

PLANNING BOARD MEETING – February 22, 2023

PRESENT: Scott McKiel, Chairman; George Nangle, Vice Chairman; Michael Buxton; Charles Kanavos; Tim Savage, Alternate; Alison Manugian, Community Development Director; Mark Hamel, Town Engineer and Lisa Wagner, Recording Secretary

ABSENT: Doug Dooley

Chairman McKiel opened the meeting at 7:00pm in the Douglas G. Willett Board of Selectmen's Chambers at Town Hall and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

MINUTES:

Meeting held on January 11, 2023: Mr. Nangle motioned to approve. Mr. Buxton seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

251 SLADEN STREET/SPIRO SKINSACOS/SPECIAL PERMIT & SITE PLAN REVIEW FOR A MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT/PUBLIC HEARING (CON'T):

Chairman McKiel stated Attorney John Geary submitted a letter on behalf of the applicant and requested to continue the public hearing to the March 22nd meeting.

Mr. Nangle motioned to continue the hearing to the March 22nd meeting at 7:05 p.m. Mr. Kanavos seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

55 LOON HILL ROAD/TRUE STORAGE/SPECIAL PERMIT & SITE PLAN REVIEW FOR A SELF STORAGE MINI-WAREHOUSE/PUBLIC HEARING:

Chairman McKiel opened the hearing and read aloud the Legal Notice, which was advertised in the Lowell Sun on Tuesday, February 7, 2023 and again on Tuesday, February 14, 2023.

Patrick Healy, Registered Engineer of Thompson-Liston Associates and Josh Sullivan of True Storage appeared before the Board seeking a site plan special permit for a self-storage mini-warehouse facility. The site is on the southerly side of Loon Hill Road on a vacant parcel containing approximately 3.66 acres and is located in the B3 business zone. The proposed project includes the construction of a 3-story building, parking lot, stormwater facilities and site improvements. Mr. Healy indicated the building will be located on the higher end of the site furthest from the wetland boundary and it will meet side and front yard setbacks, The site will be accessed by two (2) existing curb cuts on Loon Hill Road and a circular driveway around the entire building. Mr. Healy added a retaining wall is proposed along the rear of the concrete pavement and the site will have various landscape plantings for buffering along the Circle Health property line. As shown on the grading plan, there are several catch basins for stormwater runoff, which will be directed to an underground detention and infiltration system with a discharge pipe to the east.

In further review, Mr. Healy noted a photometric plan was prepared to illustrate the lighting on site, which includes six (6) or seven (7) of the post mounted fixtures around the perimeter and several wall mounted fixtures over the pedestrian entrances. The facility will also have 24-hour security cameras and key card readers for monitoring anyone on site or entering the building.

Chairman McKiel asked if there would be any vehicle, RV or boat storage at this location. Mr. Sullivan stated no vehicles, boats or otherwise are stored inside or outside at this property. Mr. Kanavos asked about the hours of operation. Mr. Sullivan requested Monday thru Thursday, 8:30am to 6:30pm and Friday thru Sunday, 7:30am to 7:30pm with an employee on site during that time to sell packing materials or to provide leasing information. Existing customers can access their units up until around 9:00pm, but the facility is not open 24-hours. Mr. Nangle questioned the location of the curb cuts and width. Mr. Healy indicated the first is in close proximity to the property line, which requires a waiver and the other is a few hundred feet down Loon Hill and each are about 26-feet wide.

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Chairman McKiel inquired whether the Fire Chief reviewed this project. Ms. Manugian met with the Department Heads and provided a detailed letter addressing their concerns. The Fire Chief requires a fully sprinklered building with alarms connecting to the municipal system; a standpipe in one of the stairwells and bollards located where there is parking proposed perpendicular to the building. Mr. Sullivan had no issue with those items. Chairman McKiel asked Ms. Manugian if there are other concerns. Ms. Manugian indicated there are a few outstanding Engineering and Stormwater issues, but overall the plan is in order. Chairman McKiel asked for Mr. Hamel's input about stormwater runoff going into the wetlands. Mr. Hamel requested some additional details and clarification, which he anticipates being addressed and he was concerned with the amount of fill being brought into the site, as well as the truck trips that will be generated. Mr. Nangle commented the wall needs to be designed by an engineer, which Mr. Hamel confirmed the Building Inspector would be looking for that. Mr. Buxton inquired about the number of parking spaces and if the canopies extend into the travel lane. Mr. Healy stated there are 12 spaces, plus a couple under the canopies, which do not obstruct the travel lane. Mr. Buxton asked if the only entrance is on the east side. Mr. Healy noted that is the main entrance, but there is an emergency egress. Mr. Buxton asked if an appointment is made or can people just show up. Mr. Sullivan stated initially an appointment is made to obtain their key and then it's at their convenience. Mr. Kanavos inquired about the number of storage units. Mr. Sullivan believes it is around 600 units, which vary in size from 5x5, 10x10, 10x15 and typically the largest is 10x20.

There was much discussion concerning the retaining wall and whether a guardrail is proposed for the top of it, as well as some drainage structures in the adjacent area. Mr. Healy indicated either the wall would be extended with a structural blocking material or a post mounted guardrail design would be used. Chairman McKiel questioned the proposed drainage on the other side of the wall. Mr. Healy noted the underground structures would direct the runoff away from the wall. It was mentioned that the snow storage would be located towards the furthest egress or removed if necessary and there would be no dumpster on site. Mr. Nangle was concerned with snow obstructing the line of sight when exiting the property and he questioned the location of the driveway by the Circle Health. Mr. Healy stated snow would be pushed to the adjacent open area away from the egress. Chairman McKiel added a waiver is needed for the first curb cut, as that driveway is too close to the neighboring Circle Health driveway. Mr. Savage asked whether the lighting is all building mounted. Mr. Sullivan commented there are 6 or 7 pole mounts and a number of downward facing wall packs on the building.

Chairman McKiel asked if anyone in attendance had a question or comment. Nobody came forward to speak for or against this project. Hearing no further questions, Mr. Nangle motioned to continue this hearing to the March 22nd meeting at 7:10 p.m. Mr. Kanavos seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

970 BROADWAY ROAD/BOGHOS PROPERTIES/SPECIAL PERMIT & SITE PLAN REVIEW TO CONSTRUCT A 143,600 SQUARE FOOT BUILDING FOR INDUSTRIAL OR BUSINESS USE/PUBLIC HEARING:

Chairman McKiel opened the hearing and read aloud the Legal Notice, which was advertised in the Lowell Sun on Tuesday, February 7, 2023 and again on Tuesday, February 14, 2023.

Ray Boghos of Boghos Properties and Phil Henry, Registered Engineer of Civil Design Group appeared before the Board seeking a site plan special permit to construct a 143,600 square foot industrial building located on a vacant 16.5 acre site, which was the former Exxon-Mobil property. The project calls for up to 25 loading docks, two (2) drive-in ramps, 165 employee parking spaces, one entrance off of Broadway Road and is a single-story building approximately 43-feet tall, which can accommodate a single or multi-use tenant. Mr. Boghos indicated a waiver is being requested for the easterly side landscape buffer, as 50-feet is required and 15-feet is provided. All vehicles would enter from Broadway Road with the employee parking at the front of the building and any truck traffic would loop around the rear of the building with the loading docks along the length of the southwest side. The Fire Department will have access to all sides of the building and it will be fully sprinklered, as well as having fire rated walls. Mr. Boghos presented a proposed rendering of the typical interior layout for a 1, 2 or 3 tenant occupant along with the exterior concept of the building and landscaping.

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In further review, Mr. Boghos mentioned the potential benefits of the project as substantial tax revenue for the Town, employment opportunities and repurposing of a vacant site, which was identified for redevelopment in the Master Plan. Chairman McKiel asked about any potential tenants and whether a trucking depot is being targeted given the number of loading docks. Mr. Boghos stated no tenants have committed to this property at this point and it is not designed as a trucking terminal. The permit is seeking up to 25 loading docks, but if a tenant only needs 6 or 8; then only that amount would be constructed. Mr. Kanavos asked if it would be built as needed. Mr. Boghos confirmed they would. Chairman McKiel has a concern with the amount of traffic this facility will generate. Ms. Manugian noted the Building Inspector feels this is not being presented as a trucking terminal and he'll evaluate any potential tenant. Mr. Buxton questioned the number of additional vehicles at the site that a manufacturing operation would generate. Mr. Boghos feels a light manufacturing business, research or microchip manufacturing would not greatly impact the site with significant traffic. Chairman McKiel asked if potential tenants will need added special permits based on the vast amount of unknowns with the project. Ms. Manugian imagines some uses will be allowed while others might require additional permitting should the Building Inspector or staff determine it's needed. Mr. Kanavos asked about the management of the facility and how it works with more than one tenant. Mr. Boghos indicated a management company oversees the site and costs are pro-rated if there are multiple tenants.

Chairman McKiel asked if anyone in attendance had a question or comment regarding this project.

Albert Ogonowski of 267 Methuen Road spoke in length about the history of this site, his stonewalls and silt buildup, as well as some fencing that creates the boundary with his property and he believes someone should look at it before any work begins. Chairman McKiel asked if any environmental studies have been done. Mr. Boghos stated several environmental studies have been completed and thoroughly documented. Mr. Henry added that prior to construction there will be construction fencing installed, erosion control waddles, haybales and diversion ditches to properly manage any stormwater runoff from impacting Mr. Ogonowski's property. Ms. Manugian will schedule a site walk to see the conditions along Mr. Ogonowski's property line and the stonewalls.

Don Pederson of 945 Broadway Road is against this project and strongly objects to developing this site, as the land is environmentally damaged due to a number of extensive spills, which polluted the neighborhood and he is certain the additional traffic will create unsafe conditions for his family.

Darlene Pederson of 945 Broadway Road is opposed to this project because of the contaminants at this site and has a serious concern about increased traffic, vehicles speeding and dangerous conditions on this roadway.

Mr. Boghos mentioned many test pits and borings were done at the site and he will readily provide the environmental reports for the Board to review. Chairman McKiel asked if there is a cap layer and material that needs to be removed. Mr. Boghos indicated the top layer might not be suitable for construction purposes, but it is not environmentally dangerous and an LSP will be on site during this process. Chairman McKiel noted the data and details of the site is documented on the DEP website. Mr. Buxton asked if a curb cut permit was applied for with the state and if a traffic study would be done. Mr. Hamel confirmed a MassDOT permit was applied for and when a traffic study is done, the most intensive use will be considered.

Mr. Nangle motioned to continue this hearing to the March 22nd meeting at 7:20 p.m. Mr. Buxton seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

Wheeler Street – “Murphy’s Farm”/Proposed 40B Project/Discussion

Chairman McKiel stated a 22-lot subdivision was approved a few years back, however; the developer has decided to pursue a 40B development, which involves a state permitted process. Ms. Manugian indicated the application has been filed with the state for a determination of eligibility based on a conceptual sketch and the state asks for input or concerns from the Planning Board, Select Board and community members.

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Upon the determination of eligibility being issued by the state, the applicant will then file a 40B comprehensive permit with the Zoning Board of Appeals. The site contains 50 acres with a proposal for 300 rental units and 25% of those deemed affordable. Chairman McKiel asked if the state provides a traffic assessment for the neighborhood. Ms. Manugian noted the traffic impact study would come from the applicant. Mr. Kanavos questioned whether the only voice for the town is by way of the ZBA. Ms. Manugian added the project will go before Conservation as well, but ZBA will be issuing the permit and establishing any conditions. If the applicant does not agree with the findings, an appeal can be filed with the State Housing Appeals Court, who can make any changes to the decision or remove conditions. Chairman McKiel mentioned the ZBA cannot roadblock the project as the town has not met the 10% affordable housing mark. Ms. Manugian agreed and added there is a project page on the town website, which will provide information on the development and she will take names, addresses and emails of anyone who wishes to be notified directly.

Chairman McKiel asked if anyone in attendance had a question or comment on this project.

Wendy Sullivan of 112 Derby Street mentioned the application indicates public transportation is available, however; she does not feel this is realistic with the closest bus stop being 3-miles away. Ms. Manugian referred to the LRTA road runner service that goes anywhere in Dracut, although she does not deem it public transportation.

Linda Hayes of 32 Wilshire Circle requested that the Board go on record with the state as being opposed to this project and pass a resolution, as it is inappropriate for the site based on the size. Mrs. Hayes noted a situation in Wilmington where they pushed back on a 40B project and the state agreed it was too large. Ms. Manugian added Wilmington was at 9.5% on the affordable housing mark and suggested the Board not vehemently oppose the project, at this point. Chairman McKiel asked where the town is with affordable housing, which Ms. Manugian stated Dracut is at 5.35%.

Bill Hayes of 32 Wilshire Circle stated the town should tell the state it is working towards the affordable housing mark and this site is too small for this size project.

Renee Tanguay of 25 Paddock Lane is a member of the Affordable Housing Partnership Committee and been in affordable housing for 24-years representing investors and suggested further details in the draft letter to the state.

Dana Taplin of 489 Wheeler Road questioned the availability of water, sewer and gas for this development. Ms. Manugian indicated that would be dealt with during the ZBA application, but in discussing it with the water and sewer department; capacity is not a concern.

Jonathan Couture of 524 Wheeler Road stated this property is 6 times more dense than the surrounding neighborhoods and the square footage exceeds the current plans although 22-acres is under development; the owner intends on using all 50-acres. Mr. Couture suggested the Board's statement should include that the density does not match the neighborhood and felt it could be a mix of some ownership rather than 300 rental units or 3-bedrooms instead of 4.

Todd Dow of 50 Wilshire Circle agrees with his neighbors and questioned creating an appropriate zone for affordable housing projects. Ms. Manugian spoke of the MBTA multi-family zoning and 40B requirements as both relating to dense residential developments, but there is no specified zoning. Mr. Dow asked if the developer is considering elderly housing. Ms. Manugian was not aware of that at this point, however; it could be considered or discussed at the ZBA hearing.

Hearing no further questions, Chairman McKiel thanked the public for coming to the meeting and appreciates all the comments and input. After the project is filed with the Zoning Board of Appeals, all abutting property owners will receive notification of the public hearing.

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ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Nangle motioned to adjourn at 9:30 p.m. Mr. Buxton seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

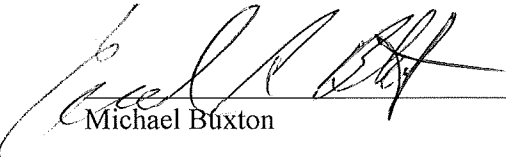
THE DRACUT PLANNING BOARD




Scott McKiel, Chairman



George Nangle, Vice Chairman



Michael Buxton



Charles Kanavos