



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

Wednesday, December 22, 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
Conor McCormack
- Planning Board Members Participating Remotely:** Kevin Aguirre, Clerk (participating remotely)
- 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, Inspectional Services (participating remotely)
Nick Lyford, DPW&P (participating remotely)
Michelle Smith, DPRS (participating remotely)
Alexandra Kalkounis, Law (participating remotely)

Call to Order

Board Chair LaValley called the meeting to order at approximately 5:30 PM.

Requests for Continuances, Extensions, Postponements, and Withdrawals

- Item 2: 47R Fourth Street (PB-2020-072) – Definitive Site Plan & Special Permit to allow a Cluster Group of Single-Family Dwellings**
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to January 12, 2022
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to February 3, 2022
- Item 3: 1103 Millbury Street (PB-2020-076) –Definitive Site Plan – Definitive Site Plan**
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to February 2, 2022
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to February 24, 2022
- Item 4: 4 Henschman Terrace (PB-2021-060) – Definitive Site Plan**
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to January 12, 2022
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to February 3, 2022

- Item 5: 4 & 14 Velandar Street & the Velandar Street Right-of-Way (PB-2021-064) – 81G Street Opening, Definitive Site Plan & Definitive Plan – More than One Building on a Lot**
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to February 2, 2022
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to February 24, 2022
- Item 7: 700 Plantation Street (PB-2021-076) – Amendment to Special Permits**
Request to Postpone the Public Hearing to January 12, 2022
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to February 3, 2022
- Item 8: 75 Quinsigamond Avenue (PB-2021-079) – Definitive Site Plan**
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to January 12, 2022
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to February 3, 2022
- Item 11: Garrison Avenue Right-of-Way (Clark Street North +/- 275 FT) (ST-2021-008)**
Request to Leave to Withdraw without Prejudice
- Item 13e: 16 Salisbury Street, 17 Lincoln Square & abutting land (AN-2021-081) – ANR Plan**
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to January 12, 2022
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to February 3, 2022

On a motion made Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 4-0 by roll call to grant the postponements and withdrawal.

New Business

Item 1: 573 Grafton Street (PB-2021-020) – Definitive Site Plan

a. Public Meeting

Ray Lopolito presented in-person on behalf of the applicant. He stated Shaun Kelly, traffic engineer, was online. Mr. Kelly, participating remotely, presented on the traffic study findings and methodology. He described minimal additional traffic due to the project on the surrounding street network. He noted sight distance is more than adequate for this site in both directions, exceeding the minimum requirements by a significant amount.

Mr. Rolle summarized the previous concerns expressed by the Board on this project. He confirmed the applicant had met the condition to study the traffic impact of the site and agreed with the conclusions reached by Mr. Kelly and the firm.

No comments. Lyford noted the curb cut permit could be issued if the project moves forward.

Mr. LaValley called for public comments.

Public Comment

Ms. Sheilagh Crotty of Worcester, participating remotely, stated that she had lived in the area for 50 years. She listened to the presentation, but stated she had a hard time believing it would not be dangerous to develop the

land. She described past accidents on Grafton Street. She also asked for two trees to be planted on site to replace the large tree removed on the property.

Board Discussion

Board Member Moynihan asked Mr. Kelly if the number of trips was determined by direction of trip. A little more 60% westbound trips in the evenings; almost even split in the morning. He asked, for the speed limit in this area, whether Mr. Kelly could describe braking distance. He noted that given the distance available, the acceptable speed limit could be almost 45 mph.

Mr. Moynihan, Mr. Kelly, and Mr. Rolle discussed sight distance. It was concluded that a driver exiting the driveway and turning left would be able to see beyond the intersection with Standish St.

Mr. Aguirre stated he had visited the site recently and agreed the street was dangerous. Exiting the driveway from that site would be dangerous in his opinion.

Mr. LaValley reiterated his previous statements on this project. He understands why neighbors would oppose the development. However, he felt there were no grounds for denial of the application and asked staff to confirm.

Public Comment

Dolores Anderson, abutter, asked to comment. She stated the drivers exceed the speed limit on Grafton St and that should be taken into account. She noted all deliveries require trucks to park on Standish St because they can't park in front of properties on Grafton St.

Board Discussion

Mr. LaValley thanked her for her comments and stated while he did not support the project as designed, he felt based on the criteria for site plan review that he would vote to approve.

Mr. McCormack noted he would support the plan and agreed with the Chair.

Mr. Moynihan described the expanded driveway opening suggested in the staff memo to improve safety further for drivers and pedestrians. Mr. Lopolito indicated the applicant would be amenable to that design. Mr. Rolle clarified on the staff recommended condition of approval. Mr. Moynihan asked that there be no plantings that block sight lines of westbound traffic; Mr. Lopolito agreed. Mr. Moynihan stated his wish that the City would improve the overall safety of Grafton Street.

Mr. Aguirre stated he would support the plan if reluctantly.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted by roll call 4-0 to approve the Definitive Site Plan, with staff-recommended conditions of approval, adding the condition "1.h. Retaining walls shall be in accordance with the staff comment under criteria 1 in the staff memo." and approving requested waivers.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A: Definitive Site Plan Application and responses; received March 29, 2021, April 13, 2021, April 20, 2021; prepared by Ray Lopolito.

- Exhibit B: Revised Site Plans; received August 5, 2021; prepared by Asa Engineer.
- Exhibit C: Elevations & Floor Plans, received February 22, 2021; prepared by Acropolis Design Consultants
- Exhibit D: Public Comments from Sheilagh Crotty; dated April 8, 2021.
- Exhibit E: Public Comments from Dolores Anderson; received September 17, 2021.
- Exhibit F: DPRS Memo; dated May 3, 2021; revised September 3, 2021.
- Exhibit G: Traffic Impact and Safety Assessment; dated December 14, 2021; prepared by Vanasse & Associates, Inc..
- Exhibit F: DPW Memo; dated December 17, 2021.

Item 6: 15 Waban Avenue the Waban Avenue & Porter Street Right-of-Ways (PB-2021-073)

- a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan
- b. Public Meeting – 81-G Street Opening (Porter Street) & Chapter 12 Section 12 (Waban Avenue)
- c. Public Hearing – Definitive Frontage Subdivision Plan

Harry Avery, owner, presented in person and stated Zac Couture, engineer, would present the project.

Zac Couture, HS&T Group, participating remotely reviewed the project and noted that the City recommended they shrink the pavement down to 22 feet wide and shift Porter Street further south. He noted that the property at the corner of Waban Ave and Porter Street to the north (n/f Flood) is currently using the right of way as part of their yard, so the recommendations as he understood would minimize impact to the owner and the developer was amenable.

Mr. Rolle described the definitive frontage subdivision and the site plan, that roof runoff is to be infiltrated in the back yards; discussed recommended conditions of approval. He described utilities and drainage improvements that would result with regard to the 81G approval for opening Porter Street and the improvements on Waban Ave and reviewed staff recommended conditions of approval.

No comments from Law or Zoning.

Mr. Lyford responded that while the street width of 22' is adequate for a private street, it would not be acceptable for a public street, which requires a minimum of 26', but noted that since conversion to public was not intended that DPW accepted this narrower width due to the neighborhood context; requested profile views of sewer and utility connections.

Mr. LaValley called for public comments.

Public Comment

Michael Hayes, of 20 Waban Ave, participating remotely stated that he recently bought his home. He described a joint concern about privacy after talking to the neighbors, noting that the road is a dead end, and that the street opening would negatively affect this neighborhood and his property and its value. He indicated that he and his neighbors use the street and expressed concern about removal of existing vegetation. He expressed concerns about the roadway improvements solely being for the utilities. He asked who would be responsible for street maintenance after built and noted the developer has no interest in maintaining the street. He expressed concern about the need to opening Porter Street if the utilities could be connected on Waban Avenue.

Mr. Hayes also indicated his neighbors may not have understood the difference between the Zoning Board and Planning Board. He indicated that the Zoning Board meeting was attended by additional abutters and that residents shared his concerns and hoped there would be opportunity for them to express their concerns.

Mr. LaValley acknowledged several written comments were received noting many aspects of comments expressed by Mr. Hayes were shared by other residents.

Board Discussion

Mr. McCormack asked the applicant to comment on the decision to connect to utilities through Porter St instead of Waban Ave. Mr. Couture stated that the distance of improvements required for Waban would be about 700 feet with the city's paving policy, which would make the project infeasible. He indicated that the Porter Street connection required only +/-260 feet of improvements.

Mr. Lyford clarified that DPW presented different development scenarios but has no preferences. However, Mr. Lyford agreed that the Porter Street option made the most financial sense and reviewed DPW policies related to roadway improvements added information about required utility enhancements and costs of paving. He explained that while the sewer on Waban Avenue is closest, the paving to Pine Hill Road would make this project be cost prohibitive. He indicated that the current proposal involves a longer sewer connection but much shorter length of paving.

Mr. Moynihan asked where the nearest fire hydrants would be located and if the water service was adequate. Mr. Couture clarified the existing and proposed location. Mr. Moynihan asked about fire truck accessibility. Mr. Rolle clarified that emergency access would be provided, code requiring 20 feet clear distance, and that the proposal is wider than the existing roadway and would improve emergency access to existing homes.

Mr. Moynihan requested that the concerns by the resident at 1 Porter Street be addressed related to a buffer between the road and the home. Chair LaValley stated that the change based on the staff recommendations would appear to allow the Flood property maintain their existing walkway by shifting the road to plan south, while keeping the right-of-way within the right-of-way. Mr. Rolle referred to the image in the staff memo depicting this suggestion and noted the goal was ensuring safe access to the existing home's entrance.

Mr. Moynihan requested the applicant confirmed the waivers noted in the staff memo were requested. Mr. Avery affirmed they requested the waivers.

Mr. Aguirre asked the applicant to comment on the rationale of providing a 22' width vs. a 26' wide road, which would allow the street to become public in response to resident concerns related to upkeep. Mr. Rolle indicated the 22' width was staff's suggestion to minimize impacts to abutters given the existing structure at #1 Porter Street is located near to the right-of-way line, with existing improvements likely within the right-of-way.

Mr. Rolle asked if the applicant could confirm that access to #1 Porter could be retained with a 26' wide way. Mr. Couture stated they had not located the existing improvements but that it appeared that the property's playground and possibly other improvements would be located within the proposed street if the road were to be constructed 26' wide as proposed. He indicated that the applicant would be amenable to providing either a 22' way or a 26' way. He stated that his client prefers the 22' width for cost considerations and it seemed that that benefits the neighbors reducing the likelihood that drivers will use Porter to cut through to Waban Ave.

Mr. Rolle let the Board know that all existing driveways and walkways were not depicted on the plan, and staff had recommended that be addressed as a condition of approval but offered that the Board could request the features within the right-of-way including the walkway to 1 Porter Street be depicted on the plan.

Mr. LaValley expressed concerns about long-term maintenance of the private street given his experience with private streets. He asked if there is a waiver process for the DPW's policy for paving requirements to allow for a utility connection via Waban Avenue may be a better alternative to opening Porter Street. Mr. Lyford indicated that he would discuss that possibility with DPW management at the Board's request but the policy was longstanding. Mr. LaValley requested the existing walkway be located by the applicant while DPW investigated the feasibility of the paving policy for Waban Avenue be waived.

Mr. LaValley asked the applicant if he would be amenable to a continuance; Mr. Avery stated that he was.

Mr. Couture requested that the Board would vote on the Definitive Frontage Subdivision approval. Mr. Rolle stated that he did not see an advantage to doing that and would prefer to take them together. Attorney Kalkounis (Law Department) concurred with Mr. Rolle.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan; seconded by Mr. McCormack; the Board voted 4-0 by roll call to keep the public hearing open and continue all three approvals to the Board's next meeting on January 12th, 2022.

List of Exhibits

- Exhibit A: Definitive Site Plan Application; filed December 7, 2021; prepared by H.S.T. Group, Inc.
- Exhibit B: Definitive Site Plan; revised 8/17/2021, 2021; prepared by H.S.&T. Group Inc.
- Exhibit C: 81G Application; filed December 7, 2021; prepared by Harry Avery.
- Exhibit D: 81G-Ch.12 Sec.12 Plan; dated 6/24/2021; prepared by H.S.T. Group.
- Exhibit E: Frontage Subdivision Application; filed December 7, 2021; prepared by Harry Avery
- Exhibit F: Frontage Subdivision Plan; dated 12/6/2021; prepared by H.S.&T. Group
- Exhibit G: Public Comments from John Swiatlowki; received 11/8/2021.
- Exhibit H: Public Comments from Donna Flood; received 11/8/2021; & 12/22/2021.
- Exhibit I: DPW Comments; dated 12/17/2021.
- Exhibit J: DPRS Memo; dated 12/22/2021.

Item 9: 49 Chilmark Street (PB-2021-083)

Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Harry Avery and Peter Lavoie of Summit Engineering in person. Mr. Lavoie described the proposed three-unit townhouse style homes project. Michelle Smith went over the staff comments in the memo; reviewed the triggers for the site plan approval (steep slopes) and retaining walls and drainage; asked for more information about erosion controls; stated that renderings submitted to Planning Board would need to be reconciled with renderings approved by Zoning Board; stated that ANR plan will need to be submitted for endorsement, likely after foundation has been poured.

No comments from Law, Zoning, DPW, or the public.

Board Discussion

Mr. Moynihan asked for description of the 10 foot high retaining walls. Mr. Lavoie described concrete, rebar, and engineered walls with a vinyl coated fence on top. Mr. Avery clarified. Mr. Rolle confirmed the wall plans would be filed with Inspectional Service and noted the original proposal had been a 4-unit as originally proposed.

Mr. Avery stated neighbors were supportive at the Zoning Board hearing.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 4-0 by roll call to approve the Definitive Site Plan with staff-recommended conditions of approval.

List of Exhibits:

- Exhibit A: Definitive Site Plan Application; filed 12/09/2021; prepared by Harry Avery.
- Exhibit B: Definitive Site Plan; dated 11/11/2021; prepared by Summit Engineering & Survey, Inc.
- Exhibit C: Architectural Plans; dated 12/03/2021; no preparer noted.
- Exhibit D: Drainage Analysis; dated 11/18/2021; prepared by Summit Engineering & Survey, Inc.
- Exhibit F: DPW Memo; dated 12/17/2021.
- Exhibit G: DPRS Memo; dated 12/21/2021.

Item 10: 16 Salisbury Street & parts of 17 Lincoln Square, the former Prescott Street Right-of-Way, Lincoln Street & the Ernest S. Johnson Underpass (PB-2021-084)

Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Attorney John Spillane presented in person on behalf of the applicant, Winn Development. He went over the adaptive reuse project to convert the former Worcester Boys Club and construct a new residential building with a total of 80 units. He described easements and air rights needed for development over the Johnson Underpass.

This project will be the first affordable senior housing project in downtown Worcester, with 15% market rate housing. Through this project, the developer will be charged with maintaining the War Memorial. He introduced project team members from Cutler Design, VHB, and Winn.

Michael O'Brien, Winn Companies, described partnership with City departments as well as Preservation Worcester in developing this project; described previous projects in Worcester; described project and timeline.

Rich Whitehouse described the proposed building; a parking podium with four stories above. Described parking access through Voke Lofts and optional exit only by turning right onto Lincoln Street; increased pedestrian access through reconstructed and new walkways. Described landscaping opportunities on site; stormwater improvements; grading; and erosion controls. He noted utilities will be removed in general and redone; the public sewer in the area will be redone to DPW&P standards; described utility connections.

John Raposo, project architect, described the building layout, lower floor connections with the Boys Club, building materials (reiterating the existing building will be restored to NPS standards). He stated that they are considering a white roof treatment. Mr. Whitehouse addressed comments by staff on concrete piers and proposed barrier to protect these structural elements.

Mr. Rolle described overall importance of the proposed development on this site linking downtown and introducing some vibrancy and greater intensity of use to this area. He stated staff comments were minor, related to signage and traffic controls. He reiterated that the project team has worked with the Massachusetts Historic Commission and historic preservation groups to arrive at this design distinguishing the existing historic building form the proposed apartments.

No comments from City staff.

Mr. LaValley called for public comments.

Public Comment

Linda Michelle, Chair of the Board of Worcester Mission Society, abutter with a parking lot next to Boys Club, described her opposition to this design because of the impact on her organization's parking lot.

Joe Zwirblia, resident, had various comments on the project including possibility for solar for a project using historic tax credits. He complimented the project on its design.

Attorney Spillane reported he had spoken to director of Worcester Area Mission Society earlier today and conveyed there will be no parking for the development on their property. He stated the project goal was to provide 1:1 spaces per unit through leasing. He noted a construction easement had been requested from the abutting parcel and negotiations are ongoing.

Mr. Raposo, project architect, responded that the new building roof would be designed for solar but that solar on the Boys Club rooftop wasn't possible as a historic building.

Board Discussion

Mr. McCormack stated the project would benefit the downtown area and the historic renovation was welcome. He asked about unit size and vehicular access through Voke Lofts, also owned by Winn at this time. Mr. Spillane stated that a change in ownership would not impact the proposed access.

Board Member Moynihan asked about future electric vehicle (EV) parking and LEED certification. Mr. O'Brien confirmed the demand for EV parking would be monitored and additional spaces could be added in the future; reiterated their green commitment as a company. Mr. Raposo stated the project was aiming for certification as a passive house, which is more stringent than LEED certification. Mr. Moynihan asked about the east façade, and how the proposed design would help break up the massing in this challenging location. Mr. O'Brien replied that the goal is to work with the City to remove that section of sidewalk being referred to as it narrows considerably and does not provide sufficient access due to the tunnel; he indicated a public art project to draw the eye and attention was being considered. He stated that the goal is to work on beautification, ongoing maintenance, in the context of providing a safe environment for the public.

Mr. Moynihan thanked the team for that explanation and stated he viewed the project as positive – 55+ affordable housing units in the downtown.

Mr. Aguirre supported fellow board member comments, particularly with regard to affordable housing.

Mr. LaValley asked for clarification on expected timeline to receive tax credits. Mr. O'Brien clarified, noting the amount to date and number of years spent applying. They will submit for state affordable housing credits this summer, and would receive them in fall of 2022 if successful. Construction could start at the end of 2022 or start of 2023. Mr. LaValley wished them success and described the project as a positive attribute as a gateway to the City.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 4-0 by roll call to approve the Definitive Site Plan with staff-recommended conditions of approval.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A: Definitive Site Plan Application; filed 11/30/2021; prepared by Michael V. O'Brien.

Exhibit B: Definitive Site Plan; dated 11/18/2021; prepared by VHB.

Exhibit C: Architectural Plans; dated 11/12/2021; prepared by Cutler Design.

- Exhibit D: Stormwater Memo; dated 11/19/2021; prepared by VHB.
- Exhibit E: Traffic Memo; dated 11/19/2021; prepared by VHB.
- Exhibit F: DPW Memo; dated 12/17/2021.
- Exhibit G: WFD Comments; dated 12/21/2021.
- Exhibit H: DPRS Memo; dated 12/21/2021.

Item 12: 110 Webster Street (ZA-2021-007)

Public Hearing – Zoning Map Amendment

Nick Lewis of Maverick Development, petitioner, presented and provided materials for the Board; described the intended development and the proposed rezoning, which would bring the property into the Adaptive Re-Use Overlay District (AROD).

Ms. Lau went over the recent zoning changes in 2020 which extended the AROD.

Law, Zoning, and DPW had no comment.

Mr. LaValley called for public comments. There were no public comments.

Mr. McCormack stated that he thought it was an appropriate use of the AROD and asked how many units he would be building; Mr. Lewis clarified.

Mr. Moynihan asked Mr. Rolle to clarify on what they would be voting on; Mr. Rolle clarified that it was just a recommendation for the re-zoning.

Mr. Aguirre had no comment.

Mr. LaValley agreed that it was a good use of the AROD.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 4-0 by roll call to recommend the proposed zoning map amendment to City Council.

List of Exhibits:

- Exhibit A: Petition – Nick Lewis; referred to the Planning Board on November 10, 2021.
- Exhibit B: Map of Proposed Adaptive Re-Use Overlay District in vicinity of Webster Street, Webster Place, and the western terminus of Fremont Street.
- Exhibit C: DPRS Memo; dated 12/21/2021.

Other Business

Item 13: Approval Not Required (ANR) Plans

- a. 2 & 4 Ararat Street (Public) (AN-2021-076)
- b. 21 Iowa Street (Public) (AN-2021-77)
- c. 663 Burncoat Street (Public) (AN-2021-079)
- d. 48 Northboro Street (Public) (AN-2021-080)

e. 16 Salisbury Street, 17 Lincoln Square & abutting land (Public) (AN-2021-081)

Ms. Lau described the ANR plans before the Board for endorsement, including Items 13a, 13b, and 13c. She stated that 13d and 13e were not properly before the Board.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 4-0 by roll call to endorse the ANR plans A, B, and C which were properly before the Board.

Item 14: Subdivisions

a. Burncoat Heights

i. Request for Final Release of Surety

Ms. Smith described the request.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 4-0 by roll call to confirm that all lots have been released from the covenant and to release the remaining security for the entire length of Burncoat Heights from the performance agreement.

Item 15: Discussion of Board Policies and Procedures

No discussion.

Item 16: Approval of Minutes

There were no draft minutes for the Board to approve.

Mr. LaValley acknowledged that it would be Ms. Lau's last meeting and thanked her for her service.

Adjournment

The Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:05 P.M.