



# BELLINGHAM PLANNING BOARD

10 MECHANIC STREET BELLINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS 02019

## MEETING MINUTES

**Thursday, November 16, 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:**

Amy Sutherland, Assistant Town Planner  
Tina Griffin, Recording Secretary – via Zoom

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

### **CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC HEARING**

#### **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.

At the last meeting the applicant was asked to procure an independent peer reviewer, which they have since done. The applicant is back here this evening to report the findings from the peer review and give a synopsis of where they are with project status to date.

Mr. Turner let the Board know that he's had conversations and very productive meetings with the Conservation Commission since their last Planning Board meeting. In addition, he will be sharing information tonight about some items, such as the driveway area that has been discussed with both peer reviewers, and what would be seen in that area if you were traveling on Route 495.

With the Conservation Commission they have been discussing refining of the mitigation package and what it will look like in terms of wetlands that would be created in order to compensate for some of the

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alterations that would be part of the project. They will be meeting with the Conservation Commission again in December and will be working out some additional technical details with them.

The applicant's representatives shared updates to the driveway area that they have been working with for lane assignments, signage improvements, and making sure the shopping center patrons don't get blocked in if they pass the first internal intersection. There was also discussion about the Uno's parking lot and traffic entrance/exiting that were also being shown in these images.

Robert Michaud from MDM Transportation Consultants was present at tonight's meeting and gave members an update, letting them know that many of the objectives from that initial review that was done in October have been addressed. The revised plan would be easier to implement in certain ways because it could possibly have less environmental impact. It has been reviewed and MDM is comfortable with the level of flexibility that it provides to accommodate Uno's patrons as well as not causing constraints to the shopping center. Monitoring of the intersection would be a must, but it's not expected for subsequent monitoring results to show a problem. The monitoring is done for projects like this, as MDM does a lot of work with logistics facilities and industrial sites. With not knowing who the tenant will be for this project, it will be incumbent on the proponent to look back and determine whether or not the projections that served as basis for the approval are in line with the project reality. MDM issued a letter today that recapped each of the points and objectives that were recently laid out. The only item that's needed to be added to that letter will be for the intersection monitoring. It is recommended that the post-occupancy data includes video of the intersection for a weeklong period. This would give a visual record of how things are operating, instead of just a vehicle count.

Board members discussed additional details and scenarios of the vehicle traffic monitoring and the possibility of making additional modifications to the Uno's driveway. There are concerns from Board members that with not knowing the type of business going there would have a major impact on traffic. Additional concerns regarding the additional traffic that's already in that parking lot on weekends and cars mixing in with tractor trailer trucks were further discussed between the Board and applicant's representatives.

Mr. Muller also let members know that he is scheduling a meeting with DOT within the next week or two and will discuss the possibility of having a sign placed at the Route 495 ramp, as well as the new overhead sign to the mast arms that are being proposed. The Chairman asked Mr. Muller to ask DOT if a sign can be placed near the end of the 495 Southbound ramp to advise drivers to keep left for the Crossroads Center entrance.

Mr. Turner then shared some pictures and ideas of what they would be looking to do with perspective views of the project for drivers on Route 495 Northbound and Southbound that a passersby would see. Currently when passing that area, it is basically all trees. A picture was shown with a slight vision of how the building would be placed but would most likely not be seen while driving on 495. Some selective planting will also be done along the boundary line to infill where the canopy might be lower, just to provide some additional buffering. However, the expectation is that the facility will not be visible. A short video was shown to the Board to show before, during, and after the proposed project would be completed and the view from Route 495, once completed.

Then the view from the Southbound exit and entrance ramps were shown to the Board, showing the existing view and how it would be proposed to look after project completion. The proposed building is expected to be 45' at the tallest point and was also shown in the video to show the view from these Southbound ramps.

It is also expected that the tractor trailer trucks will not be seen because the loading dock doors on the building aren't viewable in the video and the trucks are shorter than the loading dock doors. At previous meetings the Board was concerned over the trucks being seen, which is why the applicant's representatives took that into consideration and reviewed the initial plan to accommodate that concern. There are some low spots with brief topography dips that were discussed and there will be some strategical plantings in that area, in order to supplement the underneath canopy of the existing vegetation.

Board members had additional concerns of what the site would look like in the fall and heading into the winter months for visibility of the building. Mr. Turner said that additional photographs and video will be prepared for the Board shortly, so that a current view of the topography can be reviewed at this time of the year as well. This discussion continued further as Board members all gave input on wanting the project to be as limited visibility as possible, from all angles. Mr. Turner said this will be taken into further consideration after they see the views with the foliage at the current time of year, and additional topography they may have to consider before presenting the next set of photos to the Board. Mr. Turner also said that at the next meeting he will have a two-dimensional visual perspective of the architectural appearance of the building to share with the Board, but those will just be the building and not the vegetation areas. They will also have the updated perspective views of what the theoretical winter topography conditions would be like for visibility from the surrounding roadways.

The Chairman stated that the satellite parking had recently been discussed with the Conservation Commission and asked if there were any updates from that. Mr. Turner shared pictures of the satellite parking plan and let the Board know that they are fully entitling the satellite parking through the Conservation Commission, and it will be part of the Order of Conditions. As part of the conversation with the Board and the Conservation Commission, they have substantially consolidated that parking by introducing more compact spaces and reducing that footprint. The relief of reduced parking spaces will also need to be brought before and approved by the Town, but they have been working on this design to provide to the Town, as the proposed project continues forward.

Mr. Turner asked if it would be appropriate, from the Board's perspective, to start thinking about some of the Conditions of the presumptive approval, and to possibly establish some framework for that decision. The Chairman replied that they could start looking at some of those Conditions, but there will still need to be additional pictures and discussion regarding the topography and building visibility during different times of the year.

Board members let Mr. Turner know that the Town Planner, Jim Kupfer is looking for terms of Conditions from them, in which Mr. Turner said he will be able to provide. In addition, a final plan will start to be prepared for the Board after tonight's meeting which was needed to further define areas of concern by the Board.

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The Board also stated that for the next meeting they would like to see actual elevations of the building, discuss pedestrian safety, and see the actual parking lots.

**Mr. Salisbury made a motion to continue this Hearing until the January 11, 2024, Planning Board Meeting. Motion was seconded by Mr. Devine and passes unanimously.**

**GENERAL BUSINESS:**

**Next Meeting:**

The next Planning Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, January 11, 2024, 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 9:19 pm. Mr. Devine seconded, and the motion passes unanimously.**

**Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully Submitted,

*Tina M. Griffin*

Recording Secretary