



BELLINGHAM PLANNING BOARD

10 MECHANIC STREET BELLINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS 02019

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, May 11, 2023, at 7:00 pm

Bellingham Municipal Center

Arcand Meeting Room and Via Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT:

William F. O'Connell, Jr.	Chairman
Brian T. Salisbury	Vice Chairman
Dennis J. Trebino	Member
Philip M. Devine	Member
Nick Mobilia	Member
Robert Lussier	Alternate Member

ADDITIONAL OFFICIALS PRESENT:

James Kupfer, Town Planner – via Zoom
Amy Sutherland, Assistant Town Planner
Tina M. Griffin, Recording Secretary – via Zoom

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

REORGANIZATION

Due to the recent elections, a Reorganization of the Board needed to be completed.

Mr. Trebino made a motion to nominate William O'Connell as Chairman of the Board. Mr. O'Connell accepted the nomination. Mr. Devine seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. O'Connell made a motion to nominate Brian Salisbury as Vice Chairman of the Board. Mr. Salisbury accepted the nomination. Mr. Mobilia seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR NORTH STREET & BLACKSTONE STREET

The applicant, Ravens Homes, Inc, and owner, Raven Homes, propose to construct (12) 3-unit townhouses with associated improvements at North/Blackstone Street in Bellingham, approximately 20.8+/- acres of land, shown on Assessor's Map 59-Lot 60A, zoned Agriculture. This application falls under the Town of Bellingham's Zoning By-Laws §240-101, Special Residential Use – Townhouse Dwellings, §240-16, Development Plan Approval, § 240-54 and Stormwater Management, and §240-60.

Brian Falk, Attorney at Mirick O'Connell was present, on behalf of the applicant.

The Chairman noted there is no association between himself and the law firm representing the applicant.

Updates were needed for the Board on two items spoken about at the last meeting. One is for a request for continuance, in order to push out the decision deadline for the Hearing until August 10, 2023.

The second request is that the Board would like the applicant's representatives to hold a community meeting with the neighbors to discuss the project, outside of the Planning Board Hearings. This would allow more in-depth discussion between the applicant and residents that have concerns with the project. The Library has been contacted and a meeting date is being worked out with them. Once a date is confirmed the Board will be notified and the public will be made aware in any way possible. Revised plans are being worked on and are hoping to be unveiled to the neighbors at the meeting and then following that meeting we would come back to the Board to show the plan revisions.

Ms. Sutherland noted that letters would need to be certified mailed to abutters within 300', at least a couple weeks in advance. Public that are not on the abutters list would be welcomed to the meeting, but the applicant is only required to notify the abutters. Residents in attendance tonight said they would notify non-abutters about the meeting as well.

Mr. Salisbury made a motion to continue the Public Hearing until June 22, 2023. Mr. Mobilia seconded and the motion passes unanimously.

Mr. Salisbury made a motion for the decision deadline to be continued to August 10, 2023. Mr. Trebino seconded and the motion passes unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR 455 HARTFORD AVENUE:

The applicant and owner, Moshe Attias, Darn Properties, LLC, seeks a §240-16, Development Plan Approval and §240-54, Stormwater Management from Section propose to construct a 15,200 square foot, 9 bay, auto repair shop with associated improvements at 455 Hartford Avenue in Bellingham, approximately 4.4+/- acres of land, shown on Assessor's Map 04-72, zoned Business 1 and Suburban. The plans were prepared by Allen Engineering and Associates, Inc, 1 Charlesview Road, Suite 2, Hopedale, MA 01747.

Mark Allen from Allen Engineering and Dominic Rinaldi from BSC Group were present on behalf of the applicant to give an update on the status of where this project stands since the last meeting.

Mr. Allen shared his screen with members to show the outstanding comments from the Planning Board and Conservation Commission that were addressed in Comment Response Letter #2 that was sent to the Planning Board. These comments were remaining from BSC Group. There were a handful of items that were taken care of and have been removed from the list. Some of the items that were addressed were the slope on the northerly side of the property, snow storage, sidewalk and ADA compliance, size of the building relative to the number of parking spaces, and stormwater management.

Mr. Rinaldi has been working for both the Planning Board and Conservation Commission, which is why the Comment Response letter was sent out on April 3rd. The comment for access around the building was too late to be added to the letter in time for tonight's meeting, but there is a plan to be provided that should be able to address this concern by the next meeting.

Mr. Rinaldi went into detail about the previous concerns that have been addressed by the Engineer. Snow storage locations have been updated to provide adequate storage area. Removal of the sidewalk that was not ADA compliant has rectified that concern. Another previous item was that if the proposed project can be sufficiently with water. The discussion of whether the proposed project can be

sufficiently serviced will need to be discussed with the DPW. The Planning Board has not yet heard anything from the DPW about this item and the applicant's representative will need to get confirmation from the water department.

Moving forward, one of the biggest issues was that Bellingham requires detention infiltration basins to be constructed below grade and not built up on fill. In this case, the project is built up on fill and the applicant has requested a waiver from that requirement. The design shows that the basin is designed properly, but it is above existing grade, which is reason for the waiver request. The rest of the items were related to stormwater design and have all been resolved.

Board Members discussed the waiver request for the detention infiltration. This needs to be in specification with the Massachusetts Stormwater Management Standards for the type of material being used. All the material that is treating stormwater must be of granular material and can't be organic or filled from another site. It must be raised due to the groundwater elevation and the outside berm must be built up above grade. This item will need to be discussed at the next meeting, after getting confirmation from the Conservation Commission that this is acceptable on their behalf before granting a waiver from the Planning Board.

Also discussed was that the previous Engineer for the project had a lot of comments from the neighbors that Mr. Allen said he would review previous meeting videos and see what they were looking for, in order to have the project mitigated. There hasn't been any future discussion on this, and the Board would like it to be added to a future meeting to see what items Mr. Allen thought were valid. A lot of concern from the neighbors had pertained to fences, trees, views, and items of such. Mr. Allen replied that they met with the immediate abutters to the north and then chatted with them directly when doing the additional topographic survey. This can be put into a short presentation at a future meeting to let Board Members know the results of the abutter concerns and how those issues are being addressed.

The waiver request will not be voted on tonight, as it has been a little while since this proposed project has been before the Board and they would like to look at more things in writing, as well as input from the public and direct abutters to this proposed project. The Hearing has been continued numerous times and it has been 5 or 6 months since the neighbors were to a meeting. There were comments from the public at the first meeting and the Board hasn't seen any responses back and forth from the public. The applicant will need to notify the abutters in writing that a meeting will be held on June 22nd.

Mr. Salisbury made a motion to continue this Hearing until the June 22nd meeting. Seconded by Mr. Devine and the motion passes unanimously.

Mr. Salisbury made a motion to have the applicant notify all abutters, no less than 2 weeks before the June 22nd meeting, to make them aware of the meeting continuation. Seconded by Mr. Trebino and the motion passes unanimously.

CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR PROSPECT HILL ESTATES:

The applicant and owner, Wall Street Development Corp. propose a 19-lot residential subdivision on approximately 72.16+/- acres of land at the corner of Lake Street and Prospect Street (Franklin) in Bellingham, shown on Assessor's Map 65-20, 65-22, and 69-87 zoned Agriculture. The plans were prepared by GLM Engineering Consultants, 19 Exchange Street, Holliston, MA 01746, entitled Definitive Subdivision Plan Prospect Hill Estates Bellingham, Massachusetts, dated December 17, 2021.

The Chairman stated that the Public Hearing for Prospect Hill Estates is still open. There wasn't anyone present online or in-person with additional questions for this Hearing.

Mr. Salisbury made a motion to close the Public Hearing. Mr. Trebino seconded and the motion passes unanimously.

There is a decision on Prospect Hill Estates that has been provided to the applicant. The comments were circulated through the Board and then back through the Town Planner. The changes were provided to the applicant, and everyone has had a chance to review them. Board Members didn't have any further questions.

Mr. Salisbury made a motion to approve the Certificate of Approval of a definitive subdivision plan and stormwater management plan for Prospect Hill Estates, dated May 11, 2023. Mr. Devine seconded and the motion passes unanimously.

CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR WS DEVELOPMENT:

The applicant, W/S Bellingham IV Associates LLC, and owner, Bellingham N Main Street II LLC, Hartford Av. Associates LTD, W/S Bellingham IV Associates LLC, & Varney Bros Sand & Gravel propose to construct a 700,000 sf industrial building for warehouse and distribution use with associated improvements on approximately 175.6 +/- acres of land in Bellingham, shown on Assessor's Map 24 Lot 12 and 10, Map 30 Lot 73-1, and Map 31 Lot 3, zoned Industrial. This application falls under the Zoning By- Laws §240-16, Development Plan Approval, §240-54, Stormwater Management, §240-138, Water Resource District Special Permit, §240-60, Flexible Parking Options Special Permit and §240-119, Major Business Complex Special Permit. The plans were prepared by Bohler Engineering.

Mr. Devine made a motion to open the Continued Public Hearing for WS Development. Mr. Trebino seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Cusack from Bohler Engineering was present and gave a summary of the project details since the last meeting. Comments that have been heard most recently are the traffic circulation associated with the Home Depot Plaza and the potential cut-through traffic, and with concerns of parking associated with the development.

The Board had previously expressed concerns about people driving up North Main Street and cutting through the plaza to cause additional traffic issues. Mr. Cusack told Board Members about some options they have been researching to make sure the traffic wouldn't be cutting in front of the retail spaces there. A plan was shared with everyone present to review current access points that could possibly be closed,

in order to avoid the benefits of trying to cut through the plaza. Board Members commented that they were expecting more information about the traffic concerns and for preventing tractor trailer trucks from entering on the North Main Street side and then not being able to complete a turn that goes around the back of the building, causing additional traffic issues. The plaza has traffic that flows in all different directions, and the fleet of trucks that go in are not under control of the facility. This creates a bigger issue, and it must be addressed in the plan, especially with the number of pedestrians going in and out of Home Depot. The current plan is showing nothing to prevent a truck from going up North Main Street, around the backside of Home Depot, and then not being able to make the turn to exit once they enter. Members spoke about additional traffic concerns and possible variations of parking lot access/exiting.

Traffic Engineer, Ron Muller replied that when they heard the Boards traffic concerns at the last meeting, they were under the impression that passenger car traffic and employee vehicle traffic to the warehouse would be considered the issues. Tractor trailer trucks were not thought of as a concern from that evening and the crew has been working on the plan to eliminate passenger cars from using the plaza as a cut-through.

The Board agreed that was the main concern at the last meeting, but that both passenger and tractor trailer concerns will need to be addressed. Mr. Muller and Mr. Cusack continue the conversation of adding signage and limiting passenger cars from entering the tractor trailer entrance. Board members don't agree that signage will solve the problems, especially with people that don't visit the site frequently.

Mr. Rinaldi from BSC Group was present and said that he is studying the area and knows of the Boards concerns with the multiple areas of traffic that will be issues in the parking lot. The Board would like the passenger traffic and tractor trailer traffic to be kept as separate as possible. There are concerns about a tractor trailer trying to either come in off of North Main Street or go out onto North Main Street. There could be other options at the intersection, such as a bump-out or a gap in the road that can only fit a passenger car and not a tractor trailer truck. These might be ideas to look at more closely, as well as the signage that very clearly states warehouse traffic in one direction and passenger cars in the other.

Mr. Kupfer let the Board know that signage on the lot wouldn't be necessary to review with the State, but the signage on Hartford Avenue can be part of the State's process and would be a little longer to process.

Board Members also brought forward the previously mentioned warehouse parking concerns, and the question about reducing the amount of parking. Mr. Cusack said that reducing the amount of parking isn't the parking itself, but more of the impacts associated with parking, such as stormwater run-off, impervious areas, buffers to wetland and resource areas, etc. The Town has a high parking ratio but then the ordinance for this type of a use is more than what's needed at two per thousand. The applicant acknowledges that, but also needs to come up with a scenario that makes sense for this use and for the operational integrity of tenants that may come in. What is being proposed was approximately a 40% reduction from the requirements where we started. Then comments started coming forward about reducing the number of parking spaces even further. We need it to be marketable and feel that it can serve tenants. We then looked into this issue a bit further and developed some modifications to the original plan that reduced approximately 7,000 sf. of impervious area from what was previously proposed, while maintaining the parking ratio very close to what was proposed before. In the plans

being shared, the parking that was proposed on the side has been eliminated, so that it is not double loaded. There was also a further reduction in that area, as they now show as compact parking stalls. By losing some of the parking stalls that can't afford to be lost, there was another section of the parking lot that makes it a little more efficient and gets parking closer to the building. This keeps the integrity of the parking that is felt to be needed for this market to the tenants, reduces some of the impervious area, and provides larger setbacks to buffer zones.

This proposed project will most likely be flex industrial area, possibly some warehousing distribution components, but is likely to be a mix of things. The market is seeing different adaptations for these types of buildings. With some sort of light industrial use there would be more employee vehicles and less traffic generated than the assumed trips of just being a warehouse. However, we have to make sure that everyone agrees with the traffic concerns in case it does end up being a warehouse. The applicant will look at that further and will come back before the Board with more parking and traffic circulation solutions.

Mr. Rinaldi said that overall, the proposed changes are being looked at in a positive manner. The plan does pull the two satellite lots away from the wetland and brings more parking closer to the building. There are proposed walkways, but the parking is a distance for people walking to and from the building. The does change the stormwater management design a little. It should be a minor change of numbers, but we will need to see that in order to make sure that it all still works out.

The Chairman asked the applicant's representatives if they would have a plan ready for the June 22nd meeting, with specifics to the traffic circulation and not for the parking plan.

Mr. Salisbury made a motion to continue this Public Hearing until June 22, 2023. Mr. Trebino seconded, and the motion passes unanimously.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Minutes:

Mr. Lussier made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 13, 2023, meeting. Mr. Trebino seconded, and the motion passes unanimously.

Next Meeting:

The next Planning Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, May 25, 2023, at 7:00 pm. This meeting will take place both in-person and via Zoom.

Mr. Salisbury made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 pm. Mr. Mobilia seconded, and the motion passes unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tina M. Griffin

Recording Secretary
Approved – 05-25-2023