NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

April 15, 2020

The Planning Board Virtual Meeting using Zoom was remotely called to order by Martin Jacobs, Chairman, on Wednesday, April 15, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. with Messrs. Alpert and Eisenhut and Ms. McKnight, as well as Planning Director, Ms. Newman and Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee.

Mr. Jacobs noted this is an open meeting that is being held remotely because of Governor Baker's executive order on March 12, 2020 due to the COVID Virus. All attendees are present by video. He reviewed the rules of conduct for zoom meetings.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Ms. McKnight, it was by a roll call vote of the four members present unanimously:
VOTED: to automatically continue the meeting to 5/5/20 at 7:00 p.m. with the same zoom ID number if any technical difficulties arise that keep the Planning Board from continuing this meeting.

Public Hearing:

7:05 p.m. – Article 1: Map Change to General Residence B Zoning District

Mr. Jacobs noted this is a map change for the Town Meeting Warrant. There is a legal notice in the packet.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Ms. McKnight, it was by a roll call vote of the four members present unanimously:
VOTED: to waive the reading of the public hearing notice.

George Guinta Jr., representative for the applicant, noted he is there to present a Citizen's Petition for a zoning map change. The section is 23 parcels on the edge of the Single Residence A (SRA) District generally between Hunting Road and Route 128. He reviewed the SRA requirements – 1 acre, 150 foot frontage, 30 foot minimum front setback, 15 foot rear setback and 15 foot side setback for existing and 25 foot setback for new construction. None of the 23 parcels meet the requirements. Only 4 parcels meet the frontage requirement. He is not clear on the current planning objective to keep them in the SRA District. All parcels are fully developed and non-conforming. It is Single Residence B (SRB) District across the street. The Citizen's Petition is to rezone and 18 of the 23 parcels have signed on and support. Others are also in support. He noted this has been discussed for several years. It can proceed as of right if put in the SRB District. He would like the Planning Board's support.

Mr. Alpert stated he had no comments or questions. Ms. McKnight stated she took a walk around the neighborhood. It appears the area in question does not look any different from the SRB Zone across the street. She sees no reason not to support it. Mr. Eisenhut commented he supports it. He stated the town needs to be treated as a whole. This is a particularly concentrated area. He asked if there are other areas in town where it is this concentrated. He also asked if anyone had been denied a Special Permit in this area. Mr. Giunta Jr. stated the issue is not obtaining a Special Permit but a matter of process. The lots really are a mirror image of across the street. He noted it is an extra burden to have to go through the process. He stated Needham originally had 3 zones and his thought is the lots were laid out when Needham had a third zone.

Ms. Newman noted the circumstances existed in other areas. One area that stands out is the Clarke Road and Rolling Lane area. The lots are laid out in a 20,000 square foot profile and now in the SRA District. She feels it is appropriate for a modification in this area. Mr. Eisenhut stated it is a unique parcel. He is not enthusiastic about it but will support it. Ms. McKnight stated the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is very conservative in how it interprets and grant permits. Mr. Jacobs noted 18 of 23 are in support and asked if the other 5 are in opposition or unwilling to sign. Mr. Giunta Jr. stated he has not heard of any in opposition. Some could not be reached and some would not sign but are in support. Bruno DeFazio, of 176 Hunting Road, stated he went around and got signatures. All but one supported it and only one did not want to sign because she could not be bothered.

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by a roll call vote of the four members present unanimously:
VOTED: to close the hearing and take it under consideration for a recommendation to Town Meeting.

Article 2: Amend Zoning By-Law – Pediatric Medical Facility in New England Business Center District.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Ms. McKnight, it was by a roll call vote of the four members present unanimously:
VOTED: to waive the reading of the public meeting notice.

Robert Smart, representative for the applicant, stated if the amendment were adopted by Town Meeting the hospital would require a Special Permit. The hospital is seeking to construct a pediatric medical facility at 380 First Avenue in the New England Business Center District and parking facilities as required. He believes Children's Hospital will bring a significant benefit to the Town such as world class pediatric care, physician training, innovative research, collaboration with the schools and support for Town health initiatives. The hospital would make payments in lieu of taxes. He feels there will be a positive fiscal impact. The applicants have met with the Planning Board, Select Board, Town Manager, Finance Committee, Town Engineer, Police Chief, Building Commissioner, School Superintendent and School Committee. He has a letter of support signed by 87 town residents. Mr. Jacobs noted he has received that letter and it will be part of the record.

Mr. Smart noted there are 3 components – it will add medical facility pediatrics, owed/operated and managed by the pediatric hospital and amend the required parking table to one space per 290 square feet. Tim Sullivan, of Goulston and Storrs, described the area. This is in the New England Business Center (NEBC) District and is bordered by Route 128, Highland Avenue, Charles River and the City of Newton and Cutler Park and Kendrick Street. The proposal is for a special permit use in this area. A new defined term is being added and a new special permit use in the NEBC that is creating a defining standard for which parking has to be provided. He described conversations they have had and how the new defined terms came about as a qualifier for the proposed use. He noted the proposal is not for a hospital but an outpatient, ambulatory center. A frame of reference would be the Children's Hospital ambulatory facility in Waltham. He stated the definition needs to be added to the By-Law first.

Mr. Sullivan stated the second component would be to add a new special permit use in the NEBC. He noted there will be day procedures, labs, radiology and doctors offices. The components need to be captured. There is no existing definition that is comprehensive. The third part is to create a parking standard. He feels one space for 290 square feet of floor area is an appropriate standard. He described the area and location of the proposed facility and the site plan of the area. The proposal is for a pediatric medical facility at 380 First Avenue. He showed the approved but undeveloped projects. He noted there is no plan to build either of the approved office buildings at this time. This project will build the 925 space parking garage.

Sean Manning, of VHB in Boston, stated he tried to define an appropriate standard for parking for pediatric medical. He used Brookline, Peabody and the old Waltham Hospital and he explained the parking at each of those facilities. Needham will be primarily ambulatory as are these comparables based on size and facilities. He reviewed the estimated parking requirement summary. He noted he did an operational assessment and anticipated trip generation comparison. He stated he counted every drive and entry into and out of Founders Park and the a.m. peak would be higher by about 1%. The evening would be slightly higher by about 6%.

Mr. Sullivan noted the prospective economic and community benefits. The applicant will pay 100% of the assessed real estate tax. They will enter into a PILOT agreement to make a payment in lieu of taxes. This will be an innovation hub for Boston Children's Hospital. He feels the food and lodging business will be increased due to the project. He noted there are 250 Needham residents currently employed by Children's Hospital. Children's is a long-term citizen of the area and will be around for a long while. He noted an economic impact analysis has been done. Construction will begin around 2022 and will have a $130 million economic impact. There will be about 680 jobs and $1.2 million in state and tax revenue. There will be $52 million increased activity in Needham. They are proposing a comprehensive defined pediatric facility. He feels it is in line with the town's goals and he would like the Board to favorably recommend the article.

Jeff Maxtutis, of BETA, reviewed the timeline of documents for parking and trip generation. Mr. Jacobs noted all those reports have been provided to the Planning Board and are all included in the record. Mr. Maxtutis noted the reference documents he used. Justin Curewitz, of BETA, reviewed the peer review comments regarding the parking demand and trip generation with a summary of the 2 reviews. He noted the outstanding parking demand comments and stated he wants to see the backup data on that and comments on building space types. He wants further information on how the parking metrics were determined. He noted the hotel room numbers changed from 129 to 180 and there is a 55 space parking increase that needs to be included. He came up with an average of 3.55 spaces per 1,000 square feet. 1,605 spaces would be needed.

Mr. Curewitz reviewed his recommendations and trip generation summary. Mr. Jacobs asked Mr. Curewitz to define the a.m. and p.m. peak hours. Mr. Curewitz noted the peak traffic is between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Counts are taken in 15 minute intervals for one hour. Mr. Alpert thanked Children's Hospital and the representatives. They have met with the Planning Board numerous times where concerns were raised and the hospital was very cooperative meeting the concerns and working with the Planning Board on wording changes. He is more than satisfied with the final result. He just wants to clarify there are 3 parcels but only one parcel is being developed at this time. He asked if the hospital was planning to purchase all 3 parcels at this time and was told that was correct.

Mr. Alpert stated the parking and trip generation studies were recently received. The Board will need time to review the reports prior to the recommendation to Town Meeting. Mr. Eisenhut stated it was an excellent presentation and he likes the use. He feels the trip generation will probably come up at Town Meeting in a broad sense. He also feels people will talk about Hunting Road and Kendrick Street. Access could be through Kendrick Street. He noted PTC is a large building on Kendrick Pond that is vacant. This will come up. He is not sure how that traffic generation was incorporated in. Mr. Curewitz feels there will be levels of detail like that that will be further studied. Mr. Eisenhut stated he is trying to anticipate what questions Town Meeting will have.

Ms. McKnight noted BETA is recommending a more recent traffic count. PTC was vacant at the time the counts were done. Mr. Manning stated he accounted for the vacancy and unused spaces. Ms. McKnight asked if there was a way to factor in counts as if that building was occupied for office use. She added that she understands updated traffic counts cannot be done at this time. Mr. Manning stated PTC is not inside the 128 District and would not be part of this count. He stated it would be helpful to have more data. Ms. McKnight stated she agrees with Mr. Alpert. She needs more time to review the revised documents received in the past few days.

Ms. McKnight asked if the hearing should be continued in case there are further questions once reviewed. Mr. Jacobs understands there are still a few open concerns. He believes VHB intends to make clarifications and he feels the hearing will be continued. Ms. Newman noted it will be continued to 5/5/20 to get responses from VHB. Mr. Jacobs wants to make clear the reports by VHB and BETA are helpful but are not exact computations. They are best estimates. There will be further studies and details if approved. There were no public comments.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Ms. McKnight, it was by a roll call vote of the four members present unanimously:
VOTED: to continue the hearing to the 5/5/20 meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Jacobs noted the continued hearing will be the same meeting ID number. Ms. McKnight asked if members of the public had questions prior to the meeting what would be the best way to submit them. Ms. Newman noted comments should be emailed to the Planning Department.

Minutes

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by a roll call vote of the four members present unanimously:
VOTED: to accept the minutes of 2/4/20.

Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

Report from Planning Director and Board members.

Ms. Newman noted she wants to share she has been forwarding memos from KP Law that are helpful. The Planning Department is moving to accept electronic permits. The Farmer's Market will be the first. This will allow projects to go forward.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Ms. McKnight, it was by a roll call vote of the four members present unanimously:
VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

____
Jeanne S. McKnight, Vice-Chairman and Clerk