



**Town of Gorham**  
**PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP NOTES**  
**December 10, 2007**

A workshop meeting of the Gorham Planning Board was held on Monday, December 10, 2007, at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Center Council Chambers, 75 South Street, Gorham, Maine.

In attendance were Douglas Boyce, Thomas Fickett, Thomas Hughes, Michael Parker, and Mark Stelmack. Susan Robie and Edward Zelmanow were absent. Also present were Town Planner Deborah Fossum and Clerk of the Board, Barbara Skinner. Assistant Planner Thomas Poirier was absent.

In the absence of Susan Robie, Chairwoman, Douglas Boyce, Vice-Chair, opened the meeting.

**1. Notes of the November 5, 15, 19 and 26, 2007, Workshop Meetings.**

There were no comments or corrections to the November Workshop Meeting Notes.

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**2. Chairman's Report of Town Council Ordinance Committee Meeting.**

Due to Ms. Robie's absence, there was no report.

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**3. Workshop Meeting on Two Proposed Sites for a new Gorham Elementary School to replace the White Rock Elementary School as well as eliminate overcrowding at other elementary schools in Gorham, requested by the Gorham School Department.**

Mr. Boyce explained that the two sites under consideration are the Chick property, behind Narragansett School, zoned OR/UR, Map 26/L4 and 4.001; and the rear portion of the property owned by Walter Stevens on Route 237; zoned R/SR, Map 71/L1 and M53/Lot 38.

Jim Hager, Chairman of the Gorham School Committee and Chairman of the White Rock project committee, introduced the project, and said that a formal application will be presented after a successful Town-wide referendum in June of 2008. He introduced the design team of Lyndon Keck, PDT Architects, and Bill Hoffman of DeLuca-Hoffman Associates.

Mr. Keck said that the Stevens family has been approached to see if a parcel between 23 and 26 acres at the back of the Stevens property could be purchased. He said the parcel is very attractive to the School Committee in that it could easily serve North Gorham by replacing White Rock Elementary School. He described the parcel as predominately open hay field, surrounded by some smaller, older residential neighborhoods and some conservation land and sod farms. He said the parcel has 69 acres, so with an anticipated purchase of between 23 and 26 acres, the Stevens family would retain approximately 44 acres of land for future use. Mr. Keck said that the Stevens family has suggested that they might want an opportunity to create a subdivision in the future; however, the subdivision design being shown is not the Stevens' design, it is the design of the representatives of the School Department to see how the land could be laid out. He stressed that they are not asking for Planning Board feedback on the proposed subdivision, but want to make the Board aware that a subdivision is a possibility for the remainder of the parcel. He said that an important consideration is the layout of utilities that would go back to the school site that could also serve a future subdivision. Presently, the proposed school is situated in the northeastern corner of the site, there is a potential for one or two athletic fields, although there are as many as four athletic fields could be possible.

Mr. Keck explained that access to the Stevens site would be off Route 237, with a hammerhead at the end and separate drop off points on the school site for busses and for the children. Parking for between 110 and 150 cars is proposed. The school size is expected to be 85,000 square feet, for 550 children, with a staff of

90, and it is proposed that for special events such as open house, holiday concerts, etc., the sides of the road and the bus and parent dropoff loop would be used for parallel parking purposes.

Mr. Keck noted that the site falls within two zones: suburban residential and rural/manufactured housing. He said the southern half of the site is suburban residential, and the northern part is rural/manufactured housing. He pointed out a former gravel extraction pit that is on the site and which is currently undergoing reclamation by Shaw Brothers. He said that soils on the site are limited sands on top of clays, with a relatively high water table and some hydric soils because of the clays, and test boring and pits have been done with no ledge or rock found on site. He said that anticipated wetland impact would be approximately 25,000 square feet with some mitigation being required. Mr. Keck pointed out an existing man-made dam and pond on site which would be retained by the Stevens family. The school would have its own stormwater management pond to direct water into the existing pond.

Mr. Keck said that a traffic study by Gorrill-Palmer suggests that no turn lanes are needed and the speed limit is 30 miles per hour in front of the site. The traffic report suggests that the morning peak trip generation would be 231 cars, and in the afternoon it would be 254 cars.

Mr. Keck pointed out a sewage treatment plant in an adjoining subdivision at Hannah Drive (sic: referring to the Little Falls treatment plant off Tow Path Road), that has three-phase electric service. There is single phase power along Route 237, and if three-phase power were to be brought into the site, it is available at Huston Road. Mr. Keck also pointed out the 50-foot right-of-way at Parker Hill Road which they propose to use to bring utilities in to the site, and which is the preferred method to bring in water and sewer, with the water looping back out to Route 237.

Mr. Keck then read the questions to which they seek guidance and answers from staff and the Board, as follows:

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1. Is there anything problematic with the Ordinance which would limit the planning of an elementary school of the site?
  2. What Street Standards should we use for Site Development?
  3. Is street frontage on the end of a ‘Hammer Head’ acceptable?
  4. Street grading of 2% is only required at side street intersection legs?
  5. How would street dead end length beyond 1500 feet be viewed?
  6. Would street lighting be required?
  7. Once the Gravel Pit is fully restored, is that area allowed to be included in the total net residential acreage allowance?”

Mr. Keck continued his presentation by describing the Chick property, which he said historically has been used for public safety and municipal offices, and pointed out the proposed elementary school site behind Narragansett School where there are presently athletic fields on site. He said that the school site would utilize between 23 and 26 acres of the 85 acre parcel, access would be off Route 25 and the major entrance would be off Route 202, with connections to Narragansett and back out Route 25. He said the site has sewer and water, and 3-phase electric, and there is also gas available on Route 202 to the property. Posted speed on both 25 and 202 is 35 miles per hour in front of the property, and the same trip generations would result on this parcel as on the Stevens parcel. Soils on the site are sandy, silts and shallow to bedrock. There are substantial wetlands on the back of the site, and the school would have its own stormwater management pond to release water very slowly into the wetland, but the school would have minimal impact on the wetland. He noted that the same 7 questions would apply to this site as well.

Ms. Fossum said that she would discuss some of the questions listed by Mr. Keck with the other staff such as the Town Engineer and Public Works Director and then get back to Mr. Keck.

Mr. Hughes commented that the 1500 foot dead end issue, saying that in the past the Fire Chief has preferred two entrances into a site, and it would be particularly important to have two entrances with a school at the end of the road. Mr. Keck noted that they assumed they would use the 50-foot parcel off the cul-de-sac at the end of Parker Hill Road as an emergency access point, with a gated gravel drive.

Mr. Boyce noted that the possibility of a future subdivision should not impact the Board's consideration of the Stevens property as a viable school site. He made observation about Huston Road traffic and the movement of school busses.

Mr. Stelmack asked if the students who attend this school will come primarily from the White Rock area or from throughout Gorham. Mr. Keck replied that students would come from North Gorham and would include the 146 students presently attending the White Rock school. Mr. Stelmack said that if the school is located at the Stevens site, then traffic patterns will be completely different than those currently to the White Rock school.

Mr. Keck answered a query from Mr. Stelmack that if the Chick property is selected, the State of Maine Department of Education will provide substantial funding and one of the things the state would like to have considered is having the new school possibly near or attached to Narragansett School.

Mr. Keck said it is hoped that a selection will be made in early January, and they would be happy to return for another workshop with the Board. Mr. Parker said he would be interested in having more information about the status of the gravel pit.

Ms. Fossum noted that Mr. Zelmanow has some concerns with placing a new school behind the existing Narragansett School, one of those being the distance children from North Gorham and the White Rock area would have to travel and being on the road longer with more potential for accidents. Another of Mr. Zelmanow's concerns is this may add to fuel costs of running the busses over increased distances.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD OPENED:       None offered.  
PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ENDED.

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#### **4. Pre-application Conference on the Proposed Construction of Athletic Fields and Expanded Parking at the Gorham Middle School off Weeks Road requested by the Town of Gorham.**

Bill Hoffman, DeLuca-Hoffman Associates, explained that at the time the Middle School was constructed, a master plan was developed with tennis courts and multi-purpose fields proposed. The Town would now like to build a large turf area and not build the tennis courts, but instead build ball fields and extend the parking area. Drainage analysis was constructed previously, and as the tennis courts are not being constructed, there is less runoff than allowed by the analysis and the sizing of the stormwater pond. There will be no lights or speakers, as these are only for daylight use. Mr. Hoffman said the entire site is under a Maine DEP permit, a minor amendment review, with the permit due the end of the week. The project was bid before the referendum approving it was held with a favorable budget anticipated. Mr. Hoffman asked for clarification on whether the parking extension, which would also be used for school event overflow and athletic field use, could remain as gravel surface instead of having to be paved, due to both the expense of paving and the fact that the fields and the parking would only be used in fair weather and not in the winter. He said that a buffer was left on Weeks Road that screens the original fields that were constructed; although some clearing needs to be done the buffer has thickened up since the Middle School was constructed. The buffer will be retained on both the Weeks Road and the residential lot line perimeters and will be anywhere from 25 to 40 feet, with additional plantings along the school drive and at the edge of the parking lot. Mr. Hoffman said that based on the bids, it does appear that the fields can be fenced, which helps control unauthorized use at night.

Ms. Fossum gave the staff comments, noting that the Middle School project was originally approved in 2001, and at the time the applicant indicated that it would be coming back with this Phase 2 for additional ball fields, recreational facilities and parking, which was included in the master plan. She said that special exception review was completed at that time, and as this is an accessory use to the originally approved use, she did not feel that special exception review needs to be repeated at this time. Ms. Fossum said that one of the questions for the Board to decide is whether it is necessary to revisit the site and conduct a site walk, especially in light of the snow cover now present. Mr. Boyce said that from his point of view, the primary purpose of the site walk would be to look at the adjacent property to see if there are any concerns to be addressed with abutters. Mr. Parker said he did not see a need to go back; Mr. Hughes concurred, but asked staff if abutter on Canterbury are aware of the project. Ms. Fossum confirmed that those abutters have been and will continue to be notified of any activity involving the project. Mr. Fickett said there is no sense in taking a site walk with snow on the ground, and Mr. Stelmack agreed.

Mr. Hoffman told Mr. Stelmack that an amendment has been filed to the Maine DEP Site Location of Development permit to add the new facilities and the permit should be issued the end of the week.

Mr. Boyce asked if there is more school property to the east. Mr. Hoffman replied that it is developed property and backs up to Canterbury Road. Mr. Stelmack asked if the facilities will be shared by the high school and if a snack shack facility is contemplated. Mr. Hoffman replied that he would not want to rule out a shared use due to the scarcity of fields in Gorham, but they do not anticipate building a snack shack as they did not extend sewer to the site, and while the irrigation system is to be extended, that is considered as non-potable water.

In response to Mr. Hughes about timing on the project, Mr. Hoffman said the bids were received in early November and can be held for up to 4 months, and the Town would award the contract after DEP permits and Planning Board approval have been secured. Ms. Fossum told Mr. Boyce that this is a project which will come back before the Board with a formal public hearing and hopefully could be ready for the January Board meeting.

Ms. Fossum told Mr. Boyce that the next item on the agenda relating to allowing gravel parking lots in limited circumstances does not apply to this application as it involves smaller business type uses. Mr. Hoffman said the question of gravel parking will also come up in the issue of the new school site, due to the very high paving prices.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD OPENED:**

Kim Ross, Quincy Drive, asked how the Middle School relates to her property and the common land of Heartwood Subdivision. Mr. Hoffman said they would not be working within at least 650 feet of that subdivision.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ENDED.**

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**5. Proposed Amendments to Chapter II, Section II, Parking, Loading and Traffic, (a)(7) of the Land Use and Development Code allowing gravel parking lots in limited circumstances.**

Discussion of proposed amendments to the Town's parking standards, referred to Planning Board for Public Hearing by the Town Council on November 13, 2007.

Ms. Fossum explained that this ordinance was drafted because even though the ordinance requires that all commercial, industrial and institutional uses must pave their parking lots, there have been several smaller business projects developed in Gorham where, from a practical standpoint, it seems feasible to allow gravel parking lots in certain limited circumstances such as seasonal use or when there is low volume parking and minimal turnover. Norman Richardson is one of the minor site plan applicants who has requested that the Town review its standards and develop an ordinance which would permit gravel parking lots, as his

particular use is seasonal and one which would typically see activity on weekends. The ordinance has been drafted to accomplish two things: to accommodate seasonal business or those which would have weekend traffic, and also to accommodate those smaller businesses that will have a low turnover and a small number of employees. She said the ordinance is based on the concept that MDOT considers anything under 50 trips to be a low volume driveway, and a small business is one with 8 employees or fewer, which would exclude some services and retail uses because of the high turnover. Ms. Fossum read the proposed language as follows:

“For commercial, industrial and institutional uses (excluding retail or service businesses) that will generate an estimate average of thirty-five (35) vehicle trips or less per day or for Rural Entrepreneurial Uses that meet the Performance Standards of Chapter II, Section VII, Subsection E.2. in the rural district, parking areas shall be constructed with a suitably durable surface (including gravel) that minimizes dust and is appropriate for the type of land use activity. Surfacing, grading and drainage shall be required to facilitate groundwater recharge by minimizing impermeable pavement and stormwater run-off. Gravel parking lots shall have a paved apron 30 feet in length commencing at the existing edge of pavement on the adjacent public road.”

Ms. Fossum said the proposed language as it is presently drafted would not accommodate anything as large as a school or a recreational facility.

In response to Mr. Hughes, Ms. Fossum said that the item would be scheduled for public hearing before the Planning Board at its January meeting if that is the recommendation of the Board. Following that public hearing, the Board would make a recommendation back to the Town Council.

Mr. Parker asked where the 30-foot apron come from as it could be quite large for a small parking lot. Ms. Fossum said she consulted with the Public Works Director who suggested that an average car length is 20 feet, and that figure should be augmented by another 10 feet to insure adequate car length from the edge of pavement. Mr. Parker asked about the wording relating to “groundwater recharge” noting that compacted gravel is just as impervious from a recharge standpoint as asphalt is. Ms. Fossum said there is a slight difference and the intent is that there would be stormwater run-off facilities to accommodate it appropriately on the perimeter. Mr. Parker asked if there is any particular standard for the depth of gravel, such as being the same as those for a gravel private way. Ms. Fossum said that whoever the reviewing engineer is would be expected to make an evaluation as to the appropriateness for the site. Mr. Parker commented that without standards it would be difficult to determine its suitability. Mr. Boyce noted that section b) immediately preceding the new language does state that “The surface of driveways, maneuvering areas, and parking areas shall be uniformly graded with a sub grade consisting of well-compacted gravel or equivalent materials at least six inches in depth.” Mr. Parker said that should be made clear in the new section.

Mr. Stelmack asked if the purpose of this change is to save developers the cost of paving. Ms. Fossum said it is in part, but also there can be some environmental benefit to not paving. Mr. Stelmack commented about driving into certain recreational areas where dust is a problem, and said if he were a resident living near an unpaved parking lot, he would be concerned about dust, health issues, and other annoyances, which paving would eliminate. Mr. Boyce suggested that staff talk to the Public Works Director about an aggregate surface that is an alternative to paving that would not induce dust and which would be less expensive than paving. Mr. Hughes said he agrees with Mr. Stelmack, but a mitigating circumstance would be that there would be 35 trips or less per day.

Ms. Fossum said that staff can report to the Town Council Ordinance Committee about the changes that are being discussed by the Planning Board. The Board agreed that the proposed language should come back before the Board for another workshop to reflect some of the issues discussed this evening.

**6. Other Business.**

None.

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**7. Adjournment: 7:15 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

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Barbara C. Skinner, Clerk of the Board