

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, July 24, 2019, 7:00 PM
Town Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

PRESENT: Michael Birtwistle, Christine Gray-Mullen, Acting Chair, Jack Jemsek, David Levenstein, Janet McGowan
ABSENT: Maria Chao, Pari Riahi
STAFF: Christine Brestrup, Planning Director
Pamela Field-Sadler, Administrative Assistant

7:00 pm: Vice Chair Christine Gray-Mullen opened the meeting and explained she would serve as the Acting Chair for this meeting; other Board members agreed by consensus. Ms. Gray-Mullen also welcomed Janet McGowan who is a new Planning Board (Board) member.

I. MINUTES - None

II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – None

IV. PLANNING & ZONING

- A. ZSC Report – None
- B. Public Comment about ZSC Report – None
- C. Other – None

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- D. The Board received correspondence regarding the Certificate of Assessment for the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission for the fiscal period July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. Ms. Brestrup will email a reference copy of the Certificate of Assessment to the Board.

III. PUBLIC HEARING – SITE PLAN REVIEW

**A. SPR 2019-08 – Javier Campos of Adams & Ruxton for Bank of America
360 College Street**

Request Site Plan Review approval to install new light posts and fixtures to provide better illumination, safety & security for Bank of America ATM (COM Zoning District, Map 15A, Parcel 28)

7:05 p.m. Ms. Gray-Mullen read the preamble and opened the public hearing. There were no Board disclosures.

Javier Campos introduced himself and explained he is the Project Manager for this proposed project. Mr. Campos explained that Bank of America (BOA) has an

Exterior Lighting Program (ELP) which determines if site lighting meets the BOA standards. The ELP has deemed the lighting for the 360 College St. BOA site is insufficient and additional lighting is required to ensure the safety and security of customers. Mr. Campos stated that work had begun at the site after obtaining an electrical permit, however, the work was stopped upon learning the change to existing conditions requires Site Plan Review (SPR) approval.

The applicant proposes to improve the current lighting with the addition of two 15' pole lights including a 3' base, and one additional fixture attached to the shopping mall.

Mr. Birtwistle provided a summary of the Site Visit and the current conditions observed, as well as a description of the bases for the new pole lights. Mr. Birtwistle pointed out that an existing pole light was observed at the east end of the property. Ms. Gray-Mullen asked if the existing light pole would remain once the new lights were installed.

Mr. Campos provided the following when answering questions from the Board:

- Mr. Campos will determine the working condition of the existing light, and how this light effects the improvement plan.
- Mr. Campos confirmed the proposed pole lights will be 15' in height including the base. He acknowledged that the catalog cuts indicate a height of 25' but that is not correct. The light poles will be 12' high on 3' high bases.
- The proposed improvements are based on the BOA lighting standards intended to increase customer safety and security.
- BOA has permission from the property owner to make the proposed improvements.
- Mr. Campos will determine the exact height of the proposed building fixtures.
- Mr. Campos will explore reducing the Kelvin units to reduce the color temperature of the light.
- Mr. Campos will explore moving the pole lights to the outer area of the driveway, as well as ways to create a more attractive design.
- The lighting will be on from dusk until dawn.

Ms. Brestrup noted that the property is located in a growing Village Center and that the streetscape should be inviting for pedestrians. It should not have the feeling of a shopping center.

Public Comment

- Vince O'Connor, 175 Summer St., suggested all lighting be required to point down to create greater efficiency and avoid shining light into neighboring properties.

Ms. Gray-Mullen encouraged the applicant to go back and redesign the lighting scheme.

Mr. Birtwistle made the motion to continue the public hearing for SPR 2019-08 – Javier Campos of Adams & Ruxton for Bank of America - 360 College Street to the meeting of the Planning Board scheduled for September 18, 2019 at 7:05 p.m. Ms. McGowan seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0-0 to continue

PUBLIC HEARING – SITE PLAN REVIEW & SPECIAL PERMIT

B. SPR 2019-07 & SPP 2019-04 – Amir Mikhchi

South East Street Court Housing – 133 & 143 South East Street

Joint public hearing to request Site Plan Review approval to construct a new 3-story mixed-use building with 62 apartment units, 1358 sq. ft. of retail space and associated site improvements and work in the town right of way, under Section 3.325 of the Zoning Bylaw & request a Special Permit to modify the front and side setback requirements under Footnote “a” of Table 3, Section 6 of the Zoning Bylaw (B-VC Zoning District, Map 15C, Parcels 3 & 4)

7:35 p.m. Ms. Gray-Mullen read the preamble and opened the public hearing. There were no Board disclosures.

Amir Mikhchi, property owner, introduced himself, as well as Michael Liu, Berkshire Design Group, Landscape Architect and Project Designer, and Roy Brown, Architect.

Mr. Liu explained the proposal is to construct a three story, L-shaped building at 133 & 143 South East Street. The building will be mixed-use with 2 retail spaces (totaling 1,200 square feet) on part of the ground floor and 62 residential units planned for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors. Mr. Liu provided plans including a lighting plan and building elevations. The applicant is requesting waivers from the Parking Requirement, Traffic Impact Statement and the Sign Plan.

The site, a combination of two parcels, is just over 1.25 acres; there is an existing single family house on each parcel and both are currently vacant. The new building will front on South East St. and the applicant is proposing a 6' front set back to the street and a 6.2' setback from the northern property line. The applicant proposes 67 parking spaces primarily located behind the building and hidden from the streetscape. Mr. Liu pointed out there is an isolated wetland in the center of the site. The applicant proposes to replicate the wetland at a 4:1 ratio at the low point of the site on the Southwest corner. Bike racks will be provided at the main entry to the building, which is located in the courtyard where the two parts of the building meet. There will also be a door at the northeast corner, along the street side, that will provide access to the interior of the building.

Mr. Liu stated the application provides for road improvements along the west side of South East Street, including road widening, a new bus stop, and new sidewalks from the curb cut to the Florence Saving Bank down to the driveway for the new building. The plan includes a semi-circular pedestrian plaza for outside the retail space with a walkway to the bus stop. Currently water drains from the street to this area; a catch

basin installed in the road with piping to carry the drainage to an existing catch basin and grading is planned to carry water away from the plaza area.

The retail space is envisioned to be a coffee shop or a convenience store. The semi-circular plaza could be a gathering space for residents of the building.

Mr. Birtwistle provided a summary of the Site Visit. The group noticed the two existing residences on the proposed site, and the large area in the back. They also viewed the common area in the front and existing vegetation including the large Catalpa tree proposed to be removed. The tree is wired, but flowering and appears healthy. Also viewed was the wetland area and the downward slope of the site and the group wondered how much fill would be required, and they noted the proximity to Amherst College land.

There is currently a fence along the northern border on the property of Florence Bank.

Ms. Brestrup updated the Board on the status of the joint public hearing regarding the trees proposed for removal for this project. The Town Attorney has confirmed that because a letter of opposition was received at the public hearing on April 17, 2019, the proposed tree removal must be considered by the Town Manager. The Board will need to hold another joint public hearing with the Tree Warden during the August 27, 2019 meeting whereby the Board and the Tree Warden will each state their decision about the proposed tree removal and a referral of the matter to the Town Manager can take place.

While answering questions from the Board, Mr. Liu and Mr. Brown provided the following information:

- The height of the building is approximately 40' and a 42" fence is planned for the rooftop.
- All of the units are one bedroom allowing for a two-person maximum.
- The units will be about 595 square feet in size and will be rented to young professionals and students.
- The rent is likely to be about \$1,200 to \$1,300 per month.
- The applicant does not include any affordable units in the plan; affordable units are not a requirement for a mixed-use building.
- The 6' front setback will allow for some greenspace in the front of the building and necessary piping.
- The plan for the replicated wetland is to allow the area to naturalize with native trees and shrubs.
- There is no measurable light level at the tree or property line.
- The applicant will expand the light plan to include lighting proposed for the building, especially lighting around entrances. The light poles and fixtures are similar in style to those used by the town in the downtown area.
- No fencing is planned to prohibit access to nearby trails.
- The applicant proposes one parking space per unit; the Zoning Bylaw requirement is two parking spaces per unit. The proposed parking includes

standard and compact size spaces. The plan includes four parking spaces for the retail spaces, and one extra space. The applicant will consider including electric charging spaces in the parking plan.

- The applicant will work with a traffic engineer to assess the expected impact on current traffic due to the project including a study of trip generation, sight distance and sight lines.
- There is no surface run-off from the paved parking. Drainage will be caught in catch basins and be piped through a filtration system to an underground detention basin with overflow being returned to the replicated wetland area.
- Five uncovered bike racks are included in the project plan.
- There are three entrances into the building. Deliveries or loading for the residents and retailers will potentially be from the street or the parking area.
- The applicant will submit a Management Plan including a Complaint Response Plan, and details regarding contracted services for property management and trash and snow removal. A Construction Logistics Plan will need to be submitted prior to the building permit application.
- The applicant will provide a sketch of the proposed building which includes the Florence Bank for comparison.

Ms. Gray-Mullen asked that the lights around the building be of a lower level of brightness than 5,700 Kelvin, not bright white. She asked for additional lighting on the building. She asked that the applicant and the designers observe the level of light along South East Street and use that level to inform their lighting plan.

Ms. Brestrup asked that the Photometric Plan be superimposed on a Site Plan so that it was clear where the different levels of light were falling.

Ms. Gray-Mullen noted that the applicant is requesting waivers from the parking requirements, the requirement for a Traffic Impact Report and a Sign Plan.

Mr. Liu stated that the waiver from the parking requirement was reasonable because most residents will have one car and the property is on a bus line. The retail spaces need 4 parking spaces, but 5 are being provided. There is good sight distance on South East Street. Berkshire Design will do a trip generation study, but a full Traffic Impact Report should not be necessary.

Signs will be needed for the retail spaces; a sign will be needed for the name of the building and the address.

Ms. McGowan stated that she would like to receive a full Traffic Impact Report, because of the number of driveways in the area, the vehicle trips and bicycle trips and pedestrian movement in the area. There will also be a new bus stop and cars will be pulling out. Mr. Birtwistle stated that there was a visibility issue to the south.

The Board made further observations: there is a well-controlled intersection to the north; however, widening the road will speed up the traffic; and a mid-block crosswalk may be problematic.

The town requires a 34' wide roadway, curb to curb, with two 12' vehicle travel lanes and a 5' bike lane on either side.

Ms. Gray-Mullen stated that a letter from a traffic engineer describing the proposed traffic (trips per day, trips at peak times, etc.) and commenting on the sight lines would probably be adequate for a traffic impact statement.

Mr. Mikhchi plans to develop property on both sides of the street. The project for the east side of the street has not yet been designed.

A curb-ramp will be built at the south side of the driveway to accommodate a future sidewalk.

Ms. Gray-Mullen agreed that the industry standards were moving towards fewer parking spaces per dwelling unit.

Mr. Liu described where compact parking spaces are being proposed.

Ms. McGowan observed that there is currently no place to park to unload bags and packages and only one elevator in the building. This will make the move-in more difficult.

There will be doors at the stairwells to bring things into the building.

Deliveries to the two retail spaces are currently proposed to occur as they do in downtown, off the street. The applicant will look at this issue and propose a better solution.

The finish floor of the building is proposed to be 2'-8" higher than the level of South East Street. This will require filling of the site and grading into the town right-of-way.

The Planning Board had not yet received Fire Department comments, or a site management plan, or a Complaint Response Plan, or comments from the Town Engineer, as of the date of this public hearing session.

Mr. Liu described the dumpster and recycling location and the circulation for trucks. Pick-ups will occur at least weekly.

The façade of the building is massive and the sidewalks should be at least 6' wide.

Public Comment

Dorothy Pam - 229 Amity St., Vince O'Connor – 175 Summer St. and Maurianne Adams – 14 Beston St. shared the following comments:

- The proposed plan lacks green, recreational space for the residents as required in Section 11.2403 of the Zoning Bylaw.
- The applicant should determine how the site will accommodate snow fall from the roof.
- The number of proposed bike racks is inadequate for the size of the building; all bike racks should be covered and located behind the building.
- A professional comparison study should be completed in order to determine a realistic number of residents for the new building and the parking that will be required. There is no additional permit parking nearby.
- A recycling and composting facility should be included in the plan.
- A PV System to serve the building should be considered.
- Signed contracts for the retail space should be required.
- Traffic moves quickly through this area and is unaccustomed to slowing down for development.
- One elevator is insufficient for the size of the building, and resident storage should be included in the plan.
- A reduction in the building size and the number of residential units should be considered.
- The commercial space is conducive for food retail and a plan for deliveries should be clear.

In responding to the public comments, the consultants confirmed that three of the residential units and four of the parking spaces are handicapped accessible. The applicant stated there are pros/cons to considering a PV System, specifically there is minimal south facing area.

The applicant agreed verbally to take responsibility for the plaza area. There will be a discussion about furniture or permanent seating.

Mr. Levenstein made the motion to continue the public hearing for SPR 2019-07 and SPP 2019-04 – Amir Mikhchi, South East Street Court Housing – 133 & 143 South East Street to the meeting of the Planning Board scheduled for August 27, 2019 at 7:15 p.m. Mr. Birtwistle seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0-0 to continue

PUBLIC HEARING SITE PLAN REVIEW AND SPECIAL PERMIT
C. SPR 2020-01 & SPP 2020-01 – 462 Main Street LLC – Center East Commons
462 Main Street

Joint public hearing to request Site Plan Review approval to construct a mixed-use building on the easterly side of the property, containing 16 dwelling units & one professional office space, including site improvements, under Section 3.325 to be co-located with the existing commercial building containing 7 office spaces, under Section 3.358 and in accordance with Section 3.01 & demolition of the existing accessory building. Request Special Permit to extinguish Special Permits ZBA FY2018-08, ZBA FY2005-18, ZBA FY2004-00034, ZBA FY1998-00024, ZBA FY1980-00071 & any other Special Permits currently or previously associated with the site (B-N Zoning District, Map 14B, Parcel 68)

9:35 p.m. Ms. Gray-Mullen read the preamble and opened the public hearing. There were no Board disclosures.

Attorney Tom Reidy, Bacon Wilson, P.C., introduced himself, as well as John Wroblewski, owner and manager of 462 Main St., Architect Kristine Royal and Civil Designer William Osley. Attorney Reidy explained the property was formerly zoned General Residence, however, the property is now in the Neighborhood Business zone. The applicant is requesting the Board extinguish any Special Permits currently or previously associated with the site, because a Special Permit is no longer required for office uses in this zoning district.

The project will contain 4 one-bedroom apartments, 10 two-bedroom apartments and 2 three-bedroom apartments.

462 Main Street is a ¾ acre parcel with an existing commercial building containing 7 office spaces served by 20 parking spaces. The applicant plans to include two electric charging stations too. Additionally, there is an existing accessory building on the property proposed to be demolished. The applicant requests Site Plan Approval to construct a mixed-use, 3-story building co-located with the existing commercial building. The proposed building will contain 16 dwelling units and 1 professional office space. The applicant is considering a PV System for this building.

Mr. Osley pointed out the project meets the dimensional requirements for a mixed-use building in the B-N zone, and the building will be built on a slab.

Mr. Osley stated 32 parking spaces are proposed to serve the existing and proposed buildings with 3 of the spaces designated as handicapped accessible with the appropriate signage. Parking access will remain from the existing 18' driveway off Main Street. The existing driveway will be rebuilt. Mr. Osley pointed out the sidewalks will be concrete and meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for slope and width. Additionally, the sidewalks leading to the ground floor units will also meet the requirements of the Fair Housing Act for sidewalks.

Mr. Osley explained the Storm Water Management and Drainage system meets Department of Environmental Protection Standards. The system, approved by the Town Engineer, includes an infiltration basin and a detention basin at the south end of the property, with overflow directed to the town storm drain system in the street. The applicant proposes to connect to the water and sewer lines on Spruce Ridge; the DPW Director and the Town Engineer support the utility plan. Mr. Owsley reviewed the site grading and the Erosion Control Plan for the project.

Attorney Reidy confirmed that Town Engineer Jason Skeels has reviewed the project plans, traffic impact statement and the storm water management plans and has no concerns. Wetlands Coordinator Beth Willson has reviewed the project and has no concerns from a Conservation perspective. Ms. Brestrup confirmed the Fire Department has also reviewed the plans and had no adverse comments.

Mr. Reidy and Mr. Wroblewski have had conversations with the VFW across the street about contractor parking.

Mr. Jemsek provided a summary of the site visit noting the Board observed the existing building and garage on the property, as well as the designated trash and recycling area. The Board observed the fencing on the west side of the property and the HVAC system on the west side of the existing building. Mr. Jemsek reviewed questions and comments that arose during the site visit. Mr. Wroblewski clarified that the parking needs for the existing apartment development to the east has actually declined on average. There have been up to 30 cars parked on a regular basis in the past, in previous years. Now there is an average of 23 cars parking on a regular basis on the Spruce Ridge site. Ms. Brestrup will correct that item on the Site Visit report.

Public Comment

- Dorothy Pam, 229 Amity St., shared her support for handicap accessible units, as well as affordable units for senior citizens.

Ms. Brestrup reviewed the Development Application Report. The applicant will submit a Photometric Plan and a Construction Logistics Plan for the Board's review. The applicant will confirm the plan for sign illumination, and submit sample leases for the commercial/office uses and the residential use.

Mr. Birtwistle made the motion to continue the public hearing for SPR 2020-01 & SPP 2020-01 – 462 Main Street LLC – Center East Commons 462 Main Street to the meeting of the Planning Board scheduled for August 27, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Jemsek seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0-0 to continue

VIII. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS

ANR 2020-01 – Back land – Bay Road

Upon the Board’s authorization, Ms. Gray-Mullen signed ANR 2020-01 relating to property on Bay Road.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Approved:

Pamela Field-Sadler
Administrative Asst.

Christine Gray-Mullin
Acting Chair

DATE: _____