NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

January 17, 2012

The regular meeting of the Planning Board held in the Selectmen Chambers of the Needham Town Hall was called to order by Bruce Eisenhut, Chairman, on Tuesday, January 17, 2012 at 7:30 p.m. with Messrs. Warner, Jacobs and Ruth and Ms. McKnight as well as Planning Director, Ms. Newman and Recording Secretary, Ms. Kalinowski.

Request for Extension of Temporary Occupancy Permit: Major Project Site Plan Review No. 2004-11: Permanent Public Building Committee for the Needham High School, 609 Webster Street, Needham, MA 02492, Petitioner (Property located at 609 Webster Street, Needham, MA).

Chip Laffey, representative for the applicant, noted he has been working with the building department. Inspections are scheduled. They need a certification for the elevators at the High School but they are having trouble. They need to shut down the building for inspection. The elevator is scheduled for inspection on 2/13/12 at 1:02 a.m. They are requesting a 6-month extension to be on the safe side.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Ruth, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to extend the date of temporary occupancy permit another 6 months to 7/17/12.

Correspondence

Ms. Newman noted a letter from Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick regarding handicap ramps. Mr. Jacobs stated the letter from the Town Manager was what he was looking for. Ms. Newman noted a letter from George Giunta Jr. regarding 61 Central Avenue; a letter from the Town Manager regarding deadlines for Town Meeting and an announcement of the Town Meeting. Mr. Jacobs stated he would try to get to both upcoming meetings (one at Mt. Ida and one at the Sheraton Needham) sponsored by the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce.

Appointment

7:30 p.m. – Discussion: Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital – Needham proposed Phase II expansion.

Roy Cramer, representative for the applicant, introduced John Fogerty, CEO of Beth Israel, who started in February 2011 as the interim CEO. He then gave an overview of the project. They want to construct a 30,000 square foot facility with 20,000 square feet dedicated to cancer programs. There will also be a third floor expansion of the surgery unit. They would like feedback on the Board's thoughts and directions.

Dennis Monty, of JACA Architects, described the current conditions and noted they want to follow various master plans. They will take down the administration building and build a 30,000 square foot site. The proposed building is 2 stories above grade at Chestnut Street. It will be 3 stories with 2 above grade and one at grade with additional parking along the School Street side. There will be a 2-story deck garage with lower access from Lincoln Street and an upper level entry from School Street. From the lower level parking you could walk right into the lower level of the hospital. It meets all setbacks and has a 50 foot setback off Lincoln Street. It is under a 1.0 FAR. They believe they can do this as of right.

Mr. Monty noted they considered putting a parking deck over the current lot across the street on Chestnut Street. They are thinking of using slate and stone wall panels. He commented there is still a fair amount of work to do.

Mr. Cramer noted in 1997 they got a Special Permit to construct a parking lot across the street. This is counted in the parking supply. The zoning question they need to know is that area in the Lower Chestnut Street overlay district? 3.9.3.4 allows the Planning Board to grant a Special Permit for a parking garage if it serves uses covered in the downtown development plan. He asked if the Board agrees they have discretion to allow a parking garage or not? Mr. Cramer feels they do have that discretion. The hospital is part of the downtown development plan. Is a parking garage allowed by Special Permit or not is the primary question.

Mr. Ruth asked Mr. Cramer if it was his view they can do it as of right. Mr. Cramer stated no, but it is his view that they do not need Town Meeting approval. Mr. Ruth noted a parking garage there brings a lot of traffic to the neighborhood. He did not hear anything about that and should have. It will bring a lot of traffic. Mr. Cramer stated he knows that but is just running it by the Board tonight for input. Mr. Ruth commented it was disturbing. The issue was to keep traffic on Chestnut Street and off of Lincoln Street.

Mr. Fogerty stated they have had several neighbor meetings and have heard their concerns regarding traffic. They should not have glossed over it. There are also other considerations. Mr. Cramer noted he did not want to advocate one location over another.

Ms. McKnight noted the opening on the existing location on Lincoln Street and asked where it leads to. Mr. Monty stated the loading dock. Ms. McKnight stated she would like to review the downtown development plan herself to determine if this serves the uses. She noted page 88 of the Zoning By-Law does allow a parking garage as a primary use of a parcel. She commented it seems as though they can have it. Mr. Eisenhut stated he also would like to look at the downtown development plan.

Mr. Ruth stated he does not think there is any doubt the hospital is a use in the downtown development plan. He has no doubt they will be within their authority to allow a garage on Chestnut Street.

Mr. Warner stated this is very important to the town. He wants to support it and make it thrive. Level grade from Lincoln Street to Chestnut Street would give them 2 levels. The plan is not going to meet minimum standards. They have proposed a large basically windowless block. He suggests they make the building a U shape. He feels the use of slate is appalling. The fire station is brick, as is the police station. Slate is not friendly. He also feels they should look freshly at the parking and site design. They should make a nice garden and open space.

Mr. Monty noted there are windows and a healing garden that goes along with the plan. The only place with no windows is at the loading dock area. Mr. Jacobs agrees with Mr. Ruth it is within their authority. He asked what the intent is of increasing the Chestnut Street lot. Mr. Monty noted they are putting more employees there that are still parking next to the hospital. Mr. Jacobs asked what the anticipated increased need for parking was. Mr. Monty stated they are still working on that with Vanasse.

Mr. Jacobs stated the parking was very close. He really wants to start hearing numbers and how they will deal with it. Ms. McKnight stated she feels they need a good 15 foot setback with trees for a parking garage. She asked if the hospital funding could be used to build to rent to others. Mr. Fogerty stated generally they do not use funding to rent to others for other purposes.

Mr. Eisenhut stated he and Ms. McKnight will look over the downtown development plan and get back to Ms. Newman with their comments. Mr. Monty stated they want to start moving forward with the process. If they need to get on the Town Meeting agenda they need to move on it. Mr. Cramer commented he thinks this can all be done by Special Permit.

Request for Extension of Temporary Occupancy Permit: Major Project Site Plan Review No. 2010-02: Town of Needham, 470 Dedham Avenue, Needham, MA and the Needham Historical Society, 1155 Central Avenue, Needham, MA, Petitioners (Property located at 1155 Central Avenue, Needham, MA).

Ms. Newman noted she had sent an e-mail. They would like to extend the occupancy permit on the auditorium through August 31, 2012.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Ruth, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to ratify the Planning Director's action to extend the occupancy permit through August 31, 2012.

Request for Permanent Occupancy Permit: Amendment to Major Project Site Plan Review No. 2008-08: V.S.A., LLC, 1105 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 11G, Cambridge, MA 02138, Petitioner (Property located at 225 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA).

Ms. Newman noted they are requesting an occupancy permit for the space. She has the certification from the architect and the architects' affidavits have been received. Mr. Ruth noted they are advertising for medical space. They were allowed non-medical only. He asked the Planning Director to please remind them of the permit condition.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Ruth, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to issue a permanent Certificate of Occupancy for the Gymboree use.

Parking Determination: Needham Farmer's Market, Inc., 28 Perrault Road, Apt. #1, Needham, MA 02494, Petitioner (Property located at 23 Dedham Avenue, Needham, MA).

Mr. Eisenhut noted a letter from the Town Engineer, dated 1/13/12, recommending 24 spaces. Jeffrey Friedman stated that was satisfactory to them.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Ruth, and seconded by Ms. McKnight, it was by four of the five members present (Mr. Jacobs abstained):
VOTED: to recommend adoption of 24 spaces as recommended by the Town Engineer.

Correction Decision: Lot B Amendment to Major Project Site Plan Review No. 200-02: Digital Realty Trust, c/o Walter Greaney, 451 D Street, Suite 912, Boston, MA 02210, Petitioner (Property located at 128 First Avenue and 72 A Street, Needham, MA).

Ms Newman noted this is the Level III building. They established a parking standard when they subdivided the lot. This is just a clean up so only the Building Inspector signs off and not the Planning Board.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Ruth, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to amend the decision with regard to 128 First Avenue and 72 A Street application 2000-02, Lot B to revise Section 2.9(d) of the decision to read as presented.

Discussion of Selectmen's request to have Downtown studied.

Mr. Eisenhut stated he was unclear as to the purpose of the request. Ms. McKnight noted she served on the prior committee. She does not feel she should serve on any new committee. She feels it should be studied with new eyes. Mr. Warner asked what new data would this bring to the table. Mr. Eisenhut added who is going to pay to get that data. Ms. Newman noted she has about $7,000. She could do a limited review. Mr. Eisenhut suggested they ask the Planning Director to put together the scope of work and reasonable costs. Ms. Newman will put something together and get some estimates.

Board of Appeals – January 19, 2012.

Tiem Dinh, 238 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA 02492 – 238 Highland Avenue.

Ms. McKnight stated she had no opinion if massage should be allowed or not.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jacobs, and seconded by Mr. Ruth, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: "No comment."

Sprint, 1 International Blvd. Suite 800, Mahwah, NJ, 07495 – 350 Cedar Street.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Ruth, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: "No comment."

Report from Planning Director: proposed subdivision plan at 61 Kingsbury Street.

Ms. Newman noted she has the schematics for the subdivision on Kingsbury Street. The sketches do not show a compliant subdivision. She noted the practice of the Board is to show a compliant on paper. This does not show a 60-foot radius in the cul-de-sac and no roundings on the street. She noted the applicant is working on that.

Ms. Newman noted the project in the old Abode space, VO2 Max Fitness, needs handicap accessibility in 2 locations. They are putting a ramp at the back door. Is this a diminimus change or an amendment? There will be new drainage and they may put in dry wells. She feels it is ok as diminimus if Mr. Mackin and all are on the same page. New dry wells are not diminumus.

Mr. Ruth stated it is an incidental change. It is all impervious surface back there. He feels if the town engineer is satisfied there is no issue really. Ms. McKnight clarified there is no new impervious surface. She was informed this is correct. Mr. Ruth noted there is a re-direction of existing flow from impervious structures. The ramp is a legal requirement. Ms. Newman will distinguish it.

Minutes

Ms. Newman noted she could e-mail the minutes to all members and get their comments. This would save time at the meeting. All agreed.

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Mr. Warner, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to accept the minutes of 10/4/11 as written with the changes discussed.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Ruth, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

Sam Bass Warner

Sam Bass Warner, Vice-Chairman and Clerk