

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, January 5, 2011 – 7:00 PM
Town Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

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

ABSENT: Jonathan Shefftz, Chair

STAFF: Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner

Mr. O’Keeffe opened the meeting at 7:02 PM and announced that the meeting was being recorded by Planning Department staff and was being recorded and broadcast by ACTV.

I. MINUTES

Mr. Schreiber noted several corrections to page 2 of the Minutes of December 15, 2010.

Mr. Roznoy MOVED to approve the Minutes of December 15, 2010, as amended. Mr. Schreiber seconded and the vote was 6-0-1 (Carson abstained).

II. PUBLIC HEARING – SITE PLAN REVIEW

SPR20011-00004/M6686 – Bangs Community Center, 70 Boltwood Walk – Ron Bohonowicz – *continued from September 15, 2010*

Request Site Plan Approval to re-pave and re-landscape the pedestrian plaza at the west entrance. (Map 14A/Parcel 305; B-G Zoning District)

Ron Bohonowicz, Director of Facilities and Maintenance for the school system and town buildings, presented the revised plan. He stated that he has met with the Council on Aging, the Tree Warden and others and has come up with a “hybrid” plan that resolves ADA access issues and safety problems in the Bangs Center entry plaza, while saving more of the existing trees than the original plan. In the interim, he has installed fencing around the plaza area, to cordon off parts of the plaza that are especially problematic with respect to heaving pavement and he has had the pavers between the entry door and the driveway reset to smooth out bumps and low spots.

Mr. Bohonowicz would like to put the new plans out to bid in the next three weeks, if they are approved. He will be asking Town Meeting for more money to construct the new plan.

The revised plan shows that three of the existing Honeylocust trees will be removed and five will remain. There will also be some additional plantings.

The revised plan calls for a paved concrete walk in front of the doorway and along the driveway. The concrete walks will provide access into the building. To the sides of the concrete walks there will be areas of pavers that may have a slightly steeper grade than the 5% slope allowed by ADA standards without handrails. There will be a ramp and platform area for loading wheelchairs into vans. The platform will be at street (driveway) level, with ramps down to it from the walkway on either side.

The long steps at the north end of the plaza will be replaced by two shorter steps with railings on both sides.

Mr. Bohonowicz described the travel route for disabled people and able-bodied people.

There will be a small wall at the edge of the paved area (approximately 18" to 24" high). It will act as a sitting wall and will help to define the walkway. There will also be a 36" high, black steel rail fence, similar to that in the Boltwood Garage area, to keep people out of the plantings.

Mr. Carson asked if the existing pavers will be reused and reset. Mr. Bohonowicz stated that he cannot reuse the existing pavers because they crumble when they are removed. He plans to use new pavers that look similar to the existing ones. They will be individual pavers, with the gaps filled with TRG (trap rock gravel) dust. The color will be the same as the existing. The new sidewalks will be tinted a beige or sandstone color to avoid bright white concrete sidewalks which cause problems for those with vision impairments.

Alan Root of 33 Kellogg Avenue spoke in support of the new plan. He has been active on the Council on Aging and agreed that the plaza has been problematic for years. He noted that Mr. Bohonowicz, other town staff members and members of the Council on Aging are happy with the process and the resulting plan. He thanked Mr. Bohonowicz for listening to the concerns of the seniors. He suggested that when plantings are chosen, that seasonal interest be taken into consideration. He suggested that methods be used to discourage skateboarding on the plaza. There has been damage to the existing benches as a result of skateboarding.

Mr. O'Keeffe thanked Mr. Bohonowicz for developing the revised plan. Mr. Roznoy also noted that he was glad to see people working together.

Mr. Bohonowicz noted that he is taking skateboarding and other social behaviors into consideration in designing the plaza. He will consult the Tree Warden when choosing plantings.

Mr. Bohonowicz stated that the benches will be the town standard benches with the recycled plastic seats. The benches will have an additional armrest in the center, to help seniors to sit and stand easily and to prevent skateboarding and sleeping on the benches.

The existing lamppost will remain and there will be more sconces added to the building. The lights will have new energy-efficient lenses.

Mr. Roznoy MOVED to close the public hearing. Mr. Schreiber seconded and the vote was 6-0-1 (Webber abstained).

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; lighting will be downcast;
- 11.2402 – Abutting properties will be protected from detrimental site characteristics resulting from the proposed use because will be no detrimental site characteristics;
- 11.2403 – N/A;
- 11.2410 – N/A;
- 11.2411 – N/A;
- 11.2412 – N/A;
- 11.2413 – The proposed drainage system is adequate; portions of the plaza will be paved with individual pavers that can absorb stormwater runoff; the plan was prepared by the Department of Public Works staff under the supervision of the Superintendent and Town Engineer;
- 11.2414 – Adequate landscaping will be provided because five of the existing trees will remain and new plantings will be added in protected planting areas;

- 11.2415 – N/A – There are no steep slopes on this property;
- 11.2416 – N/A;
- 11.2417 – The adjacent properties will be protected by minimizing the intrusion of lighting because all new lighting will be shielded and downcast;
- 11.2418 – N/A
- 11.2419 – N/A
- 11.2420 – The Planning Board declined to use the Design Review Board design principles and standards because the Design Review Board had reviewed and recommended approval of a previous version of the site plan;
- 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; the chair noted that the applicant had done a good job in meeting this criterion;
- 11.2431 – N/A
- 11.2432 – The location and design of site improvements will be provided in a safe and convenient manner;
- 11.2433 – The provision for access to adjoining properties will be provided in an appropriate manner; the chair noted that the applicant had done a good job in meeting this criterion;
- 11.2434 – N/A
- 11.2435 – N/A
- 11.2436 – N/A; the requirement for a Traffic Impact Report will be waived;
- 11.2437 – N/A.

Ms. Anderson MOVED that the requirement for a Traffic Impact Statement and an Erosion Control Plan be waived. Mr. Schreiber seconded and the vote was 6-0-1 (Webber abstained).

Mr. Schreiber MOVED that the application be approved with the waivers as noted and with the standard Site Plan Review conditions. Mr. Carson seconded and the vote was 6-0-1 (Webber abstained).

III. APPEARANCE

Olympia Drive - Rudy Perkins, Project Manager & Staff Attorney for HAP, Inc. (known as HAPHousing)

Presentation and review of ZBA Comprehensive Permit application for multi-unit affordable residential development off East Pleasant Street (Map 8D/Parcel 20, RN Zoning District)

Ms. Brestrup stated that this evening's presentation by HAP Inc. would be an informal one, since HAP had not yet filed an application with the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The proposed project will be the subject of a Comprehensive Permit application with the ZBA. After the application is filed, it will be transmitted to the Planning Board. At that time the Planning Board may choose to receive a formal presentation on the proposal and may choose to make formal recommendations to the ZBA. Ms. Brestrup described the Comprehensive Permit process and noted that while Amherst is currently above the 10% affordable housing threshold the town is always working to promote the development of affordable housing so that Amherst remains above the threshold. Aside from the desire to have a diverse stock of housing available to its citizens, Amherst also wishes to avoid the prospect of an "unfriendly 40B" or Comprehensive Permit project that is not in keeping with the town's goals and objectives.

The team representing HAP Housing included:

- Rudy Perkins, Project Manager and Staff Attorney for HAP Housing;
- Joanne Campbell, Executive Director of Valley CDC;
- Aelan Tierney, Kuhn Riddle Architects;
- Chuck Roberts, Kuhn Riddle Architects;
- Thomas Hogan, Doucet Associates;
- Chris Stidsen, Doucet Associates.

Joanne Campbell began the presentation. The town initiated the project, she said. In 1987 the town purchased the land and started to work with UMass on developing a housing project on the site. This development did not materialize. In 2005 the land was rezoned to R-N (Neighborhood Residence) from R-F (Fraternity Residence) to allow more flexibility in its development. In 2009 the town hired Kuhn Riddle Architects to prepare a Feasibility Study for multi-family housing on the site. There was discussion about whether the project should be owner or rental housing. In the end, the finances of the project dictated that it be rental housing. In July 2010 the town received a proposal from HAP Housing in cooperation with Valley CDC to develop the site for affordable rental housing. HAP Housing is a non-profit organization serving Hamden and Hampshire Counties. Valley CDC (Community Development Corporation) is based in Northampton and has developed 160 units of affordable housing. HAP Housing has developed over 900 units of affordable housing. Valley CDC focuses on outreach to the community.

Chuck Roberts presented information about the design process, the goals of the project, preliminary work with the Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee, Phase I (the Feasibility Study) and Phase II (HAP Housing's proposal for development). He noted that Doucet Associates and New England Environmental would be working on civil engineering and landscaping.

Mr. Roberts stated that the goals of the project are sustainability, a sense of community, preserving the natural surroundings, and neighborhood character. He described the site location, east of East Pleasant Street, just south of the North Amherst Fire Station. He showed a locus plan of the entire site, including the area designated for open space and the area of conservation land. He noted that the property is located on a bus route and that the bus comes into Olympia Drive. He asserted that residents would be able to walk to downtown Amherst from the site.

The proposal includes a one-way loop road, small areas for parking, a community building, and the preservation of some large existing oak trees. The Gerald Bozzo Nature Trail traverses the site. A playground, community gardens and open space are planned for the project. The community building will contain a large community room and a mailroom.

Aelan Tierney described the architecture of the proposed development. She presented the site layout and grading plan. Townhouses will be located along the contours in the central portion of the site. Triplexes will be arranged around the edges. There will be 42 units, with 28 townhouses and 14 single-level units that can be adapted to ADA standards. The units will be divided as follows:

- 8 – one-bedroom units
- 21 – two bedroom units
- 13 – three bedroom units.

Ms. Tierney described the details of the buildings related to sustainability and showed elevations of the buildings. The buildings will have a variety of forms. Each will have a clear entryway and clear private and semi-private spaces outdoors. The architecture will be “farmhouse vernacular” with gabled roofs. They will have fiber-cement siding, fiberglass windows and fiberglass doors. The roofs will be constructed of durable asphalt shingles. Composite decking will be used for the porches. Entries will be at-grade. The project will be pedestrian-friendly. No cars will be permitted in the center of the property. Townhouse units will have patios in back.

The triplex units will have a ground-level unit. Ms. Tierney showed typical floor plans for the units and plans for the community building.

Ms. Tierney described the lighting plan. There will be lampposts along the loop road and bollard lighting along the sidewalks. The new lighting will be added only to the development and will not be added along Olympia Drive.

Mr. Perkins noted that all units would be affordable rental units. Ownership of the units is not feasible, given the finances of the project. Town Meeting voted to lease the land to HAP Housing and Valley CDC for a period of 99 years. The town retains ownership of the property. The agreement with the town states that the units must remain affordable for the period of the lease.

Mr. Schreiber questioned the infrastructure of the project and asked about the location of sidewalks. He expressed concern about the “connectivity” of the project to the larger sidewalk system in town.

Mr. Perkins stated that there is a continuous sidewalk system along East Pleasant Street, except for a gap of about 300 feet. Olympia Drive has asphalt sidewalks. East Pleasant Street had bike lanes on both sides of the street. Mr. Perkins asserted that the site has pedestrian, bike and bus connectivity. Olympia Drive is not a town road. It is owned by UMass. The town has an easement over it. The town is exploring obtaining control over the road. The developers will resurface and improve Olympia Drive as part of the project.

Mr. Schreiber questioned the fact that sidewalks within the project connect the buildings to each other, but there is no sidewalk along the road.

Mr. Roberts noted that the project is based on the idea of “consolidated circulation” on the site. Both cars and pedestrians will use the road. There will be pedestrian paths between buildings and into the center space. He described the walking paths. There is a connection to the nature trail from the walking paths.

Mr. Perkins stated that the developers would look at the sidewalk issue in further detail.

Mr. Webber made a disclosure that the law firm by which he is employed, Shatz, Schwartz & Fentin, had done work for HAP Housing in the past, before he joined the firm. He asked about the “clockwise” circulation pattern along the one-way loop road. Tom Hogan of Doucet stated that the clockwise pattern is needed to accommodate the existing conditions on the site, near the intersection of the new road with Olympia Drive. The engineers wanted to have a “T” intersection with a controlled stop. There is also a gravel parking lot on the UMass property that may be eliminated in the future. The elimination of this parking lot may open the possibility of reconfiguring the road intersection.

Mr. Roznoy asked a question about the fire protection system described in the Feasibility Study.

Ms. Tierney noted that the Feasibility Study contains old information and the proposal has been changed since the time that it was written. All units and the community building will be sprinklered, she said.

Mr. Roznoy asked if the cost for the project is still estimated at \$200 per square foot. Mr. Perkins noted that the developers wouldn't get "real costs" until the bids come in. But the estimates now are slightly over \$200 per square foot.

Ms. Anderson, whose former job at UMass included managing the parking lots, noted that Olympia Drive is in deplorable condition. She stated that the road requires rebuilding and noted that there are long-term plans for UMass to abandon the parking lot on Olympia Drive.

Mr. Perkins stated that the improvements to Olympia Drive would be done as part of the development of the housing development. Everything needed to connect to East Pleasant Street will be brought up to standard, he said. He concurred with the concern about the lapse in "connectivity" regarding sidewalks.

Ms. Tierney noted that the community building will have bike racks. The units will all have lockable sheds that can accommodate bike storage.

In response to a question about the potential for student housing, Mr. Perkins stated that a likely funding source would be a federal tax credit program. This program does not allow student occupancy. It is meant for affordable family housing. The market study showed that the potential tenants would include non-professional employees of the university and retail employees from businesses in the Route 9 corridor. The Town of Amherst has asked for a preference for local residents and employees. Another term for this type of housing is "work force housing", he said. The development will not be permitted to rent to transient graduate students either. It will be permanently affordable in accordance with the 99-year lease with the town. The tax credit program and other funding sources also have affordability requirements although they are not as long.

Mr. Perkins stated that there are no plans for a resident on-site manager, although there will be a management office in the community building. It is not yet clear whether the management position will be a full-time or part-time job.

Mr. Perkins asked the Planning Board to advise him on certain waivers that might be required.

Ms. Brestrup stated that the answer to these questions was better addressed to the Town Counsel.

Mr. O'Keeffe commented that this looks like a good plan.

Ms. Campbell announced that there would be a community meeting regarding the planned development at the Jones Library from 7 to 8 p.m. on January 6th.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. **SPR2011-00005/M6948 – 43-51 North Pleasant St. - Boltwood Place – Archipelago Investments, LLC**

Review of information submitted in accordance with Condition #5 of SPR 2011-00005 regarding façade treatment (Map 14A/Parcel 48; B-G zoning district)

Kyle Wilson and David Williams presented the request for confirmation that the requirements of Condition #5 of SPR 2011-00005 regarding façade treatment had been met during the public hearing.

Mr. Williams explained that the developers now have a contractor and that he will be applying for a Building Permit. Satisfaction of Condition #5 is required in order to obtain a Building Permit. August 26, 2011, is the expected completion date of the project. He noted that the developers have received 85 inquiries for 12 units. Professionals associated with the university and colleges and who are based elsewhere in the country would like to have a second location in Amherst, he said.

Mr. Wilson noted that Condition #5 appears to have been a carry-over from a previous Site Plan Review decision. He stated that the developers would submit information to satisfy the other conditions as required. Nothing has changed with respect to the information about the façade that was presented at the public hearing.

Mr. Roznoy MOVED to confirm that the requirements of Condition #5 had been complied with. Mr. Webber seconded and the vote was 7-0.

B. Other Old Business - none

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of Zoning Subcommittee Draft Work Plan

Mr. O’Keeffe reported on the January 5th meeting of the Zoning Subcommittee and explained the ranking of priorities on the Draft Work Plan. This was the first ZSC meeting since the Zoning Forum. The Draft Work Plan was revised after tonight’s ZSC meeting.

The items listed under Priority A have been divided into two categories. The ZSC reviewed all of the items on the Priority A list. The members began to discuss what to do with the Development Modification amendment. Traditionally Spring Town Meeting has dealt with budget issues and zoning issues have been dealt with in the fall. The ZSC had been selective in deciding what to work on for the spring. Development Modification will be one of the items worked on for spring.

The rezoning of North Amherst and Atkins Corner will be worked on with the help of consultants. RFP’s for the consultants were issued and responses are due this Friday. The ZSC is planning to meet on Wednesday, January 12th, to begin to review the responses.

The rezoning effort will take a lot of time, he said. It will be virtually impossible to have the work completed by this spring. The goal is to have it ready for fall.

The other items to be worked on for spring are smaller. Mr. O’Keeffe described other issues that the ZSC is working on, including duplexes (possibly treating owner-occupied and absentee landlord duplexes differently) and parking issues related to residential uses.

The ZSC also talked about possible zoning amendments that would be related to an application for “Green Communities” designation. Planning Department staff will provide Planning Board members with more information about this topic for the next meeting.

Mr. O’Keeffe spoke briefly about the remainder of the list on the Draft Work Plan. He reviewed the list of active amendments that the ZSC expects to work on but target for fall.

Mr. Schreiber noted that the duplex issue had become an issue of importance, especially in light of the new responsibilities that the Planning Board has for Site Plan Review for duplexes in certain zoning districts. He stated that there is currently an application for Site Plan Review for a duplex before the Planning Board. He noted that the language defining duplexes is vague. The words “duplex” and “two-family dwelling” are used interchangeably. There is vagueness with respect to what “side-by-side” means. He is in favor of more carefully defining duplexes in the Bylaw. He also supports looking at the issue of parking in general and “right-sizing” the parking requirements.

Mr. O’Keeffe agreed that there is a need for a comprehensive review of parking requirements.

Mr. Webber noted that parking is an issue with respect to other uses, besides residential. Parking had recently been an issue in the review of an application to locate an institutional use – a mosque.

Mr. O’Keeffe agreed that there is a need for a change in terminology on the Draft Work Plan and that it would be good to take a look at overall parking requirements.

B. Discussion of status of Development Modification zoning amendment

Mr. O’Keeffe reported on this item. He noted that although Article 8 had failed to achieve a 2/3 majority at Fall Town Meeting, it had failed by a small number of votes. The Zoning Subcommittee has different viewpoints about how to proceed. Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director, has submitted a list of possible changes to the structure and text of the Development Modification amendment. Mr. Roznoy and Mr. Carson, members of the ZSC, have thoughts on alternative mechanisms and have suggested possibly not using the point system. The members of the ZSC have been asked to come back to the January 19th ZSC meeting with proposed alternatives. Mr. Carson invited other Planning Board members to attend the ZSC meeting on the 19th.

Mr. Schreiber made the following recommendations:

- Have fewer points and “clump” them together under a set of working principles;
- Avoid negative points; work up from a base of zero, assuming that applicants have at least met the requirements of the Zoning Bylaw;
- Avoid anything that can be measured only after the fact, such as LEED certification.

Mr. O’Keeffe noted that the ZSC had received feedback that some citizens did not think that there were enough negative points to keep people from doing things that we don’t want them to do. He is reluctant to eliminate negative points altogether.

Ms. Anderson noted that the Development Modification amendment seemed cumbersome. She would like to see it streamlined and consolidated. She encouraged more simplicity and a shorter document. The principles were great, she said. She suggested grouping things by topic.

Mr. O’Keeffe noted that he has been speaking with ACTV [now Amherst Media] about televising ZSC meetings.

C. New Information – none

VI. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS – none

VII. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS – none

VIII. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS – none

IX. PLANNING BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Zoning – Mr. O’Keeffe had already given the report under Review of Zoning Subcommittee Draft Work Plan and Discussion of status of Development Modification zoning amendment.

X. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – Mr. Schreiber reported that the PVPC had met before Christmas. Every year the PVPC starts off with a list of Top Ten Resolves. He noted that the Planning Board had received copies of these Resolves. Mr. Tucker had already weighed in on Resolve #1, on transportation, asking that an expanded study be made regarding train service. Mr. Schreiber stated that the deadline for response to the PVPC’s list of Resolves and other items was around January 20th. He asked that a discussion of the PVPC’s packet be put on the Planning Board’s agenda for January 19th.

Mr. Schreiber presented the PVPC’s “Report Card on Smart Growth” noting items for which Amherst had received a check or had not received a check.

Mr. Roznoy asked about “Transit Oriented Development”. Mr. Schreiber described it as being part of the New Urbanism. It involves developing higher densities around transit nodes. Mr. Carson noted that the new B-N zoning district [around the depot] would qualify as an area for transit oriented development. Mr. O’Keeffe noted that the Master Plan speaks to Transit Oriented Development and that passage of the Development Modification amendment would have served to implement some of these ideas.

Mr. Schreiber stated that the PVPC had also sent information on the District Local Technical Assistance Program. It invites communities to nominate projects for assistance by the DLTA. Requests must be received in writing by January 23rd.

Ms. Brestrup offered to consult the Planning Director about the DLTA Program and ask whether there were projects that might be considered for DLTA assistance.

Community Preservation Act Committee – Ms. Anderson reported that there would be a CPAC meeting on January 6th. There is no fixed deadline for submittal of requests. CPAC has about \$700,000 available for projects for this year. So far projects or groups that have submitted requests include the Historical Commission, the Hope Church, Habitat for Humanity, the Hawthorne Property and purchase of a property near Atkins Corner.

Agricultural Commission – Mr. Webber stated that he had no report. Mr. O’Keeffe noted that the winter farmers’ markets have been successful. Mr. Roznoy noted that a book has recently been published about the history of agriculture in Amherst.

Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee – Mr. Roznoy stated that the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee had agreed to work with the DPW to request funds at Town Meeting for a consultant to develop a Transportation Plan for the town. Ms. Anderson commented that the University has hired a consultant to do a Master Plan. Perhaps UMass could work with the town on the Transportation Plan, she suggested. Mr. Schreiber noted

that Dennis Swinford is the new Campus Planner. Mr. Schreiber is a member of the Master Plan Committee at UMass.

Amherst Redevelopment Authority – Mr. Webber reported that the ARA will meet on January 6th. The Fraternity Row project has been the subject of discussion. Many opinions have been expressed about the RFP. Everyone has been willing to listen. It is an open process. The University is involved, he said.

XI. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Mr. O’Keeffe reminded everyone to file the required form with the Town Clerk regarding the Conflict of Interest Law. He also announced that the Annual Town Election would be held on March 29th. He encouraged Planning Board members to serve on Town Meeting. The deadline for filing nomination papers for Town Meeting is February 8th.

Mr. Crouner noted that Town Meeting is generally a three-year commitment. However all precincts are being redistricted as a result of the census. All members will be up for re-election in 2012.

XII. REPORT OF STAFF

Ms. Brestrup reminded the Board that Town Counsel, Joel Bard, is scheduled to give his annual training session to Board members and staff on February 2nd. She encouraged Board members to submit questions or topics that they would like Mr. Bard to address in his presentation. Ms. Brestrup has already heard from some Planning Board members.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Christine M. Brestrup, Senior Planner

Approved:

Jonathan O’Keeffe, Acting Chair

DATE: _____