

**AMHERST PLANNING BOARD**  
**June 4, 2008 – 7:00 PM**  
**Town Room, Town Hall**  
**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Aaron Hayden, Chair; Jonathan O’Keeffe, Richard Howland, Denise Barberet, Susan Pynchon, Ludmilla Pavlova-Gillham (7:10 PM), Jonathan Shefftz (7:11 PM), Eduardo Suarez (7:20 PM)

**ABSENT:** Kathleen Anderson

**STAFF:** Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director; Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner; Sue Krzanowski, Management Assistant

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Mr. Hayden opened the meeting at 7:08 PM.

**I. MINUTES – Meeting of May 7, 2008**

Mr. Howland MOVED: to accept the Minutes of May 7, 2008 with Ms. Barberet’s anticipated corrections. Mr. O’Keeffe seconded.

Ms. Barberet corrected the last paragraph on page 2 and pointed out minor typographical errors on pages 3 and 4.

Ms. Barberet MOVED: to accept the Minutes as corrected. Mr. Howland seconded, and the Motion passed 6-0-1 (Pavlova-Gillham abstained).

**II. PUBLIC HEARINGS – SITE PLAN REVIEW APPLICATIONS**

**SPR2008-00004, Amherst Enterprise Park – Andrews & LaVerdiere**

Request to construct a 12,800 sf, two-story wood frame construction office building with access drive and parking on 5.6 acres, Meadow Street. (Map 4D/Parcel 8, LI and FPC zoning districts) [continued from 04/16/2008]

The Board received a request to continue the hearing for 60 days.

Ms. Pynchon MOVED: to continue the hearing to July 16, 2008 at 7:05 PM. Ms. Pavlova-Gillham seconded, and the Motion passed 6-0-1 (Howland abstained).

**SPR2008-00003, Amherst Enterprise Park – Andrews & LaVerdiere**

Request to construct a 24,700 s.f., three-story, masonry construction, climate-controlled storage facility with access drive and parking on 5.6 acres on Meadow Street. (Map 4D/Parcel 8, LI and FPC zoning districts) [continued from April 2 and May 20, 2008]

The Board received a request to continue this hearing to June 18, 2008.

Ms. Pynchon MOVED: to continue the hearing to June 18, 2008 at 7:30 PM. Ms. Pavlova-Gillham seconded.

Ms. Barberet asked if the Board should hear from members of the audience who were interested in the proposal. Mr. Tucker advised that it would be best to continue the hearing without taking any evidence, since not all eligible Planning Board members were present, and taking evidence in their absence would make them ineligible to vote after the hearing was closed.

The Motion passed 6-0-1 (Howland abstained).

### **III. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. Lot Release Request – Lot 4, Concord Way – Amherst Hills Subdivision**

Mr. Tucker noted that there are still several unreleased lots (over half of the total lots), and the Town Engineer recommended the release of Lot 4.

Mr. Howland MOVED: to release Lot 4, Concord Way. Ms. Pavlova-Gillham seconded, and the Motion passed 7-0-1 (Suarez abstained).

The Board signed the Certificate of Performance.

#### **B. Lot Release Request – Lot 5, Lawrence Circle**

Mr. Tucker noted that this would bring to 5 out of 6 the number of lots released. Per the Town Engineer's recommendation, a \$20,000 performance bond had been submitted by the applicant.

Mr. Howland MOVED: to release Lot 5, Lawrence Circle. Ms. Pavlova-Gillham seconded, and the Motion passed 7-0-1 (Suarez abstained).

The Board signed the Certificate of Performance.

#### **D. 2008 Summer Landscape Design Institute at Conway – Brochure in packet.**

#### **E. "In Common" – UMass Extension Publication – in packet.**

#### **C. Zoning Forum – Mr. Tucker noted that the Zoning Subcommittee is sponsoring this session on June 18, 2008, 5:00 – 6:30 PM in the Town Room, Town Hall. Mr. Hayden said that the purpose is to help with getting zoning articles to Town Meeting. A draft of the Subcommittee's FY09 zoning amendment work plan was included in the packet.**

There was discussion about how to post public notice of the forum so that a potential quorum of Planning Board members could attend. It was decided that because the Zoning Subcommittee meetings are already posted as Planning Board subcommittee meetings, that would be sufficient. Ms. Barberet said that an email of the agenda would be helpful.

- F. Other** – Ms. Pavlova-Gillham announced that the 2008 Regional Sustainable Energy Summit will be held at UMass, June 20-21. She will be one of the many speakers, she said. Ms. Pavlova-Gillham said that she would send out invitations.

Mr. Suarez said that there will also be many topics on sustainable development.

Stating that he is an employee of Amherst College, Mr. Hayden recused himself from the following hearings, stepped down from the Board and left the room. Mr. Shefftz assumed the Chair.

**II. PUBLIC HEARINGS – SITE PLAN REVIEW APPLICATIONS (continued)**

**SPR 2008-00005, 297 South Pleasant Street and 22 Hitchcock Road – Trustees of Amherst College**

Request approval to renovate and construct a new parking lot at the Scott House; also request approval for renovations and construction of an addition at the Smith House. (Maps 14C/Parcels 52 and 83; R-G zone) [continued w/o taking testimony from May 20, 2008]

Mr. Shefftz read the preamble and opened the hearing. He and Mr. Howland disclosed that they were alumni of Amherst College but could discharge their duties with regard to this application impartially.

Mr. Mark Tassinari, project manager, described the college's project, which he said involves three facilities, 22 Snell Street, which is not part of this SPR application, and the Scott House at 297 South Pleasant Street and Smith House at 22 Hitchcock Road which are contiguous properties.

The Advancement Project will provide new and renovated office space for the Amherst College Advancement Project (alumni outreach and fundraising). Smith House will be renovated and an addition of approximately 4900 SF will be constructed. Scott House, which is currently vacant, will be renovated and a new parking lot for approximately 25 cars will be constructed between the two buildings.

Mr. Tassinari described the site drainage and said that the Conservation Commission has approved the soil erosion plan and determined that there are no wetlands affected. Mr. Tassinari said that DCR has approved access to the bike path property for installation of utilities.

Mr. Tucker asked Mr. Tassinari to address the reasons for the waiver requests (Traffic Impact Statement and Sign Plan).

Mr. Tassinari said that since there will only be a small increase in the number of office workers to the site, there should be a minimal increase in traffic. Many will use alternative modes of transportation because of the site's location, he said. It is located on a bus route and near the Norwottuck Rail Trail and an adequate number of bicycle racks will be provided.

Mr. Suarez asked about LEED practices, greening of buildings and bike path use. Mr. Tassinari said he was not sure what information Mr. Suarez was looking for. He said there is no direct access from the property to the Rail Trail, but that there is a Rail Trail access point

very close to the site, at the intersection of South Pleasant and Snell Streets. There will be bike racks at all three buildings, he noted.

Mr. O’Keeffe asked about the overlapping use of off-site parking spaces. Mr. Tassinari said that there will be 25 spaces on site and 19 elsewhere on the Amherst College Campus. They anticipate that there will be adequate parking. Mr. Suarez said that he wants to be certain that there is enough parking so that the project will not impact downtown public parking.

Mr. Jim Brassord, Director of Facilities at Amherst College, said that approximately 70 employees currently work in a downtown office and will be moving from downtown to these two buildings and the building on Snell Street. Therefore, the downtown parking supply will gain a net increase in available parking spaces, he said. There are additional parking spaces available at Orr Rink, Mr. Brassord noted. Mr. Brassord also noted that the schedule for activities at Orr Rink does not overlap with normal business hours and that the parking spaces at Orr Rink will be available for use by employees at Smith and Scott Houses during the day.

Ms. Barberet commented that a recent PVPC study found that there was adequate parking in downtown, though not all of it was readily available or efficiently used. She liked the College’s proposal to use blacktop for double duty and said that the Board should encourage that.

Mr. Suarez said that it would be helpful to hear about Amherst College’s plans to encourage bicycling.

Mr. Brassord said that the number of parking permits (issued for cars) has gone down. The College also has begun to utilize “Zip cars”, he said, and is proactive in encouraging students to use downtown businesses.

Mr. Tucker reminded the Board that Site Plan Review approval is a use by-right and there are specific review criteria and design guidelines in the Zoning Bylaw.

Ms. Pavlova-Gillham asked what the net gain in parking would be. Mr. Tassinari said approximately 22 spaces. Ms. Pavlova-Gillham asked for a description of the lighting proposal, which Mr. Tassinari provided.

Mr. Mario DePillis, 27 Gaylord Street, said that the same lighting which is used on campus may not be appropriate in a residential neighborhood.

There was no additional public comment.

Mr. Howland MOVED: to close the public hearing. Ms. Pynchon seconded, and the Motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Shefftz said that the issues in the Site Visit Report were covered, and he began going through the Development Application Report, starting with the waiver requests.

Mr. Howland MOVED: to waive the Traffic Impact Statement.

Mr. Tucker said that if the Board also intends to waive the Sign Plan, it should include that in the Motion.

Mr. Howland MOVED: that, under the same Motion, the Board also waive the Sign Plan, on the basis that this is a residential neighborhood.

Ms. Pavlova-Gillham said that she would prefer more lighting rather than less, for reasons of safety.

Mr. Suarez seconded the Motion.

Ms. Pavlova-Gillham said that she supports the waiver of the traffic plan, but would like the Design Review Board to review the sign plan.

The Motion to adopt the waivers passed 7-0.

The Board reviewed each of the remaining issues identified in the rest of the Development Application Report.

Ms. Pavlova-Gillham asked if the lights would be on motion sensors. Mr. Brassord said that the College would be amenable to considering that.

Mr. Howland MOVED: that the Board approve SPR2008-00005, 297 South Pleasant Street and 22 Hitchcock Road, subject to the following waivers and conditions, as amended by Ms. Pavlova-Gillham:

Waivers

- 1) Traffic Impact Statement
- 2) Sign Plan

Conditions

- 1) Amherst College shall review the 24-hour lighting policy in order to address neighborhood concerns and energy efficiency and consider limiting the 24-hour lighting only to the parking lot.
- 2) The proposed landscaping shall be installed and continuously maintained.
- 3) Four (4) copies of the final plans shall be submitted to the Planning Department.
- 4) This permit will expire in two (2) years if substantial construction has not begun.

Ms. Pynchon seconded, and the Motion passed 7-0.

**SPR 2008-00006, 101 South Pleasant Street – Trustees of Amherst College**

Request approval for addition and renovation to an existing 81-year old former fraternity (Hitchcock House). (Map 14A/Parcel 219; R-G and B-L zone) [continued w/o taking testimony from May 20, 2008]

Ms. Pynchon stepped down from the Board and left the meeting at 8:42 PM.

Mr. Shefftz read the preamble and opened the hearing and again disclosed that he and Mr. Howland were alumni of Amherst College.

Mr. Tom Davies, Amherst College, presented the project, and reviewed the issues in the Development Application Report. Mr. Davies said that they have met with the Fire Department and have incorporated the Town Engineer's comments into the plans. Mr. Davies said that the building is in two different zoning districts (R-G and B-L) with different height limits. The Building Commissioner has approved a small sliver of the addition located in the B-L District as being conforming in that district (less than 35 feet in height). The height of the remaining building is allowed in the R-G District (39'-11" or less than 40 feet). The college is still working with the Town Engineer on site drainage issues, Mr. Davies said.

Mr. Shefftz asked if the number of beds would increase. Mr. Jim Brassord, Amherst College, said they would in the short term at this site, but the dorm capacity for the entire campus may actually decrease in the long run.

Mr. Suarez ask how many bicycle racks were proposed. Mr. Davies said that an 8-foot bike rack is shown on the plans, which will accommodate 20 or so bicycles, and can be expanded, if necessary.

Mr. Howland commented that it didn't seem to be a significant change in use and said that Amherst College had done a pretty good job of designing the project to fit into a residential neighborhood.

At the Board's request the applicants described the parking spaces and parking system in detail.

Mr. Mario DePillis, Sr., 27 Gaylord Street, said that there is an extremely obnoxious security light that shines toward Gaylord Street, and was told it would be removed.

Mr. Dennis Porter, 33 Gaylord Street, expressed concern about student impact on the neighborhood, but said he was pleased that parking would be limited to 20 spaces. Mr. Porter asked about the drainage plans.

Mr. Don Pitkin, 27 South Prospect Street, expressed concern about increased traffic and speeding on South Prospect Street.

Mr. Davies responded to those concerns.

Ms. Charlotte Westhead, 24 Gaylord Street, had concerns about the noise and disturbance that the additional students would have on the neighborhood.

Ms. Turia Eaton, 43 South Prospect Street, said that 21 of the proposed rooms will be within 100 feet of their house. The loss of the direct connection between the parking lot and Sellen Street will increase the traffic impact on South Prospect, she said. She said that she was concerned about headlights "sweeping" over their house all night, and was glad to hear that the security light will be removed because, she said, it's blinding. Ms. Eaton encouraged Amherst College to save the large white pine trees which she said would provide a visual screen.

Mr. Pitkin asked if the white pines were going to be removed and Mr. Davies said they were, because they would not survive the construction. In response to a question from Mr. Tucker, he indicated that an arborist had examined the trees.

Mr. Rob Eaton, 43 South Prospect Street, also expressed concerns about the proximity of the residence hall to his house and associated noise and disturbance.

Mr. Tucker suggested moving the South Prospect Street curb cut to the parking lot north to a point opposite Gaylord Street in order to save the north westernmost pine tree. There was extended discussion of the issues of traffic, landscape screening, and student behavior, after which Mr. Brassord commented that not all of the noise and problems are caused by Amherst College students. He pointed out that there are a number of student rentals in private residences on South Prospect Street.

Mr. Howland MOVED: to close the public hearing. There was no second.

Ms. Westwood said that every owner in the neighborhood is concerned, and most were present.

Mr. Mario DePillis, Jr., 27 Gaylord Street, asked if Amherst College would consider putting limits on parties at the dorm and/or look at moving the wing to the north side of the building. Mr. DePillis said that he would have appreciated being able to have input earlier in the process. The neighborhood is a buffer area, he said, and would like the Town and Amherst College to work together to protect the neighborhood.

Mr. Tucker noted that there are limits to the Planning Board's jurisdiction under the Site Plan Review process whereby the use is by-right.

After more discussion, Mr. Brassord said that it might be possible to alter the angle of entry of the parking lot driveway which might alleviate the impact of night-time headlights on adjacent residences.

Mr. O'Keeffe said that he believed the Board had heard from all of the public who were present and wished to speak and MOVED: to close the public hearing. After some discussion, Mr. Howland seconded. There was discussion about whether to close or continue the hearing, and the vote to close the public hearing failed, 3-3-0 (Barberet, Suarez, Pavlova-Gillham opposed).

There was continued discussion about whether or not the Board had enough information to close the hearing and begin to deliberate.

Mr. Howland left the meeting at 10:15 PM.

Mr. Dennis Porter, 33 Gaylord Street, asked Amherst College to move the proposed new wing further east on the property.

After further discussion there was consensus that the Board should close the public hearing, but put off deliberations until their next meeting. Staff noted that there were a couple of agenda items that the Board still needed to address.

Ms. Barberet MOVED: to close the public hearing. Ms. Pavlova-Gillham seconded, and the Motion passed 5-0.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. ANR2008-00009, Development Authorization Schedule**

Ms. Brestrup noted that the Form A had been endorsed at the last meeting, was subject to the Phased Growth Bylaw, and the Board needed to assign a building permit authorization date.

Ms. Barberet MOVED: to assign July 2008, as the date that the two new lots will be eligible for building permits. Mr. O’Keeffe seconded, and the Motion passed 5-0.

**B. Town Meeting**

The Board signed the forms for the Town Meeting articles which had been adopted by Town Meeting (Art. 25, Density Calculations; Art. 27, Municipal Parking District, Art. 28, Design Review District; and Art. 31, Inclusionary Zoning), to be submitted for the Attorney General’s approval.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. O’Keeffe MOVED: to adjourn this meeting at 10:40 PM. Mr. Suarez seconded, and the Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted:

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Sue Krzanowski, Management Assistant

Approved:

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Aaron A. Hayden, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jonathan Shefftz, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_