



# BELLINGHAM PLANNING BOARD

10 MECHANIC STREET BELLINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS 02019

## MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, June 22, 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 Griffin, Recording Secretary – via Zoom

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

### **Continued Public Hearing: North Street & Blackstone Street**

The applicant's representatives for the proposed Townhouse project on North Street and Blackstone Street were present to give the Board an update since the last meeting. The plans were also shared with Board Members present this evening. A community meeting with the neighbors was held on June 14<sup>th</sup>, to show the revised plans to those in attendance. A number of concerns were raised by the neighbors and the new plan does address some of these. In terms of density, the scale was reduced to just under half, due to the number of units on the site. The development area is more compact and will have less environmental impact to the overall impervious area, and stormwater. Almost two-thirds of the site is going to be a conservation restriction area.

Traffic from the site and existing driving conditions in that area were discussed. Access onto North Street has been removed due to concerns from the neighbors as well as the Police Department that didn't think North Street was a good access point. You will only be able to access on and off from Blackstone Street. A traffic consultant will be providing an updated traffic study due to the reduced scope.

There were concerns from some residents that are required to keep their mailboxes on the opposite side of the street. The applicant's representatives said they will reach out to the post office on behalf of the residents to see if they might be able to help with that situation. It is not certain if the post office will allow, but the applicant's representatives will contact them on behalf of those residents.

Water run-off was discussed, as currently the site doesn't have any stormwater measures. We have designed the site's drainage system to handle water that comes onto the site, as well as water that will eventually run-off the site. Concerns of the septic design and leach fields were discussed. The Board of Health will review the plan and add any input in approval of the septic system.

Water supply is still being discussed regarding the plans to use town water versus wells. There have been a number of opinions on this item to see if there will be water pressure issues with neighbors of this project. We will be working with the DPW about the water concerns and will have more information after speaking with them.

The Chairman turned the meeting over to the public and asked if anyone would like to speak regarding additional items that they might have questions about. Residents received confirmation that the townhouses would be part of a Homeowner's Association. Other concerns about size of the buildings, footage they will be away from the roadway, additional traffic concerns, and the number of units were brought forward for the Board to take under advisement.

Deputy Chief Milot was present to discuss the fire access, as the department would prefer to see this as a horseshoe instead of a cul-de-sac in the middle. That would allow entrance on both sides and would help reduce the traffic flow. In the event of a fire and if hydrant lines need to be stretched across the street, we have to block off any exiting from there. Having separate entrance and exit points in the complex would be a better plan for the department for water and hydrant usage.

Board Members are in agreement with the horseshoe design and eliminating the two buildings that are up front. There are still concerns about water and visitor parking. There still needs to be a compromise of where the entrance and exit could be situated so that it doesn't impact residents across the street. The buildings will need to have sprinkler systems, which means that water flow testing will need to be done to ensure they have sufficient water for those systems.

**Mr. Salisbury made a motion to continue this Hearing until Thursday, August 10, 2023, at 7:00 pm, based on comments heard tonight. Mr. Trebino seconded, and the motion passes unanimously.**

**Continued Public Hearing: 455 Hartford Avenue**

Mark Allen from Allen Engineering was present on behalf of the applicant to update the Board on items remaining from the last meeting. Regarding fire access, a plan was sent to the Deputy Chief in May, but it wasn't the exact template the department uses. The new template was forwarded to us with the information for the 254" ladder truck base. We modified our auto turn software and supplied it to the Fire Department, which requires adding a gate for emergency use only, at both entrances. The Deputy Chief agreed with the circulation information provided.

Mr. Allen said they also contacted the DPW Director regarding water service that was discussed at the last meeting. We sent them information and highlighted the project proposal and received an email back that there is a 10" cast iron pipe on the street and that the connection would be sufficient to supply this use.

Previously there were concerns from the Conservation Commission regarding snow storage and stormwater impacts. After a lengthy discussion with the Commission, we believe we were able to resolve them and are now here to tidy up the last few items with the Planning Board.

## BELLINGHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES FOR JUNE 22, 2023 - CONTINUED

The waiver of stormwater basins had revolved around the one Regulation that says they have to be below grade. In order for us to finalize our design plans, the Board would need to take action on the waiver.

Ms. Sutherland read the letter that received from Mr. Allen on July 21, 2023, as follows: The letter stated that the project has requested a waiver from the local bylaw, specifically to the below grade construction. This waiver is the same one that the Planning Board gave themselves as part of the Town Hall / Common Road project. The new road that starts at Walgreens and connects at Mill Street has 2 large stormwater basins that are designed and approved by the Planning Board and Conservation Commission with this exact waiver. In addition, the design phases in Red Mill subdivision were granted this waiver. Hopefully, I will not have to bring this up at the Hearing tomorrow night. In my opinion, this below grade bylaw should be eliminated, as it is almost impossible to adhere to. It would require that the groundwater underneath the basins would need to be 10' deep. There are not any locations in Bellingham, nor New England that have that dry of conditions. Let me know if you would like to follow up on this topic or any others.

The Chairman told Mr. Allen that marketing this property as having approved plans needs to stop. There are no approved plans for this location.

Alternate Member, Rob Lussier was not present at this time, but did provide information to the Board on the following items he would like clarification on from the applicant. Ms. Sutherland read concerns about the surface of the fire lane and if it will be paved. Trash trucks will also need to use the fire truck driveway in order to safely exit the site. Mr. Allen responded that it is going to be a paved drive aisle. In addition, the fire access road will be locked and only accessible for emergency vehicles. The trash truck would pull straight in, empty the containers, back up and then pull out

Are doors located to the rear of the building and if so, will the doors be opening directly into a paved drive aisle which is not ideal from a public safety standpoint. Mr. Allen replied that there wouldn't be any doors on the rear of the property, so there couldn't be any access to that paved road.

The additional impervious area will need to be treated and accounted for in the revised stormwater report. Mr. Allen responded that a small amount of impervious area will be captured in the stormwater system.

Board Members stated they weren't comfortable with granting a waiver, as they believe too many things are still outstanding and that enough information has been provided to the Board to make a decision this evening.

The Town Planner stated the Board doesn't even have a plan that reflects what is being proposed, in response to Mr. Allen's email with reference to other basins that have been constructed and filled. Mr. Kupfer said that residential stormwater is a different discussion in terms of stormwater management. Basins in a subdivision have an operation maintenance plan that is reviewed and conducted potentially with the Town if it's a public infrastructure as some that referenced by Mr. Allen. This basin being in fill material where the groundwater is so high, is a concern of the Board regarding the potential use there and the contaminants that may get in through any hazardous materials or waste, as the applicant hasn't identified a specific tenant or use at that location. Granting this waiver without a complete

understanding of a plan and project is well within the Rights of the Board to not grant that waiver at this time. There have been waivers in the past for residential purposes.

The Board agreed to hold off the decision to consider the waiver request until additional information and the plan is provided to the Board regarding this request.

**Mr. Salisbury made a motion to extend the 455 Hartford Avenue extension deadline to September 14, 2023. The motion was seconded by Mr. Trebino and a unanimous voice vote was made.**

**Mr. Devine made a motion to continue this Hearing until Thursday, August 10, 2023. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mobilia and a unanimous voice vote was made.**

**Continued Public Hearing: WS Development**

The Town Planner told Board Members that since the last meeting, he has sat with the applicant and talked about further improvements to the entry way. At that meeting the Board was focused on how many uses may operate within the front of the plaza and accessing the warehouse location. There were some initial designs considered and an improved exhibit will be provided tonight to alleviate some concerns.

The applicant's representatives were present and shared their screen with members to show some improvements and refinements that have been made since the last meeting. The access drive that's now being proposed has a substantial difference in design. There is now a wider entrance into the center and the raised median has been extended down to the first internal intersection. The exiting side will also have the wide shoulder necessary to allow tractor trailer trucks to be entirely in their lane.

The Board was also previously concerned with the merging or weaving that may happen when the two double left turn lanes are constructed. To help with the situation an overhead sign is being proposed that directs traffic to which lane they need to be in and additional signage directing towards the shopping center or warehouse traffic. There have also been some internal improvements made with an increase in the radius to allow single unit trucks to make those turns without encroaching on exiting traffic.

Board Members had additional concerns about traffic and discussed more signage possibilities and other suggestions to help alleviate some of the issue with people getting in the wrong lanes. When this proposal was first discussed, the traffic concern have always been an issue. Board Members don't agree with having tractor trailer trucks go through a very busy parking lot. There was also concern of tractor trailer stacking at the intersection and how many it would take stacked up before it prevents people from leaving the shopping center.

The applicant's representatives replied that the difference with the proposed access areas is that they will be much wider and will allow the tractor trailer trucks to stay in their own lane instead of taking up both lanes, as they do right now. The vehicles will be able to stay beside the tractor trailer trucks in each of their own lanes instead of staying behind the tractor trailers and causing customer traffic backing up. In addition, they will be able to have additional green light time at the exit with new technology lighting and cameras that would be used.

## **BELLINGHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES FOR JUNE 22, 2023 - CONTINUED**

Traffic condition discussions continued in detail, between Board Members, Deputy Fire Chief, and the applicant's representatives. The plan being shared with members showed more design, traffic flow studies, and the internal intersection analysis. There was also discussion regarding the installation of crosswalk sensors or some type of device that would help assist people that might be trying to walk from the parking area in the Home Depot lot and walking to Uno's. Board Members were told that there's a device called a Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacon. This would allow pedestrians to push the walk button at the crosswalk and lights would flash rapidly to protect the pedestrians and have them safely walk to and from the restaurant. Many suggestions and scenarios for traffic flow and safety were provided to the applicant's representatives tonight. All of these suggestions will be taken into consideration to provide the Board with updates at the next meeting.

The Chairman said the Board looks at this project with their peer review as a high yield warehouse with maximum volume. The proposal being for one large warehouse is a concern for the Board and they are trying to limit as much traffic in the parking lot as possible. The Deputy Fire Chief expressed additional concerns regarding the ability to be able to access the property quickly and safely, with no restrictions for the Fire Department vehicles.

Board Members gave a recap of tonight's comments to the applicant's representatives so they would have a clear understanding of what needs further refinements that were discussed. This recap includes overhead signage and arrows for tractor trailer lanes, warehouse traffic, parking lot signage and traffic, flashing beacons for crosswalk(s), delivery areas, the entrance/exit access, and other items as mentioned above.

**Mr. Salisbury made a motion to extend the deadline decision until September 14, 2023.**

**Mr. Trebino seconded and the Board voted unanimously.**

**Mr. Salisbury made a motion to continue this Hearing until the Planning Board meeting scheduled for Thursday, July 13, 2023. Mr. Devine seconded and the Board voted unanimously.**

### **MEETING MINUTES:**

**Mr. Salisbury made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 11, 2023 and May 25, 2023 Planning Board meetings. Mr. Trebino seconded and the Board voted unanimously.**

### **NEXT MEETING:**

The next Planning Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, July 13, 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 10:02 pm. Mr. Mobilia seconded, and the motion passes unanimously.**

**Meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully Submitted,

*Tina M. Griffin*

Recording Secretary