

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

June 14, 2021

The Needham Planning Board Virtual Meeting using Zoom was remotely called to order by Paul Alpert, Chairman, on Tuesday June 14, 2021, at 7:15 p.m. with Messrs. Jacobs and Block and Ms. McKnight, as well as Planning Director, Ms. Newman and Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee.

Mr. Alpert took a roll call attendance of the Board members and staff. He 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. He reviewed the rules of conduct for zoom meetings. He noted this meeting does include a public hearing that will be continued. If any votes are taken at the meeting the vote will be conducted by roll call. All supporting materials are posted on the town's website.

Public Hearing:

7:20 p.m. -- Major Project Site Plan: Needham Enterprises, LLC, 105 Chestnut Street, Suite 28, Needham, MA Petitioner (Property located at 1688 Central Avenue, Needham, MA). Regarding proposal to construct a new child care facility of 9,966 square feet and 30 parking spaces, that would house an existing Needham child-care business, Needham Children's Center (NCC).

Mr. Alpert noted a letter received from Attorney Evans Huber, representative for the applicant, requesting the hearing be continued to the 7/20/21 meeting. The applicant would like comments from other town departments. The Board received revised plans and a traffic report on Thursday and there has not been time to review them. The applicant would like a peer review of the traffic analysis, which the applicant will pay for. Multiple comments have been received from abutters. The attorney for the applicant has not had time to review all the comments yet. Ms. McKnight commented she appreciates the attention the Design Review Board (DRB) has given to this project.

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

VOTED: to continue the hearing to 7/20/21 at 7:20 p.m.

Ms. Newman noted there should be an additional motion to find that the traffic study peer review is warranted and authorize her to engage a traffic company to do the study. She noted Greenman Petersen Inc. (GPI) and Beta are under contract for the Town with the Engineering Department. Mr. Block stated GPI would be his preference. Ms. Newman will reach out to them. Maggie Abruzese, of 30 Bridal Trail Road, asked if the Board is going to deliberate or discuss the implication of alleged ethical violations on this matter. Mr. Alpert stated all were informed ahead of time of the continuance so all discussions will be deferred until 7/20. Ms. Abruzese asked, if the Board needs to seek information from the State Ethics Commission, that would not happen until after 7/20. Mr. Alpert stated the Board will not comment until the 7/20 meeting.

Carl Jonasson questioned the traffic study. He asked if it will take place after school is out of session and commented there is no point if that is the case. That traffic should be taken into account. Ms. Newman stated the purpose of a peer review is to look at information the applicant has provided and give an opinion if the information is accurate and suggest any changes. Mr. Jonasson stated the applicant feels Central Avenue is an A rating. That rating was done during Covid. Mr. Alpert noted the peer review will determine if the rating given is correct. Holly Clarke, of 1652 Central Avenue, asked if it was possible to give the reviewer the materials the neighbors have submitted as well. These are real experiences. Mr. Alpert stated all that has been presented to the Board is part of the public record. He would hope the reviewer would look at that also. They will point out the information is on the town website and how to access it. Ms. Clarke requested this information be given to the reviewer.

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

VOTED: the Board finds a traffic study peer review is warranted and authorizes the Planning Director to engage a traffic company to do the study.

Mr. Jacobs left the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Board of Appeals – June 17, 2021

Andrew McKinney, Applicant -- 33 Fenton Road

Ms. McKnight commented the Board should make clear an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) being created is not, alone, a sufficient reason to a 3-car garage. In this case the garage is set back 20 feet from the front of the house. This factor should be taken into consideration. She feels it is a good design of the garage.

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

VOTED: to comment an ADU being created is not sufficient reason to make a 3-car garage. In this case the garage is set back 20 feet from the front of the house and this should be taken into consideration.

Karen Han, Applicant – 34 Grosvenor Road

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

VOTED: “No comment.”

No No Song, LLC, Applicant – 68 Highland Avenue

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

VOTED: “No comment.”

Adam Jacob Pase and Liat Rosen, Applicants – 68 Wilshire Park

Ms. McKnight stated she has a concern with this application. The applicant wants to allow alteration or reconstruction of a prior non-conforming structure. She does not see evidence of a prior non-conforming structure.

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

VOTED: to comment this application should be carefully examined so the source of the non-conformity referred to is made clear.

Committee Appointments

Mr. Alpert noted this was discussed at the last meeting. There is a seat on the Transportation Committee held by Stephen McKnight that expired 5/31/21 and a seat on the Design Review Board held by Steve Tanner that will expire on 6/30/21. The Board discussed a new procedure to open up the process rather than just reappointing. He had a discussion with Mr. Tanner. Mr. Alpert feels opening it up at this time would be very time consuming. He would like to reconsider and reappoint both to the current positions and start the process of opening it up next time they come to the Board. Mr. Block recommends the Board start the framework process today for whenever the next appointees are. He feels there should be regular communication with appointees on a quarterly basis. Ms. Newman will start developing a policy. She will let all appointees know of the new procedure. She feels there should maybe be annual reports to the Chair and Vice-Chair.

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

VOTED: to reappoint Steven Tanner to the Design Review Board’s 3-year term.

Mr. Alpert noted there was no quorum to reappoint Mr. McKnight as Ms. McKnight will recuse herself. That will be put on the agenda for the 6/29/21 meeting. Mr. Block stated one goal of the Board is to consider the transportation policy. He feels the transportation representative should be invited when this is discussed at a hearing. There may also be parts of transportation that may be part of the housing elements. Ms. McKnight noted it is the intent of the Planning Department to establish an advisory committee to study housing. Ms. Newman would recommend there be a comparable entity created to oversee this work. This will be discussed at the Chair/Vice-Chair meeting on Thursday.

Minutes

The minutes have not been reviewed yet and will be deferred to the 6/29/21 meeting.

Correspondence

There is no correspondence.

Report from Planning Director and Board members

Ms. Newman noted there is a training session on Wednesday to learn about hybrid meetings, how they will be handled and what to expect. On Thursday there will be a Chair/Vice-Chair meeting with members of the Planning Board. The discussion will be the hospital and housing plans. She is working on the Outdoor Seating Policy to codify some practices under Covid. She wants a regulating framework that makes sense. She noted the Town will file an application soon for an upgrade for the commons.

Ms. Espada arrived at 8:05 p.m.

Mr. Alpert updated her on the meeting.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Espada, and seconded by Mr. Block, it was by a roll call vote of three of the four members present (Ms. McKnight recused herself):

VOTED: to reappoint Stephen McKnight to the Transportation Committee.

Ms. McKnight stated at the last meeting the Board had decided not to restudy accessory dwelling units. She is involved with Equal Justice Needham and would like to continue work on that. One member is creating a video and Ms. McKnight taped a background for the video. She hopes all are ok with that. Mr. Alpert requested Ms. McKnight be cognizant of any conflict of interest in her 2 roles. Equal Justice Needham will take up issues in front of this Board and he wants her to be sensitive to the appearance of conflict of interest.

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

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

Adam Block, Vice-Chairman and Clerk