

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, May 2, 2012 – 6:00 PM
Town Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

PRESENT: David Webber, Chair; Jonathan O’Keeffe, Rob Crowner, Bruce Carson, Connie Kruger, Sandra Anderson, Stephen Schreiber, Richard Roznoy (6:05 PM) and Kathleen Ford

ABSENT: none

STAFF: Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner

Mr. Webber opened the meeting at 6:02 PM. He announced that the meeting was being recorded by town staff.

I. MINUTES April 18, 2012

Mr. Carson MOVED to approve the Minutes of April 18, 2012. Ms. Anderson seconded and the vote was 8-0.

Mr. Roznoy arrived (6:05 PM)

II. PUBLIC HEARING

SPR2012-00004/M12888 – 96 Northampton Road, Amherst College

Request Site Plan Review approval to convert a single-family residence to a duplex under Section 3.321 of the Zoning Bylaw. (Map 14A/Parcel 177; R-G Zoning District)

Mr. Webber read the preamble and opened the public hearing. Thomas Hartman of Coldham & Hartman Architects and Peter Jessop of Integrity Builders were present to represent the applicant, Amherst College. Mr. Jessop has been chosen to be the contractor on this project.

Board members announced disclosures indicating that these affiliations would not affect their review of the application. Mr. Webber has played golf with Mr. Jessop. Ms. Kruger hired Mr. Jessop to build her house a number of years ago. Mr. Webber, Ms. Kruger and Ms. Anderson have served, or currently serve, on town boards with Mr. Jessop. Ms. Ford is a professional colleague of Mr. Jessop. Mr. Jessop stated that he is the chosen contractor on this project. Mr. Crowner stated that he is a graduate of Amherst College (the applicant). Mr. Roznoy stated that his wife serves on a board with Mr. Jessop. Mr. Schreiber stated that he serves on two boards with Mr. Hartman.

Mr. Hartman presented the application. His firm was hired to prepare conceptual designs for three projects to help Amherst College to choose contractors for the projects. The three projects are all single family houses that are being converted into duplexes. They are currently empty. Amherst College does not have enough housing for its faculty. Young faculty cannot afford to own or rent and heat these large older homes. Converting them into duplexes will provide more affordable housing for faculty and the houses will become more energy efficient as a result of the renovations.

Mr. Hartman showed the site plan. There is an existing “tear drop” shaped turnaround in the driveway. The modifications to the exterior will be minimal. Handrails will be added to existing steps. Two trees will be removed to provide a place for parking spaces. Three parking spaces will be added. There is one existing parking space.

Mr. Hartman explained that the building will be divided vertically, with one unit in the front of the building and one unit in the back. The mechanical and electrical systems will be separated. Three of the egresses are already in place and one will be added to provide a

secondary egress for the rear unit.

The windows are now 2 over 1 double-hung wood windows. They will be replaced with Pella Architectural Series windows in a similar configuration. The exterior shutters will be removed, scraped, painted and re-installed.

Mr. Webber reviewed and read from the site visit report. The site visit was held on May 1st. He reviewed the list of questions at the end of the site visit report and Mr. Hartman responded to the questions.

Mr. Hartman explained the plan for parking when guests are present. Three cars will park in the new spaces. Five or six guests can park in the driveway. Since this will be only a two-family house, neighbors can inform each other about planned visits from guests and arrange parking accordingly. There is no requirement in the Bylaw for guest parking.

Mr. Hartman explained that cars will be able to back up out of the parking spaces, turn around in the driveway so that they are facing towards the road and exit the driveway in a forward direction. There will be no need to back out onto Northampton Road.

With reference to trash and recycling, bins will be brought to the curb by the tenants. Amherst College will contract to have the materials hauled away. Amherst College also provides snow removal services. The fence will remain in front of the property. A light will be added to the garage. It will be "dark sky" compliant. Mr. Hartman presented a picture of the proposed light to the Board. The light will illuminate the lower parking area. No other changes to the lighting are proposed. The porch lighting will remain.

Ms. Kruger stated that a "more specifically dark-sky compliant light" should be used. The house is being converted from an owner-occupied house to a rental. The walks are not lit. She encouraged Mr. Hartman to consider installing more lighting from the parking area to the doors.

There was discussion about how much lighting should be required. Mr. Webber also encouraged the applicant to consider installing more lighting. The new lighting should "eliminate glare and prevent light from flooding into neighbors' property", he said. Mr. Hartman suggested that the lighting could be operated by a motion detector.

Mr. Hartman described the railing for the front steps and showed a photograph of the type of railing to be used. It is a black iron railing with a single bar, molded in a pattern compatible with the period of the house. It will be a "steel, flat-stock handrail" and will run on one side of each set of steps at the front of the house.

Mr. Hartman stated that the baluster at the porch on the second floor is about 20-24" high. It will be renovated and will remain in place. The Building Commissioner has stated that the baluster may remain if it does not cause an imminent safety hazard. Mr. Hartman stated that the door to the porch would be locked with a "landlord's key" so that tenants would not be able to open it.

There was discussion about whether there should be extra screening at the southwest corner of the site, to screen the cars from the adjacent properties. Ms. Anderson observed that the house would be converted from a single-family to a two-family, with more comings and goings. She suggested that more screening be added in this corner. Board members noted that Sections 11.2402 and 11.2414 of the Zoning Bylaw require the Planning Board to consider landscaping and screening of adjacent properties from lights.

Mr. Webber presented a context map, prepared by staff, showing properties in the vicinity that are owned by Amherst College. The property at the southwest corner of 96 Northampton Road, closest to the new parking spaces, is not owned by Amherst College. There was discussion about all of the other properties that are owned by Amherst College. Ms. Kruger

suggested adding to the submission requirements for Site Plan Review that a context map of the neighborhood should be submitted with the application.

Mr. Hartman noted that there is an active sanitary sewer line that runs through the back of the property.

Mr. Schreiber MOVED to close the public hearing. Ms. Kruger seconded and the vote was 9-0.

Mr. Webber reviewed the Design Review Principles and Standards as required by Section 3.321 of the Zoning Bylaw.

Section 3.2040 – General Principles

- 1) Existing architectural features have been retained, including the baluster;
- 2) N/A
- 3) Stylistic features have been preserved or will be improved;
- 4) N/A
- 5) N/A.

Section 3.2041 – Design Review Standards

- 1) N/A
- 2) N/A
- 3) N/A
- 4) Shape – the applicant is proposing to use period-style windows to replace existing windows;
- 5) Landscape – although two trees are being removed, the applicant is being required to add screening at the southwest corner of the property;
- 6) N/A
- 7) N/A
- 8) Architectural and Site Details – changes are compatible with existing features;
- 9) N/A

Mr. Hartman and Mr. Jessop noted that the house will be repainted, probably using the same colors.

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; the property is in the R-G zoning district and meets the dimensional requirements;
- 11.2401 – Town amenities and abutting properties will be protected because detrimental or offensive actions will be minimized; site lighting will be downcast and will not shine onto adjacent streets or properties;
- 11.2402 – Abutting properties will be protected from detrimental site characteristics resulting from the proposed use; there are no apparent detriments;
- 11.2403 – Adequate recreational facilities will be provided; no changes are being proposed to existing recreational areas, open space or amenities;
- 11.2410 – Unique or important natural, historic or scenic features will be protected; the changes that are being proposed do not change the features of the house;
- 11.2411 – Proposed methods of refuse disposal are described in the Management Plan; they are considered to be adequate;
- 11.2412 – The ability of the proposed sewage disposal and water supply systems to serve the proposed use is considered to be adequate; the property is connected to the town sewer and water systems;
- 11.2413 – The ability of the proposed drainage system within and adjacent to the site to handle the increased runoff resulting from the development is considered to be adequate; no concerns have been expressed by the Town Engineer; although there will be a small increase in the amount of runoff, due to the additional parking spaces, the site is relatively flat and there is a large amount of open grassy land

- behind the house that can absorb the small amount of additional runoff;
- 11.2414 – Provision of adequate landscaping, including screening of adjacent residential uses, has been found to be sufficient; a condition of the decision will be to require the applicant to submit a Lighting and Screening Plan to the Board for review and approval;
 - 11.2415 – The requirement for a Soil Erosion Plan will be waived because there will not be extensive earthwork on the site that will cause erosion and the site is relatively flat at the rear where the parking will be added;
 - 11.2416 – N/A;
 - 11.2417 – Protection of adjacent properties by minimizing the intrusion of lighting has been discussed and is considered to be adequate; all exterior lighting will be downcast and will not shine onto adjacent properties; fixtures will be dark-sky compliant;

There was discussion about the type of lighting that would be adequate. Lamp posts and bollard lights were discussed.

- 11.2418 – N/A
- 11.2419 – N/A
- 11.2420 – N/A
- 11.2421 – The development is consistent with respect to setbacks, placement of parking, landscaping and entrances and exits with surrounding buildings and development;
- 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 Board has reviewed the circulation patterns proposed for the site and found them to be satisfactory;
- 11.2431 – N/A
- 11.2432 – The location and design of parking spaces, bicycle racks and drive aisles will be provided in a safe manner; bicycles are proposed to be stored in the lower storage area or under the porch;
- 11.2433 – N/A
- 11.2434 – N/A
- 11.2435 – N/A
- 11.2436 – The requirement for a Traffic Impact Statement will be waived; the Board members agreed by consensus to waive this requirement;
- 11.2437 – N/A

Waivers

Landscape Plan
Sign Plan
Soil Erosion Plan
Traffic Impact Statement

(A Management Plan was submitted and therefore that requirement does not need to be waived.)

(A Lighting and Screening Plan will be required as a condition of this decision and therefore that requirement is not being waived.)

Conditions

1. A Screening and Lighting Plan shall be submitted to the Planning Board for review and approval at a public meeting. The Screening and Lighting Plan shall include adequate screening of the new parking spaces at the southwest corner of the property and adequate site lighting, including lighting of parking spaces and lighting of access pathways from parking spaces to entry doors.
2. The door to the upstairs balcony on the second floor shall be kept locked in a manner that is able to be opened only by Amherst College personnel.
3. All exterior lighting shall be dark sky compliant. Exterior lighting shall be downcast, shielded and shall not shine onto adjacent properties or streets.
4. Landscaping shall be installed in accordance with the approved Screening and Lighting 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.

Ms. Kruger MOVED that the application be approved with the waivers and conditions as listed. Mr. Carson seconded and the vote was 9-0.

III. TOWN MEETING

A. Articles 24 and 25 – Procedural Motion

Mr. Tucker explained that there had been a recommendation from the Warrant Motion Committee and the Town Manager that the Planning Board be asked to support a procedural motion to consider Articles 24 and 25 on Wednesday, May 9th, at the beginning of the evening. Mr. Tucker supports this recommendation since it will allow everyone to be present who wishes to be present.

There was discussion about whether the date should be a different date and whether Article 26 should be considered on the same night as the other zoning articles. Ms. Kruger suggested taking Article 26 first and then addressing Articles 24 & 25. There was further discussion of the sequencing of these articles. The Board decided by consensus to support the procedural motion to discuss Articles 24 & 25 on Wednesday, May 9th.

B. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting

Article 17 – Mr. Tucker asked the Planning Board for support for the portion of Article 17 that requests \$40,000 for visioning, planning and rezoning of the Gateway Corridor and the Town Center. He acknowledged that he had put this amount in the budget and had inadvertently neglected to ask the Planning Board to confirm that the Gateway and Town Center were the next two areas on which the Board would like to concentrate its planning efforts. He noted that the TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) study would be a separate process. He explained that, of the money already

appropriated for planning studies, 40% had been completed and spent, 50% is currently being worked on and 10% remains.

Ms. Kruger stated that, in fact Mr. Tucker had spoken with the Planning Board on two occasions about funds required for the study of the Gateway Corridor and Town Center rezoning. However, she expressed concern about including the Town Center at this time. She supported a smaller study area, limited to the Gateway Corridor, responding to the work that the ARA had already done.

Mr. Tucker explained that the Planning Board still has \$18,300 from two different appropriations for Master Plan implementation funding. However, the Town Manager would like to move ahead with the request for \$40,000 to do the Gateway and Town Center study and reserve the other funding for future use. The need is for consulting assistance to study the design and architectural aspects of the Gateway and Town Center areas.

Ms. Anderson observed that the Transportation Plan Task Force is also hiring a consultant to implement a part of the Master Plan. She supports this request “to take us to the next step” and agrees with the recommendation of the JCPC and the Select Board to “get the Master Plan moving”.

Mr. Carson observed that proposed changes to Kendrick Park make it important to do this study.

Some members of the Planning Board expressed reservations about asking for more money to hire a consultant given all of the consultant services that the town has engaged lately. Some members stated that they would support this request out of respect for the process. Some stated that the Gateway cannot be successful unless the Town Center is studied also. Some suggested using what the town has learned from the NAVC and AC studies to move ahead with Gateway and the Town Center.

Mr. Tucker noted that there is \$40,000 being requested for the Gateway and Town Center planning effort and \$50,000 being requested for the North Amherst intersection study.

There was further discussion about the \$40,000 request.

Mr. Crowner MOVED that the Planning Board state that it desires to continue its rezoning efforts with the downtown and Gateway areas and that it supports the town’s financial and strategic planning to make that possible. Ms. Ford seconded and the vote was 9-0.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Signing of Decision

SPR2012-00003/M12887 – 1156 North Pleasant St., Catherine & Morten Jensen-Hole – Board members signed the decision.

Mr. O’Keefe left (7:20 PM) to attend Town Meeting.

Ms. Kruger and Mr. Schreiber left (7:25 PM) to attend Town Meeting.

B. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting – none

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Comprehensive Housing Study – Draft RFP

Mr. Tucker requested that the Planning Board members take some time to review the draft RFP for the Housing Study and to send comments to him. The draft will go to the Select Board on Monday. The Housing Study will be funded by \$40,000 that was appropriated for a Market Study and \$25,000 from Block Grant funds (to fund the Housing Production Plan). The products are separable, he noted.

B. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting – none

VI. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS – none

VII. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS – none

VIII. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS – none

IX. PLANNING BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT – none

Zoning

X. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS – none

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Community Preservation Act Committee
Agricultural Commission
Transportation Plan Task Force
Amherst Redevelopment Authority
Design Review Board
Other Boards and Committees

XI. REPORT OF THE CHAIR – none

XII. REPORT OF STAFF – none

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Approved:

Christine M. Brestrup,
Senior Planner

DATE: _____
David Webber, Chair