



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH PLANNING BOARD

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Approved 5-14-08

Planning Board Meeting Minutes February 12, 2008

Members Present: George Pember, Michelle Gillespie, Bob Rosenberg, Don Hewey

Others Present: Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Bill Farnsworth, Zoning Enforcement Officer/Inspector of Buildings; Fred Litchfield, Town Engineer; Kelly Burke, Senior Center Director; David Warner, Larson Associates; Rob Oliva, Hamwey Engineering; Gerry Anderson, President, Friends of the Senior Center; Paul J. Griffin, Jr., Senior Center Project Manager, Construction Management Services; Andrienne Cost

Acting Chairman, George Pember, opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Site Plan Review for Proposed Senior Center at 119 Bearfoot Road

Applicant:	Larson Associates, Inc. on behalf of the Senior Center Building Committee, Town of Northborough
Engineer:	Larson Associates, Inc.
Date Filed:	February 1, 2008
Decision Due:	April 30, 2008

David Warner, Landscape Architect, Larson Associates, Inc. and Rob Oliva, Civil Engineer, Hamwey Engineering, Inc., presented the project.

Mr. Warner explained the property is located at Bearfoot Road and Colburn Street and is in the Residential District C (RC) and Business Districts B (BB) and C (BC). The lot is 18.5 acres in size with 700 feet of frontage at its minimum width and, therefore, exceeds the minimum lot size and frontage required in the RC district of 20,000 square feet and 100 feet, respectively. Located on the property are a pond, a perennial stream, conservation land, a cell tower and an area formerly used as a shooting range. The proposed design is located within an already-developed area of the site, which is surrounded by wooded areas and conservation land. Mr. Warner pointed out the existing building, driveway and paved area on the plan and the proposed design. The driveway will be relocated from Colburn Street and Bearfoot Road to Bearfoot Road, and the address will change from 119 Colburn Street to 119 Bearfoot Road. Site distances at the new driveway location will make entering and exiting the site safer than those at the current location. The new drive is designed at a 5-6% gradient to get up to the elevation in front of the proposed facility. The site is relatively flat. The 10% gradient in front of the site will be evened out by 1.5 feet and the grade will be raised where the building will be located. Patrons will enter the site from the front to access the main entrance or the main parking lot. Currently patrons enter the site from the back. Parking in the back of the site will be advantageous for community use and for event parking at the Senior Center. One hundred twenty-four (124) parking spaces are proposed and have been designed according to dimensional regulations. An additional twenty-eight (28) spaces are unpaved because they are not necessary for the day-to-day operation of the Senior Center, but occasional events requiring more parking spaces may take advantage of them. Keeping

these spaces unpaved is more environmentally appropriate for the area. One hundred fifty (150) feet of woodland between the site and the residential area at Edmund Hills will be preserved and the substantial buffer will be retained. Views from the building as a community resource are important. The transformer and generator are accessible but hidden from view with additional evergreen plantings. The cutoff angle and light distribution shown on the lighting plan for the site has been discussed with the Building Inspector and will meet all zoning regulations. Light will be concentrated on the driveway, walks and parking areas. Driveways are shown as two-way and 25 feet in width. All aisles in the parking lots are two-way and the drop-off part of the driveway is 25 feet wide but only one-way.

Mr. Oliva explained the utility design for the site. The existing water travels down Colburn Street and the new connection will be made there. The sewer service will be connected to the existing sewer on the eastern side of the aqueduct and will run under the aqueduct. Drainage will be handled in several ways. A detention basin will be fed by the upper portion of the lot and the driveway, and will discharge into the wetlands. Runoff from the other parking lot will flow to a vegetated swale and rain garden, through the wooded area and into the wetlands. A portion of the driveway will discharge into two rain gardens, on either side of the driveway, to culverts and then to a natural path. Post-development flow will be below existing flow rates. Mr. Oliva stated Fred Litchfield, Town Engineer, had requested dry wells be provided to pick up and recharge flow from the building's rooftop, and have been included in the plan. Gas and electrical services will come from existing services on Bearfoot Road.

A review letter from town staff to the Planning Board dated February 11, 2008, was discussed. Mr. Oliva read the comments aloud and stated he has discussed the items on the list with the DPW Director, Town Engineer and Building Inspector and either has, or will be, addressing them to the town's satisfaction.

Kathy Joubert, Town Planner, stated the Assistant Town Administrator, John Coderre, and the Parks and Recreation Commission are in full agreement with the plans.

Don Hewey asked if the project will go before the Conservation Commission. Fred Litchfield stated the Conservation Commission has reviewed the project and is comfortable with it.

Michelle Gillespie asked if there was a sidewalk entering the site.

Mr. Warner stated there is no sidewalk, but there is a white outline that serves as a sidewalk for the drop-off and parking areas and patio space out front and out back.

Mr. Coderre explained the Senior Center Building Committee had thought a sidewalk would be a natural thing, however currently there is no sidewalk on Bearfoot Road and there won't be one within the next 10-15 years, per the DPW Director. If they constructed a sidewalk on the site, it would lead to no-where. If a sidewalk is eventually constructed on Bearfoot Road, a sidewalk on the site would be added. There is no parking allowed along the driveway on the site and, therefore, a sidewalk would serve no purpose and would be a considerable expense as well. Mr. Coderre stated future plans for the site include development of a recreational area, handicap-accessible walking trails and a large gazebo similar to the one at Ellsworth-McAfee Park on South Street. Some of the wooded area on the site is overgrown and could be thinned out and used for a picnic area and passive recreation. They have also talked about having court sports in the lower area, including basketball and bocce, and a swing set to create a park area that would be inter-generational.

Bob Rosenberg stated it might be useful to make a trail from Rice Avenue to the parking area, as it is one of the most widely walked parts of town on a weekday. He also asked about the

size of the parking spaces. Mr. Oliva replied they are 10 feet x 18 feet, which is the standard size of 180 square feet. The 10-foot width is based on the demographics of the users. Mr. Rosenberg was curious about the generator. Mr. Coderre explained if they were to lose power they would have minimum lighting inside and outside the site and would not be at risk for pipes to burst. Mr. Warner stated the generator is about 7-feet below the floor elevation of the building, so there will be no view of it from inside the building.

George Pember asked if they had thought to add more handicap parking spaces. Mr. Warner stated they show 5 on the plan and 4 is the minimum number required. Since all the parking spaces are the same dimension and there are spaces convenient to the entrance, there could be more assigned as handicap. Two of the five spaces are of van-accessible width. John Coderre stated the building committee wanted a cluster of handicapped spaces located at the entrance.

Mr. Pember asked how difficult the permitting process is to connect the sewer under the aqueduct. Mr. Oliva replied they will be working with MWRA and have had considerable conversations with MWRA's project manager, who has confirmed it can be done. If they had to go with septic, it could be possible to pump over the top of the aqueduct, but it is more expensive. Mr. Coderre stated the decision was made early in the process to go for the sewer connection. The proposed building will have a large meeting space with a full commercial kitchen and it is in the best interest of the town not to get into a septic system situation.

Mr. Hewey asked if there is access to trails off the back of the property where the road leads to the cell tower. Mr. Warner stated there are existing trails developed by the town's Trails Committee.

Mr. Coderre stated both the original design and the site plan have unanimous approval of all boards.

Mr. Warner stated the most recent plans submitted for this meeting are dated January 29, 2008, but Mr. Oliva submitted plans tonight to Mr. Litchfield with comments from the Conservation Commission incorporated. Mr. Farnsworth requested the board get the most recent plans to reference in the decision.

Regarding the one-way drop-off at the front entrance, Bill Farnsworth stated he would like to see signage saying DO NOT ENTER and a center-line stripe. Also, the fire lines should say NO PARKING, however if the applicant has met with the Fire Chief and he's OK with them as is, he's fine with it. Mr. Coderre stated there is a full NFPA-13 fire suppression system in the building and the Fire Chief is very comfortable with the design.

There were no comments from the public.

Kathy Joubert stated the Senior Center wants to put together bid documents by the beginning of March.

Mr. Rosenberg moved to approve the site plan for the Senior Center with comments from the staff review letter dated February 11, 2008 to be used as conditions of approval of the plan. Don Hewey seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous to approve the site plan.

Kathy will put together the site plan approval and George Pember will sign it after the board reviews the draft.

Zoning Changes for 2008 Town Meeting from Bill Farnsworth

The board reviewed and discussed two zoning articles proposed for 2008 Town Meeting by Bill Farnsworth. The proposed articles are as follows:

Amendment to 7-040-040, Nonconforming Uses and Structures

(Proposed amendment attached)

Bill Farnsworth explained this article will allow an expansion/addition to a non-conforming structure that does not exceed 100% of the existing gross floor area. The existing bylaw states the alteration may not exceed 50% of the existing gross floor area. He stated there are a lot of cases that come before the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for variances for non-conforming smaller homes and/or lots requesting to construct additions that are between 60% - 80% larger than the gross floor area of the existing structure, and they are all granted. A lot of these filings come from small homes in the Northgate and Indian Meadow areas and are for the addition of a garage, a garage with a room above or an enlarged family room downstairs. Right now applicants have a 3-month process to go through before they can start construction. This change will help them and will not cause any harm. Mr. Farnsworth stated the ZBA is strongly in favor of it. There is no other restriction like this in any other town.

Kathy Joubert stated a summary of permits shows the largest percentage of applications and variances granted by the ZBA is on the 50% ruling for non-conformities. This will be addressed in more depth in the revised bylaw, but she stated she and Bill Farnsworth would like to keep it simple and take it to this year's town meeting. She stated Rick Leif looked at the drafts on Friday and she talked with him about it on Friday night. He was in favor of both of the articles.

Bob Rosenberg stated the subcommittee wanted to differentiate between groundwater non-conforming and those based on required lot sizes. He suggested adding C from the revised zoning bylaw to the proposed article.

Kathy stated the subcommittee proposed to leave it at 50% and make it a special permit process. ZBA consistently approves them and therefore it's time to make it allowable.

Bob stated he believes the subcommittee thought they had had a final discussion on it. Bill stated he, Judi and Kathy had not had a final discussion on it.

Michelle Gillespie stated she is in favor of it because it takes care of Northgate and other neighborhoods like it. Kara Buzanoski, with the Water & Sewer Commission, will be addressing the groundwater issue next year. She would like to stream-line the process so the applicant doesn't have to wait 3 months to start construction.

Don Hewey stated he'd be willing to leave it as it is and add C and have a combination of both.

George Pember stated his opinion is not to get into a lot of complexity at town meeting. The proposal is so simple it should go right through and accomplishes what the Board is trying to do - take non-controversial situations that are rubber-stamped and make them allowable. Variances are not something that should be granted.

Kathy stated they will need a majority of the four members or a unanimous vote to put these on as a warrant article. The majority would be 3 members.

Michelle Gillespie moved to put the article on the warrant for 2008 Town Meeting, changing 50% to 100%. The motion was not seconded.

Bob Rosenberg moved to modify the proposed zoning amendment to use paragraph C from the subcommittee's submittal instead of the proposed language. Don Hewey seconded the motion. Don stated he believes it is solving both problems for the reasons they need to be solved. The vote was 1 member in favor and 3 opposed.

Don Hewey moved to modify the proposed article by changing 100% to 80% and adding C from the revised zoning bylaw. Bill Farnsworth stated he is comfortable with 80% but the statement about the groundwater overlay is not needed. Kathy agreed with Bill, stating the motion is covering all the bases but is redundant. The proposed article is taking care of those cases whether groundwater is involved or not. It needs to be simple for town meeting and people won't understand it if groundwater is included. It's capturing all the people and situation they want to capture. Bob stated at some point they will be leaving it up to the Water and Sewer Commission to handle groundwater and that may change the whole dynamic of the question in the future. No one seconded the motion.

Michelle Gillespie moved to modify the proposed article by changing 100% to 80%, Don Hewey seconded the motion and the vote was unanimously in favor of amending the wording of the article to read 80% instead of 100%.

Amendment to 7-20-040, Signs (Proposed amendment attached)

Mr. Farnsworth stated this amendment covers businesses in town with entrances that don't face the street. In those cases, signs required to be above front entrances don't do them any good. The proposed article is allowing one 32 square-foot wall sign or two different wall signs that together total 32 square feet. The wording is the same as in the proposed new zoning bylaw. The subcommittee left this up to him and Kathy to do. Mr. Farnsworth stated this has nothing to do with free-standing signs.

Mr. Rosenberg had two comments. First, this specifically is saying 32 feet in area per business or 2 wall signs totaling 32 square feet, but the subcommittee did not say "per business", they used "per establishment". Kathy stated the reason she kept it "per business" was this is what the rest of the existing bylaw references. Bob stated the point wasn't the term, it was that it was saying "per business". If you have two businesses you have two 32-foot signs. Second, regarding the underlined part, he stated it should've been a cut-and-paste of the one above, but the second line doesn't need to be said. He suggested eliminating the words "attached to the wall". Kathy stated that came out of the existing bylaw verbatim for three or more tenants, but she does see the need to change it. Don stated it eliminates any reference to the free-standing signs. It has no relevance if there's a free-standing sign or not. Bob stated it allows 2 wall signs even if you already have a free-standing sign. Don and Bob stated the change makes sense.

Kathy made the changes to the sign zoning change and distributed the revised draft to the board.

Don Hewey moved to approve the proposed article as amended, Michelle Gillespie seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous to approve.

Approval of Minutes

Michelle Gillespie moved to approve the minutes of January 8, 2008 as amended, Don Hewey seconded and the vote was unanimous to approve.

Bob Rosenberg moved to approve the minutes of January 31, 2008 as written, Don Hewey seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous to approve.

Memo to ZBA from Planning Board re: 172 Main Street

The Board reviewed and approved a memo they will send to the ZBA regarding 172 Main Street which states they have reviewed the plan for a proposed oral surgery facility for the site and agree with the plans as presented.

Next Meeting

After a brief discussion, the Planning Board's March 4, 2008 joint meeting with the ZBA was rescheduled to March 18, 2008 due to an anticipated lack of attendance. Dick Rand, ZBA Chairman, Planning Board members Michelle Gillespie and Don Hewey, and Bill Farnsworth would not be able to attend the meeting. The March 18th meeting will include a public hearing for a special permit common driveway at 231 South Street and a discussion with Tom Reardon, Comprehensive Zoning Reorganization subcommittee member, on multi-family dwellings.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Grampietro, Administrative Assistant
Planning, Engineering & ZBA