

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
PLANNING BOARD OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER**

November 18, 2020

Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 23, 2020 Order, as amended, imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting was conducted through remote participation. The meeting was livestreamed from the City of Worcester website and via the local cable access channel and is available for streaming online. Public participation was facilitated through a call-in number, 415-655-0001 (Access Code: 1601714991), which was publicized on the posted meeting agenda and during the video broadcast.

Planning Board Members Participating: Albert LaValley, Chair
Paul DePalo, Vice-Chair
Eleanor Gilmore, Clerk
Toni Molinari
Edward Moynihan

Planning Board Members Not Participating: None

Staff present: Stephen Rolle, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Michelle Smith, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Jody Kennedy Valade, Inspectional Services Division
Alexandra Kalkounis, Legal Department

Call to Order – Mr. LaValley called the meeting to order at 5:32pm.

Approval of Minutes-

Requests for Continuances, Extensions, Postponements, and Withdrawals

- 2. 115 NE Cutoff (PB-2020-011)**
 - a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan
Postpone to 12/09/2020, and extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to 12/31/20.
- 3. 11 & 22 (aka 24) Canterbury Street (PB-2020-058)**
 - a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan
Postpone to 12/09/2020, and extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to 12/31/20.
- 5. 1451 Grafton Street (PB-2020-066)**
 - a. Public Hearing – Special Permit for AUM
Postpone to 12/30/20, and extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to 01/21/20.
- 9a. 857 Main Street & 19 Ripley Street (AN-2020-054)**
Postpone to 12/09/20, and extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to 12/31/20

Mr. LaValley reads the postponements into the record.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore, seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board votes 5-0 to grant postponements.

New Business (OUT OF AGENDA ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE BOARD MEMBERS)

7. 11 (Lot A & Lot B) Sever Street (PB-2020-070)

b. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

a. Public Hearing – Special Permit to allow a Density Bonus for Affordable Housing in an RG-5 Zone

Item # 7 taken first, Mr. LaValley recuses himself.

Mr. Moynihan is recused.

Mr. DePalo clarifies that it the applicant has requested to postpone the public hearing for the special permit; Ms. Smith confirms.

Ms. Gilmore makes a motion to postpone the public hearing for the special permit to 12/30/20, and extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to 01/21/21; Mr. DePalo seconds; 3-0.

Ms. Smith gives a summary of the project; applicant is splitting the lot and proposing a 13,000 square foot multifamily high rise building; will share management with existing residential building.

Ms. Smith describes comments that staff had on project: number of accessible spaces, composition of amenities offered within building and exterior, and availability and management of parking during construction activities.

Joshua Lee Smith, on behalf of applicant Sever Street Development LLC, introduces Julia Scannell, project manager for The Community Builders.

Ms. Scannell gives a background on The Community Builders (TCB) and their mission and their history in Worcester; gives background on how TCB came to own the property and progress on the project; aiming to meet Worcester's need for affordable housing and work with local stakeholders in the community.

Ms. Scannell introduces rest of TCB team – Rishna Crowley, Director of Development, Tony Amenta and Michael Tyre, architects, and engineers from Langan.

Mr. Smith gives more details about the project and proposed building; describes surrounding residential neighborhood and nearby commercial and retail establishments; describes relationship between TCB and their tenants; explains that there has been low utilization of existing parking and new building will use some existing parking; proposed building will a 100% affordable development; explains that new building will be under different ownership than existing, but management will be shared in perpetuity; mutual easements will run between properties with respect to parking and utilities.

Mr. Smith introduces Frank Holmes, civil engineer with Langan Engineering.

Mr. Holmes gives overview of site plan and approach to parking; describes how parcel and parking will be divided into two lots; will keep one existing curb cut on Sever St, will remove existing curb cut on Merrick Street and propose a new one on Merrick Street; site has been designed to provide the "right" amount of parking, based on observed measurements of current parking utilization on site and across street at Sever Square; describes drainage and stormwater management on site, does not currently conform to DEP standards, but stormwater system is being upgraded with the new development, reducing runoff rate and

improving stormwater quality; will connect to existing utilities under Merrick Street; introduces colleague Michael Hunton.

Mr. Hunton gives overview of landscape architecture elements of the design; aims to create more pedestrian friendly environment both for residents and for passersby; one tree per 25' along Merrick Street being planted; trying to maintain existing trees along perimeter of site; shrub and screen planting with evergreen shrubs to screen from abutters and screen utilities and dumpster enclosure; describes lighting plan and Dark Sky compliant fixtures; describes site architecture—new entrance on Merrick Street, seating area, aiming to create “residential campus”; proposing interior and exterior bike storage; introduces Michael Tyre from Amenta Ema Architects.

Michael Tyre, project designer, goes through architecture; 49 unit affordable housing development, 57,000 square feet, 4 stories, wood frame construction building, mix of studio, one, two, and three-bedroom units; building will be LEED Silver certified; describes motivations behind architectural decision; describes building material; describes entrances to building on Merrick and facing parking lot; describes interior amenities and floor plans.

Zoning has no comment.

Public has no comment.

Board Discussion

Ms. Gilmore thanks the presenters and commends the thoughtfulness of the project; asks if someone front applicants' team can comment on the common areas.

Mr. Hunton explains that intent is for a passive open space environment with seating area.

Ms. Gilmore asks applicant to comment on sidewalk and whether a concrete sidewalk can be installed in lieu of an asphalt sidewalk.

Mr. Hunton explains that there is an existing asphalt sidewalk on Merrick Street, and that there are two street trees blocking pedestrian traffic; planning to remove these trees, and put a new sidewalk with concrete.

Ms. Gilmore asks applicant to confirm waivers they will be requesting.

Ms. Gilmore expresses appreciation for the effort put into calculating parking required.

Ms. Molinari expresses that she is pleased to see affordable housing built at a large scale in the City.

Mr. Smith asks that dumpster enclosure be allowed to be a white vinyl material.

Mr. Rolle says staff is okay with this.

Ms. Smith recommends that Board add the addition of concrete sidewalk along Merrick Street frontage as condition of approval 1.o.

Mr. Rolle adds that sidewalk is also subject to DPW approval.

Ms. Gilmore makes a motion to approve the Definitive Site Plan subject to staff-recommended conditions of approval, amending condition 1.k. and adding condition 1.o., and grant waivers; Mr. DePalo; 3-0.

4. 36 & 40 Jackson Street (PB-2020-061)

a. Public Hearing – Special Permit to allow an Adult Use Marijuana establishment, retailer use

Mr. LaValley and Mr. Moynihan return to the meeting.

Mr. Rolle notes that they have 20 minutes with a 5-member Board.

Ms. Smith gives an overview of the application – a special permit to operate a storefront marijuana retailer, seeking to operate on the second floor of an existing building; physical improvements are limited to lighting, accessible parking spaces, signage; applicant has requested modifying COA #8 and staff has no issue with it; notes that applicant is an Economic Empowerment Applicant; notes that applicant has received a variance from ZBA related to parking requirements.

Mark Borenstein on behalf of applicant, Corner Emporium LLC, gives further detail about the application; applicant is proposing to renovate portions of the second floor; install site improvement to parking lot; adding security lighting; adding landscaping including trees; installing catch basin in the parking lot; notes that applicant has satisfying special permit findings of fact; will improve economic vitality of the neighborhood; will provide economic empowerment services; traffic memo indicates no negative impacts; ZBA has determined that proposed parking layout is sufficient; existing building has adequate facilities for the proposed use; parking lot will be smoothed out; use is functionally compatible with the neighborhood with no nuisances created by lighting or odor; there will be no manufacturing or cultivation on site.

No public comment.

Mr. DePalo has no comment.

Mr. Moynihan ask if there will be any paving on construction to the parking lot—asks if they are laying the groundwork for electric vehicle charging stations.

Mr. Borenstein explains that applicant is proposing to repair portions, but has no plans for EV charging stations at this time; another opportunity for this groundwork may arise.

Ms. Gilmore expresses that she is glad to see Economic Empowerment Applicants come before the Board.

Mr. LaValley states he is strongly in favor of project and applauds hard work that went into it.

Ms. Molinari is absent.

All remaining Board members state that they intend to vote yes.

Ms. Gilmore makes a motion to close the public hearing; Mr. DePalo seconds; 4-0.

Ms. Gilmore makes a motion to approve the special permit, subject to staff recommended conditions of approval, amending condition #8 as articulated by Mr. Borenstein, and accept findings of fact; Mr. DePalo seconds; 4-0.

Old Business

1. Country Club Acres CCRC (aka 190 Mountain Street East & fka Paradise Point) (PB-2020-034)

a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan Amendment

Mr. LaValley notes that this item has been continued from October 7th meeting, and that they will only be entertaining comments on the changes to the plan in the time since.

Ms. Smith notes that they are seeking an amendment to a previously approved plans; changes will bring total number of units down to 99 units; they have switched from townhouses to duplexes, reducing number of units and driveways along Shami Circle; plan changes also include guest parking spaces and changes to grading; they made changes according to Fire recommendations as well; staff has asked applicant to reduce massing of a wall with terracing.

James Tatro, representing Mr. Ansari (applicant), further describes changes to site plan, including landscaping changes such as additional shrub plantings; as a result of changes, net impervious cover will go down.

Law Department has no comment.

Zoning has no comment.

Mr. LaValley reminds public that they will only be fielding comments relative to changes to Shami Circle, unit count, and guest parking changes.

Public Comment

Meryl Jacobson, resident of Country Club Acres, expresses concern that there will not be enough parking for guests, would like to see more.

Ms. Smith notes that four spaces are an addition to previous plan.

Mr. Tatro explains that there is no more room for additional parking.

Mr. LaValley notes that these four spaces were added a result of discussion of site plan at last meeting.

Ted Ruetenik, resident of Country Club Acres, makes a comment regarding parking during poor weather.

Board Discussion

Mr. Moynihan wishes to clarify that Shami Circle can accommodate emergency vehicles.

Ms. Smith confirms.

Ms. Gilmore expresses gratitude for staff work; states she is satisfied with amendments as proposed; states that she generally like to see less parking but that acknowledges desire for guest parking; asks applicant to confirm waivers being requested.

Mr. Tatro confirms.

Mr. DePalo has no comment.

Mr. LaValley acknowledges that applicant has considered resident comments and made suggested changes to the roadways.

Mr. Rolle reminds Board that issue of riprap on northern edge of site needs to be addresses; expresses that staff has seen poor outcomes with use of riprap slopes in the City; would like to see a small section of retaining wall used instead.

Mr. LaValley asked applicant to address this issue.

Mr. Tatro expresses that applicant would agree to using retaining wall per Mr. Rolle's suggestion instead.

Mr. LaValley says Board would defer to staff judgement on issue of retaining wall.

Ms. Gilmore asks for clarification as to which condition of approval is being discussed.

Mr. Rolle states that it is condition 1.i.

Ms. Gilmore asks whether language of the conditions of approval should change.

Mr. Rolle notes that there is one other steep slope that may need to be addressed.

Mr. Tatro confirms.

Mr. Rolle suggests revision to condition of approval to include retaining walls in area north of Shami Circle.

Mr. LaValley asks if applicant would be amendable to the change.

Mr. Tatro confirms.

Ms. Gilmore makes motion to approve the Definitive Site Plan, subject to staff-recommended conditions of approval, amending condition 1.i., and grant waivers; Mr. DePalo seconds; 4-0 (Molinari absent.)

New Business

6. 67 (aka 67A) Millbrook Street (PB-2020-069)

a. Public Meeting – Parking Plan

Ms. Smith gives an overview of the application; applicant proposing to demolish existing accessory building to create additional parking spaces; staff has met with applicant to discuss conditions of approval, including incorporating compact spaces and modifying landscape buffers; staff has asked applicant about pedestrian-friendliness of the parking lot, and they are proposing a pedestrian access route; applicant is willing to put electric vehicle charging stations closer to building rather than new parking area.

Vito Colonna, representing applicant, clarifies that applicant would be willing to do eight EV charging stations and would rather have them closer to the building.

Law Department has no comment.

Zoning has no comment.

Mr. LaValley states that DPW comment was that they require stormwater checklist.

Mr. Colonna confirms that applicant has seen that comment.

Ms. Smith confirms that they have received the checklist, does not know if DPW has had the opportunity to review it.

Public has no comment.

Board Discussion

Ms. Gilmore expresses concern about pedestrian safety and access given the size of the parking lot; concerned about safety in the rest of the lot (aside from pedestrian access way).

Mr. Colonna describes pedestrian access and safety in the rest of the lot; suggests that another crosswalk striping could be added.

Ms. Gilmore asks applicant to confirm waivers being requested.

Mr. Colonna confirms.

Mr. DePalo expresses support for additional pedestrian striping.

Mr. Moynihan acknowledges that parking lot is often full currently due to large tenants in surrounding buildings; asks whether tenants in 67 Millbrook will still be utilizing parking across the street, as people crossing Millbrook Street has been a safety hazard.

Mr. Colonna confirms that they will, but additional parking will relieve this somewhat.

Mr. Moynihan echoes concerns about pedestrian safety, asks applicant to do what they can to alert cars of people crossing Millbrook Street; in regards to EV charging stations, would like to see number of spaces increased to twelve as electric cars are being more popular.

Mr. LaValley expresses that he would be in support of increase to twelve, asks applicant if they are amenable.

Mr. Colonna says they would.

Mr. LaValley asks for clarity on where there is parking congestion.

Mr. Colonna describes where parking becomes full.

Mr. Colonna, in regards to Mr. Moynihan's concern, explains that there are currently flashing lights alerting vehicles to pedestrians crossing.

Ms. Gilmore and Mr. DePalo state that they support increased number of EV stations to twelve.

Ms. Gilmore asks for clarity on whether DPW comments should be added as a condition of approval.

Mr. LaValley states he would support adding it.

Ms. Gilmore makes a motion to approve the parking plan, subject to staff-recommended conditions of approval, amending 1.d. to increase number to twelve, and to grant waivers, and incorporate DPW comments; Mr. DePalo seconds; 4-0. (Molinari absent.)

8. 264 Stafford Street (PB-2020-071)

- a. Public Hearing – More than one Building on a Lot
- b. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Mr. LaValley recuses himself.

Mr. DePalo states that applicant has requested a Leave-to-Withdraw for the application for More Than One Building on a Lot (MTOBOAL).

Ms. Smith gives an overview of the project; applicant is Worcester East Side CDC; MTOBOAL is no longer necessary as project is exempt being an educational/institutional use (Dover determination); applicant is proposing to create transitional housing for homeless persons; steep grades on site trigger site plan approval; Ms. Smith reminds Board that they recently approved the removal of Kettlebrook Way from the official map to allow this development to go forward; applicant has clarified number of accessible units being proposed; staff would like to see concrete instead of asphalt walkways and make changes to plan for more pedestrian friendliness and connectivity; applicant has confirmed that some of proposed parking can be eliminated under Dover determination; staff has recommended lawn areas instead of mulched planting areas for tenant enjoyment; staff has asked applicant to make efforts to mitigate steepness of slopes on site.

Eric Dubrule, Bohler Engineering, on behalf of applicant; use on site will be non-profit educational, which is allowed under Zoning Ordinance; reiterates that slope is the trigger for site plan review; site is partially developed from a previous contemplated development; gives details of proposed campus; applicant has met with Fire to ensure emergency access; describes grading on site and proposed retaining walls; describes stormwater compliance efforts and management and erosion controls to be implemented; describes landscaping and planting schedule and reasons; confirms that applicant is withdrawing MTOBOAL application and requesting waivers.

Law Department has no comment.

Zoning has no comment.

Board Discussion

Mr. Moynihan asks applicant to describe residential units and square footage.

Mr. Dubrule describes floorplan of units and amenities.

Mr. Moynihan expresses his support for this kind of housing.

Ms. Gilmore commends this type of project and states that Worcester has a need given demand for housing; expresses enthusiasm for this housing model.

Mr. DePalo states that he shares positive feelings.

Public has no comment.

Ms. Gilmore makes a motion to approve the requested leave-to-withdraw without prejudice, approve Definitive Site Plan subject to staff-recommended conditions of approval, grant waivers, and incorporate DPW comments; Mr. Moynihan seconds; 3-0.

Other Business

9. Approval Not Required (ANR) Plan(s)

- b. 19 Hilda Street (Public) & 112 Osceola Avenue (Public) (AN-2020-055)
- c. 134 Ararat Street (Public) (AN-2020-065)
- d. 5 Chino Avenue & 21 Seattle Street (Public) (AN-2020-066)
- e. 64 Heywood Street & South Stowell Street (Public) (AN-2020-068)

Ms. Smith gives an overview of the ANRs requesting endorsement.

Ms. Gilmore makes a motion to endorse the ANRs; Mr. DePalo seconds; 4-0. (Molinari absent.)

10. Communication(s)

- a. Preservation Awards – Invitation to the 2nd Annual (Virtual) Award Ceremony (December 10, 2020); from the Worcester Historical Commission & Preservation Worcester

Mr. Rolle describes the awards ceremony.

11. Discussion Regarding Zoning Ordinance Provisions for:

- a. Procedure for the Planning Board to initiate a Zoning Change
- b. Discussion of possible Special Meeting Dates for long-range planning discussion

Mr. LaValley asks for an update on procedure.

Mr. Rolle states that he will have update in writing at the next meeting.

Mr. LaValley asks if Board should discuss Special Meeting dates.

Ms. Smith discusses scheduling challenge; asks which month would be best.

Mr. LaValley would like to calendar a date, Mr. Moynihan agrees and states that he does not want to burden staff; Ms. Gilmore states that she can help with scheduling.

Ms. Smith says she will send out Doodle poll.

Mr. Rolle states that he will confer with Mr. LaValley on agenda and topics.

Adjournment

Ms. Gilmore makes a motion to adjourn; Mr. DePalo seconds; 4-0.