



BELLINGHAM PLANNING BOARD

5 COMMON STREET
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October 23, 2003 Meeting Minutes

♦ Present at the meeting:

Richard V. Dill (RVD), Chair
Edward W. Guzowski, (EWG), Vice Chair
Brian J. Sutherland (BJS), Secretary
Roland R. Laprade (RRL)
Arthur P. MacNeil (APM)
Glenn C. Wocjik (GCW), Alternate

Other officials: Stacey J. Wetstein, (SJW) Town Planner
Beth E. Partington (BEP), Coordinator
Amy Cook, (AC), Commission on Disabilities

♦ Old Business:

RRL: Motion to sign the Sunken Meadow Definitive Subdivision Decision.

APM: Second. Vote: 3-2, approved. (RVD, RRL, APM, aye; EWG, BJS, nay)

RVD opened the meeting at 7pm.

BJS: Motion to accept the 10/10/03 Meeting Minutes.

APM: Second. Vote: 5-0, approved.

RVD: discussed the charter review committee. He is starting a new venture and doesn't have the time to devote to it fully. He asked if someone else on the Board would like to volunteer to represent the Board. RRL is on the committee as appointed by the Town Moderator.

BJS asked about the state of Home Depot that it was a mess with everything out on the walk. He said 10-12 spaces were being taken by discount items such as paint. It becomes a way of life as opposed to the exception. We had been assured by the new manager, that this was no longer going to happen, and it is continually happening.

RVD suggested writing a letter to S. LeClaire stating things have become a mess again and could they possibly be fined.

BJS stated they get a permit every year for the rug sale, however they had a dozen spaces taken for discount items. Trailers are parked in the back on the right hand side.

They've moved the sheds. They told us they weren't going to be taking extra parking spaces and they're in the habit of it.

RVD discussed a Tuesday morning informational meeting for a proposal for Dunkin Donuts Distribution Center.

BJS stated for clarification, that the meeting was called by Town employees; it wasn't a public hearing.

RVD stated full buildout will be 380,000sf, first phase 230K sf, We discussed when they will be brining in tractor-trailers. They have manifests for their truck drivers. We asked about other vendors bringing materials in. They have a big long driveway, which will be a queuing area all around the building. It will be similar to the Franklin facility. They are predicting this facility will be for a 20 year time period of growth. They have no storage of gasoline. They have schedules by which the trucks leave. Deputy Guerin had fire related questions; the rest will be when they come in before the Planning Board.

BJS asked about the residential area at Box Pond.

RVD stated they are going to keep the 200' buffer. The angle of the building will be such that it won't be facing the residents. They are basically taking up the same footprint as the power plant. This will be their corporate headquarters as well as their distribution center. They're projecting over 200 stores opening in the next year.

SJW stated Denis Fraine indicated they would be submitting for the December 13, 2003 meeting.

RVD stated they weren't asking us to rubber stamp it, but wanted to give us a heads-up before they came in and make sure they were going in the right direction.

EWG stated this is going to bring a lot more traffic down Depot Street and he hopes the applicant will be prepared to mitigate the roads for the traffic they are bringing to the Town of Bellingham.

RVD stated they work three shifts. They close down Saturday nights at 6pm and reopen at 7am on Sunday. He stated that Dunkin Donuts hires local residents, many from Bellingham, Milford and Franklin that will benefit from the new jobs created by the distribution center.

RVD also discussed the Pine Acres subdivision. The DPW discussed extending the sewer. The MRD is perfect for that. DD suggested the cluster development to save money on the road and be able to put it into the development of the area

◆ **High Ridge Estates Construction Update, Tim Jones:**

The sewer is operational and the generator as well. Center Street is completely done with the exception of final paving. The water line, sewer line, castings are all done, with

the exception of the base coat of pavement for final preparations for next year. On Park Street, a culvert for the town is being repaired; they've put in two head walls and some A.D.S. pipe. They're replacing drainage on Park St. because it's old and with putting in a new road, now is a good time to replace it. The services for the water should be starting any day. They're just waiting for a few things to transpire from the town.

RRL asked about Center Street.

TJ stated it was paved. Don wouldn't let him put a finish coat on it because it hasn't gone through a winter.

RRL asked if they could put a consistently smooth base coat.

TJ stated they are going back and fix the patches for the winter. He stated Don was more concerned with Park and Railroad being rough paved for the winter. He also has to smooth the whole of Lake St. for they winter.

RRL asked why they couldn't do that on Center St.

TJ: He has a lot of paving to do and won't be able to get it all done before the winter.

RRL stated he'll have to talk to DD on that one.

TJ as far as inside the subdivision we have another section ready to be paved, which will bring us well into the third phase and a base coat will be over the whole project. The neighbors seem on board and pretty happy.

TJ stated there is nothing to talk about with Mrs. Parenteau.

SJW stated the Board doesn't know what's going on.

TJ stated when he brought the property, it shows that it was existing cleared. I sold the lot to a builder. I went out of my way. I brought all kinds of fill in there. I told George I would sit there with the exact plans.

SJW stated that yes she bought the land from a builder, but some times in April, a lot of construction vehicles were taking away land. She had her land surveyed. The removed trees were part of her land. She wants to see if there's any recourse with the Planning Board. I asked here if she had any before and after pictures.

RRL stated the Planning Board is not an enforcement agency; it's the building inspector who would enforce that.

TJ: As far as the rocks and piles on her lot, she wanted them off, we removed them.

SJW stated she told her she's not sure what the PB can do.

RVD asked how many houses have occupancy up there?

TJ stated approximately 25.

EWG asked the mitigation payment schedule.

TJ stated he was up to \$100K

RRL: That you've paid already?

TJ: Yes.

RRL: Was that when the lots were released?

TJ: When they're sold. Right now to date, I believe it's in the 30's that are sold.

RVD asked if they could take the hump out of Lake Street.

TJ stated they would be removing about a foot of the hump and then smooth paving it.

RRL asked how many lots do you have released?

TJ: 39 in the first phase, 22 more in the second phase. We only released what we had for pavement in, which was 7. So 54. This certificate of release was for the bond for the lots, but he couldn't release all the lots.

♦ **Connor's Crossing Peer Review Discussion:**

TJ stated he made two payments the first of \$2200, the second of 2000.

SJW stated she did a lot of research. When this project first came out. PED used Tom Sexton for the review. What's been the policy since I started was the consultant sends us a contract and we sign it. That's no longer happening, we're having the applicant sign it. Paige got a contract, spoke to TJ and gave the go ahead. The initial contract was open ended. As he was doing different reviews, he billed for them. We don't do those anymore. SJW pointed out the information in their packets, from 9/30/2002.

RVD asked if we had an initial contract for \$2200.

SJW stated yes.

RVD: And we had no further contracts, because he just submits bills after

BJS stated from Connor's Crossing, he remembers the drainage system was complex and going to wetlands, there were changes made. My impression from the project was there were additional questions about what was going to happen to the wetland area.

TJ: You're absolutely right. Mr. Sexton would say to Paige, I need more money. Mr. Sexton stated for him to do the rest of his review, he needed two thousand dollars more. That was for the final review. He knows once the plan is signed, it's done. He would have said, "Don't sign it, I haven't been paid".

SJW stated it was signed October 10 and filed October 11th. She explained the contract and how it was billed hourly. The few contracts we've had have been a flat fee and they haven't gone over their budgets.

RVD asked SJW to get in touch with Paige. I see that you've moved forward and will get a new contract if they go over.

SJW stated the reason this came up was that Tom Sexton requested the PB hold future bond releases. She informed the Board she consulted with Town Counsel and funds could only be held in relation to construction of the project.

RVD asked SJW to touch base with PED. TO contact Tom Sexton, keep communication open with him, stating we are working on it.

TJ stated I do agree with Mr. Sutherland, It was a state of the art drainage system. Paige and I talked about it. The review costs were exorbitant.

RRL stated the ConCom was concerned about the endangered species.

TJ stated that Tom took all these ConCom issues on, issues that he shouldn't have been involved in. Tom spent a lot of time on that. I question that. It was a lot of different stuff. Let me take all the billing. We can see what Paige says with SJW.

BJS stated it was done at a time when Paige was leaving, and the invoice dates correspond to before the decision was signed. If we can get some clarification from Paige, it might help. His intent was not to add it on before the signing.

TJ stated his intent was probably not to add onto it. He said he would look at the bills and check his engineering from the development and look into it.

SJW asked if she should bring it up at the next meeting. The Board agreed that would be fine.

RVD abstained from the lot release.

RRL: Seeing that we have a letter form DD and Doug Ballum, I motion to release lots 14, 15, 16, 17, 72, 73 and 74.

BJS: Second. Vote: 4-0, approved. RVD abstained.

TJ thanked the Board for having patience with the sewer issues and being patient while he completed the project. He appreciated their support through this difficult time of construction.

♦ **RK Plaza Development Plan Approval, Pulaski Boulevard:**

Dave Baker (DB) spoke for the project team, Art Scarnio, Mr. Ericson, traffic, Rich Hollworth, the engineering specialist. Tonight, they're prepared to discuss traffic.

SJW stated they could discuss the changes made.

DB stated they would like to demolish the former building Ames/SaveALot, they've improved the CVS building. D&D will remain. Bellingham Palace is being incorporated into the site development for traffic issues brought up by the Town's traffic consultant.

The development is an improvement to what's out there, a 1970's shopping center, completely paved with no landscaping. We bought it several years ago and noticed Ames was not doing very strongly. The first thing we were trying to accomplish was to put in two dedicated turning lanes. One of the comments was that we should look into widening further to get a dedicated right hand turn lane. They've prepared this design to the Mass. Highway requirements to design for 2.5% growth rate. Bruce Campbell asked us to look at something higher such as 4%. They've been to both the Bellingham and Blackstone ConCom and received an order of conditions from both. They've been to the Blackstone PB asking to defer to the Bellingham Planning Board review. They're next meeting with them is 11/6. They've filed a special permit with the Town Clerk with the Zoning Board. They feel this area is crying out for a renovation. We could only widen the road to what abutters would agree to. We would ask the members of the board to give us a positive determination.

Art Scarnio, from GPI, traffic engineer for the project. They've been reviewing the project for 2 ½ years now. They've responded to the comments from the traffic consultant, trying to work out the minutia of details. It really is a matter of once and for all finalizing the ultimate numbers. One of the issues raised is the ability to provide for offset left turns, such as turning on Bellingham St. To do the stacking of the left turn lanes, there would be a land taking from three houses. Ideally it would be the best, but it would be economically infeasible to accommodate that. If the right of way was there, would we provide a 5 lane crossing – absolutely. This is the best solution we have with the constraints. There are two access points currently, very uncontrolled. There are no cross walks for pedestrian traffic. The tradeoff is that we are stopping traffic on 126. We have added lanes. Working with an adjacent abutter, we've created a right turn lane. Right now, someone taking a left hand turn waits for oncoming traffic, backing up traffic past Bellingham Street. When this plaza was in full function, there were existing queues. We're trying to come here and occupy an existing facility. We could do nothing and simply reoccupy this space as is. The traffic could be worse than redevelopment. Secondly, we've looked at the possibility of designing the second light. Everything will be technically there, and it will be just a matter of hooking up the lights. We've brought a model to give you an idea of how this operates.

Christer Ericson, gave a Powerpoint demonstration of an output model. Simulation has been around for 20 years and has come a long way, we can put road names on them. This is the existing pm peak hour, the queues on Bellingham Street. The model has passive and aggressive drivers, with a phenomenon that happens in Massachusetts, which is barge and block, creating gaps that are unsafe.

He spoke with Bonnie to address the queuing. The queue does develop on 126. The back to back turning lanes allows for the traffic to flow. The signal timing at the plaza at 126 models the actual behavior out on the street.

AS stated they were on the same page with Bonnie and her comments. We're not representing this is the ideal situation, but they are actually getting through the light.

CE stated they wanted to show the visual to show how the intersection will work. It will be a more orderly operation.

BJS asked if the light was going to be no right on red.

AS stated right now it is a right on red, but they could look at it. Right now the ability of any motorist has the capacity to come into the parking lot, fly through the lot and make a left hand turn. After renovation, the traffic will be deferred to 126.

RRL asked if that was going to exacerbate the person going north.

CE stated what AS was talking about was keeping the signals on time to the demand until it hits the maximum until your leaving more green time for the main stream traffic. This model is geared to right turn on red. It could be looked at in the final design.

BJS stated he asked the question because if there was no right turn on red, the queues would back up into the plaza. He asked how many cars were backed up.

RRL asked if they had prepared a simulation for Bellingham Street if the second intersection was signaled.

RVD stated that Bonnie Poulin, the traffic consultant, said with the dual signal the backups would be worse.

AS stated they hadn't. He would have to agree that if there were two signals, there would be worse levels of service than with no signal.

ES stated if that were signaled, you could make it work, but you're introducing stoppage on 126. If you have to extend the stoppage with two signals, you'd have less green time, which was Bonnie Poulin's opinion as well.

AS stated the volumes you're looking at are 4% growth volumes, which we predict 5 years from now. These are not the numbers existing today.

RRL: The existing format, does that take into account if the existing building were occupied?

AS: No it does not. We did shift the volume to one drive and did not model it as two separate entrances as it exists today.

BJS stated they were not taking into account any traffic as if it were re-tenanted, so it wasn't completely accurate.

AS, No, we're showing how the traffic operates today, that if someone takes a left hand turn, the queue on 126 backs up.

AS stated the proposed traffic shows the building being occupied, plus five years of growth.

GCW asked how much growth on 126 are you showing.

AS stated redevelopment was 1091 vs 1025 if it were re-tenanted. Evening 1240 re-tenanted vs. 1285 redeveloped.

Currently the site is generating 260 exiting pm hour with 250 entering. Reoccupied it's going to generate 788 vehicle trips.

AS, about 500 more trips than currently. on the peak hour, if it were just reoccupied as a supermarket and a retail store. For example Kohl's says they like the site and want to come in. You're delta trips is less than 50. You're not looking at whether we're putting 500 new trips on the road.

GCW stated so you're saying if you redevelop vs. re-tenant the building, it will be 450 trips vs. 500 per hour.

RRL stated there aren't that many cars stacked up. I go there all the time.

ES stated the traffic volumes in there are based on the counts.

RRL stated he'll come out of there on a rush hour and there are never more than three cars trying to make a left hand turn.

AS stated right now, it's an aggressive driver who pulls out and wait for the courtesy from the north-bound driver. The simulator is a tool and doesn't give the most complete vision.

ES stated we wanted to give a visual for what the report was saying.

AS explained, this was to give you the understanding of the traffic flow. That queue was not there every single cycle. It was just to show you what we envision. We use that

model and actually put the timing in there based on the counts we take. We feel we have a comfortable conservative worst case numbers we could give you. We might not even see that growth on the area.

BJS stated you're relying on your model. It's a very useful tool. You're saying your going to put in the required infrastructure for the second light. It would be nice to see the second light on the model. It would help to be able to see that.

Dave Baker, historically, the second light came in to solve the Bellingham Street motion. Then we would have two interconnected signals. It was Bruce Campbell and Associates who said that would not be a good idea.

BJS stated you have a tool there to help show the queue, but I would like to see it on the model with the second light. A lot of people are asking if the potential of the light is there, could we see it on the model?

RVD stated there was a very lengthy delay there along Bellingham Street. Our consultant states putting two signals so closely together and coordinating them would create a delay.

EWG Commended RK Plaza for putting in the turning lane. He also agrees the second light would cause as much harm as good, but it's good that you're also putting in the infrastructure in case we put in a flashing light or something along those lines. His main concern is the two hundred foot (200') queuing line going from the plaza; it backs up. Ten years ago, we put in Wal Mart Plaza and we have an intersection that has the same problem now. There's a terrible problem going into Home Depot now. It's terrible. He asked if you could take a look at that again and make the numbers work somehow.

AS stated this is not a virgin piece of property. We want to give it our best. We don't want to create a disaster in your town. We want this to be financially successful. It's not an exact science. We all know that. We'd like to hear, "You did a nice job, it works just as you said it was going to. We just don't have the physical capability of going and taking someone's land.

Dave Baker: We don't have eminent domain capabilities for the town. We don't want to hear from Stop and Shop, "This is a disaster, go fix it. We'd rather do it right the first time. It was through comments from Bonnie that we went and spoke with Bellingham Palace and got some additional land. They're closing a driveway. In that diagram, we'd have to take away someone's living room.

EWG, unfortunately, we don't want another situation like Hartford Ave. Once this is in, one of your neighbors will probably sell their land to Kohl's for something like 2 million dollars and the road will already be in there.

Dave Baker stated he understood. He shops at that Home Depot all the time. Basically, we've done the best we could without getting eminent domain power, without it backing up to Crooks' Corner. The other thing I'm happy to do is to sit down and fine

tune these numbers so that Bonnie comes back and says that these concerns have been addressed. There are existing businesses there. We're not working with virgin land. Even if I went to the liquor store on the other side it wouldn't be enough.

RVD stated the flip side is you could always re-tenant the building. We've heard traffic consultants for years state that it would work. For the Home Depot Plaza their original consultant said it wouldn't work and they went and found someone to say that it would work.

AS stated that though there are increased accidents with traffic lights, the severity of accidents is lower with signalization. Right now there is the capability of traffic to speed through the lot as a cut through. It becomes much more of a pedestrian center when redeveloped. By introducing these islands, we're controlling traffic and making it much safer for pedestrians.

Ron Picard stated that what they would be creating here would be a disaster. He suggested dropping down the right side of the lot for exiting truck traffic. The through traffic could go right through with a wider turn. Dunkin Donuts draws dozens of tractors. He would like to see the traffic situation created on the developer's land, not on the Bellingham roads. We're getting a time bomb.

AS stated with the tractor-trailers, as it stands now, the driver doesn't know where he's supposed to line up. With the new intersection, they're providing 50' radii. They're giving up 15' of the physical property. The existing radius is only 5'.

AS stated if a tractor-trailer is destined to go Southbound, he's not going to get in the right hand lane. He's going to straddle the two lanes, possibly the left hand turn lane closer to the center and he will be able to make that turn without encroaching into that oncoming traffic.

RVD asked if they could give up a little more of that land to make sure that turn would be wider.

AS stated that they would be discussing that with Bonnie.

RVD stated I don't think you need to talk to Bonnie to decide to give up 5' of your property to make it a better turning radius.

DB stated that currently with no cars in the lot, with the redevelopment, it won't be so appealing to truckers, they may go down to the Honey Dew and park in the Ace Hardware parking lot.

RP stated they could drop the border back in line with the left side of the entrance.

RRL asked if they had looked at the traffic flow with out any signal at all.

AS stated that was a good question and still gives a level of service of F. He feels the accidents would be more severe. The volume of traffic making a left hand turn would fail.

RP discussed the numbers of accidents over the years.

DB stated they have to do a warrant analysis to put in a light. They have several warrants and we meet 4 of them.

Mr. Murray submitted a letter to be entered into record and read it. He expressed his support for the new shopping center and stated that many of the local businesses along Pulaski Boulevard would benefit from the business the new Stop and Shop would bring in.

RVD stated there is a lot of material that needs to be divulged here. They need to get in line with Bonnie Poulin. I like the proposal and concur with Mr. Murray and am in support of getting rid of an eyesore. I'd like to go through all the materials.

AS stated they would probably need two to three weeks.

RVD asked what time frame they were under.

DB stated he'd like to rip it down tomorrow.

EWG stated make that turn wider than.

RVD asked SJW if all the engineering issues had been resolved. He suggested getting with Bonnie and making it happen.

BJS asked they show the turn wider.

Mr. Murray stated most of the people in the room are here to support the project but are afraid to speak up.

RVD stated that often times people that oppose the project are afraid to speak up as well. He asked if there was anyone in the room that opposed the project. No one spoke up.

Roger Ducharme, owns the property across the street from the plaza. He asked if anyone wanted to see that second light work. He didn't think it was necessary to look at it. He'd like to see the project come in and do well.

Ron Picard, stated he'd like to see the second light work. He can't understand why they didn't drop that curb back into their plaza.

Steve Gerwitz owns Hill top Farms and they moved the Subway sandwich shop into the plaza with the anticipation that the plaza will be developed. His family has owned

businesses in Bellingham in the last 40 years. He would love to see traffic being pulled into this development. He's in favor of seeing this project go forward.

RVD stated his wife is right there with you.

RD stated everyone has been here. I don't see how anyone could see that the Ames and Almac's traffic from when it was in its prime operation could be better than what's going to be in operation in this new development. It's going to improve the situation down there.

RP stated he's not anti-business, he's looking to prevent a disaster for the people who live in town.

RVD asked if they were installing the infrastructure for the light, would there be money set aside in a fund

Ronald Lucier owns Diamond Auto and purchased Fleuettes. He lives on Paine Street. He doesn't find the traffic is so terrible. There's a little bit of traffic, there's nothing to cry about. Just be tolerable. Nothing in this world is perfect. So many people have good jobs in Highland Park at CVS. So what if there's traffic a few times during the day, it's helping to keep people in work and doing business in our town.

George Hajopolous, of Bellingham Palace, stated they've worked with RK Plaza, to work with Stop and Shop – they are looking forward to the business coming in.

RP discussed setting up some contingency as to who is going to maintain the light. We have to probably broach that with legal counsel.

RRL: Motion to continue the RK Plaza development plan to November 13, 2003 at 7:30pm.

EWG: Second. Vote: 5-0, approved.

RRL: Motion to adjourn. BJS: Second. Vote: 5-0, approved.

Minutes Accepted on:

11/13/2003
(date)

Beth E. Partington
(prepared by: Beth E. Partington)

Richard V. Dill

Edward W. Guzowski

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Brian J. Sutherland
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Arthur P. MacNeil
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Roland R. Laprade
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