NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

October 29, 2024

The Needham Planning Board meeting, held in the Charles River Room of the Public Services Administration Building, and virtually using Zoom, was called to order by Natasha Espada, Chairman, on Tuesday, October 29, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. with Messrs. Crocker, Block, Alpert and McCullen, Planner, Ms. Newman and Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee.

Ms. Espada noted this is an open meeting that is being held in a remote manner per state guidelines. She reviewed the rules of conduct for all meetings. This meeting includes one continued public hearing and public comment will not be allowed. If any votes are taken at the meeting the vote will be conducted by roll call.

Public Hearing:

7:00 p.m. – Major Project Site Plan Special Permit No. 2024-01: Needham Housing Authority (NHA), 21 Highland Circle, Suite 10, Needham, MA, Petitioner (Property located at 0 Linden Street and 5 Chambers Street, Needham, Massachusetts). Regarding request to redevelop the NHA Linden-Chambers property. ***Please note that this hearing has been continued from the September 24, 2024, and October 15, 2024 Planning Board meetings.***

Robert Smart, attorney for the applicant, stated Assistant Planner Ms. Clee asked him to provide language for the decision as to whether the decision complies with site plan review standards. He has provided that language. The Conservation Commission voted an order of conditions to approve the project. He received correspondence from the DPW and the Fire Department. Both are ok with the project changes. Dan Chen, of Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype, Inc. (BHA), stated the capacity of the storm water management has been increased for a 25-year storm and is entirely on site. The previous design met and exceeded the state requirement. At the town's request capacity has been added and doubled. At this capacity it is at a threshold of diminished return. If it was increased any more, it would not be able to absorb the additional water. The fire lane extends further into the back of the building on the north and south sides in Phase 1B. The concrete path in back has been widened. That will help with the ladder access for the Fire Department.

Ms. Espada read the correspondence from the Fire Chief with his comments. She noted a full vehicular fire lane is not required in the back of the building. The 2 fire hydrants will remain but one has been moved slightly. Wider sidewalks have been modified slightly to accommodate the new extended fire lanes. Mr. Block asked if the storm water management plan for the entire site was both phases. Mr. Chen stated it was. Mr. Crocker commented he would prefer if the access lanes on the sides of the building had the same treatment as the Board had requested at Muzi Ford. Ms. Espada asked if the applicant would consider that. Mr. Chen stated there were mixed results for both the plastic surface and the paving system that allows grass. Sometimes the plows destroy the system. The permeable asphalt system will help with water runoff. He is looking further into permeable asphalt systems.

Mr. McCullen, Mr. Alpert and Mr. Block are all satisfied with the changes. Ms. Newman noted an email from Fire Chief Tom Conroy, dated 10/24/24, with comments and a letter from Town Engineer Thomas Ryder, dated 10/24/24, with comments regarding the fire lane. Mr. Block noted an email from resident Kaliegh Moriarty, dated 10/15/24, regarding the relocation plan for residents.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. McCullen, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to close the hearing.

Ms. Newman will have a draft at the next meeting on 11/6. She would like some direction from the Board on any special conditions. A discussion ensued with some residents concerned there was no public comment allowed. Mr. Crocker noted the pavers are to be reviewed and some signage should be considered going into the fire lane. He feels the landscaping is pretty good. He is satisfied the project will improve the neighborhood storm water management. It will be better than before. He feels the Board did their jobs and noted the residents can always email any thoughts or concerns to the Planning Board. Ms. Espada thanked the residents for their comments. She noted the comments helped shape the improvements. Mr. Crocker asked if there were any conditions Mr. Smart anticipated. Mr. Smart stated he provided a letter today with language regarding the 2-year lapse. Ms. Newman will have Town Counsel Christopher Heep review the language. Mr. Smart stated he went to the Children's Hospital decision to look at the language regarding the permit running with the land. He asked the Board to import that language into this decision. Ms. Newman stated the decision will be included in the online packet the Friday before the meeting.

Board of Health – Article 1: Regulation Affecting Smoking and the Sale and Distribution of Tobacco Products in Needham.

The Board discussed their purview regarding this. Ms. Newman noted the Board does not have any purview. She is not sure why this was sent to the Planning Board. Mr. Block asked if other municipalities have enacted this. Mr. McCullen stated Brookline is the only town that has enacted this. Mr. Block noted the question is the age limit. Mr. Alpert stated it is not an age. If born after a certain date that person cannot buy cigarettes in Needham. Mr. Crocker is not sure the Board can have an opinion on this, but individual members can. It was decided the Planning Board will thank the Board of Health for letting them know and otherwise make no comment.

Minutes

There were no minutes for this meeting.

Report from Planning Director and Board members

Ms. Newman noted, at the 11/19 meeting, there will be appointments to the Large House Study Committee at large members. After discussion, it was decided the Chair and Vice-Chair will interview and make recommendations to the full Board. Ms. Newman feels the Board should have a meeting with goals, what the Board wants to get done over the course of the next year and what would be required for the Spring and Fall Town Meetings. Ms. Espada asked if there have been applicants for the Committee positions. There have been 6 applicants for the 5 at large positions. The Committee will be comprised of 2 Planning Board members, 2 Select Board members, a Design Review Board member or designee, a Finance Committee member, a Zoning Board of Appeals member and 5 at large members which will include a Real Estate Broker, a developer, an architect and 2 at large. The posting is still open on the town's website. Ms. Newman wants to get this Committee appointed as soon as possible.

Ms. Espada stated the Board needs to review ADUs, Crescent Street and the rezoning of that and Hershey. Mr. Block commented there is a much bigger opportunity in front of them to deal with Great Plain Avenue from the Post Office to Warren Street. He stated he had started a list. Ms. Clee re-sent the list to all members so they can add to it. Mr. Crocker stated Wexford Street should be thought about. Ms. Newman noted she applied for a grant through the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) for parking. She hopes to hear by the next meeting. For the MBTA Communities Act follow up, they need to develop design guidelines to get that project moving. Ms. Espada feels the Dover Amendment guidelines should be reviewed. All members should look at the list and add revisions and thoughts for discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Block noted Heidi Frail will be the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA). Mr. McCullen stated the Mobility Planning and Coordination Committee is having their semi-annual transportation summit. They will have a joint meeting with the Transportation Safety Committee and the Rail Trail Committee to go over the status of transportation on 11/20/24. Ms. Espada feels that would be a good group to partner with for the parking study.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. McCullen, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

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Artie Crocker, Vice-Chairman and Clerk