

Work Session - 2023-7 @ 231 Wheeler Street Comprehensive Permit application pursuant to M.G.L.Ch. 40B for multi-family residential. Petitioner: The Homes at Murphy's Farm, LLC This work session is not considered part of the current public hearing process. No public testimony or questions will be taken.

Town of Dracut - Alison Manugian, Jackie Anderson, Scott Mallory, Brian Lussier

Town Consultant/Hancock Associates - Joe Peznola

Peer Review/Green International - Jim Thorne

Applicant/Owner - Kevin O'Brien

Applicant/Engineer - Bill Hall and Tom Schomburg

A Manugian provided a brief overview of the work session intent and format. J. Peznola summarized the outstanding issues as primarily relating to stormwater and visual impacts. The fourth round of peer review has been received and the goal today is to work on the outstanding items.

K. O'Brien updated that the changes include recent reduction in number of units, land area utilized and bedroom mix. T. Schomburg outlined some of the changes (noting a typo in the unit count on the projected plan):

Traffic review is ongoing, and the wetland crossings have been altered. There are changes to the parking dimensions and the roadway.

They are working to make the units closer together to allow for snow storage and recreation.

The sewer plan is to run, without need for a pump, to Poppy Lane.

Most retaining walls have been eliminated.

Responding to B. Lussier's questions K. O'Brien outlined the units as shown:

There are 48 5-unit buildings with the remainder as 7-unit structures.

There are two amenity buildings in the middle; plans include two clubhouses and a small store.

K. O'Brien shared that they are working on creating smaller areas for play structures so that they are close to dwelling units. Snow storage highlighted but not shown on the current plan - could be configured with playground, there are other smaller areas where a small play structure could go and parents can still see from home

J. Thorne outlined concerns from recent peer review:

- The permeable pavement is modeled as a single flat entity in HydroCAD, which likely over estimates the storage volume.
- Underdrains to outfalls are concerning as shown.
- The permeable pavement requires monthly vacuuming to remove sand and grit that will alter the pervious nature. Others indicated their discomfort with this approach. B. Lussier highlighted the difficulties during and immediately following construction impacts.

- T. Schomburg indicated that the cleaning would be part of the O&M requirements and that UNH has done significant analysis of pervious pavement. They've used it locally without issue on smaller commercial installations.
- K. O'Brien indicated that the permeable pavement maintenance is similar to detention pond maintenance.
- S. Mallory asked about how the permeable pavement holds up to summer weather, if it becomes malleable and if voids are reduced? J. Thorne indicated that the pavement is altered in the summer and if there is freezing in winter there may be reduced infiltration leading to ponding on the pavement.
- B. Lussier asked about oil impacts from vehicles. J. Thorne indicated that it's not removed by vacuuming and either is trapped or enters the runoff. He's not seen permeable pavement used anywhere approaching this magnitude of project.
- B. Lussier questioned the pavement detail and T. Schomburg outlined that it's typically 25" of stone then a permeable top coat 4" thick.
- The Pre-development and Post-development stormwater areas need to match and show appropriate discharge points.

K. O'Brien provided clarification of the existing sewer easement and anticipated gravity connection the system responding to inquiry from B. Lussier.

B. Lussier indicated that there needs to be significant buffering around the property – he suggested 50' as appropriate. A. Manugian pointed out that the currently vacant and agricultural sites can not be assumed to remain as such.

Discussion turned to stormwater in general. T. Schomburg summarized the general approach with the closed system designed for a 10 year storm. The test pits, groundwater and site plans need to be better coordinated. J. Thorne indicated that test pits in key areas should be done every 200' and that adding groundwater to profiles would be helpful.

K. O'Brien indicated that elevations and renderings are in progress.

Discussion turned to the entrances and roadway connectivity.

K. O'Brien indicated that Methuen doesn't want any direct access to Wheeler Street. He has taken Methuen to the Housing Appeals Committee twice and has prevailed to date. He pointed out that Dracut residents had spoken at Methuen meetings opposing direct access to Wheeler Street, which leaves Poppy and Elizabeth as the alternatives.

The wetland buffers need to be shown – 25', 50' and 100' buffers to highlight where there are potential concerns. Vernal Pool locations and impacts were raised as a concern. J. Thorne asked about pre-treatment and B. Hall indicated that the TSS removal would be via the permeable pavement. The vernal pools will see mainly runoff from grassed areas and that there may be some roof runoff redirected. He indicated that some runoff is needed to retain vernal pools and that this may be an area where a waiver is requested.

A Manugian reminded everyone that the ZBA will be in charge of local bylaws, including wetlands, and that the Conservation Commission will oversee and enforce the State regulations

S. Mallory indicated that the area of roadway where there is no curbing to facilitate runoff will need a guardrail for safety. There was additional discussion of concern around parking spaces that require backing out onto a roadway, although these will be private ways.

K. O'Brien indicated that currently the parking is a grade and that there are 9 spaces per 5-unit building and 12 spaces per 7-unit building – approximately 2 spaces per unit overall. Accessible spaces and those for EV charging will be added/indicated later. J. Thorne pointed out that these spaces take up more area than other spaces so there may be count impacts.

K. O'Brien indicated that following storms residents will need to move vehicles to allow for plowing and snow removal.

Discussion moved to recreation/open space:

- K. O'Brien intends to add back a walking path as was shown earlier, which B. Lussier requested be shown on the plans
- Sidewalks are on both sides excepting the swale on the main spine road
- B. Lussier asked about playground/swingset areas. K. O'Brien indicated a couple of larger play areas are planned with smaller residential type structures behind some of the units – likely every 2-3 buildings would share.

K. O'Brien indicated that the proposed units are currently anticipated to be two floors plus the sloped roof, with rear access and fully sprinklered and alarmed.

He anticipates post office mailbox setup at the clubhouse building or location to be determined by the USPS

Responding to B. Lussier, he indicated that multiple school bus stops are anticipated, following input from the school district and understanding of the current routes.

K. O'Brien indicated that the clubhouses will have gyms and function rooms.

J. Anderson asked for more information on the vernal pools and stormwater. The Conservation Commission will want more information on the walking path. The current ORAD is in effect through July of 2026, and a Notice of Intent will be needed.

K. O'Brien indicated that the fire department is reviewing hydrant quantity and locations.

K. O'Brien indicated that there have been conversations with the gas company and that they are accepting of the type of work shown.

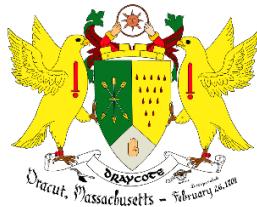
B. Lussier indicated issue with the structures closest to Elizabeth and Poppy and asked that they be reconsidered.

J. Thorne indicated that the permeable pavement isn't generally allowed to accept runoff/drainage from other areas. The Stormwater Handbook is the controlling regulation and he would prefer to see roof runoff captured and other areas drained into the roadway subbase. He indicated that the HydroCAD model needs to show the correct roadway shapes. J. Thorne reiterated, and B. Lussier agreed, that roof drains should go into drywells separately from other runoff.

K. O'Brien requested an additional work session in a couple of weeks, which all agreed to. Anticipated discussion would be around traffic study, wetland separation, permeable pavement.

B. Lussier asked how repaving is done in the future with permeable pavement. K. O'Brien indicated past conversations that it's viable, but further information is needed. B. Lussier asked about phasing and sequencing to ensure that the permeability is not lost during construction. T. Schomburg noted that there could be filtration and erosion prevention to protect the roadways. Additional questions were asked about potential impacts of future work and heavy vehicle traffic.

The next meeting was set for August 6th at 9am at Harmony Hall. The work session ended at 2:30 with all agreeing it was helpful.



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The updated (August 5th, 2024) site plan was projected and available in hard copy.

K. O'Brien provided an update on the changes since the last work session:

- We've eliminated the pervious pavement. We have now put a system in which would be picked up by the detention ponds and some underground systems. Drywells for the roofs will be added.
- We've eliminated a couple of buildings that we'll talk about. Some near the wetlands.
- The amenity buildings were shifted up near Elizabeth Lane.
- A walking trail concept was added, shown in red. Input is needed as to the materials to be used - pavement, gravel etc.
- He's been unable to get in contact with the School Superintendent to discuss bus stops.
- No update on the traffic review has been received.

A Manugian indicated that the traffic reviewers are working on a contract amendment and that the updates from the work sessions will be important.

S. Mallory asked for clarification of the unit counts - which remain at 268 total, 20% one-bed, 60% two-bed and 20% three-bed. The buildings themselves each have four or five units, all multi story. Buildings will have rear doors, but no patio/decks are planned.

T. Schomburg confirmed that there is no stormwater report at this point, although the detention ponds have been sized appropriately.

J. Peznola asked about the intent with the existing cul-de-sacs on Poppy and Elizabeth. The intent to leave them for ease of municipal plowing was discussed. They provide a clean delineation between public and private roads as well as potentially being beneficial for emergency vehicle access.

Discussion ensued around the space between the units closest to Rienze in the B neighborhood of units as well as vegetation (existing and proposed). This area is anticipated by the applicant to be of greatest concern with regard to abutter impacts.

- K. O'Brien put forth that the 20' natural buffer shown from the subdivision plans remains. His intent is to leave the remaining trees and remove and replace the smaller plantings and scrub.

- S. Mallory put forth a suggestion for a site walk, particularly in this area. B. Lussier plans to visit and review this week and a full Board site walk can be scheduled at the next meeting. In this area the property line is staked and there are hay bales approximating the 20' buffer limit.
- Manugian pointed out that the grading proposed goes to within 10' of the property line.
- T. Schomburg agreed to tighten that up, creating a clearer swale closer to the buildings.
- K. O'Brien noted that the abutting properties are 6-8' lower than his property, which helps with the buffering in some ways. The proposed units will be two stories.
- J. Peznola suggested adding the adjacent homes and additional topo from GIS sources and that cross sections from Rienze into the B neighborhood would be helpful. K. O'Brien agreed to add these elements.
- Lussier suggested shifting the entire B neighborhood 10' – 15' away from the Rienze property line. J. Peznola echoed his thoughts considering shifting and/or pivoting the neighborhood to create more buffer space.
- Manugian indicated that additional information about the planting approach and buffers would be helpful.

Discussion shifted to the amenity buildings, currently located near Elizabeth Drive, and previously proposed in the center of the property.

- Near the currently proposed amenity buildings there's a small depression that will capture the offsite runoff, directing it toward the existing wetlands. T. Schomburg confirmed that the runoff will be entirely retained on-site.
- A Manugian indicated that ultimately a letter will be needed from the gas company confirming their permission to alter the easement area as shown.

S. Mallory asked about possible snow storage locations. K. O'Brien indicated there is sufficient space for such and that they will be shown in the next steps.

J. Peznola indicated concerns about the proposed unit parking along the main spine road between Poppy and Elizabeth. Backing onto this higher traffic way will be problematic, particularly given the narrow dimension of the currently proposed road. B. Lussier shared this concern and indicated preference for the central amenity location. A parking lot, rather than the current layout, will likely be needed. B. Lussier would like to see the property between the gas line easement and Elizabeth Drive remain without buildings.

K. O'Brien indicated that the first amenity building will have some work out space and an area usable for small parties and such. Mail delivery may be part of this structure. The second amenity building will be a small convenience store.

The central roadway may need to be widened. Consideration should be given to traffic calming, showing crosswalks and potentially adding table-tops.

J. Anderson pointed out a couple of concerns regarding wetlands. Units 13D and 15D should be mirrored to pull them away from the wetland. The plans need to show clearly the 50' and 100' wetland buffers. (S. Mallory requested a legend be added for all linework and symbols.) The Conservation Commission will likely want to discuss alternatives to the shown sewer route running between wetlands from the area near unit 1E to the area near unit 1A.

T. Schomburg indicated that there is spacing left for sidewalks between units and parking, although such are not currently shown.

A Manugian asked what J. Thorne needs to be able to start the next significant peer review. He indicated that a stormwater report is needed. K. O'Brien stated that he would like to review the items previously discussed, particularly shifting the B neighborhood, before a stormwater report is done. Others agreed with that idea.

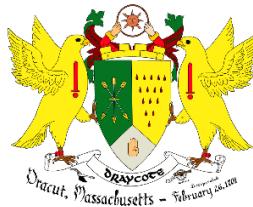
J. Peznola reiterated the need for additional landscape buffering information and cross sections.

J. Thorne asked if the Fire Department has plans with their truck overlay, which they do not currently. A. Manugian will confirm and supply the truck template and asked that she be copied on future communication between the applicant team and other departments.

K. O'Brien indicated that a couple of weeks should be sufficient to do the work needed prior to the next work session. A. Manugian reminded everyone that the full Board will need an update on these discussions, and the next meeting scheduled for 8/29.

Following brief discussion of dates and times, the next work session was scheduled for 2pm on August 22nd, location to be determined. S. Mallory will be unable to attend.

The work session ended at 10am with all agreeing that it was useful.



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The updated (August 20th, 2024) site plan was projected and available in hard copy.

T. Schomburg provided an update on the plan and updates:

- Roadway B has shifted from previous red centerline
- Added 50' wetland buffers
- Mirrored units 13D and 15D to provide more separation to wetlands
- Added Rinzee Road homes, legend and crosswalks
- Swapped units and amenity buildings – between central location and abutting Elizabeth Drive.

Discussion of retaining the existing cul de sacs on Poppy and Elizabeth took place

- Legal language needs to be reviewed to see if elimination is viable
- Leaving them in place provides a clear delineation between public and private and allows Town plows to turn around readily
- Will this connection road be used for fire access? Should it meet subdivision requirements – in particular the prohibition of parking spaces that back into the travel lanes

T. Schomburg provided an update on the area between neighborhood B and Rinzee Road properties –

- an additional 10' separation has been created
- Swale remains so that there's no abutter impact from the drainage – use fill to construct swale
- Space on outside berm to add vegetation or shade trees/low cover trees
- Site is grubbed and cleared with defined limit of excavation

B. Lussier provided that he walked the site, with the applicant, and the central roadway in neighborhood B is cleared to between Station 600 – 700. Shifting the road allows for the swale and additional plantings, he suggests spruce for lower visual privacy and pines for higher division

K. O'Brien agreed with B. Lussier's statements and suggestions noting that the Rinzee homes are approximately 8' below the property line already.

A Manugian indicated that the turning template plans have been shared with the Fire Department. They need larger full size plans that show the entire property and that trucks can't swing wider than their traffic lane to corner.

A Manugian asked what other topics are remaining of concern

B. Lussier would like to understand the Elizabeth Drive area, which is still heavily wooded making it hard to discern impacts to existing abutters.

J. Peznola indicated that the scope for work sessions from the full board has been covered and that an update should be provided to the full board at the next meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding traffic peer review.

VHB has requested a contract amendment and there was discussion of replenishment of the 53G governed peer review account. A Manugian will have VHB proceed without additional applicant funding at this point.

Civil peer review will wait until there is more backup data (stormwater reports, plans etc) and the full board affirms the current concept.

B. Lussier indicated an interest in further reductions in the unit count – particularly near Elizabeth Dr.

J. Peznola indicated that the traffic peer review may suggest traffic calming measures and asked for the building separation distances. T. Schomburg indicated it's generally about 15' currently.

B. Lussier indicated his strong preference for project access to be directly from Methuen

A Manugian introduced the new Town Manager Greg Hanley, who has been given an update, but may have questions.

G. Hanley outlined the new Affordable Homes Act that is driving consideration of new bylaw ideas for future development. Stakeholder meetings are anticipated around this and inclusionary zoning topics. Current residential taxation is insufficient and expanded commercial development could help. He put forth an example of design guidelines for a village style approach that might be preferred by the Town.

K. O'Brien clarified that the current concept is the design he wants to move forward with and requested another work session in mid-September. He proposed full plans by September 12th for peer review and comment. It would be helpful if on-site traffic comments could be received next week.

J. Peznola stated that the full Board needs to discuss next steps and their desire for additional work sessions or for the project to proceed within the public hearings.

A Manugian – the next meeting is currently August 29th and an update to the full board is anticipated. A site walk will be discussed as well.

The work session ended at approximately 3:15pm with all agreeing that it was useful.