

**Planning Board
February 18, 2015**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

1. Roll Call

In attendance: Doug Locy, Noah Luskin, Jim McCarthy, Bonnie Sontag, and Sue Grolnic.
Leah McGavern arrived at 7:12 pm.

Absent: Don Walters

Director of Planning and Development, Andrew Port, was also present.

2. General Business

- a) The Executive Session minutes of 1/21/2015 were approved as amended. Bonnie Sontag made a motion to approve the Executive Session minutes. Doug Locy seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.
- b) The Regular minutes of 1/21/2015 were approved. Sue Grolnic made a motion to approve the Regular minutes. Doug Locy seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

4. New Business

- a) *Tropic Star Development
81-83 Storey Avenue
Request for Minor Modification
2014-SPR-02*

Jim Mitchell, Vice President, Tropic Star Development, 321 Lafayette Road, Hampton, NH, presented information for a Minor Modification request to allow a freestanding sign for the relocated Shell Station. The proposed sign was 6 feet high and 228 square feet, in satin white on a stone base, with AFL12 halogen externally illuminated lighting, similar to what was currently at Panera's. The existing Shell Station sign is 28 feet high. The new sign will be located in the area as shown on the plan so as to not obstruct vehicular sight lines.

The rendering depicted a 1½ foot green strip along Storey Avenue. Pending approval from Mass DOT, the grass strip would be installed and maintained by the developer. Chairman McCarthy said ordinance compliance for off-site illumination to adjacent properties, ZBA approval for any sign modifications, and not attaching anything to the sign were the conditions.

Sue Grolnic made a motion to approve the Minor Modification with three conditions. Leah McGavern seconded and all members voted in favor.

Motion Approved.

**Planning Board
February 18, 2015**

During the course of discussion and consideration of this application, plan(s), supporting material(s), department head comments, peer review report(s), planning department comments and other related documents, all as filed with the planning department as part of this application and all of which are available in the planning department, were considered.

**b) Bradku Construction, LLC
8 Oakland Street
VI.C Special Permit Pre-Application Conference**

Chairman McCarthy recused himself from the discussion and left the room. Vice Chair Sontag led the discussion. Nicholas Cracknell, Keystone Planning & Design, 13 Pickard St, Amesbury, MA, as Project Manager, presented a pre-application proposal on behalf of developer Brad Kutcher, Bradku, LLC, 242 Main Street, #5, Amesbury, MA.

The proposed project would restore, develop, and permanently protect the Amos Coffin House, circa 1840, with a deeded Preservation Restriction, and construct a second, principle single-family dwelling on the lot at the corner of Walnut and Oakland Streets. The Coffin House was a two-family structure until 2003, when owners Robert and Ann Miller converted it back to a single-family dwelling.

A ZBA meeting to obtain permission for two-family use for the lot and a dimensional variance would be February 24th. If desired relief were granted, the applicant would return to the board in 4-6 weeks to request a VI-C Special Permit for two principle residential structures on the property to restore the Amos Coffin House. If the VI-C Special Permit were not granted, there would be no interest in the two-family project.

The goal was a project that fit completely into the streetscape, contributed to the historical character of Oakland Street, and improved the value, quality and character of the other 29 properties in the neighborhood. The neighborhood context was of great importance. Fifty attributes of the 29 other structures had been collected, including details of stoops, porches, and rails. Mr. Cracknell worked with abutters and neighbors to describe and solicit feedback on the project. The new construction would be respectful, measured, and not overburden the site, which could support two structures. Less than seven other structures had their long sides facing Oakland Street as this house would. The front door would orient to the front door of a Greek Revival structure across the street; the houses would bookend each other.

The 3,500 square foot existing principal structure was historically significant. Mr. Cracknell would meet with the Historic Commission and the Preservation Trust. Overall, the project met 90% of the dimensional requirements, but fell 340 feet short of the 12,000 square feet needed for a two-family development. The front yard set back was within 18 inches of the requirement. Walnut Street frontage was 85 feet, Oakland Street frontage was 129 feet, a frontage total exceeding 200 feet. The property had three driveways and one garage.. Another developer could double the size of the existing house.

Oakland Street structures ranged from 1 ½ story to 2 ½ stories high. Most street trees looked less than 10 years old. There were tree gaps on this property and would be filled in as part of the

**Planning Board
February 18, 2015**

development. A brick sidewalk would surround the site, replacing concrete sidewalks. The newly constructed single-family home would be a Federal Gambrel with a cedar shake roof, similar to an existing structure at Plummer Street and Atkinson Common Current. Impervious surfaces and the third curb cut would be removed. The footprint of the new house would be comparable to the removed impervious surfaces. The building was the width of a two-car garage at 24 feet wide. Open space in the rear was a plus; the lot shape would provide usable side and rear yards for two houses, each with a garage. Parking would not be in front of the façade. A neighbor would be granted the parking space that had evolved from a driveway that straddled the property line. Removal of non-conformities would be examined.

The visual character was important; two proposed principle structures on one lot should appear as two lots. Mr. Cracknell would make sure the project goals would not be downgraded by any changes/alterations that came up during construction. The site lent itself to a VI-C development with access from two separate streets. He said the City was approaching the end of this kind of VI-C development and gave examples of the potential that remained in Newburyport.

Member comments. The application was impressively comprehensive. What were the abutter's comments? Mr. Cracknell had not yet reached everyone in the neighborhood. He hoped to have the support of most, but it would not be all. He had revisited some neighbors up to three times, gaining new information the process. Some birch trees were important to one abutter and a flowering magnolia was important to other neighbors. Members asked if it was a Georgian Colonial? Mr. Cracknell said it was a Federal Gambrel, perhaps because of the entryway. Was there a dramatic drop in slope and elevation change? Mr. Cracknell said the drop was behind the fence and wall on an adjoining property. The area members were concerned with was relatively flat, but there was a four-foot drop as you left the property. How would the two back yards be oriented? Mr. Cracknell said they would be joined and divided by a wooden fence. Would the existing garage be removed? Mr. Cracknell said the existing garage would be removed and replaced with a new garage; a second garage would be built for the new structure. The distance from the backyard to the new house was about 25 feet. What specifically did the project need from the ZBA? Mr. Cracknell confirmed he needed a variance for dimensional relief and a special permit for a two-family use of the lot. It was suggested Mr. Cracknell see the Historical Commission prior to returning to the board with his application because the board relied on the Commission's input. Mr. Cracknell said he would have a pre-application conference with the Historical Commission before returning, but hoped to proceed with scheduling the public hearing for the project. He might not finish with the Historical Commission before the hearing completed. Was the Historical Commission interested in the Preservation Restriction? Mr. Cracknell said informing the Commission prior to securing the needed ZBA Variance and Special Permit did not make sense. There would be no project without ZBA support.

Director Port said the project was similar to 251 Merrimac Street. Vice Chair Sontag said the first possible return date for the applicant would be the 2nd meeting in March.

**Planning Board
February 18, 2015**

5. Planning Office/Subcommittees/Discussion

a) 40R

The discussion covered plans for the upcoming joint public hearing with the City Council Planning and Development committee scheduled for March 4. It included format and content, rescheduling the Back Bay Zoning proposal to another meeting, and the review process for 40R with DHCD and the City Council. Outstanding issues in the proposed ordinance were reviewed and agreed.

Chairman McCarthy announced that the Mayor has received three applications for the two open Planning Board positions. She will make a decision after interviewing the applicants and send her choices to the City Council for their approval.

6. Adjournment

Bonnie Sontag made a motion to adjourn. Doug Locy seconded and all members voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted -- Linda Guthrie