

Special Meeting of the Planning Board
With Mr. Ira Grandberg

Village/Town of Mount Kisco

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Members Present: **Chairman Joseph Cosentino**
 Vice Chairman Anthony Sturniolo
 Doug Hertz
 Ralph Vigliotti
 Joseph Morreale

Members Absent: **Sol Gibbons**
 Stanley Bernstein

Staff Present: **Whitney Singleton**

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 P.M. By Chairman Cosentino.

Ira Grandberg: I was approached by your Board and the mayor to evaluate the parking garage. I was given the input that everyone was concerned that the existing parking garage proposed, having no history of what had happened was an encumbrance upon the side street. It was too high, it was too bulky. All of you had met; had trial balloons, and it was determined that it was pretty massive. Having had experience with parking garages, I realize that in order to cut back the street wall the way it probably should be done, they'd never get the parking count that they were trying to achieve, and they kind of concurred with that, I think, when we met with them. I was then asked to make any recommendation I could from an architects "point of view" to evaluate what could be done. I objectively, as not having been involved with the process here, thought that when you come into Mount Kisco; I was taking the role as if I had been still on the Planning Board, what do you see? You see an enormous parking lot that's any eyesore to the community. This is my personal opinion. All you see are a few trees, then three or four hundred cars there daily. Then I said, either naively or not naively, did anyone consider putting the parking garage as a screened element along the main street, so that when people came in there would look like there would be a gateway to the hospital campus, and it would also be something that could be attractive from the point of view of the town. Immediately, rather than the applicant saying it's impossible, we can't do it, I think the architect said, we thought of that idea a long time ago but we never pursued it because we didn't know it was an option open to us. So I just put it on the table as something to evaluate. They came back two weeks later and completely ignored what the suggestion was. They put a massive parking garage on the north side of the site and left the whole parking lot still open. Nannette and Tony immediately realized they didn't do what they said they were going to explore doing, and they went back and acknowledged that they had not addressed the issue of the whole frontage. I then had a telephone conversation with them basically stating if you create a gateway to the whole hospital campus and you created a beautiful entrance to the Emergency Room, and we looked at the renderings for that, why couldn't you take that architectural idiom and put it on the street front to say, this is a new facility. This is something nice to look at. They indicated that they were required to go 30 feet back from Main Street as a buffer, and they would present a plan that would show what it would look like along the Main Street edge and accomplish their parking count. They sent me these drawings first. They are sterile and horrendous. It looks like the Battleship Bismarck and tells you nothing. They then sent me these drawings which were just like you had seen; preliminary three dimensional sketches that started off, I assume they will give us color renderings tonight, as to what this could look like. They seem to be very sensitive to the fact of creating a screen in front of the parking lot that would integrate with a parking structure, and then they could set the parking structure down a half of a level based on the topography, so that the parking structure would not be a full three story building, it would be lower and less obtrusive. They then sent me something that didn't come out. It was some sort of color elevation, which I also think is useless. Any architect can put trees and color on and say isn't that beautiful, but it doesn't tell the story. So, I am hoping what they'll do is take these sketches and exhibit to everybody what this thing might look like. They told me by e-mail that they were sending me a sketch of what it would look like from the entrance to the hospital complex. That's what will be the telling story. All I've done is then given them the opportunity to show what could be done from an urban design point of view, and to see what they are capable of and see if you found any value in doing that.

The other thing is; when you're dealing with architecture in a street frontage, you want to deal with corners. They are very important. So, you'll see in these sketches that it was discussed to create a corner approach on this side, so that the building wouldn't look like a garage, and some sort of campus entry on the other side. If they pull it off and it looks great tonight, and you think it looks great, it's an opportunity. If it's not, it's not, but at least see if they gave it a Yeoman's try and came up with something that is valid, and they weren't trying to pull the wool over anybody's eyes with a lot of eyewash. So far it looks like they've had integrity; they've presented their work properly, they have communicated with me properly, and it seems they have been responsive to our queries. The only opportunity that you have tonight is to evaluate if this is something you're interested in, if it improves the community, or the other parking garage was better. And then the question is what would they do to mitigate the problems that the other one presented.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: The drawings that you just showed us now.

Ira Grandberg: Got them Friday with the understanding that these were early conceptual sketches; that they were preparing more finished renderings for the next meeting, which I assume is tonight, predicated on those views. What they present, I have no idea. But it seems that they are taking it seriously.

Doug Hertz: I think what might be useful for all of us is to give our input to Ira as to where we got to up to this point, our reactions to the various parking proposals that we have seen from them so that he has some ammunition. Let's say we don't like tonight. Who knows, we haven't seen it and this is very schematic. I would like to go over what I felt about the parking up to now so that it's all on the table. Originally when there was a different proposal in front of us; they had proposed a medical building as well that had a larger parking count on the north side, and there was a large parking structure proposed on the north side. A number of us on the Board felt that it would create; even though there were buffers and it wasn't the full height, right at the street level, etc., felt that it would really create a corridor down that edge there. So we pushed to see if there were alternative locations for the parking garage, ultimately the building went away, their parking count changed, etc., and I believe actually their original proposal had been a parking garage in the north and a parking garage in the south.

Chairman Cosentino: Yes, originally; you're right.

Doug Hertz: So, when the building went away, all we were really left with was dealing with the lower parking count that they needed but still higher than we currently had, so we had them continue with that south parking garage. I, for one, liked a lot of what I saw with the south parking garage but we had concerns. Not that it was completely unviable, but that we needed to be able to address if it was going to stay there at the size it was going to be, then we had to come up with some creative solutions to mitigate it. The other things that were being discussed were if it made sense to keep a parking structure of some sort in that location, but possibly make it smaller and see if there was a way to address the parking with possibly two smaller structures instead of one very large structure. That's at least for me where we left it after we walked away from the balloon test that morning; that ultimately we felt from Boltis is was fairly effective, from on campus it worked, certainly from Main Street it had no effect whatsoever. The issue was from the corner of St. Marks and Main Street as you come around, and from the Conte's corner, that it would be quite visible. Again, it does step back a bit. So, the questions in my mind are; is that the best solution? I agree with you that having that entire front of Main Street with nothing but a sea of cars parking almost right up to the sidewalk is ugly.

Ira Grandberg: As a planning point of view, the garage they designed is attractive, except the Conte Street is a wall. A set back. That was the input I received. The hospital is going to spend a lot of money.. From a town point of view, if they came up with a way of putting a berm in front of that parking lot because it slopes down, and completely planted it so you'd never see a car, it's the easiest thing in the world to do based on the topography.

Doug Hertz: On St. Marks?

Ira Grandberg: No, on Main Street. That whole 400, 500 feet. You could berm it with nothing and make it so no one knew there was a parking garage there, and you've made some concessions on the parking structure that they originally designed. That would be better than the most creative architect that would put a 500 foot wall down and landscape it. In other words, I propose doing an alternate parking garage scheme. A third opportunity is to make the hospital; put something into creating a wonderful

frontage for the town, and then build the parking garage maybe with some minor modifications, if it's doable. Their parking consultant kind of made a pitch that it wasn't doable, meaning they couldn't pull it back enough to mitigate the issues that concern you and still get the viable parking count. That's the way I think it was presented.

Chairman Cosentino: Sort of; you're almost there.

Ira Grandberg: If they come up tonight with the most terrific street front you've ever seen with the garage behind it, and everybody says this is fantastic, consider it. If they don't come up with anything other than looking like the Berlin Wall, then realize that you have an opportunity to force them into doing a minor landscaping job that can completely hide that parking lot and make it a wonderful, park-like 500-600 feet.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: What you just said would revert the conversation back then to Option #2, am I correct?

Ira Grandberg: No. Option 2 and 3 were to put a parking garage where the main parking lot is now. Option 1 was your original parking garage. Option 1 would give you the best of both. Do a terrific landscaping plan which makes them put 1/4 to 1/2 million dollars into modifying the 500,600 feet so no one looks at their parking lot anymore, and then give them the first garage.

Chairman Cosentino: So if you're coming down 172 you can see a berm.

Doug Hertz: Redo the entire Main Street landscaping without building.

Ira Grandberg: Right. Not just plant a couple of trees. The whole topography goes like this, if you look at it. All you have to do is berm up 3-4 feet, and you'd never see a car back there.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: How would you address the massiveness of the parking structure at the south end?

Ira Grandberg: I don't think it's massive. I think it's quite nice except the Conte side. The other sides look terrific, and it harmonizes with the Emergency Room.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: How would you address the Conte side?

Ira Grandberg: Terrace it back and see what kind of count they could get by doing that.
Ralph Vigliotti: You're talking the St. Mark's side?

Ira Grandberg: Yes. In other words, go back the 30 feet that they have to, go up maybe a level and then cut back another level.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: So this conversation is now Option 2A?

Ira Grandberg: I B; but they might say we can do that, but we lost 57 spaces. So then they have to determine where they are going to get their 57 spaces.

Doug Hertz: I looked at the lot; there is no frontage on Main Street, so whatever you do planting wise in there, even the smallest berm is going to eat up parking spaces. So they would have to reconfigure that.

Ira Grandberg: Their new plan, Scheme III, sets back 30 feet with a whole park land, which we will see tonight.

Doug Hertz: Right, but it puts a structure there.

Ira Grandberg: It puts a structure there, but it meets their parking.

Doug Hertz: I am totally open to what they present tonight, and I very much like the idea of them putting it in the corner where it is now on the South Side in the back of Conte's.

Ira Grandberg: If they came up with an alternate parking count that they could live with; and they seem pretty rigid on that.

Doug Hertz: The other question is, if you heap everything the way it was, terrace it back, lose some parking count, and is there another site on the lot that you can put a second small area?

Ira Grandberg: Yes, near the Cancer Center. And, by the way, their first scheme that they didn't listen to us on, they put a parking garage near the Cancer Center and left the parking lot open. Their pitch was that parking structure would be only for employees of the hospital. So, the way they saw it was that this parking structure near The Cancer Center; I raised the question that people would park there and walk 400 feet to get to the main lobby of the hospital, and their retort was they were not going to use it for that; they are going to use it for hospital employees. So picking up what you're saying, if you could create Emergency Room and hospital spaces Scheme 1, and build a small parking structure for 50 to 100 cars for employees, you're actually taking their need and splitting it properly. They'll come back and say that the cost of building two parking garages because of foundation work and rock removal and all of that will be a premium. I don't think very much of one, but it will be. That would be a viable alternative. Let them build two satellite parking garages; one for employees, one for the public and berm the front. Then this town is wonderful and gets everything.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: Do you think they are going to approach it tonight with Option 1, 2 and 3? Or Option 1, 1 B, 2 and 3?

Ira Grandberg: They are going to do 1, which they did already, 2, which is the north side which we told them was verboten.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: No, that was 3.

Ira Grandberg: Okay, 1 and 2. 1 B we are just talking about now.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: So they really have no thought or concept about 1 B.

Chairman Cosentino: I think when they left the meeting, I think that they thought they wanted Option 2, and we're on Board with that.

Ira Grandberg: All I am saying is when they sent me their drawings and I saw how monumental this wall was, if they show tonight that it actually looks terrific, it's worth considering. If they show tonight that it's a big wall and it's pretty ugly, that's why I'm proposing 1 B as an alternative.

Chairman Cosentino: The only thing I have against Option 1 is that it is really massive from Friendly's.

Ralph Vigliotti: If that were taken back 50 feet from where it is proposed now...

Ira Grandberg: The lower level will be fine; the in and out, because that's at street level.

Ralph Vigliotti: I looked at if the parking garage sat on top of the wall and that was the end of the most southern end of the parking garage.

Ira Grandberg: It might not be economical because they're not going to get the count.

Ralph Vigliotti: How many cars do you think they may lose with that? Because they'll net out what's there now, which is on surface parking and then they'll lose X number of spaces.

Ira Grandberg: Their design called for a ramp system to go up and down. As soon as you cut back one or two bays, you're eliminating the ramp or you're eliminating parking spaces.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: Option 1 B probably still has roof parking.

Ralph Vigliotti: Is that also Option 3?

Chairman Cosentino: Option 3 is eliminated.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: Okay, Option 2 includes rooftop parking.

Ira Grandberg: Half down.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: Half down; so therefore, the light poles on the rooftop parking for Option 2 ultimately, I would assume, would be at a lower height than the light poles that would have to be used on Option 1 or 1 B.

Ira Grandberg: Yes, but the difference is that in order to get the right number of lumens for a parking garage, you have to use light poles. Now imagine light poles running 500 feet only 30 feet off the ground versus light poles running 150 feet up on the hill. I don't think seeing through the trees, light poles are as terrible as you think it is. It's worse, I think. If you just saw this enormous football field with light poles on it. We have to talk about that. We have to see what they've done. We made it very clear that we wanted the entrance to the campus to have this wonderful extension of the building planted, and become a beautiful entrance and you don't know what's behind it. Let's see tonight if they do that and carry the theme of the Emergency Room with stone piers and beautiful signage and all that stuff, and see what they came up with. Or, we all look at it and you guys say it's terrible. Then, at least, I'm presenting 1 B as an alternative that would beautify the town. But I think there would have to be strict guidelines. That you're not putting trees with four inch calibers, that you're creating landscape benches for people. That you're creating a berm that's planted so that it could be a serious urban plus.

Chairman Cosentino: If we decide if it's the south side, we're really going to be asking for two things. We're going to be asking to modify the whole front of the parking coming down 172 with some kind of a berm.

Ira Grandberg: That's an opportunity, yes.

Chairman Cosentino: I like the idea of doing something with that parking lot and not seeing it.

Ira Grandberg: It's so easy to do because of the topography.

Chairman Cosentino: Whether it's a berm or a parking garage, they should do something now.

Ira Grandberg: The only claim to fame I ever thought I got out of the Planning Board was when you told me, and I pushed for 11 pear trees in front of TJ Maxx. That's my claim to fame, but it worked. It's beautiful now. So a little effort like that might make some sense. But do it seriously; not just a couple of holes in the ground.

Chairman Cosentino: I like the idea of re-doing the front. It looks like the 1950's now.

Ira Grandberg: But don't get caught by that because every time you see a parking lot like Target, they go through the whole process and they end up putting petunia bushes up. It looks ridiculous. Everybody says, here's our landscape plan, so the guy uses green magic marker and everybody gets finessed and says this is beautiful, and it looks like a lousy parking lot.

Chairman Cosentino: We have to learn from that.

Ira Grandberg: You have to hold them to guidelines that are professionally guaranteed that you're going to get a spectacular investment in the town.

Ralph Vigliotti: So, we've talking about two options: south side for lack of a better word, as opposed to Option 1, south side; Boltis to St. Mark's to Main to the Emergency Room with problems with the south end of the parking lot meaning that long wall as it sits along the wall. It appears, and correct me if I'm wrong, if they were able to move that wall back 50, 60 feet on top of or close or on top of that hill, I think everybody would be reasonably happy. But the only way that could happen is if they put a small parking lot next to the cancer center.

Ira Grandberg: I think, if you'll forgive me, because they've gone to thousands and thousands of dollars, hopefully what we see tonight, not to be their advocate. If you presented it more like the town was very worried what this thing would look like, you've presented it, and we have concerns that it's too massive; and open it up that way, there might be another opportunity. Think about it. They're building two parking structures at the opposite ends of a campus that has two distinct functions. It makes sense, doesn't it? Down near the apartment houses on the north side. They can create a two-level parking garage for employees there, and do the other one 50 feet back, and do something along the edge, that forever would be terrific. Just like Leonard Park, you drive by and you say, boy, this is beautiful. People from out of town say this is a terrific town, look at this pagoda. Now, if they come up Main Street and they see this beautiful landscaped City of Trees, give them some trees. Make the hospital, if their due diligence, participate in the town.

Ralph Vigliotti: So, we go to Option 3. This is surface parking here, if I'm reading this correctly?

Doug Hertz: Yes, you have a parking structure in the north corner on the Moore/Main Street corner.

Ralph Vigliotti: But Option 2 brings it all the way down almost a football field and a half.

Ira Grandberg: It brings it all the way down but lowers it a half a story.

Doug Hertz: What is the length of that?

Ralph Vigliotti: Option 2 is a football field and a third.

Ira Grandberg: But its 30 feet back from the street, which is deceptive, because the parking lot now is about 15 feet back from the street.

Ralph Vigliotti: But Option 3 would also show a parking structure back 30 feet?

Ira Grandberg: Yes.

Chairman Cosentino: If you put a berm in the front, how many parking spaces would be taken?

Ira Grandberg: They already said that with the parking structure they had more than they needed then. Even if you took one row and you built the second parking lot, you can make up the difference with the second parking lot. They were going to take 200 cars just for staff. In other words it wasn't like 25 cars; there was a major staff count.

Chairman Cosentino: I am just thinking; how are they going to take this?

Ira Grandberg: If you don't present it like, here's a new scheme, and they go what do we waste our time for, give them the objective, and look at this new scheme, and we all might look at it and go, that's terrific.

Doug Hertz: Well, in all fairness, they haven't been before the board as a whole to discuss this yet. So, they really shouldn't have any expectations of what the whole board's feeling is.

Ira Grandberg: Right. And Joe is generous enough to say we're not going to hold you up on the other side, right? Let them work a little harder on this side.

Chairman Cosentino: We're moving forward on the Emergency Room but they can't start construction until both are approved as one document.

Ira Grandberg: I think you're doing your due diligence, and if you're given the nuances later, it would be, "well why you didn't consider the front of Main Street?"

Chairman Cosentino: Well, we did and it's massive.

Ira Grandberg: Now you'll see tonight; is it massive? I don't know. This drawing they gave us looks horrendous; this mechanical drawing. The sketches might be like, wow, that looks great.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: Going back to Option 1 B.

Ira Grandberg: Right, the berm and the smaller south garage.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: The viewpoint from Boltis Street; looking at Option 1 and Option 1 B. Does it change?

Doug Hertz: I wouldn't think it does. Our feeling is we barely saw it from Boltis.

Ralph Vigliotti: But if we put a berm in, you wouldn't see it at all from Boltis. The berm should go there anyway.

Chairman Cosentino: Right now with the trees, you don't even see the hospital.

Ira Grandberg: I don't mean a berm the width of this table. I'm talking about beautifully designed; like on the inside of the berm might be a four foot wall, but on the outside it might go 20 feet. A really substantial landscape component.

Ralph Vigliotti: If we got rid of this section; this is the section that bothers everyone, correct? This is Option 1 - St. Mark's, and this is that section that bothers everyone.

Doug Hertz: Again, or if it were tiered, it might not be offensive.

Ira Grandberg: Put in parking structure design, to get from one floor to another requires such an enormous ramp, that what you've done is eliminated parking spaces; the ramp has got to go somewhere. So you end up with a building, with a ramp and two rows of parking spaces versus the four, you need to economically build the ramp.

Ralph Vigliotti: But for now, if we came out and took whatever was here, placed it here and you still had grade level parking here. This is a barn. This is the edge of the property.

Chairman Cosentino: The Village doesn't want to rezone it.

Ralph Vigliotti: Okay, but that would be the only way that we could capture it.

Chairman Cosentino: You've got another problem here. To do this, they have to rezone this. It's different zoning. This, where the old dentists were, on the top of the hill, that's a different zoning than this. That has to be rezoned to accommodate that.

Whitney Singleton: Not just rezone, it has to become one lot.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: I'm keeping an open ear and an open mind on everything, but my thought, from the hospital's point of view; I think they are going to have a difficult time swallowing the concept of building an ancillary parking structure.

Ira Grandberg: They don't seem to have a problem building a 600 foot long pancake versus a four or five story cube. Cubes are more economical than pancakes because of the amount of perimeter wall, the amount of cubic concrete and all of that. They didn't seem to raise an objection to that.

Chairman Cosentino: But you have to look at it a different way.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: It's a new fly in the ointment?

Chairman Cosentino: Yes. If they took the idea which they like as much as a parking lot in the front, Option 2, they're not done. It gives them further, if they want to expand, to go up. If they built two parking structures, they can't expand on this side then either.

Ira Grandberg: They could theoretically.

Chairman Cosentino: Not with the parking structure there. So, they're saying, "Hey, we like that in the front. We think it's great."

Ira Grandberg: Would it be so terrible to put a parking structure on Boltis? It's not the end of the world.

Chairman Cosentino: We suggested that they take 150; they suggested they take 25 feet, but the Village won't rezone it.

Ira Grandberg: That's something else.

Chairman Cosentino: We were told absolutely unequivocally they are not going to rezone Boltis Street. That came from the Mayor.

Ira Grandberg: You've got to work with what you've got. They understood completely that if they went to Option 2, they would create something architectural to make that 30 footer feeling. So the question tonight is will they show something that's appealing? If everybody looks and says, no way; then you've got to open up the discussion to alternatives.

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: Meaning 1 B. But if the Option 2 that they show looks presentable, and doable.

Ira Grandberg: Thank you very much, you've made a really good effort, but we don't like this. They are good architects, so I think they'll come up with some pretty interesting material. Were you a little surprised that the hospital grimaced at this; Option 2?

Vice Chairman Sturniolo: No.

Ralph Vigliotti: I guess they're feeling is that if we go with it, we hit a home run with loaded bases. They get a lot of spaces. It reminds me of Camden Yards.

Ira Grandberg: Is that good or bad?

Doug Hertz: It's an attractive place because they took these old industrial buildings and brought them back to life. They have an architectural integrity to them.

Chairman Cosentino: Don't be too surprised when we start going to a different area, and they say, what are you guys doing? I thought you liked the front? I thought we were all on Board.

Doug Hertz: Throw it on me; throw it on Ralph.

Chairman Cosentino: I won't throw it on anybody. I've got big shoulders.

Doug Hertz: The point is we never met with Ira until tonight. We never gave this input.

Ralph Vigliotti: The two small garages are interesting.

Doug Hertz: We brought that up before. It was never seriously explored.

Ralph Vigliotti: How small would that be?

Ira Grandberg: Whatever you cut back on the first one from the south, it would make up at least on the other one, and you'd be generous to say put in 50 more spaces or whatever you need for your staff. The other scheme they might come up with tonight is just the north end. Leave the lot but create the front wall as a screen element. We talked about that as well. I have no idea what they're going to do, but they might do that. In other words build a parking structure here and put a brick and stone and aluminum façade which just screen the parking lot. We talked about that. It will be interesting to see what they come up with.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

dm