

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

Wednesday September 8, 2021

Worcester City Hall - Levi Lincoln Chamber, with remote participation options available via Webex online at <https://cow.webex.com/meet/planningboardwebex> and call-in number 415-655-0001 (Access Code: 1601714991).

Planning Board Members Participating: Albert LaValley, Chair
Edward Moynihan, Vice Chair
Kevin Aguirre, Clerk

Planning Board Members Participating Remotely: Conor McCormack

Planning Board Members Absent: None

Staff present: Marisa Lau, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Steve Rolle, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

Staff Participating Remotely: Jody Kennedy Valade
Nick Lyford
Alexandra Kalkounis

Call to Order – Board Chair LaValley called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm

Requests for Continuances, Extensions, Postponements, and Withdrawals

- Item 1: 1103 Millbury Street (PB-2020-076) – Definitive Site Plan**
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting & Hearing to September 29, 2021
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to October 21, 2021
- Item 2: The former Kendig Street ROW (between Attleboro Street and Clay Street); part of 11 Attleboro Street; Attleboro Street (from Glade Street +/- 700ft to Coonan Street); Coonan Street (from Attleboro Street west 75ft and east 75ft); Glade Street (from Attleboro Street west 50ft); Kendig Street (from Attleboro Street west 50ft); and Clay Street (at the intersection with the former Kendig Street ROW) (PB-2021-012) 81-G Street Opening & G.R.O. Chapter 12 Section 12 Private Street Improvements, and Definitive Site Plan**
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to September 29, 2021
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to October 21, 2021
- Item 3: 5, 7 & 9 Richards Street (PB-2021-014) – Amendment to Definitive Site Plan**
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to October 20, 2021
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to November 11, 2021

Item 9: 135 & 139 Gold Star Boulevard (PB-2021-063) – Parking Plan
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to September 29, 2021
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to October 21, 2021

Item 10: Hemans Court (Hemans Street North +/- 400 feet) (ST-2021-001) – Street Removal
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to October 20, 2021
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to November 11, 2021

On a motion made Board Member Aguirre, seconded by Board Member McCormack, the Board voted 4-0 to grant the postponements.

New Business

Item 4: 573 Grafton Street (PB-2021-020)
Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Ray Lopolito presented in-person on behalf of the applicant, who was participating remotely. He gave an overview of the application and plan revisions since the item was last before the Board. Mr. Rolle described the series of retaining walls proposed to step down towards Grafton Street; he indicated the revisions complied with the recommendations in the staff memo and were a viable design, but suggested widening the wall opening to further improve sight distance. Mr. Lopolito stated the owner was amenable to that change.

There were no comments from City staff.

Public Comment

Dolores Anderson, 563 Grafton Street, stated concerns that the development would exacerbate dangerous conditions on Grafton Street.

Board Discussion

Board Member Moynihan asked the applicant to clarify how stormwater would be managed on site; Mr. Lopolito clarified. Mr. Lyford confirmed DPW did not have comments relative to stormwater; Mr. Rolle noted the staff had recommended that certification of the stormwater system prior to occupancy be required as a condition of approval. Mr. Moynihan asked if any improvements were proposed for Grafton Street in that area; stated he was worried about traffic and in general thought the City should comprehensively study how to improve safety conditions along corridors like this one. Mr. Rolle stated he was not aware of any projects for traffic calming or other improvements; he noted the citywide master plan would look at these issues.

Board Chair LaValley noted that the site has been before the Planning Board several times since he joined the board, indicating a high level of difficulty for development. He stated he could not support the proposal due to his concerns about safety. He referred to the staff memo and the fact that none of the abutting houses have driveways, as well as inadequate pedestrian infrastructure along Grafton Street.

Board Member Moynihan stated he was in agreement with the Chair.

Mr. Rolle suggested the applicant continue to the next meeting.

Mr. Lopolito requested the Board hear the next application to allow him to confer with the applicant. The Board agreed.

Item 5: 13 Pocasset Street & the Pocasset Street Right-of-Way (PB-2021-034)

Public Meeting – 81-G Street Opening & G.R.O. Chapter 12 Section 12 Private Street Improvements

Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Robert Murphy presented the applications in-person on behalf of the applicant. He gave an overview of the proposal for a duplex (two units total) on a vacant lot, with a 100 foot-extension of the street proposed. He requested the waiver for labeling trees greater than 9” in diameter as noted in the staff memo. Ms. Lau stated that staff recommendations included a condition for the roadway to be improved to binder course for a minimum of the 70 feet of required frontage prior to issuance of the building permit, and conditions for additional erosion controls. Mr. Murphy noted that the revised plan sent to DPRS earlier included the proposed locations of construction entrances as staff had recommended in the memo.

There were no comments from City staff or the public.

There were no comments from Board Members.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan; seconded by Mr. Aguirre, the Board voted 4-0 to approve the Definitive Site Plan, 81-G Street Opening & G.R.O. Chapter 12 Section 12 Private Street Improvements subject to staff-recommended conditions of approval and grant waivers.

Item 4 continued: 573 Grafton Street (PB-2021-020)

Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

After conferring with the applicant, Mr. Lopolito asked to continue the application to the next board meeting.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan; seconded by Mr. Aguirre, the Board voted 4-0 to continue the Definitive Site Plan application.

Item 6: 153 Green Street (aka 120 Washington Street) (PB-2021-052)

Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Attorney Todd Rodman presented in-person on behalf of the applicant. He introduced the rest of the project team, including: Rich Mazzocchi, Matt Mvra, Austin Turner, Kevin Dandrade and Dan Benoit.

Mr. Rodman described how postponement of the application allowed the team to address comments in the staff memo, and increase the number of units to 83 units in a multifamily building proposed as the first phase of the redevelopment.

Mr. Mazzocchi discussed the team’s development experience, the proposed affordable housing and the population it will serve.

Mr. Mvra and Mr. Turner, Bohler Engineering, explained how the building was sited in response to grading; described parking and landscaping proposed for Phase 1. They stated that staff comments on the vehicle drop off area, lighting levels at pedestrian crossings, and proposed locations of temporary/permanent curb cuts would be addressed or reconciled in the revised plans.

Mr. Benoit, project architect, described the building façade/materials, layout and amenities.

Mr. Dandrade, TEC Inc., discussed traffic and circulation.

Mr. Rolle reiterated staff concerns for lighting levels along Spruce Street and the accessible parking lot, and proposed revisions to locations for curbing and sidewalk alignment that would enhance the pedestrian environment. He described the first phase of the project, and the eastbound-only lane with buffered bike lane on Spruce Street. He noted that staff felt the one-way option was preferable although City Council may want to consider changes elsewhere to traffic circulation in the area as a result.

There were no comments from City staff.

Public Comment

David Sullivan, Worcester resident and Chamber of Commerce representative, supported the proposed project.

Allen Fletcher, abutter, stated he did not support this project as proposed due to the impact it would have on the business community in the Canal District and business owners' investments to date which have created a vibrant destination downtown. He reiterated comments provided earlier to the Board about location of the proposed retail, building design, and the need for a mix of affordable and market rate housing.

Dino Russo, abutter, stated his concerns about parking and his belief that the level of parking proposed will create a hardship for the neighborhood.

Mr. Mazzocchi responded. He described the total amount of ground floor retail included in the project; the building design features as respectful of the site's history and neighborhood context; and the parking analysis done for this type of urban project noting the appropriate level was proposed.

Board Discussion

Board Member Aguirre stated he thought the design had good qualities and supported more affordable housing, noting that parking always raises a concern for new development in the city.

Board Member Moynihan asked about the project's funding structure and whether it was dependent on having affordable housing incorporated into the redevelopment; Mr. Mazzocchi confirmed and gave details on potential state funding sources. Mr. Moynihan asked about housing in future phases; Mr. Mazzocchi stated the intention was for the next phase to have market rate and perhaps workforce housing. Mr. Moynihan noted he was disappointed only two EV charging spaces would be provided initially, and also asked the applicant to discuss other design alternatives for Spruce Street to help break up the façade. Mr. Mazzocchi replied the team would monitor demand for EV and provide future EV parking in the garage based on their assessment. He described larger design issues and economic constraints for creating mixed use development with an affordable housing component. He believed landscaping and building materials will address some of Board Member Moynihan's concerns about the design, but did not think direct entry off the street would be feasible in that location.

Board Member McCormack stated that concerns about activating Spruce Street could be addressed by the uses proposed in future phases of the project.

Board Chair LaValley asked about bike parking; the applicant confirmed front and rear parking will be provided for the building. In response to parking concerns, he stated that in the long term, industry standards for parking levels should guide what is proposed for the site. He asked the project team to consider the shade impact of the proposed buildings for the landscaping on the rest of the site.

Board Member Moynihan asked if staff comments in the memo had been addressed; Mr. Rolle and Attorney Rodman confirmed these had been satisfactorily addressed.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan; seconded by Mr. Aguirre, the Board voted 4-0 to approve the Definitive Site Plan subject to staff-recommended conditions of approval and grant waivers.

Item 7: 30-50 Lagrange Street & 47 Oread Street (PB-2021-061)

Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Public Hearing – Special Permit for CCOD to modify dimensional requirements for parking facilities

Board Chair LaValley recused himself; Board Member Moynihan took over chair duties.

Mr. Rolle describe why the Board would be unable to act in a timely fashion on the CCOD Special Permit application, and the applicant’s options. Attorney Don O’Neil, on behalf of the applicant, requested to postpone the special permit only.

On a motion by Mr. McCormack; seconded by Mr. Aguirre, the Board voted 3-0 (LaValley recused) to postpone the Special Permit application to the next board meeting.

Mr. O’Neil (attended in-person) described the project to renovate existing buildings into 63 affordable dwelling units with commercial space. He stated they were amenable to staff recommended conditions of approval for the site plan, and requested waivers for strict compliance with interior landscaping requirements and labelling of soil types. He addressed staff questions about bike parking and environmental sustainability regarding passive cooling treatments.

Tom Ryan, Ryan Associates, provided a project overview and described open space improvements, parking layout, and building reuse. He highlighted pedestrian connectivity throughout the site.

Austin Turner, Bohler Engineering, described stormwater management systems and confirmed all roof runoff will be directed to the treatment system. He added that Fire had signed off on the revised drawings showing building distance and truck turning analysis in the parking areas. He described potential modifications to the drive aisle width and conversion of some adjacent parking to compact spaces, in order to meet the dimensional requirements in the Ordinance.

Mr. Rolle went over staff recommended conditions. He asked about the location and number of EV ready spaces; Mr. Turner replied. He also asked if there was an accessible route to Building 4; Mr. Ryan confirmed there was.

Staff Comments

Nick Lyford, DPW, stated the proposed crosswalk in the Lagrange Street ROW will require an approval from the Traffic and Parking Committee and that street and sidewalk reconstruction in the same ROW will require street opening permits from DPW&P and must meet all departmental standards.

Public Comments

Steven Fischer, Executive Director of the Regional Environmental Council in Worcester, stated his organization, which abuts the property, supports the project as proposed.

Board Discussion

Board Member Aguirre asked if the proposed units were affordable housing; Taylor Bearden for the project team confirmed the units would be considered either affordable or workforce housing and deed restrictions would be recorded.

Board Member McCormack supported the project, highlighting its preservation value and provision of affordable housing. He added that he would like to see a reflective rooftop treatment or other sustainability measures.

Board Member Moynihan asked the applicant to confirm that Fire had approved this site layout; Mr. O'Neil confirmed. He asked for clarification on the stormwater system; Mr. Turner clarified the large infiltration unit would be located under the southern parking lot with 26 spaces. He asked the applicant to consider adding EV charging spaces to the EV ready infrastructure.

Mr. Rolle stated that staff would like condition 1a amended and a new condition added requiring the first 20' of the southwesterly driveway be resurfaced to help with erosion control; Attorney O'Neil agreed on behalf of applicant.

On a motion by Mr. Aguirre; seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 3-0 (LaValley recused) to approve the Definitive Site Plan with waivers and the following changes to conditions:

1a. Modify the parking aisle width to 24 ft for all portions of the aisle that are adjacent to 90 degree parking spaces and convert up to 25% of the spaces to compact parking, or obtain relief from the applicable parking dimensional requirements.

1o: Resurface the southwesterly driveway a minimum of 20' from the Lagrange Street right of way.

Item 8: 23 Pullman Street (PB-2021-062)

Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Board Chair LaValley returned. Patrick Healy presented remotely on behalf of the applicant, who was also available remotely. He described the project and revisions made based on staff comments in the memo. The applicant will be purchasing the property and moving their auto body operation to the site, with the existing use to continue in a portion of the building. Changes to site circulation and site improvements to accommodate the new use are proposed. A retaining wall, additional landscaping (in accordance with lease restrictions related to rooftop solar facilities), and stormwater systems to mitigate the new impervious area will be constructed.

Ms. Lau went over the staff-recommended conditions and asked the applicant for further details on proposed lighting. Mr. Healy stated revised photometric plans were forthcoming and they were generally in agreement with staff comments. He requested waivers.

There were no City staff comments or public comments.

There were no comments from Board Members.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan; seconded by Mr. Aguirre, the Board voted 4-0 to approve the Definitive Site Plan subject to staff-recommended conditions of approval and grant waivers.

Item 11: 18 Mountain Street East (ZA-2021-005)

Public Hearing – Zoning Map Amendment

David Tetteh, applicant, presented in-person to the Board. He petitioned City Council to extend the BL-1 zoning district across Mountain Street East to the south, in order to convert the single family residence on his property to a two-family dwelling.

Ms. Lau described permitted uses under BL-1 that are not allowed by right or special permit in the current zoning district, RS-7. She also noted that the ML-0.5 zoning district had previously been extended slightly southward to Mountain Street East and changed to BL-1 zoning, as described in the staff memo.

There were no City staff or public comments.

Board Discussion

Board Member Moynihan stated he was inclined to support the rezoning since commercial development is located across the street. He noted there should be an alternative to rezoning in order to allow for a two-family dwelling.

Board Chair LaValley agreed with Mr. Moynihan that rezoning to business zoning district gave him pause because of the by-right uses that would be allowed that might not make sense in a residential context. He noted that business uses surrounded the property to the east and north, and that the property was a corner lot. He added that the Board’s role is to make a recommendation to Council.

Board Members Aguirre and McCormack agreed with other members’ comments.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan; seconded by Mr. Aguirre, the Board voted 4-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan; seconded by Mr. Aguirre, the Board voted 4-0 to favorably recommend the zoning map amendment.

Other Business

Item 12: Approval Not Required (ANRs)

a. ~~0 (aka 78) Kenwood Avenue (Private) (AN-2021-054)~~

b. 35 (aka 37-39) Standish Street (Public) (AN-2021-055)

c. ~~603 Grafton Street (Public) (AN-2021-056)~~

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan; seconded by Mr. Aguirre, the Board voted 4-0 to endorse the ANR.

Item 13: Subdivisions

Brookline Street Extension - Request for extension of performance agreement work completion date

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan; seconded by Mr. Aguirre; the Board voted 4-0 to grant the extension of the performance agreement work completion date for the Brookline Street Subdivision from August 23, 2021 to May 5, 2022.

Item 14: Communications

Ms. Lau stated the Board received notice of a community outreach meeting regarding a proposed Adult Use Marijuana Cultivator at 13 Hope Avenue held on August 25, 2021. ; from Projekt Flower, Inc.; received 7/27/2021.

Items 15 & 16:

There was no discussion of board policies and procedures and no approval of minutes.

Adjournment

The Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:46 p.m.