

**City of Newburyport
Planning Board
September 7, 2022
Minutes**

The online meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.

1. Roll Call

Planning Board Attendance (in-person): Alden Clark, Bob Koup, Jamie Pennington, Bonnie Sontag, Rick Taintor, Richard Yeager

Planning Board Attendance (remote): Heather Rogers

Planning Board Absent: Beth DeLisle and Don Walters

Planning Director Andy Port and note taker Linda Guthrie were also present.

2. General Business

a) Approval Not Required

- *1 Jefferson Street and 390R Merrimac Street*

Ed Dixon, Hancock Associates, 185 Centre St., Danvers, said land would be separated from the Hadley property and combined with neighboring property to expand on a sliver with a view of the river. He's not aware of any non-conformities. The Hadleys are on board and supportive. Director Port said the office recommends endorsement.

Alden Clark made a motion to endorse the ANR Plan for 1 Jefferson Street and 390R Merrimac Street. Rick Taintor seconded the motion, and all members present voted in favor.

Motion Approved.

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.

3. Public Hearings

- a) Newburyport Office of Planning & Development
24 Merrimac Street (Market Landing Park Expansion & Restroom/Visitor Facility)
SPR-22-2
Continued from 8/17/22*

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Director Port said 75% construction documents were submitted in May. At the end of the public hearings 100% construction documents will be prepared to go out to bid over the winter. The bulkhead project will be done off season because of sturgeon restrictions and the timing of federal funding and will be postponed until winter 2023.

Merin Braco, Sasaki, 64 Pleasant St., Watertown, reviewed plan updates based on feedback from the last meeting. Bike circulation and parking: bicycle parking is added, different bike racks will be specified, paths are widened for bike dismounting, and pedestrians are redirected at the western edge of the shared path through adjustments in the curb and grading. Changes at the center of the park include extending the plaza pavers, made distinct from the shared use path, and adding signage to indicate where bicyclers can dismount, adding 5 bike racks at the Ferry Wharf Way entrance and 3 bike racks at the shared use path entrance. Vehicular circulation and parking/west parking lot: a flush condition is created and boulders that are a barrier to vehicular movement are relocated but there is plenty of room for pedestrians. The 10 ft wide shared use path now has a 10 ft buffer on each side of the embayment for dismounting. There are 14 additional EV-ready parking spots. The drive aisle is widened with added stop signs and striping. Interim parking during phase 1: interim conditions until parking areas are complete includes additional, smaller gravel lots. Events + programming: where tents can be laid out, where the electrical distribution panel is relocated, a stage location, and the event delivery & loading zone, as well as the zone of reinforced turf for trucks to drive onto is identified. Topography & views: The height of berms is 13.5 ft. Standing on the path you see over the landscape.

Stephanie Krueel, VHB, 99 High St, Boston, described the resiliency strategy & modelling. Three sources for the year 2070 show 36 inches of sea level rise. The base level will be increased by 36 inches (Newburyport Climate Resiliency Map). Newburyport Wetland Regulations uses the Boston Harbor Sea Level projection of 40 inches (3 feet 4 inches) of sea level rise by 2070. Coastal Zone Management uses MC-FRM. Their planning number for 2070 is 4.2 ft. Sea level rise includes Antarctic ice sheet melt. NOAA sea level rise mean high water is + 6 ft. She used a combination of the information. The goal is to avoid tidal flooding, reduce coastal storm flooding, and protect the Visitors Center because of its vulnerability and criticality to the public. She looked out to 2030 for the park areas and 2050 for the visitor center and bathrooms.

Richard Yeager asked about bike sharing infrastructure. Director Port said there is no planning for bike sharing right now. If the opportunity presents itself, it would be either adjacent to parking or next to the Visitor Center. Both those are too far out as of now.

Alden Clark asked if the relocated electrical panel closer to the river is at an increased risk. Merin Braco said it will be designed to be above the flood level.

Alden Clark asked if parking behind Urban Elements, which is 9-10 reserved spaces, is in the temporary plan. Director Port said that's an obligation the City has to maintain. Those spaces are in the parking count on page 11.

Alden Clark said the counts don't seem quite right from the temporary spaces in phase 1 to phase 2.

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Rick Taintor said the “Bike Circulation and Parking” slide shows the shared use path going through the embayment area, but bicycles can’t be ridden through the embayment area. People walking bikes take up twice as much space as people riding them, so this will add to congestion on the boardwalk. That’s his ongoing concern. Are bike parking spaces all available at major events? One bike rack is placed where trucks unload for major events. Make sure they are usable when trucks and other things are parked there during events. He repeated his suggestion from the last meeting to eliminate some of the parking spaces to add additional, more diverse bike parking. Merin Braco thinks people quickly get off their bike once they’re at the park.

Rick Taintor said it’s a mistake not to put racks where people want to put their bikes. Director Port said other perpendicular paths are pedestrian only.

Bonnie Sontag said no one will see the racks with their bikes if they cannot use bikes on the paths. Director Port said there are site constraints elsewhere, but the team would take another look. Merin Braco said there are steps and seat walls in the locations where there are grade changes in 2-3 places.

Rick Taintor proposed putting the bike racks in the parking lot.

Bonnie Sontag suggested signage in the park showing the location of additional bike racks at other locations than on the shared-use path.

Rick Taintor said “EV-ready” spots means there’s a panel, conduit, cable and connection points in place rather than “EV-capable” which means the conduit is in place but no cable. Director Port would confer with the city electrician, but the plan is to put the conduits in but not run the cable.

Rick Taintor suggested using the term EV-capable on the next set of plans.

There’s still only 1 short term parking space by the Visitor Center. Director Port said this is the city clerk and the city council’s preference.

Rick Taintor asked about the ADA pathway by the Visitor Center? Merin Braco demonstrated the location of the stairs and ADA pathways in relation to the parking and the visitor center.

Bonnie Sontag asked if it was advisable to add a cover to the trellis over the swings to create shade? Director Port said that everyone’s concern is that it would block the views. Transparent views are a necessity.

Bonnie Sontag suggested using a canopy that can be rolled back to create a dual-purpose structure.

Rick Taintor said that in the topography section it seems like the path is higher. Merin Braco said the shared use path slopes down to meet the boardwalk.

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Rick Taintor asked why the map doesn't reflect a smaller flood extension as reflected by FEMA + SLR. Stephani Krueel said FEMA doesn't use detailed topography or wave run-up, meaning it's not just an additive calculation. The embayment project addresses tidal flooding.

Jamie Pennington said the restroom screening trellis is controversial. It's imperative that it be more well-defined during the public comment phase. You could design the trellis (at Ferry Wharf Plaza) to some specificity that the Planning Board could approve later. He did not want to leave to chance.

Bonnie Sontag asked if the plaza designs along waterfront have taken into consideration flooding and runoff. Merin Braco said most plazas are at a higher elevation than the flood zone. Ferry Wharf Plaza is 3 ft higher than the shared use path. The whole park is designed to properly handle stormwater.

Public comment open.

Heather Shand, 32 Orange St, President, Newburyport City Council, said this is a 2-year plus project. The City Council was disappointed that the economics require many phases to complete this project. Phase 1, when complete, should help with future donations.

Paul Dahn, 343 High St, said cars don't need views. People need views. Phase 1 looks good. He supports this plan.

Public comment closed.

Bonnie Sontag read the draft decision. EV capable will be added under parking. The last sentence from the Site Plan and Architectural Design section will be removed. The model names from the Lighting section will be removed and a generic description inserted. Director Port would update the date of the Stormwater Management Plan to the more recently revised Stormwater Management Plan of July 15, 2022.

Bonnie Sontag highlighted standard condition #3, Modifications to approved plans. She requested any modification at all to the site plan come back before the Planning Board. She read the special conditions.

Jamie Pennington recommended a similar condition as #3 for the trellis if the style is not pinned down by the next meeting.

Rick Taintor suggested deleting standard condition #2. Director Port agreed.

Rick Taintor said, regarding the screening on the performance standards, to delete the phrase "with various plantings." Since there are some changes to the plans in the areas of focus, he suggested including some detail like the end of the shared use path transitioning, the EV-capable spots, the restroom screening, the meet up of the shared use path and the embayment, making it clearer where the bicycle parking and the truck parking are located, and showing bike parking at

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the Custom House Way. He suggested looking at widening the shared use path and only resubmitting the revised plan sheets in the plan set rather than a completely new set.

Jamie Pennington made a motion to continue the Site Plan Review Application for 24 Merrimac Street (Market Landing Park Expansion & Restroom/Visitor Facility), Newburyport Office of Planning & Development to 9/21/22. Richard Yeager seconded the motion, and all members present voted in favor.

Motion Approved.

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. General Business

a) Approval of minutes

Alden Clark made a motion to approve the minutes of 8/17/22 as amended. Jamie Pennington seconded the motion, and five members present voted in favor. Richard Yeager and Bonnie Sontag abstained.

Motion approved.

b) Other updates from the Chair or Planning Director

Director Port said STRUs are in discussion on the floor of the City Council and would continue to the next meeting on 9/12/22.

Rick Taintor said the ad hoc committee meeting on Waterfront West Zoning is next Wednesday at 7:30 PM. It's posted as a special Planning Board meeting.

Alden Clark said the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law Training is tomorrow night. The second opportunity to attend is the same night as a Planning Board meeting.

5. Adjournment

Alden Clark made a motion to adjourn. Rick Taintor seconded the motion, and all members present voted in favor.

Motion Approved.

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Meeting adjourned at 8:48 PM

Respectfully submitted -- Linda Guthrie