

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

January 21, 2021

The Needham Planning Board Virtual Meeting using Zoom was remotely called to order by Jeanne McKnight, Chairman, on Thursday, January 21, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. with Messrs. Alpert, Owens and Block, as well as Planning Director, Ms. Newman.

Ms. McKnight took a roll call attendance of people expected to be on the agenda. She 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 conference. She reviewed the rules of conduct for zoom meetings. She noted this meeting does not include public hearings and will not allow for public comment. If any votes are taken at the meeting the vote will be conducted by roll call.

Highway Commercial 1 Rezoning and Planning Study: Review of Urban Design Plan, Discussion of Next Steps and Project Schedule.

Ms. Newman stated she had a second meeting with Natasha Espada, of Studio ENEE, and staff from the Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. (GPI) group. The purpose was to look at the draft presentation regarding urban design plans and the suggested changes made last week. They put together a power point presentation for the community meeting and are going to walk through the presentation so all members can see it. Ms. Espada noted she changed some of the property lines due to receiving the Assessor's map. She updated the site square footages. She also changed the retail with a different color to separate it from landscaping, added information on parking and added a "P" for the parking garages. She needs to add cars to the 6 renderings from the ramp. She listed the parking requirements and updated the spreadsheets Ms. Newman sent. She did not change the FAR on any slides. The goals remain the same. She also took out some of the plans that were not as relevant.

Mr. Block suggested taking out one or 2 photos from the lower part of Chestnut Street. Ms. Espada will remove one that is similar. She noted the idea is to see the spine back and forth. There is a new slide with the existing By-Law, the previous By-Law and the proposed By-Law. Mr. Block stated they will restate the by right situation and make a couple of changes on this slide. Susan Crowe Knight, Architect at Studio ENEE, noted there should be a discussion regarding the transition of maximum heights by special permit from 70 feet to 42 feet. This will need to be set. Mr. Alpert thought they had decided to reduce the by-right height. Select Board Member Marianne Cooley agreed it was to be 4 stories and 2 stories and not 5 stories and 3 stories. All agreed to reduce the by-right height. Ms. McKnight clarified the maximum by-right height will be 30 feet near the streets and 54 feet in back.

Ms. Espada stated there were no dimensional changes made to the renderings but she could do that. She added a zoning district planning slide. Ms. McKnight asked if the number of acres could be added and keep the square footage. Ms. Espada noted the drawings for the warehouse were moved to the back, current parking numbers of 690 plus have been added and the existing zoning requirement information has been added. She noted the parking numbers are 422 for TV Place and 688 for the Muzi site. This is an as of right zoning plan. A "P" has been added to the plan for parking garages, and they are staying 180 feet back. The setback is based on a parallel road. They could do a parallel line to the road. Mr. Block stated they could do a distance from the intersection at a distance of "X". Mr. Alpert has no problem with a parallel line.

Ms. Espada stated she has shaded over the Muzi Ford building so you cannot see it. Two slides will be revised to reduce the height levels. Ms. McKnight would like green space shown on the slide. Mr. Block asked if a couple of cars could be reduced on the slides. He feels traffic will be a huge focus of this. Mr. Owens agreed there does not need to be a heavily trafficked slide. Ms. Espada can easily remove cars and could remove the bike line also. She will add more trees to the highway exit slide and will remove the white line. She will lower the building by one floor and maybe cut it back to make it parallel to the block. Warehouse parking is in the background. The

question is where is the setback line going to be set along Highland Avenue? She will take the 200-foot setback for higher buildings and show it on the site. Ms. Newman suggested they start the line at the point of intersection of Highland Avenue and Gould Street and run the setback line parallel to that line.

Mr. Alpert agreed with Mr. Owens that it is too late to tinker with the language too much. There is already a setback needed to build. He would like to leave the distance as it is now and run it parallel to Highland Avenue. It is simple and can be done quickly. Ms. Newman stated there needs to be a point on the lot that is selected as a starting point for the line to run parallel to Highland Avenue. Mr. Alpert stated he is ok with a line at 180 feet. It was agreed to go with what they have.

Rebecca Brown, of GPI, showed slides of when the traffic counts were taken. The blue counts were taken in 2015 and the green were updated in 2019. The blue counts have been adjusted to account for traffic changes. GPI has used the 2019 data as 2015 was less. For the Volume of Traffic Slide, a.m. and p.m. peaks were generated using existing uses on site and proposed trips. Ms. McKnight asked why there were no existing trips. Ms. Brown stated she did not count them but wanted to give an idea of how many trips there would be. There is a net increase.

Ms. Brown noted the next slide shows how they distributed the trips out and the next is the level of service with no build in the a.m. and p.m. and with build out in a.m. and p.m. She will explain the trip generation. She has shown where there are capacity constraints that need mitigation. Other level F service intersections are at the 2 proposed site drives and at Central and Gould. This intersection is a level service F and no build. The Town has money for improvements there for 3 years out. Ms. Cooley stated the town is already in year one of the 3-year cycle. Ms. Brown noted the next slide shows the improvements needed at Gould and Highland. She showed the worst-case scenario of what the impacts might look like.

Ms. McKnight stated the squares were hard to read and there may need to be oral presentation. Ms. Brown will explain each item and describe it. She noted there will need to be signal easements, takings on the Muzi property and easements for sidewalks. The last slide shows the intersections proposed to be improved and how their levels of service will be, once improved with mitigations. There will be no Level F at Central and Gould and there will be a left turning lane. The last slides are questions in case something comes up. There is collision history at intersections and then a zoomed in version of the concept plans. There are slides that detail traffic volumes, existing conditions and new build and generated trips with build scenarios.

Mr. Owens left the meeting at 9:40 a.m. Ms. Brown gave a detail of trip generation by use and pass by traffic. She will do a slide that removes some of the retail and adds in 240 residential units. Ms. McKnight stated she would like a slide between the existing and Option B. Ms. Brown will add it into the question and answer section. Mr. Block commented the highly technical data could be seen as a bit of a distraction. He wants to keep the core part simplified. He is not sure he wants to add anything to the core. Ms. Brown could add a column that shows traffic with Option A, Option B and the difference.

Mr. Alpert stated the mitigation plans for the Gould and Central intersection are going to happen without the rezoning. He does not want to spend a lot of time on that. Ms. Newman is concerned because it shows takings that people have not been notified of yet. Ms. Brown stated this slide is only there in case questions come up. She can remove the information. People will know the level of service at that intersection will be fixed. Mr. Block asked Ms. Brown to write "no build scenario" at the top of slide and put "with mitigation." Ms. McKnight assumes the sketches with the size of the site do not take into account the takings. Ms. Espada stated they do not, as takings may not be necessary depending upon what happens and what is proposed. She was asked to prepare a worst-case scenario.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by a roll call vote of the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

Paul Alpert, Vice-Chairman and Clerk