



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

July 11, 2012 / Calendar No. 7

C 120177 PCM
CORRECTED

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the Fire Department and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the site selection and acquisition of property located at 512 West 23rd Street (Block 694, Lot 40), for use as an ambulance station, Borough of Manhattan, Community District 4.

This application for site selection and acquisition of property was filed by the applicant on January 20, 2012. The action would facilitate the long-term placement of an ambulance station at 512 West 23rd Street.

BACKGROUND

The applicants seek a site selection and acquisition of an approximately 12,000 square foot, privately-owned zoning lot at 512 West 23rd Street, within the Special West Chelsea District. The New York Fire Department (NYFD) proposes to utilize this space as the Midtown West Ambulance Station (EMS 7) to replace a now-closed facility at St. Vincent's Hospital.

The site lies beneath an elevated railroad trestle that has been converted into the High Line Park, and is a through-block site with frontages on West 22nd Street and West 23rd Street. Previously, this unimproved site was used as a surface parking lot. In November of 2011, the FDNY leased the site from the current owner, and has installed approximately 3,656 square feet of temporary office trailers, which contain locker rooms, bathrooms, a pantry, medical and vehicle supply areas and administrative spaces. The remainder of the lot is being used for storage of spare ambulances and other material/equipment. The site selection and acquisition of the site would facilitate the development of a permanent facility. Access to and from the site is provided via a curb cut on West 23rd Street.

The proposed facility replaces the staff and ambulance units that were stationed at St. Vincent's Hospital, which closed in 2010. EMS operates from the subject site using a strategy known as "dynamic deployment." The ambulance units leave the facility in a non-emergency response capacity, and travel to pre-designated street corner locations, where they wait for emergency

calls. When the ambulance is dispatched from the street corner, they pick up the patient and take them to the hospital. From there, the ambulance will either return to its street corner to wait for another call, or return to the EMS facility, where the workers will restock the ambulance. Eight ambulance units operate from this site, with a total of 21 eight-hour tours.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The application (C 120177 PCM) was reviewed pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and the SEQRA regulations set forth in Volume 6 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulations, Section 617.00 et seq. and the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Rules of Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The designated CEQR number is 12FDO001M. The lead agency is the New York City Fire Department.

After a study of the potential environmental impact of the proposed action, a Negative Declaration was issued on November 10, 2011.

UNIFORM LAND USE REVIEW

This application (C 120177 PCM) was certified as complete by the Department of City Planning on February 27, 2012, and was duly referred to Community Board 4 and the Borough President, in accordance with Title 62 of the Rules of the City of New York, Section 2-02(b).

Community Board Public Hearing

Community Board 4 held a public hearing on this application on April 4, 2012, and, on that date, by a vote of 38 in favor, 3 opposed, with no abstentions, adopted a resolution recommending disapproval of the application unless the following conditions are met: .

The Board recommends denial of the application for site selection and acquisition unless FDNY commits to an expanded search for a more suitable site on a non-residential block and to addressing operating issues that affect quality of life for neighboring residents. The results of such a search should be submitted to Manhattan CB4.

If this site becomes a permanent EMS location, the Board recommends denial unless:

- FDNY commits to building a fully enclosed garage structure of appropriate design reflecting its location beneath the High Line;
- Effective measures are undertaken to mitigate exhaust fumes from idling vehicles on site in the short term, and elimination of idling completely in the long term; and
- Proper operating procedures are implemented and followed to address identified issues affecting quality of life.

Borough President Recommendation

This application (C 120177 PCM) was considered by the Borough President, who issued a recommendation approving the application on May 11, 2012, subject to the following conditions:

that the FDNY liaises with Community Board 4 to address quality of life concerns; installs cameras to monitor adherence to operational protocols; installs appropriate signage alerting pedestrians to the active driveway; and removes the disused parking attendant booth. Additionally, the Manhattan Borough President encourages the FDNY, with DCAS and OMB, to identify a permanent location for the operation of EMS Station 7 as it is a critical service necessary for the health and safety of Manhattan's residents.

City Planning Commission Public Hearing

On May 23, 2012 (Calendar No. 1), the City Planning Commission scheduled June 6, 2012, for a public hearing on this application (C 120177 PCM). The hearing was duly held on June 6, 2012 (Calendar No. 14).

There were two speakers in favor, and none opposed.

A representative from the New York City Fire Department described the operation of the facility, and reiterated points listed in a letter sent from the FDNY to the community board in response to their comments, dated May 2, 2012. He described the "dynamic deployment" method by which ambulances respond to emergencies, and explained that ambulances only return to the facility when they are at the end of their shift, or when they need to restock or clean the ambulance during their shift. There are also spare ambulances located on site to be used when a regular ambulance is being serviced or cleaned. Any ambulance that is off-duty is not to be on and/or idling. The FDNY representative also stated that the FDNY will be installing cameras on the site to monitor conditions including whether an ambulance is idling, or if there is litter on site. The

tapes would be reviewed if there is a complaint. Also, the representative reiterated that community members are able to contact the station's Captain, who is on-site during business hours, if they have any issues with the site's operation.

A representative from the Manhattan Borough President's Office reiterated the Borough President's recommendation of conditional approval of the application.

There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

CONSIDERATION

The Commission believes that this application for a site selection and acquisition (C 120177 PCM) is appropriate.

The Commission acknowledges that the Midtown West Ambulance Station at the 512 West 23rd Street location replaces an ambulance station facility that was located at St. Vincent's Hospital, which is now closed. The 512 West 23rd Street site provides an EMS facility in close proximity to ambulance deployment locations on the west side of Manhattan, serving the neighborhoods of SoHo, Greenwich Village, Chelsea and Hudson Yards.

The establishment of this facility is part of the Fire Department's station-based dispatching system which is designed to improve supervision of EMS crews and reduce loss of coverage due to shift changes. The site is currently occupied as an ambulance station and is of adequate size to accommodate the facility. The ambulance station is located on a split zoning lot, with half of the site zoned M1-5, and the other half zoned C6-3A. Both of these zoning districts permit the use.

The Commission notes that this facility is well-located to enable the FDNY to operate and service its emergency service units efficiently. The need for the proposed facility was not noted in the Citywide Statement of Needs; however a letter pursuant to Section 204g of the New York City Charter was sent to the Manhattan Borough President and Manhattan Community Board 4 on August 3, 2010.

The Commission is pleased that the FDNY has responded to the concerns of the community board, and asks that they continue to work with the community board to reduce noise, engine idling, litter and other quality of life issues on and around the site.

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, that the City Planning Commission finds that the action described herein will have no significant impact on the environment; and be it further

RESOLVED, by the City Planning Commission, pursuant to Sections 197-c and 201 of the New York City Charter, that based on the environmental determination, an application submitted by the Fire Department and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the site selection and acquisition of property located at 512 West 23rd Street (Block 694, Lot 40), for use as an ambulance station, Borough of Manhattan, Community District 4, is approved.

The above resolution (C 120177 PCM), duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on July 11, 2012 (Calendar No. 7), is filed with the Office of the Speaker, City Council, and the Borough President, in accordance with the requirements of Section 197-d of the New York City Charter.

AMANDA M. BURDEN, FAICP, Chair
KENNETH J. KNUCKLES, Esq., Vice Chairman
ANGELA M. BATTAGLIA, RAYANN BESSER, IRWIN G. CANTOR, P.E.,
ALFRED C. CERULLO, III, BETTY Y. CHEN, MICHELE DE LA UZ,
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ORLANDO MARIN, Commissioners