



BELLINGHAM PLANNING BOARD

2 MECHANIC STREET
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Meeting Minutes January 24, 2013

MEETING LOCATION: ARCAND MEETING ROOM – MUNICIPAL CENTER

Present at the Meeting

Patricia M. Murphy (PMM), Chairman
Glenn C. Wojcik (GCW), Vice Chairman
Amber S. Griffiths (ASG)
Roger H. Oakley (RHO) - absent
Peter Pappas (PP), Secretary
Andrew T. Greene (ATG), Alternate

Other Officials:

Stacey J. Wetstein (SJW), Town Planner
Jean Keyes (JK), Planning Board Coordinator

PMM opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

GCW: Motion to waive the reading of the Public Hearing for Bellingham Commons II, Development Plan Modification, and Shared Parking Special Permit, 1st Public Hearing; Decision Deadline: 2/16/13

PP: Second.

Vote: Carried 4-0. (PMM, GCW, ASG, PP)

PMM stated that the public hearing will continue after the Master Plan Implantation Committee presentation.

Informal Discussion with Master Plan Implementation Committee – Hartford Ave Zoning

Present from the MPIC: Mary Chaves, President, Brian Sutherland, Vincent Hayes

Mary Chaves explained that the Town has a Master Plan which is to retain the character of the town but also help the residents. She then gave a detailed explanation of the proposed Hartford Ave Overlay District. The goal would be to provide relief to residents in that area. The overlay would allow for a very small business to be operated out of the existing home. The structure of the home would not change so the character of the neighborhood would not be impacted. But it would give the residents options whereby their property would be more attractive to potential buyers who might want to have a very small business there with minimal (1-2) parking. Examples of the types of business would be accountant, architect, attorney, insurance, chiropractor, real estate sales, or salon with 1 or 2 employees.

Brian Sutherland gave an example of the business of Land Planners that was once a home but is now a small volume business. Currently, in a residential zone, the resident cannot have a small business. But this type of overlay plan would allow for that. The MPIC wanted to provide some relief to homeowners and it would always be a residential zone but can have a small impact business.

Chaves explained that if the residents agree then the MPIC will expand the notice and the overlay would eventually have to be approved at town meeting.

PMM opened the meeting to questions from the residents present and thanked them for coming.

Residents:

Quint Roth lives across from Hess. Asked if the overlay would cause an increase in taxes? Chaves explained that there would be no change to the taxes but it would make the property more valuable to potential buyers. GCW further clarified that the taxes won't go up if using as residential; but, if the buyer changes the use, the taxes may increase. Mr. Roth asked if the business could change the building. SJW explained that the house would stay the same and the most that could be changed is adding a small addition. Mr. Roth asked about additional parking for businesses. PMM stated that the overlay would allow only very small business that might have a client or customer of one person per hour. Mr. Roth thanked the MPIC for providing this potential option.

Sutherland stated that he has lived on busy street. Buyers hated the street and it was very hard to sell the house. If the buyers wanted to have a small business, then it would be more attractive to them. If he had had the option, it would have been easier to sell. As a resident, taxes won't change. When you sell it, if the new owner uses the new overlay, they may have higher taxes.

SJW explained that the draft of the overlay district would allow for the split use as well. So the house could be a residence and some sort of business.

Jeannie Donnelly lives on Hartford Ave next to Route 495. She was very frustrated that she can't get out of the driveway and questioned whether a small business would be able to operate there as well. Currently she would like to see improvements on the road – signs, traffic signal improvements – to help the residents get in and out of their driveways. SJW suggested that the residents talk to Safety Officer Rolls about this issue.

Chaves clarified that a person cannot buy 3-4 houses and then tear them down to build a commercial building as the overlay would not allow for that.

Vic Deloyer doesn't live on Hartford Ave anymore but still owns property and agrees with Jeannie Donnelly that something must be done to help the residents.

PMM explained how the overlay would get implemented and that all registered voters need to show up and vote for it at town meeting. SJW recommended that the residents discuss this with their neighbors. GCW stated that the overlay doesn't change anything the residents can do today but it gives them an option for the future and for potential buyers.

Chaves stated that the town meeting is in May and October and this would probably be ready for October as they have a lot to research and then have to compile the draft of the actual overlay plan. She requested that the residents please provide the MPIC with feedback about the overlay.

GCW told the residents that there will be misinformation circulating about this in the town. For accurate information, they should contact SJW. Mary Chaves then asked the residents who were present if they want to go forward with the overlay and they responded very positively and want to move forward.

Bellingham Commons II modification, 191 Mechanic Street, Development Plan Modification, Shared Parking Special Permit, 1st Public Hearing; Decision Deadline: 2/16/13

Present: Mark Beaudry, Meridian Engineering, and George Levine, owner and Applicant.

Mark Beaudry explained that they need additional access to the plaza with an alternate drive. Vehicles traveling east go by the entrance and miss it. Then never come back so by creating the alternate drive they are trying to capture the traffic.

Mr. Beaudry referred to a study by engineer Ron Muller that was done in October of 2012 which looked at traffic count. He observed 5 cars drive by the plaza and brake and maneuver to get back in. On Saturday, traffic was backing up from the signal, so cars had slowed down and had time to see it and get in so no cars missed the plaza. The numbers are consistent with the traffic study done for the pad site. The subdivision roadway can support that traffic but the visibility issue is what is holding it back. The deceleration lane as previously suggested by the Board requires 440' of lane development but the plaza only has 450' of frontage in total for the plaza. So a deceleration lane cannot be created in accordance with MassDOT standards.

As an alternative, they suggest a right-turn only 100' long taper on Mechanic Street to get cars off the road and into the new alternate driveway. According to Mark Beaudry, they received an email in December 2012 from Mass DOT that indicated that MassDOT supports this plan. If the Board approves of the new alternate driveway, then they will go back to Mass DOT for approval permit.

Mark Beaudry explained how the new driveway would impact the parking which currently has 209 spaces. There would be a net loss of 5 parking spaces to get to 204. Under the new parking bylaw – shared parking – they would need 223. So they would apply for a Special Permit to reduce the number to 204. PMM stated that she knows how difficult it is to get into the plaza and would vote for granting the parking space reduction under a Special Permit.

Dan Mills, MDM peer reviewer for the town has reviewed the traffic study and the plan for the alternate drive. He does agree that small business would lose customers because of visibility and pass-by drivers but stated that most traffic is destination traffic. He suggests that the owner could make additional improvements to current site by adding additional signage and moving the large sign closer to the main subdivision driveway.

Mr. Mills further stated that five cars are not a lot of cars to miss the plaza but it does add up over time. MDM's review letter notes that 30 cars are turning right when coming from the center of town but with the new entrance only 15 cars would use the new entrance as the traffic would be split between the two driveways. Because of low volumes MDM does not recommend a right turning lane. Sight distance is not a problem to the current entrance as a driver can see cars turning right into the plaza. MDM recommends that the owner redesign the internal aisles so the entering traffic has the right of way and this is critical component. There must be striping, signage, and turning radius appropriate. Furthermore, this entrance should not be a delivery truck entrance and should be cars only. Driveway alignment should be adjusted. The Applicant has to get a permit from District 3 of MassDOT and review and comments from MassDOT should be provided to the Town for review. The new alternate drive would not work with the future roadway improvements planned for Mechanic Street. The applicant should provide a copy of his plan with the alternate drive to the town so they can plan adjust their future plans for Mechanic Street. The plan provided to the Board is not a final design and he is not opposed to using a tapered entrance but they can work with MassDOT on final design.

Ernie Pelletier, who owns the comics store in the plaza, stated that they are losing business from eastbound traffic that goes by. People, including repeat customers, have to park at Rapid Refill and walk over to his store. He is concerned about safety as people who see it and stop short to make the turn into the plaza.

Ed Morse of 6 Blackstone Street stated that the yellow house blocks the entrance to the plaza so the new entrance will make it work better.

GCW: Motion to continue Bellingham Commons II, 191 Mechanic Street, Development Plan Modification, and Shared Parking Special Permit, 1st Public Hearing to February 14, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.; Decision Deadline: 2/16/13

ASG: Second.

Vote: 4-0. (PMM, GCW, PP, ASG)

Subdivision Rules & Regulations Modification Continued Public Hearing

SJW explained that she discussed with JT the issue of imposing fines on developers if they are not in compliance with the town's regulations and the Planning Board's decision. To do this, the Board would have to write a bylaw provision in the General Code and cannot include it in the Subdivision Regulations at this point. The Board would have to work with the Board of Selectmen on this issue. SJW will ask JT to put together some language and the Board can have an informal discussion about it. GCW would like to gather public opinion on this issue and would not want to give the impression that they are trying to unnecessarily penalize developers. More stringent inspections would help to keep developers on track and in line with regulations. If not in compliance, then the fines could be imposed and a fund of some sorts could be established. SJW stated that maybe it could be ready for the October town meeting and she will discuss with JT.

GCW: Motion to close the Subdivision Rules & Regulations Modification Public Hearing

ASG: Second.

Vote: Carried 4-0. (PMM, GCW, PP, ASG,)

General Business:

Old Business:

GCW: Motion to sign the January 10, 2013 Meeting Minutes.

ASG: Second.

Vote: 4-0. (PMM, GCW, PP, ASG,)

GCW: Motion to sign the vouchers and payroll.

ASG: Second.

Discussion: SJW explained the vouchers and payroll.

Vote: 4-0. (PMM, GCW, PP, ASG)

Northwoods II Landscape Plan Modification Decision Signing

SJW explained the draft decision to Board today. It was reviewed by JT and it details all the conditions set forth by the Board previously.

GCW: Motion to sign the Northwoods II Landscape Modification of the Certificate of Approval of a Definitive Subdivision Decision.

PP: Second.

Vote: 4-0. (PMM, GCW, PP, ASG)

GCW: Motion to sign the Northwoods II Modification to the Major Residential Development Special Permit Decision.

PP: Second.

Vote: 5-0. (PMM, GCW, PP, ASG, ATG)

Planner Update:

SJW explained that Gibbs Oil is new project that has been officially submitted.

New Business (81-P)

GCW: Motion to adjourn.

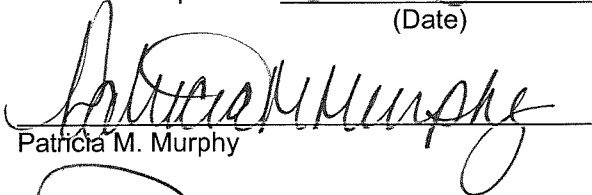
ASG: Second.

Vote: 4-0. (PMM, GCW, PP, ASG)

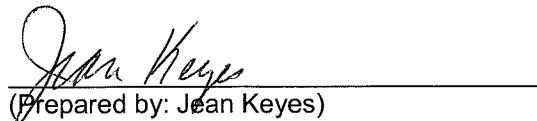
Meeting Adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

Minutes Accepted on: 2-14-13

(Date)


Patricia M. Murphy


Peter Pappas


(Prepared by: Jean Keyes)


Glenn C. Wojcik


Roger H. Oakley

Amber S. Griffiths