

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, September 1, 2010 – 7:00 PM
Town Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

PRESENT: Jonathan Shefftz, Chair; Jonathan O’Keeffe, Bruce Carson, Rob Crowner, David Webber, Sandra Anderson and Stephen Schreiber

ABSENT: Richard Roznoy

STAFF: Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner

Mr. Shefftz opened the meeting at 7:06 PM and announced that the meeting was being recorded by Planning Department staff and was being recorded and broadcast by ACTV.

I. MINUTES August 4, 2010

Mr. Webber MOVED to approve the Minutes. Mr. O’Keeffe seconded and the vote was 6-0-1 (Schreiber abstained).

II. PUBLIC HEARING – SITE PLAN REVIEW

SPR2011-00002/M6524, Community Field Comfort Station – Intersection of Triangle and Mattoon Streets

Request Site Plan Review approval to construct an addition to the existing comfort station to provide handicapped accessibility. (Map 11D Parcel 269, R-G Zoning District)

Bill Gillen of Ford Gillen Architects, Linda Chalfant, Director of LSSE and Liz Thompson of Cave Hill Landscape Architects presented the application. The existing building is a 20’ x 20’ block building with a fiberglass asphalt roof. The new building will be 27’ x 20’. The existing building will be retained and enlarged by 7’. The new building will be fully accessible for both the men’s and women’s bathrooms. It will also have a storage area. Glass block units will be added on the facades to provide light. The building will be open seasonally, will not be open at nighttime and will not be heated. The building is dark red and the roof will be a dark color. It is a “low profile” building.

The Design Review Board had commented that the building needs some life and had recommended using brighter, more welcoming colors. The suggestion was made that LSSE could sponsor an event to determine what will be painted on the building each year.

Liz Thompson presented the site plan. The existing asphalt walk from the pool area is in disrepair. It will be replaced with a concrete walkway. The entrances to the bathrooms will be accessible. The new concrete walkway around the building will be 6 feet wide. The new walkway from the War Memorial Pool area will consist of series of 30’ long ramps at 8.3%, interspersed with level landing areas. The walkway will have railings along both sides. There will be a 50’ long walkway, at a 5% grade to connect the main walk with the building. This 5% walkway does not need railings. The area around the walkway will need to be slightly regraded to accommodate the grading of the walkway. There will be a mown grass pathway to connect the comfort station with the ballfield.

Two large trees are proposed to be planted. The species has not yet been determined. They are intended to provide shade for the building. A vegetative screen is also proposed, in the form of bayberry shrubs, to be planted in front of the entryways to the men’s and women’s bathrooms. The bathroom areas may be used as changing rooms and these screens will provide privacy.

The level area at the women’s bathroom door has been expanded to provide extra room for wheelchairs when opening the door.

The material of the railings will be metal and since the metal on the playground is galvanized, the railings will probably be painted gray to harmonize with the playground equipment. The railings will be painted so that they will be comfortable to the touch.

Parking on the site is only for service vehicles. It will be left as it is. The pavement is crumbling. It is not intended for public use.

There is a water fountain proposed for the outside of the building. Mr. Gillen stated that the fountain will be accessible to those in wheelchairs.

Mr. Schreiber asked about handicapped parking and noted that there are some handicapped parking spaces by the track. He asked how a handicapped person would get to the comfort station from the handicapped parking spaces.

Ms. Thompson stated that there is a path that runs along side of the pool area, but that it needs to be upgraded. It appears to be wide enough but the surface is rough.

Ms. Chalfant stated that there is parking on the access road between the pool and the high school. There is also handicapped parking near the pool area. It can be reached via a path along the basketball court.

Mr. Schreiber questioned doing the work on the comfort station if someone cannot get to the building in a wheelchair.

Ms. Chalfant assured the Board that a person in a wheelchair can get to the building via the existing paths.

Mr. Gillen noted that the project had been reviewed by the Disability Access Advisory Committee and that they had supported the project and had made some recommendations for the future, to improve accessibility.

Ms. Anderson asked about use of the building during night football games.

Mr. Gillen stated that there will be lighting on the underside of the roof overhang, recessed in the soffit. It will come on automatically when the door is opened.

Ms. Thompson noted that there is a giant light pole on the field which provides bright light over the whole area during games.

Mr. Shefftz summarized the Site Visit Report, noting that his daughter had been present. He agreed that it is a small, dingy building and that the dark maroon red color makes it unappealing.

Ms. Brestrup reviewed the Design Review Board report and noted that the DRB had recommended that the building and the doors be painted with more welcoming colors.

Board members agreed by consensus that the applicant should return to the Design Review Board with more welcoming color choices.

Ms. Anderson MOVED to close the public hearing. Mr. Webber seconded and the vote was 7-0.

Mr. Webber stated that the fields at Community Field were used for girls' softball and for football, as well as for baseball, so these uses should be taken into consideration if any graphics were to be applied to the building.

Mr. Shefftz reviewed the Development Application Report.

Regarding the question about the amount of space allotted for the level area at the women's bathroom entryway, Ms. Thompson stated that more space had been added.

Regarding the handrails, Ms. Thompson stated that they will be gray to harmonize with the equipment in the field.

Regarding the lighting, Mr. Gillen stated that the interior lighting will come on automatically when the door is opened. The exterior lighting will be on timers.

Regarding the species of the proposed trees, Ms. Thompson stated that Dave Ziomek, Director of Conservation and Development, had mentioned a source of shade trees. Ms. Thompson said that the species of the trees had not yet been chosen, but she would recommend a large tree, like a sycamore or a maple.

The Board found under Section 11.24 of the Zoning Bylaw, Site Plan Review, as follows:

- 11.2400 – The project is in conformance with all appropriate provisions of the Zoning Bylaw and with the goals of the Master Plan;
- 11.2401 – Town amenities and abutting properties will be protected because detrimental or offensive actions will be minimized; exterior lighting will be downcast and will be operated on timers; lighting will be off during late night hours;
- 11.2402 – Abutting properties will be protected from detrimental site characteristics resulting from the proposed use;
- 11.2403 – The renovated comfort station will be an amenity for the community;
- 11.2410 – N/A
- 11.2411 – The proposed methods of refuse disposal are adequate; the management plan states that the Amherst Department of Public Works, Parks Division, will pick up and remove trash and recycling on a daily basis;
- 11.2412 – The existing comfort station is served by town sewer and water systems; the Town Engineer has not raised any concerns about these systems for the newly renovated building;
- 11.2413 – N/A – There will be no increased runoff as a result of this project;
- 11.2414 – Adequate landscaping will be provided because two new shade trees are proposed along with two areas of shrub plantings;
- 11.2415 – N/A – The requirement for an Erosion Control Plan will be waived because no substantial filling or excavation is being proposed;
- 11.2416 – N/A
- 11.2417 – The protection of adjacent properties by minimizing the intrusion of nuisances has been determined to be adequate by the Board, due to the condition requiring downcast lighting; the exterior lighting will also be on timers and the interior lighting will be operated automatically when the door is opened; the Board is satisfied with the lighting information submitted with the application and there is no need to waive the requirement for a Lighting Plan;
- 11.2418 – N/A
- 11.2419 – N/A
- 11.2420 – N/A
- 11.2421 – N/A
- 11.2422 – N/A;
- 11.2423 – N/A;
- 11.2424 – N/A
- 11.2430 – The site has been designed to provide for the convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement both within the site and in relation to adjoining ways and properties; concerns have been expressed about handicapped accessibility; there are handicapped parking spaces on the access road that runs past the high school; there is a rough but serviceable pathway from these parking spaces to the pool area; from the pool area, the comfort station will be universally accessible via a new pathway; the comfort station will also be accessible via a mown grassy path from the baseball field; the existing parking space

near the comfort station is not intended for public use and is reserved for service vehicles only;

- 11.2431 – N/A – The number of curb cuts will not change as a result of this proposal;
- 11.2432 – The location and design of parking spaces, bicycle racks, and sidewalks has been discussed; although there is no bike rack at the comfort station the Board agreed by consensus that there are adequate structures in the vicinity to lock a bicycle temporarily, while using the comfort station; parking has been discussed under Section 11.2430 above;
- 11.2433 – N/A
- 11.2434 – N/A
- 11.2435 – N/A
- 11.2436 – The requirement for a Traffic Impact Report will be waived;
- 11.2437 – N/A

There is no need for waivers from the requirements for a Sign Plan and a Lighting Plan since adequate information has been provided on the site plan. The Board discussed conditions for this Site Plan Review approval.

Ms. Anderson MOVED to approve the Site Plan Review application as presented with the conditions and waivers as discussed. Mr. Carson seconded and the vote was 7-0.

Waivers

1. Traffic Impact Statement
2. Erosion Control Plan

Conditions

- 1) The applicant shall consider using more welcoming colors for the building and doors, possibly using graphics that relate to the uses of the field, both on the building and on the doors.
- 2) The applicant shall return to the Design Review Board to present information on colors and possible graphic treatment for the façade and the color of the roof.
- 3) Exterior lighting shall be downcast and shall not shine onto adjacent properties or streets;
- 4) Landscaping shall be installed in accordance with the approved Landscape Plan and, once installed, shall be continually maintained.
- 5) Four copies of the final revised plans shall be submitted to the Planning Department.
- 6) This permit will expire in two (2) years if substantial construction has not begun.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. Signing of decision

SPR2010-00001/M6234 – 381-383 Main Street, Lumber Yard Restaurant LLC – the Board signed the decision.

B. Review of signs

SPR2007-00005 – 25 East Pleasant Street – The Bank of Western Massachusetts – People's United Bank is taking over the bank and property and changing the signs – review of new signs to replace existing signs.

Pat Boni of Saxton Signs presented the sign proposal. He presented signs that had been revised based on comments that he received at the Design Review Board meeting on August 31, 2010. The Design Review Board had commented that the proposed signs did not fit well in their proposed façade areas and recommended that there be a 4" space at the top and bottom of

each sign so that they did not appear to be cramped. The Design Review Board had also expressed a concern that the signs may be too bright.

Mr. Boni described the signs as being internally lit plastic signs. They will replace the existing Bank of Western Massachusetts signs. The new signs will be smaller in area than the existing signs.

The new signs will not have the red orbit that is part of the People's United Bank logo, but will be blue, internally lit letters that will fit better on the façade areas than the signs originally submitted.

Mr. Webber suggested that the signs would read better if the spacing between the letters was increased. Mr. Boni stated that the signs show the corporate logo and cannot be changed. He also stated that the parking signs had already been permitted. They were replacing existing signs of the same size.

Mr. Schreiber MOVED to approve the proposed signs. Mr. Crowner seconded and the vote was 7-0.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Planning Commissioners' Journal – the Board acknowledged receipt of the Planning Commissioners' Journal.

B. New Information – none

V. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS - none

VI. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS – none

VII. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS

SPR2011-00003/M6685 – South Amherst School, 1001 South East Street – Ron Bohonowicz

Request Site Plan Review approval to replace the existing front door with a handicapped accessible door and to create on-property parking. (Map 20D/Parcel 25; RN and ARP Zoning Districts).

SPR2011-00004/M6686 – Bangs Community Center, 70 Boltwood Walk – Ron Bohonowicz

Request Site Plan Approval to re-pave and re-landscape the pedestrian plaza at the west entrance. (Map 19A/Parcel 305; B-G Zoning District)

These two applications are scheduled for September 15, 2010.

There will also be a Site Plan Review application, which has not yet been filed, from Archipelago Investments, developers of Boltwood Place, to add one dwelling unit to the building behind Judie's.

VIII. PLANNING BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Zoning – Mr. O'Keefe reported on the Zoning Subcommittee meeting of September 1st. The ZSC had reviewed items being considered for the Fall Special Town Meeting. Among the items discussed is an amendment regarding livestock and poultry. The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on this amendment on September 15th.

The ZSC also discussed the Development Modification amendment which is described as a replacement for the Phased Growth section of the Bylaw. The ZSC has returned to its original approach of using a point system and has raised the threshold of projects affected by the amendment from 4 to 6. The ZSC plans to hold a joint meeting with the Town Commercial Relations Committee

(TCRC) and the Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee (HP/FHC) to let the community know what the ZSC is working on and to solicit feedback.

There was discussion about medical office zoning. Select Board member, Diana Stein, had some questions related to language and thresholds in the Bylaw. There was discussion about how and why to differentiate between the various types of medical facilities. There had been a proposal to merge the two larger facilities into one use group, since there may not be a meaningful distinction between the groups and not much regulatory distinction either.

The ZSC discussed the draft Request for Proposals (RFP) that had been prepared for consultants to help with the rezoning of South Amherst (Atkins Corner) and North Amherst. The ZSC had suggested simplifying it. Mr. O’Keeffe asked if the Planning Board members would be interested in reviewing the RFP before it is released. The Planning Board declined to review the RFP prior to release.

There was some discussion about the student housing amendment, including comments from the public, which were mainly negative.

IX. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – Mr. Schreiber reported that the PVPC had not met since the last time he had reported.
- B. Community Preservation Act Committee – Ms. Anderson reported that she had been appointed by the Select Board and had been sworn in as a member of the CPAC.
- C. Agricultural Commission – Mr. Webber reported that he had been appointed by the Select Board and had been sworn in as a member of the Agricultural Commission. He is planning to attend the meeting on Tuesday, September 7th.
- D. Save Our Stop Committee – Mr. Schreiber reported that the SOS Committee had not met since February, but that Mr. Tucker and Mr. Shaffer were actively working on saving the railroad stop in Amherst.

X. REPORT OF THE CHAIR – none

XI. REPORT OF STAFF – none

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Christine M. Brestrup, Senior Planner

Approved:

Jonathan Shefftz, Chair

DATE: _____