairperson DeFruscio; Joe is this something we need to open up to the public, I mean I'll ask for comments from the public at this point in time. I really don't think it's necessary but I'd like to ask if there's anybody in the public that has any comments. I see none, so if no board members have any other questions, then I'm looking for a motion to either

approve or deny the site plan modifications for 378 Saratoga Street. I haven't heard of any contingencies that we want to add or anything, I really don't think that this changes the plan significantly at all.

Joe Seman-Graves; and just for the record, I didn't think that it did, I just with the addition of that new shed, I don't want to have that power of approving stuff myself.

Chairperson DeFruscio; thank you Joe, I agree but it's always good for us to just see them and to know what's going on. Member Bucher; yea, this is 90% of what we saw and approved, so I would make a motion to approve as submitted and modified.

Member Couture; I'll 2<sup>nd</sup>. All in favor motion carried.

	YES	NO
Bob Bucher	X	
Joseph Nadeau	X	
Mark DeFruscio	X	
Jack Carroll	ABSENT	
Stephanie Couture	X	
Kizzy Williams	X	

Chairperson DeFruscio; thank you gentlemen we look forward to you starting work there and we all look forward to having our cars cleaned this summer.

### **CONSIDERATION OF A CHANGE OF USE/NEW TENANT APPLICATION FOR 195 SARATOGA STREET**

Joe Seman-Graves; I apologize for this, I believe John you are here from Capital Region Construction?

John Convertino; yes

Joe Seman-Graves; so there was a mishap and I didn't get John's application. So what I'm going to do is have you guys put eyes on this, so bear with me, this is not how I like showing stuff. What we're looking at here is 195 Saratoga Street, you can see where we are (on screen) so down here specifically is a vacant 3 unit, there's an additional 2 unit up here, these are separate parcels (on screen), John do you want to describe what you want to do? And I'll propose this, that this land is currently classified as vacant residential, so I've asked him to come forward with a change of use but it is also a rehab of a 3 unit. He would be coming to the board anyway, so while we don't have the full site plan or drawing to show, potentially this could be enough to get him going on the work and he can come back next month with a full application, which is partially my fault for not having it in front of you guys today. John do you want to talk about the project?

Mr. Convertino; so we're in the process of purchasing this now. There's a 3 story structure in the back, a brick structure with an addition on it, kind of rip the addition off and rebuild it with proper footings. If you look underneath it right now, it looks like it's going to fall off. I mean I guess the biggest obstacle right now is it's showing as vacant land when there is actually a 3 story structure there. So I'm guessing that's the biggest thing to get through the planning board, just to let you know there is a structure there, it's not vacant land. I plan on rebuilding 3—3 bedroom apartments back there, I don't know if it was 3 bedroom apartments before, but that's what my plans are to have plans submitted and permits are submitted to the city already. That's pretty much it. There's a thirty foot strip along that little road right there (on screen) that I've been talking to Dustin over at SCI, they own that little strip right there and there's another piece across the road, those kind of join right there so I'm looking at being able to just buy that piece. Not that it really make a big difference on the bill but it's just a piece of land that they obviously don't care about, they wouldn't have to maintain it, it'll add more yardage to my property, that's kind of where I'm at with that. A lot of these trees have already been removed, it's already cleaned up.

Chairperson DeFruscio; does the city still own that property?

Mr. Convertino; I'm buying it from Bruce, I forget his last name, I just know him from the construction field.

Chairperson DeFruscio; yea they own property on the other side, the one right on the corner there (on screen) Saratoga and where Ontario Street, or I mean Columbia Street comes down.

Member Nadeau; Joe what is it, I guess I need a little clarification. What is it you want us to do as far as...

Joe Seman-Graves; I would normally have an application in front of you, showing his site plan and then the proposal, but it is kind of 2 faced. He doing some work on the outside, and John correct me if I'm wrong, not major work on the outside but cleaning it up, putting in a walkway and making it accessible. Really what it comes down to is this property is

currently assessed as vacant residential land, so for it to be a 3 unit building there, it's no longer classified as that, so it would be a change of use.

Member Nadeau; has code been privy to or seen the floor plans and minimum requirements for bedroom size and that type of thing? I guess if we give kind of a green light and he starts to proceed only to come back in front of us next month and to have some obstacle.

Mr. Convertino; I do have a full set of plans that I did submit to them, but obviously as soon as I submitted those this popped up that this is showing as a vacant land, that's when Joe reached out to me and let me know that we were going to have to go through this formality because on your end or on the city's end, it's showing it as vacant land when it's obviously not. Obviously you'll have a full set of plans that I'll have my architect do up and I do believe all of the bedroom sizes meet minimum code on that, I believe most of them are more than minimum code.

Chairperson DeFruscio; so Joe correct me if I'm wrong, what you're looking for us to do is we're either approving or denying the change of use from vacant land to a 3 unit apartment building.

Joe Seman-Graves; yes and really it shouldn't be classified as vacant residential land, but it is. However you don't have enough in front of you to make an approval. I guess it warrants giving it a preliminary at least with concept of this being a 3 unit so he can get the... I can't issue any building permits until the planning board looks at this. I think that would be one route a preliminary and then we can do modifications on the site plan when he comes back, however if that make you feel comfortable, if not I'd ask that we probably have a meeting in between now and our next scheduled meeting just because of the error I made in not getting this to you today and not putting it on the developer, but that would be on the board, on how comfortable you would feel proceeding. I know you don't have anything in front of you, I won't hold you to making a decision today if you don't feel comfortable.

Chairperson DeFruscio; now is there a house in front of that on Saratoga Street?

Joe Seman-Graves; yeah, there's a separate 2 unit up here (on screen) it's occupied.

Chairperson DeFruscio; I thought so. I'm just trying to figure out the relationship but they are separate properties.

Member Bucher; and that not part of this application right Joe? That's a 2 unit there that's not under consideration right?

Joe Seman-Graves; it's a separate parcel. I think John's plan was to do a connecting sidewalk between these 2 buildings to the parking lot in the rear. However, they are 2 separate parcels, so that has nothing to do with this application.

Member Bucher; ok and John owns that building too?

Mr. Convertino; yes they were sold as is, 3 separate parcels, the parcel to the left of that grey structure right there (on screen) is also a separate parcel and then if you go a step over, that 30 foot area before that road like I said I was talking to Dustin which I don't see being an issue of me purchasing that off of him and then I can actually maintain all of that property and get rid of a lot of that shrubbery that's just overgrown.

Chairperson DeFruscio; ok are you going to look in the future to put something else on that vacant property?

Mr. Convertino; no, no I don't think it's quite large enough, really it's just more to be more appealing a little more yardage because between the 2 or 3 parcels and those 2 building there's not much yardage, there's still some and I especially want to clean out that mess, all that shrubbery right there, it does flatten out over there and gives them a little bit of yardage. But like I said I was hoping I can pick it up from Dustin for cheap, he doesn't have to maintain it anymore and it'll make everything look nicer for the 2 properties.

Member Bucher; sounds good

Chairperson DeFruscio; ok so I guess we're looking for a motion for a preliminary approval with the right to make adjustments based on when we get the information in front of us, so that he can just move forward temporarily and do some things. Anybody have any concerns, objections, comments:

All members responded that they did not

Chairperson DeFruscio; does anyone want to make a motion for a preliminary approval to move forward on this project?

Member Nadeau; I'll make that motion to approve to proceed.

Member Couture; I'll 2<sup>nd</sup>

All in favor motion carried.

	YES	NO
Bob Bucher	X	
Joseph Nadeau	X	
Mark DeFruscio	X	

Jack Carroll	ABSENT	
Stephanie Couture	X	
Kizzy Williams	X	

Joe Seman-Graves; John I'll process the building permit, but I'm going to have you come back to the planning board next month with a full application and I apologize

Mr. Convertino; is there a, not that I'm in a big rush, obviously I'm not, I might get into some of the interior stuff throughout the winter but I'm not going to dig into hard ground until probably spring, is there another meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month just to try to get all of this squared away?

Joe Seman-Graves; the next meeting would be the beginning of next month, the 20<sup>th</sup> is either historic or zoning.

Mr. Convertino; ok, I was just on the website and I noticed that, I didn't know if it was this board.

Joe Seman-Graves; the 24<sup>th</sup> is the submission date for next month.

Mr. Convertino; ok and then I shouldn't have anything, obviously you have in your hands now and the building department has the full set of plans for there, so we should have everything we need in and in your guys hands right now, right?

Joe Seman-Graves; I'll review, I've seen the building plan, I'll review the site plan I just hadn't had time since we started talking around the 6<sup>th</sup> when I realized I didn't have this. So I'll review that and then I'll give you any notes or comments if any changes have to be made.

Mr. Convertino; ok, appreciate it.

Chairperson DeFruscio; ok John we look forward to seeing you next month and good luck.

Mr. Convertino; ok thank you everyone

Chairperson DeFruscio; if you put that picture back up Joe or you look at the other side of Saratoga Street, there used to be a 3 story brick building right next to what was the (on screen) right there to the right of that transformer, that's where I was living when I was 6 years old.

Member Nadeau; I think they should put a monument there

Chairperson DeFruscio; I have a picture of myself at 6 years old when they were repaving Saratoga Street and I was on the steam roller, my father was a laborer in public works so I was on the roller. Enough stories, I'm looking for a motion to close the meeting, its 7:08

Member Bucher; I'll make that motion to adjourn

Chairperson DeFruscio; I'll 2<sup>nd</sup>

All in favor, meeting adjourned at 7:08PM