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Developer gets variances to raze Norwich restaurant

Norwich - A Rhode Island developer received unanimous approval Tuesday for two zoning variances that would allow the firm to tear down the existing Olympic Pizza building at 372 West Main St. and build a proposed CVS pharmacy with drive-through service.

After a brief public hearing, the Zoning Board of Appeals approved allowing a retaining wall that would exceed 20 feet in some spots and a screening fence to improve neighbors' privacy around the rear and side of the property.

The wall would be necessary, because developers Gershman Brown Crowley Inc. plan to level the steeply sloped lot to create a new development pad at the center of a flat lot, attorney William Sweeney told the zoning board.

One neighbor spoke against the project, asking the board to require that the developers build a privacy fence around her property. Board members explained that the board could not order work done off the property.

The plans next will go to the Commission on the City Plan next Tuesday.

Gershman Brown Crowley Inc. has an option to purchase the property from current owner Olympic Realty Development LLC.

Olympic Realty had filed suit in New London Superior Court against its tenant, Olympic Pizza Restaurant, in a lease dispute. The two parties reached a settlement last week that would give the restaurant ample time to relocate to another Norwich location if the building is sold for redevelopment.

- Claire Bessette
