

**City of Newburyport
Planning Board
August 7, 2013
Minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

1. Roll Call

In attendance: Henry Coe, Paul Dahn, Sue Grolnic, Noah Luskin, Bonnie Sontag, Don Walters and Cindy Zabriskie

Absent: Dan Bowie and Jim McCarthy
Bonnie Sontag, Planning Board Secretary, chaired the meeting.

Mayor Donna Holaday and Andrew Port, Director of Planning and Development were also present.

1. General Business

Request for minor plan change for 4-6 Hale Street – relocate loading dock

Director Port said the project was approved awhile ago. An appeal in the courts was finally resolved, resulting in a minor modification to bring the loading dock back from the setback, eliminating the need for a variance. He recommended signing the Certificate of Vote.

Don Walters made a motion to approve relocating the loading dock and for Acting Chair Bonnie Sontag to sign the Certificate of Vote with today's date. Henry Coe seconded and all members voted in favor.

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.

2. Old Business

***Office of Planning and Development
Senior Community Center
331 High Street
Major Site Plan Review
Continued from 7/17/2013***

Acting Chair Sontag read the notification for the public hearing. Mayor Holaday said the city had been working toward this project for 30 years. She was grateful it has come to pass. After several redesigns, she was pleased with the design and landscaping. Heery International would coordinate the site with existing plans.

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Roseann Robillard, Director, Council on Aging, said the COA board consisted of 7-11 residents who worked, along with paid staff, to serve the senior community. In 1983, the COA building was destroyed. The Salvation Army offered a room for COA services. COA programs have been held all over the city for three decades. Our program is largely invisible to residents who could benefit from our services. Many residents assume the COA is part of the Salvation Army. Today, seniors travel to five or more locations in the same day to participate in COA programs and it's understandable why some seniors choose to stay home. Newburyport's elder population had a 36.2% increase in the last decade, and totals 4,600+ seniors or 24% of our population. The numbers are expected to continue growing until 2050. We need a community focal point for seniors where all COA services and programs are consolidated in one location.

Charles Griffin, Chairman, EGA, 12 Auburn Street, Newburyport, one of two architects on the project said the Senior Community Center would be a joint venture with Bill Sterling, President, Sterling Associates, 19 Bishop Allen Drive, Cambridge, MA. EGA has executed nearly 200 major senior facility projects. Many months effort determined that the old Bresnahan School building was more expensive to convert than to build new. There was no insulation and many repairs were needed. The Senior Community Center would use the same entrance off High Street as new school. The 2-story building will cover 15,000+ square feet, has no attic or basement, and faces away from the northern prevailing winds. It faces the parking lot. School buses would drive by the Bocce Court area. The building had changed slightly since voters approved the project. Its architecture drew from the Classical and Federal styles that represent most of downtown. Providing a skin, fit and finish that lasted a long time, almost maintenance free for 10-20 years, high-end vinyl siding was proposed (a siding sample was passed around). The final partial elevation drawing demonstrated where they were today, which was through design documents. Building will go forward only when the old Bresnahan is no longer in use and can be torn down. One section of the building is designed as short-term tenant space to help pay for the Center's operations. The first floor opens into a vestibule with an elevator as you enter and a living room and main office just beyond. The biggest central room is the function room, dividable into three separate spaces with moveable walls.

Director Port added that a tenant would help the Center get underway in the early years and the space could be reclaimed by the Center at the appropriate time. Mayor Holaday said with scarce conference space in the city, to have a space with a stage that accommodated 140-150 people would add a great deal to our community.

The kitchen serves directly into the function room, is scaled like a country kitchen but set-up like a test kitchen for teaching the preparation of healthy meals, Mr. Griffin continued. There is a drop-in area, library, wellness center area, bathroom, and major storage areas. The 2nd floor has a billiards area, veterans office, exercise room, computer room and arts and crafts rooms. Other than dining or meetings, the programs would all occur upstairs.

Acting Chair Sontag asked if the tenant space had a separate entrance and parking? Mr. Griffin said the tenant's entrance and parking were in the back of the building, near but separate from the service entrance, and the entrance opened directly into the tenant space. Director Port said the tenant vestibule allowed a stairway to be built into the main building later on, if necessary. A member asked what types of tenants would be considered? Mayor Holaday said it would be

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something compatible, like physical therapy. Geordie Vining, Planning Department Senior Project Manager, said being over a year away from going out to bid, a request for tenants had yet to be developed,. We have the time to reach out to the community.

A member asked why the function room didn't open up onto the patio area? Mr. Griffin responded the patio was a service area. The member was thinking of how opening the room to the outdoors would better serve the city's use. Mr. Griffin said the room received a lot of light. The member expressed concern about the massive room size with no possibility of opening up to the outdoors. Director Port thought it could conflict with planned uses to remove that much wall space, creating the potential to obstruct activities. Mr. Vining said there was significant interface with the entry area to make a connection between those two spaces. As a group, the planning team visited a number of other centers, spoke to their directors and asked how outdoor space was used. Outdoor spaces weren't used very much. In this plan there were outdoor patios, gardens and seating areas. Mr. Griffin said the building now had four entrances; another set of doors could be nice at times, but this building has more doors than generally found on similar-use buildings. The member said opening it up to the outside would make it more attractive and offered more flexibility for uses by the whole community. Mr. Griffin said it wouldn't be difficult to change, being a wood-frame building. Director Port said building plans hadn't been finally prepared and would consider the adjustment.

Another member asked if it was slab and grade and was integrating the design with new school considered? Mr. Griffin said slab and grade were used and the school had a more sober design relating to its users, therefore design integration wasn't desired. Director Port explained the brick and steel school materials were different from the residential feel wanted for this building. Mayor Holaday thought it would be too much brick and the use of yellow would be pleasing. A member asked if vinyl siding had the lowest cost life cycle and what about shakes? Mr. Griffin said the brand of siding came in extra long lengths for fewer joints and had nicely detailed corners. As a taxpayer, he cared about that too. Director Port added there were many vertical lines in the design to break it up.

Rich Westcott, civil engineer, Westcott Site Services, 60 Prospect Street, Waltham, MA, presented the lighting plan, also showing the parking. The project was fortunate to coordinate the shared entrance while the new school was under design, for placement of underground utilities. The contractor would begin with a clean site, cutting down on unexpected extras. Engineering went through several rounds of peer review before coming before the board. Foot-candles from every light fixture, all the way out to the walkway to the bus area, were shown. An enclosure for dumpsters was at the back of the building.

Acting Chair Sontag asked about a police department request for appropriate lighting around the building. Mr. Westcott said the same LED lights used in the new school would be used for this project, except they were set lower, at 16 feet high, with half the wattage at .2 foot-candles to give a more residential feel. There was no spillover beyond the property line. Mr. Vining said the police comment came before the drawing was made.

A member asked about buffering car headlights that point toward residences. Mr. Westcott had not addressed that, saying this side had a steep uphill, creating a natural buffer. Director Port

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added that this side would have a six-foot high privacy fence as part of the subdivision. Mr. Westcott said that side of the property was heavily wooded also.

Acting Chair Sontag asked about ADA accessibility. ADA Coordinator Andrea Egmont had asked to consider more ramps in relation to parking spaces. Director Port said there was a longer expanse of opened up curbing that provided enough of an opening. Ms. Egmont had looked at a digital plan and couldn't quite tell the curbing was open. Mr. Westcott said the entire site was ADA compliant on both sides where there was parking.

A member asked for lighting bollards to be pointed out. Mr. Westcott responded they were 38 inches high with LEDs lighting the path to the building at night. Another member asked whether there was an emergency generator for the building? Director Port said he, Mr. Vining and Director Robillard were all interested in having one. It could be placed in a purchasing sequence. The member asked if electric utilities were underground, not on a separate transformer? Mr. Westcott said the building's transformer, located close to the street, away from the parking spaces, was required. Director Port said the city could add additional screening and landscaping to buffer anything that was added later. Mr. Westcott said air-handling units were on both sides and in the back. Mr. Vining said outdoor functions could be marred by the noise of outdoor equipment, so the units were placed away from the outdoor use areas. Mr. Westcott said the van drop-off and ramp were at the driveway. Director Robillard said the driveway drop-off area could accommodate a large Coach bus near a safely lighted path to the parking lot. Director Port added that the Coach location was on the opposite side from where school buses would stack. Director Robillard said the COA complied with city office hours and four staff cars would arrive to open the building at 7:30 AM. Programs would begin at 9 AM. The COA would defer to the school schedule to keep programs from competing with students being discharged.

Acting Chair Sontag asked for more information about the shared entrance with the school off High Street. Mayor Holaday said only buses would use that entrance. Acting Chair Sontag said it was good planning if the only cars turning off High Street were for the Center. How many parking spaces? Director Port said spaces were in excess of what was required for the building. Mr. Vining said there were over 100 spaces. Mayor Holaday said the last abutter's meeting surfaced continuing concerns about traffic, despite the traffic analysis, and the issue would be looked at it over time. Mr. Vining said a public institutional use at this site was decades old.

Acting Chair Sontag asked about landscaping. The landscape architect from Mr. Sterling's office was not present and Mr. Vining described the buffer of trees running along the pathway and edge of the parking that differentiated this site from the school with a green line. A bit of topography was created in this area for planting shrubs and trees. The existing allee of trees coming into the driveway would remain. A planted area with a little rolling landscape was created for visual interest at the entryway. The patio, walkway and raised gardens are hardscapes. Landscaping extending into the parking area to break-up the bays. Acting Chair Sontag asked if the Center could give up any parking for trees to enhance the front of the building? Trees would be more pleasing to look at and walk through, compared to the vast parking lot. Mr. Westcott said he'd consistently heard a desire to have enough parking. Whenever eliminating spaces was suggested, the COA Board and Director Robillard asked to leave the parking spaces alone. Director Robillard said when visiting other sites, they consistently heard there was not enough parking or

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storage. People would use outdoor and indoor areas simultaneously, making good use of the entire space. She hoped to keep as much parking as possible, especially for snow removal purposes. Mr. Vining added that parking needed to support events. A member expressed concern about overflow parking and asked about the connection between the Center and school's parking. Could the school provide for overflow if sidewalks connected the two buildings? Mr. Vining said a connecting hardscape pathway through the green was considered, but the issue was unresolved. There were ongoing conversations with the school department to determine whether a connection was desirable for them. The member said a small playing and practice field fit in that location; it would be lost if the space were bifurcated with a hardscape pathway. Mr. Vining said the issue would be revisited if the current plan did not work. The member said the two buildings were clearly linked. While the board typically requested more trees, did it make more sense to have a lawn where you could put up a function tent? Mr. Vining said there was plenty of open space for that without eliminating any trees.

Acting Chair Sontag asked about pedestrian safety when moving from parked cars across the lot to the entrance? Mr. Vining said discussions took place on the issue and it was determined nothing else was needed, based on what was seen at other sites. Removing some spaces to run a corridor through the middle was one idea, but if not parked near it, you wouldn't walk over to it. Acting Chair Sontag said you could do something for safety's sake later, if needed. Director Robillard confirmed they would be in a learning process as they grow into the building.

Mr. Westcott addressed stormwater, specifically examining where water flowed from the existing school in relation to each abutter. Using the existing school's runoff as a benchmark, the new flows would be less than or equal to, in each direction, what was currently happening. Overall, there would be less runoff. State of the art stormwater treatment and features were employed. Storm set units were advanced units to remove sediments and oils prior to the release of water. Similar to a big manhole, the features were inside. Maintenance was simple with checks at six months and one year. When the units filled with sediment, they would be vacuumed out. Underground infiltration chambers, Cultec chambers, were half round. The ground was very good at percolating soil throughout. Each set of chambers was designed for the 100-year storm. The overflow discharge points were spread throughout, but the overflow would lessen. Director Port said Christiansen & Sergei had worked out all of the issues.

Public comment opened.

Jane Snow, 9 Coffin Street, had been a teacher and said it was nice for seniors to have easy access to the school because it would encourage them to volunteer. Older kids could work with seniors without adults chaperoning them en route. Director Port said parking near the school where the buses turnaround is handicap-accessible and can be used by the seniors. As the facility gets underway, he would examine any pathway needs. Ms. Snow also asked if this project received any grants from Green Communities? Mr. Vining did not apply for Green Communities funding for this project, but architects have made the building as efficient as possible and complied with the stretch code. The Mayor said current grant funds were allocated to the needs of the library. Ms. Snow asked how far apart the Center will be from the school. Director Port said 200 feet.

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Public comment closed.

A member said the connection between the school and the center was intriguing. Volunteering brought to mind the public's access to the property. Pedestrians and bikes might come in from High Street, but to the south side of the building where there were gardens, a patio, and Bocce courts. A member asked if allowances have been made for people to circle around the building entirely? Director Port said yes. The member said you want to move people toward the Center, not the school, but making that connection is important. The grassy lawn area is functional and provides a buffer for the buses. Folks in the dining area looking out should see some smaller trees blocking the grassy expanse view. The shrubs are less functional from that perspective. Mr. Vining said in looking at several other centers with outdoor spaces, there wasn't much use in those other models. We're not limiting ourselves by having shrubs and trees as a buffer to the activity area. The member said developmentally, we will grow into utilizing the entire space. It's necessary to be as flexible as possible up front, and to consider the grassy area as a potential function area and what the view from the dining room entails. Mr. Vining agreed to bring this up in the next conversation.

Acting Chair Sontag reviewed the draft decision text. Director Port listed items in the draft decision. One special condition was the signage that was unknown today and would be submitted at a later date, as per the condition. Acting Chair Sontag said the board would vote first on the three waivers and then the total plan. The board did not have final landscaping plans or the final lighting plan. Director Port said he would follow-up on these plans and would ensure they are referenced in the decision document.

A member said the plan called for clapboards; Director Port said it was clapboard-style vinyl; Acting Chair Sontag said it was a clapboard-style wood frame building. The member asked how traffic could not be increased? Director Port said parent drop off was moving to another street and that reduced the overall traffic from High Street, making traffic throughout the day and at peak hours from High Street only school staff and Senior Community Center traffic. It was less traffic because High Street was no longer the primary access for the school. Another member asked if the second waiver should be something to the effect that during the 3rd anniversary of occupancy, the police department shall determine if there had been any vehicle and traffic concerns. Director Port said a similar condition was applied to the school project and would add it with an additional requirement for coordination between Ms. Robillard, the school and the police department. Mr. Westcott understood that the water main issue was settled. Director Port said the subdivision was required to handle the full loop connection on their own, in coordination with the school department, since all three projects were happening simultaneously.

Don Walters made a motion to approve all three waivers for the Application Fee, the Signage, and Traffic Impacts. Cindy Zabriskie seconded and all members voted in favor.

Don Walters made a motion to approve the Senior Community Center Major Site Plan Review with conditions. Paul Dahn seconded and all members voted in favor.

During the course of discussion and consideration of this application, plan(s), supporting material(s), department head comments, peer review report(s), planning department

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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.

3. Continuation of General Business

***52 Warren Street/18 Monroe Street
ANR***

Everett Chandler, civil engineer, Design Consultants, Newburyport, MA spoke on behalf of Michelle Spinelli, property owner of 18 Monroe Street. Mr. Chandler said the owner of 52 Warren Street was selling his house. The survey revealed 49 square feet of his property had been in use by 18 Monroe Street for a long time. The ANR memorialized a lot line adjustment that had been informally in place for years. Acting Chair Sontag said now there would be a straight line going to the edge of that property instead of an angled one. Director Port said the plan was in proper form.

Paul Dahn made a motion to approve the ANR at 52 Warren Street/18 Monroe Street. Cindy Zabriskie seconded and all members voted in favor.

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5 & 9 Stanley Tucker Drive – review of building elevations

Acting Chair Sontag said the plan had been approved in 2006. Director Port read the conditions. The last condition was outstanding and a vote would close out the condition. Acting Chair Sontag asked if the board had elevations at the time of approval? James Zambell, Zambell Companies, 3 Stanley Tucker Drive, Newburyport, said he didn't have the building design at that time. A member confirmed that the property was located in a back corner of the Industrial Park.

Henry Coe made a motion to approve the building elevations at 5 & 9 Stanley Tucker Drive. Paul Dahn seconded and all members voted in favor.

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.

Coffin Street Subdivision – 13 Coffin Street access improvements

Acting Chair Sontag read a request from Steve Sawyer requesting a postponement to August 21st so that plans could be updated, including stormwater management measures.

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Henry Coo made a motion to continue the access improvements at the 13 Coffin Street Subdivision to August 21st. Don Walters seconded and all members voted in favor.

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.

4. Continuation of Old Business

Northbridge Communities, LLC
30 Toppans Lane
Definitive Subdivision
Section XXIII Special Permit – Courts and Lanes
Continued from 7/17/2013

Acting Chair Sontag read the applicant's request for a continuance for sufficiently addressing all comments from the board and Christiansen & Sergei, with the anticipation of closing out the hearing at the August 21st meeting.

Henry Coo made a motion to continue the Northbridge Communities, LLC, 30 Toppans Lane Definitive Subdivision Section XXIII Special Permit – Courts and Lanes to August 21st. Cindy Zabriskie seconded and all members voted in favor.

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.

Approval of minutes of (5/15/13, 6/19/13 and 7/17/13)

Don Walters made a motion to approve the minutes from 5/15/13. Henry Coo seconded and all members voted in favor. Abstaining were Sue Grolnic and Bonnie Sontag.

Henry Coo made a motion to approve the minutes from 6/19/13. Don Walters seconded and all members voted in favor. Abstaining were Paul Dahn and Noah Luskin.

Paul Dahn made a motion to approve the minutes from 7/17/13. Bonnie Sontag seconded and all members voted in favor. Abstaining were Sue Grolnic, Henry Coo, Noah Luskin, Don Walters and Cindy Zabriskie.

5. Planning Office/Subcommittees/Discussion

Updates

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The MBTA had formally accepted bidder Minco Construction for the development rights. A working group would develop 40 R ordinance language and site guidelines that would come before the board. Who would be interested in reviewing the 40R materials? Acting Chair Sontag said Judy Tymon could represent affordable housing; she has experience negotiating a 40R project as Town Planner in Newbury. Director Port said there would be a representative from the Mayor's Office. Sue Grolnic volunteered and Director Port would pass her name forward and work on scheduling. Acting Chair Sontag asked if both the MBTA and the potential developer would participate in the discussions with the board? Director Port said it would be only the developer. The scheduling was our responsibility.

Director Port reported that the Mayor is confident we will have a consultant to help revamp zoning ordinances. Funds would be available in the coming months. We'd like to give the consultant a list of the major items to tackle. Please bring your items to the next meeting. A rewrite will take some months and include a series of meetings to review and discuss changes before going to the City Council.

6. Adjournment

Henry Coe made a motion to adjourn. Sue Grolnic seconded and all members voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:17 PM. The next meeting is August 21.

Respectfully submitted -- Linda Guthrie, Note Taker