

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

September 25, 2018

The regular meeting of the Planning Board held in the Charles River Room, Public Services Administration Building, was called to order by Paul Alpert, Chairman, on Tuesday, September 25, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. with Messrs. Owens and Jacobs and Mmes. Grimes and McKnight, as well as Planning Director, Ms. Newman, Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee and Recording Secretary, Ms. Kalinowski.

Public Hearing:

7:00 p.m. – Major Project Site Plan Review No. 2018-07: Self Storage Group II, 129 South Street, Boston, MA 02111, Petitioner (Property located at 540 Hillside Avenue, Needham, MA).

Upon a motion made by Ms. Grimes, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to waive the reading of the public hearing notice.

Roy Cramer, representative for the applicant, stated this is a redevelopment at 540 Hillside Avenue in the Industrial District. Currently the site is used by a landscape company. The applicant is proposing a 3 story, climate controlled, 123,000 square foot self storage building. This property is 1.88 acres and access is from Hillside Avenue. This is a low traffic generator. There will be 2 employees on shift.

David Williams, of SSG Development II, LLC, stated they specialize in climate controlled self storage. He gave the background of the company. The buildings are professionally managed once built. This is low impact. There will be 14 parking spaces. He noted this is a larger tax revenue use than the current use. It is a local business and supports a local need. They build properties. Ms. McKnight noted she is an abutter across Hillside Avenue; nevertheless, she feels she can be impartial and fair. Mr. Cramer reviewed the zoning relief requested. He feels the use is allowed as of right as a storage facility. Some Board members had differing opinions and asked that a Special Permit be requested. He noted the Building Inspector has determined the closest listed use is wholesale warehouse with 1 parking space for 850 square feet. He recommended 14 parking spaces be required. The applicant is requesting a waiver of 134 spaces.

Mr. Alpert noted a letter, dated 7/24/18, from Building Inspector David Roche with comments and recommendations. Mr. Cramer argued under his interpretation of Section 5.1.3(j), there is no 5 foot parking area setback required on the right side of the building. He does not think it applies but, if the Board feels it does, he would like a waiver. The applicant would like as much maneuvering as possible. There will be some storage boxes for sale. The office will be open 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. There will be gated access 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. 7 days per week. There will be a security system.

Mr. Jacobs noted there will be a contract with each of the users, and he asked what will be done to enforce the contracts as to hazardous material prohibition. Mr. Williams noted, when the contract is discussed, it is clear what cannot be stored. There will be cameras on site. He noted the applicant has never had a problem. These are month to month tenancies. There are no outside-facing units. People will need to go to the loading dock and down the hallway to their unit. Mr. Jacobs asked if there is insurance against the risk of illegal uses. Mr. Williams stated the operator will need insurance and added the building is sprinkled throughout.

David Kelly, of Kelly Engineering Group, described the site. The site is 82,000 square feet with an existing building on site. The current building is 21,000 square feet. Currently there is a landscaping company that is fairly active on the site. The landscapers enter on Hillside Avenue. He noted he will work with the Fire Department on emergency access. There will be a fenced-in recycle and trash area and a generator. There is a fairly heavy tree buffer. There will be one handicap parking space with a ramp. The building has 2 different elevations. The applicant will dig out in the back of the site and fill in the front to balance the site topography.

Mr. Kelly noted there will be elevators in the building. He feels this is a quiet, clean, low-impact use. There is an extensive storm water disposal system. There will be a substantial decrease in run off. The impervious area is being reduced by 12,000 square feet and the paved area has been reduced. The sewer exists and there are other utilities on site. Ms. McKnight asked about the lighting on the building and in the parking area. She asked what the fixtures are. Mr. Kelly stated the lighting levels are enough for safety. There is a combination of lighting poles. He described the locations of the lights. All are downward facing, LED fixtures. The poles are 20 feet high. Mr. Williams stated the lights do not project off the property. Ms. McKnight asked if there are windows in the building. Andrew Graves, project architect, described the operation and floor plan and noted that what appear to be windows are decorative not functional. There are 2 people in the office. He noted this is mostly residential-storage use. The floors have been stepped to accommodate the grade. A handicap access ramp connects all floors and there is elevator access to all floors.

Mr. Graves noted the units range from 5 feet by 5 feet to 10 feet by 30 feet. The building is non-combustible, steel frame, concrete slab on grade. There will be 2 bathrooms and a glass entry tower. Access is at grade. He noted carts will be available to put boxes on. There will be bollards and the site will be buffered in the back by the railroad tracks. Mr. Alpert asked how much light is coming from inside the building. Mr. Graves stated the lights could be put on sensors and he is happy to limit the time they are on. The lights do not go through and the hallway lights cannot be seen. Mr. Williams added there are no doors in the back of the building. The spandrel glass is just decorative and cannot be seen through.

Mr. Jacobs asked if there is any equipment on the roof. Ms. Grimes asked if there were any lights in the back of the building and was informed there were not. Mr. Alpert asked how far the building was from the railroad tracks. Mr. Kelly noted 14 feet. Ms. McKnight asked if Mr. Williams is the owner or operator. Mr. Williams stated Extra Space Storage specializes in renting or managing the buildings. Sometimes the developer holds on until all the units are rented and sometimes they sell to an operation such as Extra Space Storage before all units are rented. The operator does not always buy. He anticipates Extra Storage Space will buy.

Mr. Graves stated there are 4 rooftop units on the roof that are 15 feet long and 5 or 6 feet high. He noted the units can be screened if there is a concern. The units could be put closer to the front of the building. The elevator penthouse is on the roof and possibly a couple of suitcase size condenser units. Mr. Alpert noted the loading area is part of the parking lot. People will back up and leave their car there while they unload and take stuff to their unit. Mr. Jacobs asked if there was a traffic study.

Pat Dunford, of Vanasse Associates, noted the traffic study looked at different elements. Counts were done before school got out. There were counts for the existing use with a current peak around 6:00 a.m. and around 5:00 p.m. when the landscapers came back. The new use generates about two thirds of the traffic. There will be around 3 to 5 fewer cars per day than the previous use during peak hours. This use peaks later around 9:00 a.m. and around 1:00 p.m. after lunch. The parking is comparable with other units of similar size. The applicant is comfortable the parking supply is adequate. Ms. McKnight asked what days have the most traffic. She would assume Saturday.

Ben LaFrance, of Hawk Design, described the landscaping. The entrance has been enhanced and the existing stand of trees and undergrowth will be maintained. Seven evergreen trees and shade trees will replace what is removed due to grading. The Design Review Board (DRB) approved the plan but expressed concern the planting bed next to the building is in full sun conditions, and the DRB recommended gravel mulch rather than landscaping for that location. He described where a fence will be. Mr. Williams noted the fence will be black chain link and usually 6 feet high.

Ms. McKnight asked what the developer will do to assure the neighbor's trees are not harmed. Mr. Dunford noted the project is outside the boundary of the tree roots. He noted there is a lot of asphalt there currently.

Mr. Alpert noted the following correspondence for the record: a letter from Police Lt. John Cramer noting no safety concerns; a letter from Fire Chief Dennis Condon with no comments; an email from Tara Gurge, of the

Board of Health, with no comments; 2 letters from Assistant Town Engineer Thomas Ryder with comments, one dated 9/17/18 and one dated 9/25/18 with revised comments.

Dave Miller, of 95 Dana Place, noted storage would be what he would choose, however, he feels the 3 story building is closer to the property line than the existing shed building. This will block his sunset view and the HVAC systems will be very large. The back of the building next to the railroad tracks will make sound bounce off. John Tallarico, of 1069 Highland Avenue, stated he would like to see some landscaping considered in back or at the end of Dana Place. Abby Klein, of 96-98 Dana Place, stated this building would inhibit her view and the reverberation of the train noise on the brick building is a concern. It would be appreciated if the applicant would add additional landscaping. She asked if the applicant would consider taking the building down one story.

Mr. Alpert asked what the setback requirements are in Industrial. Ms. Newman noted the setback is 0 for Industrial. Mr. Williams stated he would be happy to address the landscaping and take a hard look at it. He will also look at the height. He will look at putting arborvitae along the back and can slide the roof top units to the front and screen them. He added the units do not run all that often. Lawrence Lipson, of 503 Hillside Avenue, noted he can see the existing building from his front. He is concerned with his property value. If the building blocks views, it will impact property values. His side of Hillside Avenue is all residential. The other side is all commercial. Mr. Cramer noted this is the Industrial District and the proposed use is benign. He stated this is an alternative to what could be put there. A motion was made to continue the hearing. Ms. Grimes stated it would take a lot for her to vote in favor of this. She lives in Needham, not Waltham or Jamaica Plain. She is against this use in general especially in her town. She will not vote in favor of this.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jacobs, and seconded by Ms. Grimes, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to continue this hearing to 10/2/18 at 7:00 p.m.

7:15 p.m. – Major Project Site Plan Review No. 2018-08: PEX Health and Fitness, LLC d/b/a PEX Health and Fitness, 1591 Washington Street, #2, West Newton, MA 02465, Petitioner (Property located at 1451 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA).

Upon a motion made by Mr. Owens, and seconded by Ms. Grimes, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to waive the reading of the public hearing notice.

Roy Cramer, representative for the applicant, noted this is a fitness center where Taylor's Stationary used to be. It will be by appointment only with one-on-one personal training. There will be some small-group classes. The largest class may be up to 8 people. He is aware of the limitations of personal fitness establishments. The busiest hours will be from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. He feels this is a complimentary use to other businesses. There will be a maximum of 6 trainers at any time and classes are one hour. The hours of operation will be 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Sunday although it is usually closed on Sundays.

Mr. Cramer noted there will be an accessory use of selling some merchandise. He reviewed the requested zoning relief. There is 2,960 square feet on the first floor. Of that, 2,438 square feet will be fitness space, 180 square feet for stairs and 342 square feet for restrooms. There is a small mezzanine where Taylors had offices that is 295 square feet and will continue as an office. There is an unfinished basement that is 1,892 square feet. That will not be used except possibly for storage. He noted there are Special Permit requests for accessory use, more than one non-residential use on a lot under Section 3.2.2, a parking waiver under Section 5.1.1.6 and design criteria. He gave the background on parking.

Mr. Cramer noted there are no external changes. He feels the use is complimentary to the other uses on site and is a low impact facility. Mr. Alpert noted the only issue is Item d – adequacy of disposal of refuse from site. He stated that was not answered. Mr. Cramer noted there is a little alley between the dry cleaner and the building. The existing dumpsters will be used. Mr. Alpert stated the applicant does not own the dumpster. He would like

an agreement in writing. Mr. Cramer stated the landlord owns the dumpsters. He will see if it is in the lease and will get a letter from the landlord stating there is dumpster access.

Ms. Grimes commented the applicant should be aware the busiest hours coincide with the St. Joseph drop off in the morning. Five spaces are blocked off. Ms. McKnight stated she does not see a parking study. Mr. Alpert noted the Board decided a year ago not to require parking studies in the downtown. Ms. Newman noted for fitness uses in downtown with limited clientele the Board has not required studies. Ms. McKnight stated some permits require parking permits from the Town for employees. Mr. Cramer assumed the applicant would get up to 6 parking permits.

Ms. McKnight asked if there were 2 restrooms. She was informed there are 2 restrooms that are both private. The applicant considered allocating one to men and one to women. There will be a locker room with 6 lockers.

Mr. Alpert noted the following correspondence for the record: a memo from Police Lt. John Kraemer with no safety concerns; a memo from Fire Chief Dennis Condon with no safety concerns; an email from Tara Gurge, of the Board of Health, with no comments at this time; and a memo from Assistant Town Engineer Thomas Ryder with no comments or objections.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Grimes, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to close the hearing.

7:30 p.m. – Major Project Site Plan Review No. 2018-09: Dr. Marcia A. Walker d/b/a Rx2Care Clinic, 660 South Street, Needham, MA, Petitioner (Property located at 1498 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA).

Upon a motion made by Mr. Owens, and seconded by Mr. Jacobs, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to waive the reading of the public hearing notice.

Dr. Marcia Walker, proponent, noted this is not a traditional clinic. There is a retail layout and a clinic layout. There is a lab for clinical assessments, exam rooms, and a retail area. The only alteration is the sinks. She is working with the state. She needs a plan review from the State Department of Public Health. She will need a waiver for parking. There will be 3 employees – one for retail, one for provider support and one provider. Mr. Alpert noted she will need parking permits. Dr. Walker stated she has 2 spaces on site. Clients are primarily by appointment. She noted signage is the only alteration. Ms. Newman asked if the class size is a maximum of 8 and was informed that is correct.

Mr. Alpert noted the following correspondence for the record: a memo from Police Lt. John Kraemer noting no safety concerns; an email from Fire Chief Dennis Condon with no comments; an email from Tara Gurge, of the Board of Health, with comments regarding food products and demolition and a memo from Assistant Town Engineer Thomas Ryder with no comment or objections.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Grimes, and seconded by Mr. Owens, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to close the hearing.

Review of Proposed Self Storage Facility at 77 Charles Street.

This is off the agenda.

Discussion of Zoning Article for the October Special Town Meeting.

Ms. Newman stated this was already voted but she needs a presenter for Town Meeting. Mr. Alpert stated he would present.

Discussion of Stormwater By-Law scheduled for consideration at the October Special Town Meeting.

Mr. Alpert had some comments he passed to the Planning Director regarding the definition of commercial including multi-family dwelling. If 3-family or more it should be included here. Mr. Jacobs asked if the last section regarding the waiver provision was added late. It does not make sense. Roy Cramer stated the original language had an effective date of 11/1. He suggested the date be March 2019. They took the effective date out and put in the waiver provision. He feels that should not be substituted for the effective date. Ms. McKnight noted the date is effective retroactively to the date of Town Meeting.

Mr. Cramer stated there needs to be more work on the By-Law and the regulations so the 2 are consistent. Mr. Jacobs noted Section 7.3.1 is an issue. Mr. Cramer noted both the By-Law and the regulations should be discussed at the same time. He noted Town Meeting is 10/10. He commented the smart thing would be to postpone this until spring to get everything together. The regulations that came out last week have not been reconciled. The regulations should be ready to go at the same time as the By-Law. He does not feel the Selectmen are listening when people say that this still needs work.

Ms. McKnight stated there are ambiguities in this By-Law. Mr. Alpert would like to continue this discussion on 10/2/18. He received an 11 page letter from Robert Smart at 5:45 p.m. tonight. He asked the Planning Director to forward it to the other Board members.

Discussion of Proposed Permit Streamlining Initiatives.

This will be deferred to the 10/2/18 meeting.

Design Review Board Committee Appointments.

This will be deferred to the 10/2/18 meeting.

Minutes

This will be deferred to the 10/2/18 meeting.

Correspondence

Mr. Alpert noted a legal notice from the City of Newton and a legal notice from the Town of Dedham.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jacobs, and seconded by Mr. Owens, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker



Martin Jacobs, Vice-Chairman and Clerk