

**FITCHBURG PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2016**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paula Caron, Chair
John DiPasquale
Mike DiPietro
Paul Fontaine, Jr.
Mike Hurley
Kristin Sweeney
Andrew Van Hazinga

PLANNING OFFICE: Mike O'Hara

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:01 p.m. in the Community Room, Fitchburg Fire Headquarters, 33 North St.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the March 15th, April 19th & April 21st meetings were approved with minor corrections.

ANR plans

None.

MINOR SITE PLAN REVIEW

306 Summer St. - KB Cars, Used Car Sales (cont'd from 4/19/16)

Aaron Cosgrove, applicant's representative called earlier to say plan revisions as discussed at last month's meeting are not ready. The Board voted to deny the Site Plan.

8-20 John Fitch Hwy. - proposed improvements to commercial plaza - Geronimo Properties

Paul DiGeronimo explained plan for improvements to the site and buildings – make more of a campus-type feeling. Plaza is undergoing a façade renovation now. Landscaped planting bed will be added along JFH frontage, eliminating some parking. A garden center for Rocky's Hardware will be installed in the middle of the parking area, with walkway to Rocky's front door.

Vehicles speeding thru parking lot to cut from JFH to Summer St. & vice versa has been a problem. Restriping parking layout will help. Dumpster pad being installed, he was planning to screen w/ chain link fence w/ vinyl slats, but can use solid white vinyl fence instead. There will be two new pylon signs. He has no plans for the vacant former Town & Country parcel at this time. It will be filled in & loamed & seeded for now.

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Mr. Van Hazinga) to Approve the Minor Site Plan.

Vote in favor.

500 Rindge Rd., Sizer School, expansion of parking area

Stan Dillis, Ducharme & Dillis presented plan revised 4/22/16. Parking for staff/students has been an issue since school opened. They propose to cut into the grass playing area and grassed island in front of main entrance to school to add 29 additional spaces. This will not affect the stormwater recharge chambers underneath the grass playing area.

Discussion of how this affects traffic circulation since new spaces will be closer to southernmost driveway. Agreed: Better situation is to prevent turns into the southerly driveway from Rindge Road. Also, an alternative is to move entrance to new parking area to the northerly end (away from Rindge Rd. intersection). The Board would support either of these.

Stan was OK w/ this.

Motion made & seconded to Approve the Minor Site Plan with the condition that a "Do Not Enter" sign be placed at the southernmost driveway to the site to prevent conflicting traffic from turning in from Rindge Road. Vote in favor.

339 River St., Johnny's Service Station

Owner Sam Gandor present. He is in process of transferring Class II license a different name. Bldg. Dept. told him he would need a Site Plan Review. The Board had approved a site plan a few years ago showing a number of spaces for used cars for sale.

Agreed: Mike O'H will talk to Duffy & see about need for another Site Plan Review, find site plan from several years ago, see how many spaces are shown & bring plan to a future meeting.

Rollstone & Electric - Bridle Cross Ests. - roundabout

Board reviewed plan for existing roundabout at Mechanic/JFH/Rindge and a concept plan for proposed roundabout at Rollstone & Electric prepared by DPW-Engineering.

Qs Raised: Can diameter be made larger? Can trucks get around the roundabout w/o going into interior island on a 90°, 180°, 270° turn? Can roundabout be moved over since city owns 2 of the 4 corners? Issue will be revisited at a later meeting.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Mr. Fontaine, Jr. recused himself from the meeting & left the room for the following item.

Special Permit - Mixed Use Development, 579 South St - Mark Gionet (continued from 4/19/16)

Hearing re-opened. Bill Hannigan, Mark Gionet & Sean Kelley, Vanasse Assocs. present.

Plan revised 5/12/16, same bldg. footprint, but roofline of bldg lowered six feet. Dumpster will be screened by a solid wall fence. They have staked out the area to be cleared of veg. to improve sight distance between the edge of South St. & the Ashley Ridge stockade fence. Approx. 15 trees mostly small diameter to be removed.

Jason Plourde, Tighe & Bond suggested condition of approval: Building Permit issued only when adequate sight distance has been provided, and is verified in field. Ongoing maintenance of the cleared area is important. Bill H agreed that should be a condition.

Public Comment:

Holly Burneau: Questioned procedure - Some residents did not receive notice of Conservation Commission meeting. This will be checked out.

Bill H: For screening, they will plant white pine or hemlock 8-foot o.c.

They will try to match the line and height of Ashley Ridge stockade fence, but NTE six feet high.

Mr. Blaquere, 593 South St: Still concerned with sight distance pulling out of his driveway.

Bill H. suggested grade on south side of site can be raised & more screening provided for Mr. Blaquere.

Abutter: Development will devalue her rental property investment.

Parking: For residential use: 56 spaces req'd, 65 provided. For medical office. 15 req'd, 36 provided. Parking will be behind the office bldg.

Unit type: 1st Floor: 1 1-BR, 4 2-BR

2nd Floor: 2 1-BR, 4 2-BR

3rd Floor: 3 1-BR, 3 2-BR

Total 17 units per bldg. Density is 7.3 residential units/ac.

Ms. Caron: Sidewalk is needed from site to connect to existing sidewalk in front of Ashley Ridge

Bill: Telephone pole & hydrant may be in the way & may conflict w/ turning lane into the site. They're not averse to doing it if they can fit it in. They will take a look at it.

Alex Gable: She is concerned with density. Q: Is a school bus stop needed?

Linda Rameau: She recently bought condo there, this will decrease property values, etc.

Mr. Van Hazinga suggested eliminating some parking spaces to increase the landscaping on site, reduce impervious surface, and strengthen the buffer to neighboring properties.

Bill H: They can look at eliminating 7 spaces on either side of entrance driveway.

Mr. DiPasquale concerned with traffic backing up on South St. He has lived off South St. for decades and backup has been getting worse. Project is way too big. He wants to see sight lines in place before making decision on project.

Paul Fontaine, Sr: Shouldn't the 4,500 sq. ft. office space be included in the Density calculation?

Ms. Caron reminded Board a denial needs to be supported by reasons listed in criteria in the Zoning Ordinance.

Jason Valera understood from last meeting that building height was to be lowered to two stories.

Mr. DiPasquale: Were sight lines measured in the field?

Sean Kelley: No, but horizontal & vertical survey work generated a model to show how much vegetation would need to be cleared in order to provide adequate sight distance.

Mr. DiPasquale wants to see sight lines in place before making decision on project.

Bill Hannigan asked that hearing be continued to next meeting.

Q: What will happen in the meantime?

To sum up: Some Board members would like density reduced even more, decrease amount of parking and increase green space & landscaping. Bill will take a look at extending sidewalk to connect to Ashley Ridge sidewalk. Will also take a look at density and # of stories.

Hearing continued to June 21st meeting.

Mr. Fontaine, Jr. returned to the meeting.

Special Permit & Site Plan Review - Retail redevelopment, 133 Water St. (continued from 4/19/16)

Pat Doherty went over revisions to plan since last meeting:

Relocated internal crosswalk, parking spaces in front of building now H/C only, dumpster screened w/ white vinyl fence, detail on fence in front of site submitted. He submitted plan showing truck turning template.

Discussion on need for sidewalk to Market Basket. Pat is willing to contribute towards cost of constructing crosswalks (curb cuts, paint) if one is required after consulting w/ DPW & Police Dept., but does not want it as a condition of approval. Cost est. - \$5,000.

Board is OK w/ this idea.

No revised traffic report as yet, Jason at T&B has had several conversations with applicant's traffic engineer and they are generally in agreement. They might even be overstating the uses' impacts. Pat showed photo from northerly driveway to show sight distance was adequate if chain link fence is removed (it will be).

Ms. Caron: Still can't support left turns out of the northerly driveway.

Suggestion: If slide driveway 110 feet to the north would gain sight distance back to Laurel St. Check w/ peer reviewer and then document the sight distance as a condition of approval.

Paul Bouvier, Mid-town Beef: He is OK with shifting driveway closer to his business. When Pelletiers was open, all retail traffic used that driveway.

Jason, T&B: Mid-block crosswalk varies from ASHTO guidelines and are generally discouraged. But they can be allowed provided it's recommended by engineer's judgement, if the Board is comfortable with it.

Q: Any other traffic issues?

Jason: Their "No Build" condition should be worse & therefore "Build" is better than it looks.

Public comment:

Mary Jo Bohart – on crosswalks - people will be crossing street from Market Basket & back. We want to encourage that.

Best place for crosswalk? At Northerly entrance, perhaps.

Motion made & seconded to close hearing. Vote in favor.

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Mr. Van Hazinga) to Approve Site Plan & Special Permit subject to:

- Screen dumpster.
- Contribution toward construction of crosswalk (H/C accessible ramps, etc.)
- Relocate Driveway to north per discussion
- Subject to Planning Board review of changes to buildings 1 & 2 based on future tenant and parking demand.

Vote 7-0 in favor.

OTHER BUSINESS

Steve Marsden, concept plan - proposed Commercial Recreation development, off Westminster Hill Rd. - zoning change?

Marsden gave brief overview - he owns seven parcels comprising 95+/- acres off Westminster Hill Rd. in W. Fitchburg. He has a developer interested in developing indoor/outdoor soccer fields w/ related uses (10,000 s.f. bldg. w/ onsite restaurant, training & coaching rooms, etc.) Similar to "ForeKicks".

Ten outdoor fields both natural & artificial turf. Developer: "Wide Word of Sports" has existing facilities in R.I & Sutton. Will be run by "Game On Soccer". Would be a \$12 mil. investment.

Board discussion: Issues will include: traffic, buffering from adjacent residential areas, lighting, access via Industrial park, rather than from easterly on Westminster Hill Rd.

Use currently not permitted in the RR district. Discussion on options for zoning change:

- (1) Allow "Commercial Recreation" – Change from "N" to Special Permit in the Rural Residential district.
- (2) Created a special Planned Development District just for this type of development. The "PDD" section of the Ordinance has never been used.

Board agreed: PDD may be better option.

Ms. Caron wanted to see a flowchart of rezoning & permitting process. Regardless of this development, improvements to & widening the R/R underpass on Princeton Rd. will remain an issue.

Mayor DiNatale stated that he was very supportive of the proposal and that it would mean more revenue for the city.

The Board agreed to hold a special meeting Tues. June 14th on just this proposed zoning amendment, location TBD.

Initiate zoning amendments

Green energy

As discussed at 4/21 Planning Board meeting, Chantel @ MRPC had come up w/ language to include alternative energy mfg. in the Ordinance's definition of Manufacturing as follows:

LIGHT MANUFACTURING - The production, fabrication, processing or assembly of goods, **including renewable or alternative energy manufacturing**, in a manner that is in compliance with all state and federal rules and regulations; confines disturbing smoke, fumes, dust, chemical discharge and noise to the premises; and is not hazardous to abutters because of potential fire, explosion or radiation.

MANUFACTURING - The production, fabrication, processing or assembly of goods, **including renewable or alternative energy manufacturing**, in a manner that is in compliance with all state and federal rules and regulations.

RESEARCH AND TESTING - Investigation and/or testing of goods and/or equipment **including renewable or alternative energy research and development facilities**, provided that all operations shall confine disturbing smoke fumes, dust, chemical discharge and noise to the premises and that no operation shall violate any federal or state rule or regulation.

Motion made & seconded that the Board initiate a petition to City Council for this zoning amendment.
Vote in favor.

Bemis Rd.

Aaron Cosgrove has been trying to get approval for Millennium Motors - Used car sales at side of former Dickie's Grilling, 34 Bemis Rd. that parcel & area around it is in the Industrial Zoning District. No longer industrial uses in area. Perhaps rezoning to Commercial would be a better fit.
Board was OK with initiating rezoning. Will be further review on just which parcels should be included.

Concept plan for proposed driveway(s) > 500 feet, Sheldon Rd.

Anna Jaffe in w/ plan showing possible locations for driveways which would exceed 500 feet. She will be filing for a Special Permit for that and a shared driveway for the June meeting.
Abutters at 455 Sheldon Rd. also present and expressed their concerns.

Meeting adjourned: 10:47 p.m.

Next meeting: 6/21/16

Minutes approved: 6/21/16