

**FITCHBURG PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2021**

**FITCHBURG CITY CLERK**

*Mar 10 2021 1:20 pm*

**NOTE:** *This was a Virtual meeting on GoToSeminar due to the pandemic.*

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Paula Caron, Chair      Paul Fontaine, Jr., Vice Chair  
Peter Capodagli      Alyne Butland  
Amanda Koeck      Laura O’Kane  
Alex Lopez      Tracey McGrath (Associate member)

**STAFF:**                      Mike O’Hara, Tom Skwierawski

**CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to order at 6:01 p.m.

**ANR PLANS**

City of Fitchburg, 16 Market St.

A vacant 4,050 sq. ft. parcel, taken by the City through Tax Title in 2016 is proposed to be split in two thru the City’s Side Yard Sales program. The structure that had been on the 16 Market St. parcel was demolished in 2018. A 1,631 sq. ft. Parcel A will be conveyed to the abutting 12 Market St. parcel to the west and become an undivided parcel. The 2,379 sq. ft. Parcel B is to be conveyed to the abutting 69 Bemis Rd. parcel to the north and become an undivided parcel.

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Ms. Koeck) to approve the plan and authorize Mike O’Hara to sign the plan on the Board’s behalf. Roll call vote:  
Koeck: Yes. Lopez: Yes. Butland: Yes. Capodagli: Yes. Fontaine: Yes. O’Kane: Yes. Caron: Yes.  
Vote 7-0 in favor.

**MINOR SITE PLAN MODIFICATION/REVIEW**

Dario’s Ristorante, 655 Main St. - proposed restaurant & outside seating.

Present: Jimmy Pappas, property owner & Elmer Melendez, applicant.

Dario’s is proposing an outside seating area on the corner of Main St. & Grove St. comprised of six tables w/ 15 seats. The seating area would be nine feet wide, leaving another nine feet to the edge of the Main St. curb.

Board comments: Type of barriers? Jim/Elmer: Looking for some suggestions from the Board.  
Why not provide more outside seating to the right? Elmer: That would conflict w/ a separate entrance to the condos on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, plus his staff inside would have no visual access through a window to that area.

Mary Jo: Over the past year we’ve seen some creative way of businesses using outdoor space, maybe separate the seating area from the sidewalk w/ outdoor planters. Ms. Koeck: Maybe faux wrought iron? Dario’s will need to get a permit from DPW to occupy the sidewalk, which is within the public way.

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Ms. Koeck) to approve the plan. Vote 7-0 in favor.

Jim Pappas expressed how helpful the TDI program has been in supporting the project. Dario’s has received a \$15,000 grant for façade improvements.

**MINOR SPECIAL PERMIT MODIFICATIONS/EXTENSIONS**

Special Permit #2005-10, 18 Blossom St. -7 townhouse units

Present: Nick Pelletier, Pelletier Properties, Bill Hannigan, Hannigan Engineering.

Nick went over history of project. A Special Permit for ten units had been issued to the former property owner in 2005. Work started on the project within the initial 2-year period, foundations put it, but then work stopped. Applicant later lost the property. There’s been no activity on the site for over a decade.

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The previous architect for the project had not been paid for their work, prevented the new owners from using their 2005 plans, or a similar design. The flat roof s design was chosen for this reason.

They are proposing to decrease the number of units from ten to seven and to revise floor plans & elevations. Board reviewed previous & current plans.

Undecided at this point what to do with the remaining three existing foundations. They may come back to the Board for permission to build additional units, but the foundation nearest Crescent St. is in a bad location, too near the site driveway and will not be used. Perhaps they will bury them. Crescent Street Development, LLC has also acquired an adjacent 1,500 sq. ft. lot on Mt. Vernon St from Tom Donnelly (map 43-71-0), which will enable them to add three parking spaces. There will be one garage space & one surface parking space per unit. Timeline: Planning on occupancy in mid-summer.

As req'd by the 2005 Special Permit they will place a historic plaque noting the site of the former Crescent Hotel on the granite retaining wall on Crescent St. They will submit revised plans for approval by June 1, 2021 showing what is happening with the three extra foundations including parking and landscaping updates.

Q: Condos or rentals? Nick: Rentals, possibly conversion to condos later. Rent: est. \$1,600/mo. for a 2-BR unit.

Tom: Project is getting \$1.6 million in financing through the state's Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP), which provides Gateway Cities with a tool to develop market rate housing.

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Mr. Lopez) to consider the requested Special Permit modification as a Minor Modification. Roll call vote:

Lopez: Yes. Butland: Yes. Koeck: Yes. O'Kane: Yes. Capodagli: Yes. Fontaine: Yes. Caron: Yes. Vote 7-0 in favor.

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Mr. Capodagli) to Approve the Minor Modification to the Special Permit with the following conditions:

- Submit final site plan & landscaping plan for approval by June 1, 2021.
- Condition 2 of the 2005 Special Permit is modified to refer to the 2021 Hannigan Engineering plan.
- Place historic marker on Crescent Street wall, as per condition 6 of the 2005 Special Permit.
- Approve the modification of condition 4 of the Special Permit referring to a Condo Master deed.

Roll call vote: Lopez: Yes. Butland: Yes. Koeck: Yes. O'Kane: Yes. Capodagli: Yes. Fontaine: Yes. Caron: Yes. Vote 7-0 in favor.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

### Special Permit & Site Plan Review - Longley, Earth Removal - 139 Warner Ave. (cont'd from 11/10/20)

Applicant's engineer has requested that this item be continued again to the next month's meeting. Applicant has not given the engineer the go ahead to make revisions to the plan that the Board had requested.

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Ms. Koeck) to continue the hearing to the March 9 meeting. Vote 7-0 in favor.

### Special Permit & Site Plan Review Severino, 50-56 Oliver St., 26-unit multifamily development

Hearing opened. Present: Magalie Jean-Michael, applicant, Marcos Severino, Flow Design architects. Marcos presented proposal to demolish the existing vacant 2½ story, 13 unit building at 50-56 Oliver & construct a five story, 26-unit multifamily. Footprint of the structure will take up most of the site. Height of new bldg. approx. 54 feet, approximately the height of the Police Station across the street. Unit breakdown: Studio/1-BR: 6 units. 2-BR: 15 units. 3-BR: 5 units. The unit mix may be subject to change.

Parking spaces: 11, that's the most they can fit on the site. It was noted that a municipal lot at Elm & Oliver is close by, just gravel surface, not paved yet. Marcos agreed there's the potential of leasing spaces for tenants at this lot. There's an approved site plan for about 24 spaces.

Ms. Caron suggested maybe applicant could help with contribution towards completion of this lot, and/or sidewalk improvements in the area.

It was noted that relief from parking requirements will be needed (Planning Board), and also relief from the multifamily density requirement (ZBA).

Board comments:

Mr. Capodagli: Supports project but is concerned with the height and how it fits into the surrounding uses or whether it will overshadow other buildings.

Magalie: She's trying to bring examples of a housing type in the greater Boston area to Fitchburg.

Q: Could height/size of project be scaled down? She has considered that, but the cost of the development is high.

Mary Jo Bohart, Economic Development Director: Project could fit into surrounding area depending on the materials and colors used.

Ms. O'Kane: Project is a positive step, the modern design will be a draw.

Mr. Lopez: Excited by proposal, sees lots of potential.

Ms. Caron: Is fine with the design, just concerned with height and parking.

Mary Jo commented that proposed façade has lots of glass, are there special types of shades planned?

Magalie: They can look into that. She also mentioned that they plan on having a gym room, pet grooming room, conference room & movie room in the building.

Public comments:

Atty. James Connors, 58 Oliver St. (an H.M. Francis bldg.): Concerned with density & height, but it would be a positive project for the area.

Gary Rano, owns abutting structure at 41 Fox St. Concerned with potential damage during construction to culvert which contains Punch Book, which runs underneath site. He was advised that DPW has good records of the location of Punch Brook & that it would be monitored during construction.

Q: Rental rates? Magalie: Market rate, with some affordable units.

Mr. Capodagli noted that plans showed a proposed trash room in basement. Consider a trash chute instead, for convenience of tenants on upper floors? They will consider that.

DPW comments reviewed by Board. Agreed: Traffic Impact Study not needed here.

Discussion on further materials needed. Applicants requested a two month continuance in order to prepare more detailed civil engineering plans and parking solutions.

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Mr. Capodagli) to continue the hearing to the April 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. Vote 7-0 in favor.

Scenic Road Act - partial removal of stone wall to widen driveway, 289 Mt. Elam Rd.

Hearing opened. Present: Gaston Garre, property owner.

Gaston is purchasing a recreational trailer, he also has a truck with plow attachment. Seeking to widen his existing approx. 14 foot wide driveway by ten feet in order to accommodate easier access & turning. Sketches by Gaston & Google street view reviewed by Board.

Mr. Fontaine: Has problem with such a wide driveway on a Scenic Road, usually the ones that the Board has approved have been 14-16 feet wide. View of driveway @ 239 Mt. Elam reviewed. Suggested that Gaston could widen driveway opening at stone wall, but then widen further deeper into his property.

Agreed: Driveway could be widened by 5 feet at the stone wall (starting 10 feet to the right of the granite bound) & taper the rounding to the edge of pavement. Re-locate stones to improve existing stone walls along frontage.

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Mr. Capodagli) to Approve the removal of a portion of the stone wall as discussed above.

Roll call vote:

Lopez: Yes. Butland: Yes. Koeck: Yes. O'Kane: Yes. Capodagli: Yes. Fontaine: Yes. Caron: Yes.  
Vote 7-0 in favor.

*Ms. O'Kane recused herself from the rest of the meeting.*

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### Year 47 (2021-22) Planning Board CDBG recommendations

Tom briefly explained the Dept.'s recommendations (see Appendix).

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Ms. Koeck) to adopt the Department's recommendations.

Roll call vote: Lopez: Yes. Butland: Koeck: Yes. Capodagli: Yes. Fontaine: Yes. Caron: Yes.  
Vote 7-0 in favor.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### Meeting Minutes

Review of 1/12/21 & 1/25/21 minutes deferred to March.

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Mr. Lopez) to adjourn. Vote in favor.

Meeting adjourned: 9:06 p.m.

Next meeting: February 11, 2021 (Zoning Update, Phase II, Bundle 3)

Next monthly meeting: March 9, 2021

Minutes approved: March 9, 2021