

**City of Newburyport
Planning Board
October 5, 2022
Minutes**

The online meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM.

1. Roll Call

Planning Board Attendance (in-person): Alden Clark, Bob Koup, Beth DeLisle, Jamie Pennington, Rick Taintor, Don Walters, and Richard Yeager

Absent: Heather Rogers and Bonnie Sontag

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

2. Public Hearings

- a) Market Landing Park Expansion & Restroom/Visitor Facility
Newburyport Office of Planning & Development
24 Merrimac Street PBSP-22-6
Continued from 9/21/22*

Director Port reviewed the landscaping around the Phase 3 Visitor Center and restroom door screening and addressed comments from the last meeting about the building itself. The previous design had a seating wall next to the building and along the Merrimac St. sidewalk. Two other options, #1 is a low porosity screen using a 6 ft tall trellis fronted by evergreen species, American Holly, Inkberry, dune grass, and Carolina Jessamine to offer seasonal color and evergreens in winter. A bench runs parallel to the trellis planting bed. The opposite side of the building has a similar landscaping treatment with more room for a row of evergreens. Option #2 is an increased plaza with a larger planting bed in front of the restrooms so that plantings can be staggered. All seating is grouped in one area close to the Visitor Center entrance.

Richard Yeager asked if this is phase 1 site work? Director Port said the pedestrian way and how it links to the building is in Phase 1. The plaza, screening and landscaping work is phase 3.

Richard Yeager said the 6 ft trellis is appropriate. There are 4 trees along Water St. The furthest tree to the east blocks the view of the Visitor Center driving west to east. He prefers option #1 because it presents more impromptu opportunities with the larger hardscape area.

Bob Koup likes the larger landscaped area in option #1 also but would keep the bench along the edge of the landscaped area. He prefers option #2.

Alden likes the clustered seating in option #2.

Beth DeLisle likes the cleaner look in option #1 because it leaves the plaza as a plaza, separate from the park and she likes the bench near the bathroom.

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Rick Taintor asked if the seating was fixed or movable. Merin Braco, Sasaki, 110 Chauncy St., Boston, said the café seating is intended to be fixed.

Rick Taintor asked if the landscaping and screening on the east side of the visitor center was the same in both options. Merin Braco said yes.

Rick Taintor asked about a safety railing at the ramp. Merin Braco said there is a safety wall.

Rick Taintor said to check with the ADA for the height of the wall if the project uses option #2.

Jamie Pennington likes option #2, but both designs are nice. He agrees that the 4th street tree blocks the view of the building.

Don Walters asked if there was a difference in cost. Merin Braco has not done a cost estimate. The planting material will be more expensive in option #2. The largest cost is hardscape, and it's about the same cost in both options.

Don Walters said more trees absorb more CO₂, all other things being equal between the options. He suggested a differing color of paver on the plaza side on the top of the retaining wall where the ramp step down is located.

Rick Taintor said that it appears that option #1 has more green while option #2 is more plaza. Merin Braco said the difference is in the distribution of plantings.

Public comment open.

Public comment closed.

Rick Taintor noted that choosing option #2 would mean a modification to the site plan. That could presumably be done at the same time as approval of the special permit.

Don Walters, Jamie Pennington, Bob Koup, Alden Clark, and Rick Taintor favored option #2. Richard Yeager preferred option #1. Beth DeLisle is neutral.

Don Walters mentioned the design difference between the Visitor Center and the Harbormaster.

Richard Yeager likes the building design and that it supports solar panels.

Bob Koup agreed with Mr. Yeager on the building. The site plan shows the transformer screening in close proximity and those could be connected somehow.

Jamie Pennington made a motion to continue the Downtown Overlay District Special Permit Application for 24 Merrimac Street (Market Landing Park Expansion & Restroom/Visitor

Facility) to October 19, 2022. Bob Koup 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.

**b) City of Newburyport
153 Storey Avenue
Site Plan Review (SPR-22-3)**

Acting Fire Chief Steve Bradbury said the station was built in 1972. Nothing has been done to the building except adding vinyl floor tiles and a kitchen exhaust system 15 years ago. It was built for 2 fire fighters. The station has added a 3rd firefighter and the living quarters are inadequate. The space is 2,200 sf. There is no storage for supplies. The gear should not be in the apparatus bays. The design includes a fire fighter's memorial.

Paul Avery, engineer, Oak Consulting, PO Box 1123, Newburyport, showed the existing site plan. The portion of Stoneybrook Road along the front of the site is the old state highway and is still owned by the State and under the jurisdiction of MassDOT. He demonstrated on the plan where a utility pole will be removed and the one that would remain. The major components are the new building, the memorial, 2 new off street parking areas with handicap parking on the left one and the handicap accessible entrance nearby and a bike rack. Two sidewalks coming in from Storey Ave. will be reconstructed. The western most sidewalk will be extended with a concrete landing, a tactile strip, and a crosswalk.

Geordie Vining, Senior Project Manager, said overall it's a 2-bay building with living quarters for 5 and expanded onsite parking.

Paul Avery demonstrated on the drainage plan catch basins in parking lots, an area drain in a landscaped area, roof drains with a few downspout collection points, and a detention gallery that connects to the storm drain under Virginia Lane. The plan was reviewed by DPS, and their comments addressed. Utilities include new water and fire protection services off Virginia Lane, at the DPS's request so as not to block the apparatus bays if work is ever to be done there. The pole connection goes from Storey Ave. to Virginia Lane, determined by what the DOT would allow in the state highway right of way. The gas service is for the generator.

Dana Weeder, Winter Street Architects, 209 Essex St., Salem, said the design intends to achieve net zero. The roof slopes toward the rear allowing 258 panels. The building is energy efficient with an airlocked space between the bays and the residential side of the building. There is a storage area behind the apparatus bays. Another design goal was to create a residential feel.

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Richard Yeager asked why put the transformer where you may put a new bay in the future. Dana Weeder noted that there was still room for a 17 ft wide bay but takes his point.

Rick Taintor said there are discrepancies between some plans regarding the crosswalk on Virginia Lane. The tactile plate on the right corner of the site is in different places on plans. Paul Avery said that the landscaping plan will be updated to match the civil drawing.

Rick Taintor noted asked about the asphalt sidewalks, noting that the City's ordinance calls for concrete. Paul Avery agreed that there is a preference for concrete in residential areas but the City has requested asphalt in this location. Asphalt can be used if the City Council grants a waiver. The plans evolve on a daily basis. He will make the needed adjustments.

Rick Taintor noted that the proposed crosswalks are the ladder style but that Jon-Eric White, city engineer, has said that the international style is now the City's standard for crosswalks. Paul Avery said that the crosswalks are in the State right of way and MassDOT uses the ladder style. He will request MassDOT approval to use the City's standard and will modify the plans if approval is granted.

Rick Taintor asked about EV parking. Paul Avery said there are conduits will be installed for one EV parking spot in each lot and denoted with a sign rather than paint.

Rick Taintor noted that the site plan shows one bike rack perpendicular to the building while the landscaping plan shows two bike racks at 90 degrees. With the bike rack perpendicular to the building, if the first bike is there, you can't get around to get to the other spot. He would prefer that the rack be parallel to the building face to be more functional. Dana Weeder said the U-shaped rack allows one bike on either side. He would install 2 bike racks, facing such that so you don't have to go around the back of the rack to park your bike. This may require a small extension of the paved area.

Public comment open.

Public comment closed.

Don Walters asked the wattage of each solar panel and if an increase in electrical service would be needed. Dana Weeder said panels are 300 watts. Geordie Vining an electrical increase wasn't raised in the meeting. It will come out as we go along.

Rick Taintor said the waiver request is for a traffic study.

Don Walters made a motion to grant the requested waivers of the submittal requirements found in Section XV-E as requested by the applicant. Richard Yeager seconded the motion, and all members present voted in favor.

Commented [DB1]: Please note – the recording of this meeting indicates that the initial vote was for the requested waivers AND to accept the application was complete. The second vote was to grant Site Plan approval.

Motion Approved.

Rick Taintor reviewed the draft findings. He recommended extending the plaza area at the front door to allow for rotating the bike racks, and to request the international standard for the sidewalk.

Don Walters made a motion to determine the application for Site Plan Review for 153 Storey Avenue as complete, including waiver of the aforementioned submittal requirements and as further amended this evening. Jamie Pennington 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. General Business

a) Approval of Minutes

Bob Koup made a motion to approve the minutes of 9/7/22 as amended. Richard Yeager seconded the motion, and 5 members present voted in favor. Beth DeLisle and Don Walters abstained.

Motion Approved.

Don Walters made a motion to approve the minutes of 9/21/22 as amended. Alden Clark seconded the motion, and all members present voted in favor.

Motion Approved.

b) Other Updates from the Vice Chair or Planning Director

Director Port said that a zoning amendment is being proposed that will include some changes in the business park. The STRU licensing ordinance is still in committee. The Planning Office is sending a generic letter to current short term rental operators notifying them to look at the drafts to be aware of what's needed for compliance, and to connect with their neighbors about their STRU. Rick Taintor asked if enforcement was complaint based. Director Port said yes. The Brown School zoning may be revisited.

Rick Taintor said Waterfront West zoning will come before the Board at the next meeting. The City is looking for a Planning board representative on the steering committee on the Economic Development Initiative, comprised of 3-4 meetings in the daytime over the next 4 months. Don Walters would participate on the steering committee if someone took his position on the Community Preservation Committee.

5. Adjournment

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

Motion Approved.

Meeting adjourned at 8:36 PM

Respectfully submitted -- Linda Guthrie