NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

June 14, 2016

The regular meeting of the Planning Board held in the Powers Hall, Needham Town Hall, was called to order by Elizabeth Grimes, Chairman, on Tuesday, June 14, 2016 at 7:45 p.m. with Messrs. Jacobs, Alpert and Owens as well as Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee and Recording Secretary, Ms. Kalinowski.

Correspondence

Ms. Grimes noted the following correspondence for the record: a memo from Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick regarding Senate Bill 2311; information regarding the Large House Review Committee and what was presented at the public hearing and articles in the Needham Times, dated 6/9/16, by Guest Columnists Gary Kaufman and Sam Bass Warner.

Update on Large House Review Study Committee Community Meeting.

Mr. Owens commented he was interested in the time table and wondered if there was enough time between now and the fall Special Town Meeting. What are the steps in the process? Ms. Grimes stated a meeting was held last week with the whole committee. There is a subcommittee to review any questionnaires that have come in and what needs further review. She noted the back yard setbacks are on hold; the committee will study front setbacks and FAR percentages. Some felt the restrictions were too loose, some too strong and there was the potential of a garage with a greater setback than the rest of the house. She noted the committee will look, as a whole, at this right after July 1 and she hopes for a vote at that point. The Planning Board will need a public hearing. Then the Board makes a recommendation to Town Meeting.

Mr. Jacobs noted the Board would need a draft first and language will have to be prepared. He is not sure how long that will take. His general sense is there is time to get it ready for the fall. Ms. Grimes stated she does not feel there is time. Town Meeting is on October 5 not in November. The committee is divided if regulations should be for all construction, including additions, or just reconstruction. It is a very divided group.

Mr. Owens stated Paul Dawson's comment changes would not prevent what happened across from him. He asked if that was correct. Ms. Grimes noted it was correct. She stated the Building Inspector will give language to fix the issue. It will not be complicated. Mr. Jacobs noted it would be along the lines of no 2 level basements. Mr. Alpert mentioned the house on the corner of Central Avenue and Hunnewell Street. He stated there is a fence there now and you cannot see it is a multi-level basement. He asked how the Board felt about that. Ms. Grimes commented she feels the same. From the back it has 4 levels.

Report from Planning Director and Board Members.

Assistant Planner Alex Clee noted correspondence from Matt Varrell of the Conservation Commission. The town is forming an advisory group to update the Open Space & Recreation Plan. Mr. Varrell would like someone from the Planning Board on the committee. Mr. Alpert noted he would be willing if necessary. He was on the Conservation Commission a long time. He would defer to Ms. McKnight if she wants it.

Ms. Clee noted the London Lane decision. There are 6 lots off of Central Avenue. The Selectmen were going to sign the Decision of Restrictive Covenants and grant of easement. Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick said the Selectmen are going to hold off. The Selectmen have an issue with how roads are named. The practice is the Board would request the developer to name roads after retired Planning Board members, veterans, etc. That started changing about 10 years ago when developers pushed back.

Ms. Grimes stated she received an email asking if the Planning Board would be ok with conditioning the approval on the Planning Board revisiting the naming of the road. The name of the road would potentially be Paul Killeen or maybe the Kendrick Mills House. She responded back to Selectman Chair Matt Borelli that her personal opinion is she is not here to dictate what people name their roads. The developers own the property. She does not feel the Board should force developers to name roads after Planning Board members or anyone else. She is not in favor of requesting that. Mr. Alpert stated he was also approached. He could not find anything that gives the Planning Board authority in how streets are named. The Board held a hearing and closed a hearing. He feels it is the developers' prerogative to name the streets. He does not think the Board has the ability to change anything now.

Mr. Jacobs noted the decision gives the Board the authority to do that. Mr. Alpert asked if anyone has approached the developer and asked him to reconsider. Ms. Clee stated she told Attorney George Giunta Jr. the Selectmen would not make a decision tonight. Mr. Jacobs agreed with Ms. Grimes and Mr. Alpert but noted the Planning Board has the power to revisit it. Ms. Grimes stated she was ok if Ms. Clee lets the Selectmen know the Planning Board discussed it and do not see the need to revisit it. All agreed.

Minutes

The Board members gave Ms. Clee their changes.

Public Hearing:

Scenic Road Act: Michael and Susan Guzelian, 105 Livingston Circle, Needham, MA, Petitioner (Property located at 1079 South Street, Needham, MA).

Mark Gluesing, architect, noted the house is under construction. There was some inadvertent tree removal. He has worked with the Tree Warden and resolved the issue. There is a revised plan. There is one existing driveway. The applicant wants a second for a loop driveway. There is 230 feet of stone wall along the front. The existing drive was damaged slightly by construction and will be repaired. Parts of the wall are in disrepair and will be repaired.

Mr. Gluesing stated there is no parking available on South Street. He felt it was reasonable to make a 15 foot opening in 230 feet of wall and reuse the stones. Some bushes growing through the fence will be removed and will be restored. There is a large ledge out cropping in the center the construction will go around. He feels this is a good solution for the issues of the site. Mr. Jacobs asked what the standards are for the Planning Board approving these applications. Mr. Gluesing stated applicants need approval from the Planning Board if the applicant wants to do work on a stone wall in the right of way.

Ms. Grimes noted the following correspondence for the record: an email from Fire Chief Dennis Condon, dated 5/31/16, with no issues or objections; a memo from Police Lt. John Kraemer, dated 5/19/16, with no safety concerns and a letter from Assistant Town Engineer Thomas Ryder, dated 6/13/16, noting no objections but with comments.

Mr. Alpert asked if there is any historical significance of the stone wall. Mr. Gluesing stated not that he knows of. The wall has been there since the 1940s. He believes it is an old boundary wall. Mr. Jacobs asked if having an additional entrance would affect traffic safety and volume. Mr. Gluesing stated the new position on the roadway is more advantageous than the existing drive with site line and view. It will be a one-way loop. Mr. Jacobs asked if it was under construction now with 3 garages. Mr. Gluesing stated it is. The applicant received a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for the barn in the back.

Mr. Jacobs asked if the police should be made aware that a few times a year there will be 30 to 35 cars there. He would like input from the police department on that. Ms. Grimes stated she is comfortable with the Police Chief's report. Mr. Jacobs stated he would like it pointed out to the police there may be a large number of cars and get their opinion. Mr. Alpert agreed.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Owens, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by three of the four members present (Mr. Jacobs voted in the negative):
VOTED: to close the hearing with no amendment.

A motion was made to consent to the removal of an approximate 15 foot section of stone wall at 1079 South Street as shown on the plan submitted with the application and consent to repair and/or reconstruction of the stone wall by reusing the existing material as requested in the application. Mr. Jacobs commented he thinks the criteria are safety and traffic. That is one of the Board's proper considerations under the Act. He stated he would vote against this as he does not feel he has enough information relative to the impact of large gatherings and many cars..

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Owens, it was by three of the four members present (Mr. Jacobs voted in the negative):
VOTED: to consent to the removal of an approximate 15 foot section of stone wall at 1079 South Street as shown on the plan submitted with the application and consent to repair and/or reconstruction of the stone wall by reusing the existing material as requested in the application.

8:30 p.m. – Major Project Site Plan Special Permit No. 2016-02: Claremont Needham Suites LLC, One Lakeshore Center, Bridgewater, MA 02324, Petitioner (Property located at 200 First Avenue, Needham, MA).

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Owens, it was by the four members present unanimously:
VOTED: to waive the reading of the public hearing notice.

Ms. Grimes noted the following correspondence for the record: an email from Fire Chief Dennis Condon, dated 6/9/16, with no issues but comments regarding a high rise; a letter from Attorney Robert Smart, dated 5/13/16, noting no traffic impact fee is needed; an email from Keith Kelley, dated 6/9/16, in response to Fire Chief Condon's comment regarding high rise; an email from Police Chief John Schlittler, dated 6/9/16, noting no issues; an email from Tara Gurge of the Health Department, dated 6/10/16, with comments and a letter from Assistant Town Engineer Thomas Ryder, dated 6/14/16, noting all items that were reviewed and including 2 comments.

Attorney Robert Smart, representative for the applicants, introduced the team. He stated the applicants own a 96,450 square foot parcel of land on First Avenue. The parcel faces Route 128. The building to the south is owned by Bulfinch, to the left is Restaurant Depot and across the street is a 3-story office building. It is located in the Business District. The applicants are proposing a 6 story hotel with 106,875 square feet. There will be 134 rooms and conference and function areas. He noted 146 parking spaces are required and the project has 146 full size parking spaces. No compact spaces are being proposed.

Mr. Smart reviewed the waivers requested. He noted no traffic impact fees are being proposed as no traffic impact fee is triggered by this proposal. The project can have an FAR of 1.0 as of right and can go up to 2.0 under special circumstances with a Special Permit. He noted the existing public infrastructure is adequate to service the facility. The applicant feels it will be a financial benefit to the town. He stated the plans before the Board members show the proposed building is 71.67 feet in height and, with the revised plans, this will be reduced by 2 feet to keep the height under 70 feet, pursuant to the Fire Chief's comments. He commented the property has been vacant for a long time.

Mr. Smart noted the prior owner came before the Board to get a Special Permit to create a new 3 story building on the site for a fitness use. The permit that was granted then included the same waivers they are requesting now. The DRB has approved the civil plans and landscape plans but have not stamped them. The applicant will wait for the revised plans to get them stamped. The applicant will be seeking approval from the Board of Health. Police and Fire have commented and are fine with it.

Paul Matos, Civil Engineer with Allen & Major Associates, noted the existing building has approximately a 33,000 square foot footprint. The existing site has impervious surface coverage of approximately 83.7%. There are currently 280 feet of parking paving spaces, there is a retaining wall on the abutting property and their property line is within 6 inches so there is no landscape buffer currently as it exists today. On the northerly side there is 280 feet and the landscape buffer is approximately 1.8 feet wide. Mr. Smart noted there are plantings all along the wall.

The proposed project is a complete site demo and construction of a 6-story hotel with 134 rooms. There will be some site improvements at the entrance and second entrance. There will be decorative pavers and porous concrete for the sidewalks and basketball court. The proposed improvements to the site will reduce the impervious cover by 9% bringing the site down to 74.3% impervious cover. They will be increasing the landscape buffer to 4.1 feet in one area and will reduce the landscape buffer in another area from 3.5 feet to 2.5 feet. The project will reset the existing granite curbing along First Avenue and reconstruct the sidewalk along First Avenue.

There will be a new storm water management system that will consist of 4 underground infiltration chambers. The system consists of Storm Tech SC310 chambers with a total of 254 units there. The water will be directed toward a series of deep sublet catch basins under the property. The system was designed to meet the Massachusetts MS4 new regulations going into effect 7/1/17. That requires them to retain on their property 1 inch of runoff over the entire pervious surface. Once the system has achieved that capacity it will be tied in with the existing municipal drain system on First Avenue. There is already a connection there that the project will be improving from a 15 inch pipe to an 18 inch pipe. All utilities are underground. There will be a new transformer.

Keith Kelley, Architect with Opechee Construction Corporation, noted the average stay is 7 to 10 days. There will be breakfast for guests and a small bar but no restaurant per se. The 6-story building will be brick, granite and glass and will be similar in architecture to Trip Advisors and Residence Inn. He noted this will be a Hilton Homewood Suites Extended Day branded hotel. There will be an exterior patio and a sport court. There will be pervious pavers. Ms. Grimes asked if all parking is surface and was informed it was. Mr. Kelley noted they are adding 2 bike racks.

Mr. Alpert clarified cars come in, customers check in and then the customer goes to the room. The majority of traffic is off First Avenue to the site. Jason Adams, Transportation Engineer with McMahon Associates, stated he has completed a traffic assessment. It is compared to the fitness center. The project will have 15 to 25 more trips than the fitness center. He feels there are the same conclusions. He noted there will be new traffic speed limit signs.

Mr. Jacobs requested the project find ways to increase the pervious surface wherever possible. Mr. Matos noted the property did have pervious pavers at the entrance but Town Engineer Anthony DelGaizo did not like that. The applicant cut it back and put decorative pavers. Ms. Grimes asked if all the hotels have sport courts. Mike Connors, of Claremont, stated it is an extended day brand standard. Ms. Grimes asked if people use them and was informed occasionally they do.

Mr. Jacobs asked for the timing. Assistant Planner Alex Clee stated the hearing should be closed but not voted on. Mr. Smart stated he would be willing to draft the decision if that would help move things more quickly. Ms. Grimes agreed that would be a great help. Mr. Smart commented he would like the relief voted tonight and he could have a decision done on Monday. Ms. Clee stated it was a timing issue.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jacobs, and seconded by Mr. Owens, it was by the four members present unanimously:
VOTED: to close the hearing.

Mr. Jacobs stated the decision should include the proposed traffic mitigation measures and the traffic report be incorporated as conditions. Ms. Grimes noted deliveries, trash removal, dumpsters, construction details and all regular conditions. Also incorporate comments from the Health Department and Engineering. Exterior lighting should not be obnoxious and there should be a photometric plan. Mr. Adams stated the proposed lights will be the same lights as Trip Advisors. Ms. Clee stated there should be a condition it could be LEED certifiable but not necessarily certified. Ms. Grimes noted the decisions for the health facility and Residence Inn should be checked. Mr. Jacobs commented Mr. Smart should work with Ms. Clee on the language. Snow removal should also be included.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Owens, it was by the four members present unanimously:
VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

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Paul Alpert, Vice-Chairman and Clerk