

**Public Hearing
Zoning Change
Conditional Use
1233 Green Street
Council Chambers
Tuesday, May 6, 2014
5 p.m.**

Mr. Waltman, Vice President of Council, called the public hearing to order and stated that the City is divided into zoning districts which regulate the use of property. Certain types of uses may impact surrounding properties or their neighborhoods. Each zone is designated with certain permitted, conditional and prohibited uses. A "conditional use permit" provides special consideration of certain specified uses which may or may not be compatible with an area depending on the specifics of the particular project.

The City uses the Conditional Use Public Hearing to evaluate whether a proposed use is appropriate for a particular property and neighborhood. The property is located within an R3 high density, multi-use zoning district. The applicant is seeking a permit to convert the first floor commercial space to a residential rental unit.

Attending: City Councilors Waltman, Sterner, Reed, Goodman-Hinnershitz, City Clerk Kelleher, City Solicitor Younger, City Planner Miller.

Mr. Waltman explained the procedure for the hearing.

I. Testimony from Applicant (No more than 10 minutes)
Domenico and Lucia Brutto, 290 Morgantown Road, 19611

Mr. Younger called the property owner to the podium and asked him to present his testimony.

The court reporter administered the oath to Haik Hambartsoumian, AHA Realty Corp, 525 Dorchester Ave., West Lawn, PA 19610 (owner).

The agenda with all attachments were provided to Mr. Hambartsoumian.

Mr. Hambartsoumian stated that he originally purchased the property as a two unit with commercial space on the first floor. He stated that as he believes that placing another commercial use into the first floor space will create additional intensity for the neighborhood. He expressed the belief that an additional residential unit would be less intense than a commercial use. He stated that he owns several rental units in Reading and he has rehabbed them and continues to keep them in good condition. He stated that he does things right and he does not cut corners.

The plans submitted with his application were distributed.

Mr. Younger asked Mr. Hambartsoumian if he objected to entering the agenda packet that includes the application and the plans into the record as Exhibits 1 and 2 respectively. Mr. Hambartsoumian agreed to having the packet entered as exhibits.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz asked Mr. Hambartsoumian what changes will be required to convert the space into a residential unit. Mr. Hambartsoumian stated that no changes to the exterior are needed; however, major changes are required for the interior. He stated that the building requires new plumbing, electric, kitchens and bathrooms. He stated that the building is vacant and he plans to complete the renovations before he rents out the spaces. He stated that if the change is approved this will be a three (3) unit building.

In response to a question from Mr. Sterner, Mr. Hambartsoumian stated that the building was vacant for two (2) years before he purchased it.

Mr. Sterner inquired about the availability of off street parking and Mr. Hambartsoumian stated that his tenants usually do not own vehicles; however, there is sufficient parking available behind the building on Birch Street.

In response to a question from Ms. Reed, Mr. Hambartsoumian stated that each unit has two (2) bedrooms and a single bathroom and that each unit has 750 square feet. He stated that space in the first floor unit will be reserved for mechanicals. He stated that there are three (3) bedrooms on the 2nd and 3rd floors and that the first floor unit will have two (2) bedrooms.

In response to a question from Mr. Waltman, Mr. Hambartsoumian stated that the commercial space was used for plumbing supplies. He stated that originally this was a large square room with shelving.

Mr. Hambartsoumian asked Council to consider approving his permit.

Testimony from City Staff.

Mr. Peiffer, the zoning administrator, did not attend the hearing.

Mr. Miller stated that the Planning Commission reviewed the application at their April meeting and recommended that the permit be approved with conditions, as per Planning Commission Resolution 5-2014. He stated that the Commission expressed concern about the lack of sufficient off street parking, which is required by the Zoning Ordinance and he stated that the units meet the square footage requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. He stated that Mr. Hambartsoumian plans to make a significant investment in this property.

In response to a question from Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Mr. Hambartsoumian stated that there are fire escapes already in place and that there is egress on the upper units in the front, side and rear portions of the building. He noted that he has not made any improvements to the property and will not until he receives all required permits.

Public Comment

Mr. Waltman opened the floor for public comment and no one responded. The public comment period was closed.

Mr. Waltman thanked Mr. Hambartsoumian for following the prescribed process before making improvements to the property and he announced that the decision would be made through the adoption of a resolution at the May 27th regular meeting.

Mr. Sterner moved, seconded by Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, to adjourn the hearing.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk