

STURBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD  
DRAFT MINUTES OF  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2009

Ms. Gibson-Quigley called the regular meeting of the Planning Board to order at 6:30 PM. On a roll call made by Ms. Morrison, the following members were present:

**Present:** Jim Cunniff  
Penny Dumas  
Francesco Froio  
Jennifer Morrison  
Sandra Gibson-Quigley, Chair

**Also Present:** Jean Bubon, Town Planner

**Absent:** Russell Chamberland

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion:** Made by Ms. Morrison to accept the amended minutes of October 6, 2009.  
**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Mr. Froio  
**Discussion:** None  
**Vote:** 5-0

**SANR – CAMP LAURELWOOD TRUST**

Mr. Jalbert of Jalbert Engineering, Inc. spoke on behalf of the applicant.

Mr. Jalbert stated that the plan submitted shows the transfer of two small parcels labeled Parcel A, and Parcel B from 102 Allen Road to 100 Allen Road and the creation of a two foot permanent easement for the benefit of 100 Allen Road. The plan was required since small portions of the structure at 100 Allen Road encroach on the 102 Allen Road property. These parcels are not to be considered separate building lots and the plan is so noted.

Ms. Bubon stated that she recommends that the Board approve the plan since it does not affect the frontage and the plans note that these parcels are not building lots.

**Motion:** Made by Ms. Dumas to endorse the ANR submitted.  
**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Ms. Morrison  
**Discussion:** None  
**Vote:** 5 – 0

Ms. Morrison, the Clerk, signed the plan.

**CARMEN SCAFFIDI – PLAYA DEL CARMEN MEXICAN RESTAURANT – 179  
MAIN STREET – REQUEST WAIVER OF SITE PLAN APPROVAL**

Ms. Gina Roscioli and Ms. Carmen Scaffidi were present to explain the proposal to the Board. Ms. Roscioli stated that Ms. Scaffidi would be leasing the former Rom's Restaurant to operate a Mexican restaurant. The capacity would be reduced from 540 seats to 275 seats based upon available parking after the sale of a portion of the land now known as 173 Main Street.

Ms. Gibson Quigley read staff reports and noted that there were no concerns indicated by staff. The Board of Health stated that a Food Service Application must be filed and that they have thirty days to review that application. Mr. Morse also wanted to bring it to the attention of the applicant that the Route 131 reconstruction will alter the westerly curb cut by narrowing that down somewhat. Ms. Bubon noted that Ms. Roscioli had indicated that a fence would be installed and she had advised her that the Board preferred plantings to fencing. The plans have therefore included a ten foot planting strip on this property to mirror what the Board required on the 173 Main Street site. Ms. Bubon noted that all other changes were cosmetic and would not affect the existing site; therefore she was recommending that the Board waive site plan approval.

Ms. Dumas stated that she was very supportive of this restaurant but she did have a few concerns and comments that she would like to note. She indicated that she was concerned about leaving an opening to the 173 Main Street property. She thought that this could create potential vehicular conflicts or conflicts with people walking in and out of the restaurant. Ms. Bubon stated that she would not want to see it closed off since when the Transportation Engineer had reviewed the plan for 173 Main Street he indicated that it would create a better flow if the Roscioli's could grant an easement to allow use of the traffic light by customers of the 173 Main Street site. She thought it should be left open to see if the two property owners may be able to reach an agreement; she also thought that it would allow a cross flow of customers between each site. Ms. Dumas indicated that she did not disagree with this; but thought that would only work if the site were designed to accommodate that. Since this property was not being altered or re-designed she thought it could pose a problem. There was a bit of discussion on this issue and it was determined that Ms. Scaffidi did not have to leave this opening if it became a problem for her business and customers and that she could extend the landscaping to close that off provided there was no legal reason that prevented that from occurring; for example language contained in the deeds.

Ms. Dumas also questioned the parking in the rear and what would trigger the applicant coming back for further review. She stated that she did not recall parking in the rear. Ms. Bubon stated that the plan as submitted shows the limits of the paved area and also notes that the remainder is gravel. Any expansion of the gravel area into parking will require further approvals; perhaps even from the Conservation Commission.

Ms. Dumas wondered if there were any timeframes that could be placed to prevent an issue such as was on-going with a proposed sandwich shop in town. Site plan had been waived four years ago and that project was not complete. Ms. Bubon indicated that there was no major site work planned for this site.

**Motion:** Made by Ms. Dumas to waive site plan approval for the operation of the restaurant as requested.  
**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Mr. Cunniff  
**Discussion:** None  
**Vote:** 5 – 0

Ms. Scaffidi indicated that she hoped to open by the end of December.

### **ELIZABETH FRAS – GREEN CENTER ASSISTED LIVING**

At this time Elizabeth Fras met with the Board to explain her organization and to discuss her desire to find an appropriate property to operate an Assisted Living Facility within the Town. She stated that she currently operates Golden Life Home Care in Webster. The facility that she would like to operate in Sturbridge would be a small facility that would provide a real home environment to seniors that need a bit of help. Ideally she would like an existing building in good condition but could renovate an older building. Her facility provides housekeeping, food and transportation as well as companionship in a small setting. The facility would be all affordable rental assisted living.

Ms. Gibson-Quigley asked Ms. Dumas if she knew of a way for the Community Preservation Committee to assist since this would be affordable housing. Ms. Dumas stated that she was not sure the funds could be used for a “for-profit” organization. Ms. Fras stated that she has formed as a non-profit organization since there are more grant and funding opportunities available. Ms. Dumas stated that she would look into this.

Ms. Gibson-Quigley thought this was something that the Master Plan Steering Committee may be interested in hearing about as well as it works through the planning process. It may be worthwhile to consider the zoning districts that would allow such a use.

Ms. Gibson-Quigley stated that it may be beneficial for Ms. Fras to meet with the Housing Partnership and Council on Aging since they may be able to assist her in some way. Ms. Fras stated that she would like to meet with them and she would also like to know if there is anyone that could assist her with writing grants for the facility.

The Board indicated that they would be in touch with Ms. Fras and asked Ms. Bubon to put her in contact with the Housing Partnership and Senior Center Director/Council on Aging.

## **DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES UPDATE – KICK OFF MEETING**

At this time the Planning Board met jointly with members of the Design Review Committee (DRC). DRC members present were Janet Celuzza, Fran O’Connell, and Christian Castendyk. Present for Cubellis, the contractor hired for this project were Phaldie Taliep, Mark Glasser and Jon Henson.

Ms. Bubon began the meeting by explaining that Cubellis was hired using the grant funds received through the 43D Grant this June. This project was approved since the main goal of the program is to streamline the permit process and encourage development in appropriate locations. As part of this project, the Design Review Guidelines will be updated to better define the process and to provide better examples of appropriate design within the Guidelines so that they would be easy to understand and apply. Additionally, the Commercial and Industrial Zoning Bylaws will be reviewed to identify impediments to appropriate development.

Mr. Taliep introduced the team members and explained a bit about their background and qualifications. He indicated that they had varied experiences in many locations including Plymouth and other similar communities. He presented a packet of photographs to all present showing some sites in Framingham and other communities. He stated that he lived in Framingham and that that was a community had grown very quickly and in the process they had lost themselves. He stated that the key was to encourage growth that doesn’t destroy what the town is today.

Mr. Taliep stated that they would need to gather a lot of information and needed to gain a sense of how the group wanted to handle Big Box development. They plan to spend a full day or more just taking photographs of businesses in town. Those pictures will be provided to the town and can be used as a data file. Mr. Glasser is LEED accredited and he will focus on some sustainable design issues. Mr. Henson is a Landscape Architect and he can better help the group visualize the impact of its bylaws. Mr. Taliep then asked for feedback from the group on what they envisioned this process to do for the town.

Ms. Bubon stated that she would like an organized clear guide that explained appropriate design not only to those with an architectural background, but to the layperson as well. She also wanted to be able to clearly explain what the submission requirements were and how the process works when an applicant meets with her.

Ms. Celuzza stated that there were so many different areas of town with so many different design standards. She wondered how that could be incorporated into a Guideline.

Ms. Gibson-Quigley stated that for her it was the question of how do you get a good design? Sometimes all the components may be correct but it may not look right together. She also stated that we are not a colonial town and that fake colonial is not necessarily good design. She did not think that you had to replicate to make a good streetscape; it just had to fit in the neighborhood. She even cited the Cheese House as an example; she said she always liked the Cheese House, but that adding a gable roof did not make it colonial nor did it make it fit into the neighborhood.

Mr. Castendyk stated that he felt the process was not consistent. Sometimes a business is actually up and running before the DRC even hears about it. He said that he has always questioned what their job was and how can they adhere to a process when it really does not seem to be defined at all.

Mr. Glasser stated that he was hearing that there needs to be a clear process, clarity of design goals and a methodology to define certain neighborhood characteristics. There needs to be discussion of components, scale and streetscape. He stated that this town is full of history, but what we do today makes history for the year 2050. Procedural guidelines must be set up so that there are triggers for when the DRC will be involved.

Ms. O'Connell stated that she did not believe that people realized when the DRC had headed things off. People may not think that the design is that nice, but it is probably a much better design than the DRC saw at the start of the process. She thought that there should be examples of Best Practices in the Guidebook. Corporate branding was another issue that was hard to deal with; she questioned how to deal with applying standards to corporate brands without making them feel unwelcome in town. She said that she had a special concern for buildings of historic significance such as the Blackington Building and wondered how those buildings could be protected. She said that she was also frustrated when someone came in for approval after the sign was already built; when that occurs, the DRC feels much pressured since the business owner has already spent a great deal on the sign. She stated that they did not want to be the color police, but there had to be a balance.

Ms. Dumas felt that the standards need to be crystal clear and that the Guidelines need some teeth. She believed that often it depended upon who the petitioner was in regards to design. Some want a unique curb appeal and nice landscaping and will work hard on that design.

Ms. Gibson-Quigley thought that it would be helpful to know how do you talk to corporate. How do you respond when they say this is what they have to have? Mr. Taliep said that examples from surrounding towns could be helpful if you can point to a good design that they did in another community. There are often several corporate proto-types.

Ms. Celuzza stated that there was a photo album of all the signs in town that was done by the students a few years back as part of their community service requirement. She said that she had not seen that in some time. Ms. Bubon stated that she would try to locate those photos for the group.

Ms. Celuzza stated that sometimes the Building Inspector will say that if someone is just re-painting a sign then DRC approval is not required. Ms. Morrison questioned what level of change is a trigger? Ms. Bubon responded that all signs and all commercial and industrial property changes to the exterior of buildings were subject to DRC approval. Mr. Castendyk stated that it was frustrating as well to see things approved by another agency. He stated that they would record their comments in their notes but would never get a response.

Mr. Taliep stated that the Planning Department should be the first point of contact. The website should be used to disseminate information and that the inspectors may need some re-training. Ms. Gibson Quigley asked how you deal with that. Ms. Bubon stated that we

should all look at this as a fresh start with a new Guidebook, applications and process. It would be an educational process for everyone involved.

Mr. Cunniff asked about restricting paint colors. Mr. Taliep stated that would have to be included in the zoning bylaw. Other members of the group did not think this was something that would be supported. Mr. Taliep stated that sometimes this is something reserved for historic districts in town.

Mr. Taliep asked about Peer Review for site plan. Ms. Bubon stated that the town rarely hired Peer Reviewers; staff was expected to conduct reviews in-house with few exceptions. He stated that sometimes you can get a student from MIT or Umass for free to review some projects.

Mr. Taliep stated that for next steps everyone should get a list of good examples and bad examples of design to Ms. Bubon so that she could compile them and get them to him. He would provide some sample Design Review Guidelines and Zoning Bylaws to the group and he asked that he be sent Word Documents of the Bylaws and Guidelines.

Mr. Henson provided photographs to the group of several business locations in Northampton. He explained that these represented examples of good site design and that this was important for everyone to realize how good site design can support what you would like to see. He stated that there were ways to soften Big Boxes so that they were better integrated. He showed photographs of the Route 5 Corridor and explained that the buildings have to be up on the street with the parking in the rear. He said that we had to think of what we wanted and what type of access we were trying to provide to the site. It was important to visualize the impact of your zoning bylaw.

Ms. Gibson-Quigley stated that sometimes that it was difficult because the project in front of you may meet everything, but you didn't know what the next project may be and how that could impact the way it looks. Mr. Henson stated that is where streetscape guidelines are important; they helped to keep everything consistent. When there are public improvements they should follow the streetscape guideline as well; in the end it is easier to get private investment in properties when the town makes an effort.

Ms. Dumas stated that she thought the Comfort Inn/Cracker Barrel project was a nice project, but the Verdi roof was not good. She believed that asphalt shingles were a much better look since the roof is really half of the building. So many want to use the metal roofs now; she wondered about requiring asphalt shingles. Mr. Henson stated that he could bring some things forward for consideration by the group. Ms. Dumas asked how you do these things without appearing anti-business. Mr. Henson stated that at some point you have to stand your ground. If just one group does not enforce what is adopted, then this has all been a waste of time.

Mr. Taliep stated that the town must be marketed. You want people to like the look of the town and want to come back. You have to work to create or maintain that sense of place. He said that sometimes you could have a Chamber of Commerce speak to an entire groups of towns and businesses to try to help express why you have standards.

Mr. Taliep stated that they would be in touch with Ms. Bubon and would set some time to come out and spend time in the community and they would look to meet with the group again some time in November with a draft report.

## **TOWN PLANNER UPDATE**

### FEMA UPDATE

- Revised maps were received September 22, 2009 and there are now approximately 300 properties within the Zone A versus the 1200+ on the April preliminary maps
- There were approximately 1200 properties in the AE zone versus over 1400 on the April maps
- A new mailing would be sent to all that had been into the office for a copy of the map if there was a change; a new mass mailing would not be done
- The website would be updated with the revised maps and a notice of significant changes such as Leadmine and Big Alum being removed from the Zone AE.

### ZONING BYLAW 2009

- All zoning amendments from the 2009 Annual Town Meeting had been approved by the Attorney General's office.

### EMAIL RETENTION

Handout from Kopelman & Paige – Re: Email retention was provided to members

## **NEXT MEETING DATES**

- October 27, 2009 – Steering Committee
- November 10, 2009 – Planning Board
- November 17, 2009 – Steering Committee
- Saturday, November 21, 2009 – Master Plan –Public Forum 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM
- December 1, 2009 – Planning Board
- December 8, 2009 – Planning Board
- December 15, 2009 – Steering Committee

## **OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS**

None

On a motion made by Ms. Morrison and seconded by Mr. Cunniff the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:50 PM.