

**PLANNING BOARD
MAY 18, 2017
MINUTES**

Chairman Burke called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM at the Town Hall

Members present: Burke, Barringer, Giger, Perkins, Svarczkopf, and Wilson

Members absent: Vega

PUBLIC HEARING - SPECIAL PERMIT & SITE PLAN REVIEW– 788 BOSTON ROAD

Chairman Burke called the continuation of the public hearing to order. Applicants Donald (Mickey) Higgins and Frank Hartnett of NJL Properties, design engineer Bruce Ringwall of GPR, traffic engineer Rebecca Brown of GPI, and the Planning Board's traffic engineer Jeffery Dirk of Vanasse & Associates were present.

Chairman Burke said the Board will discuss the traffic report entitled, "Traffic Impact and Access Study, Proposed Mixed Use Development, Groton, Massachusetts," prepared by GPI, dated April 2017. The Board also received a peer-review report from Vanasse & Associates dated May 15, 2017, a response from GPI dated May 17, 2017, and a supplemental peer review from Vanasse & Associates dated May 18, 2017.

Traffic engineer Rebecca Brown said previously approved projects on this site included a bank, a donut shop, a restaurant, and retail stores. The new plan is different because there is a proposed medical office building instead of a restaurant. The curb cut on Boston Road (Route 119) requires a Permit to Access a State Highway (curb cut) from MassDOT (730 CMR 13.00). There will be no left turns from the site onto Boston Road because the curb cut is in the location with three lanes of traffic on Boston Road.

Chairman Burke said MassDOT will make the determination on turning when it reviews the application for a curb cut. He noted that the Board required a copy of the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) filed with MEPA and will be submitting comments. Ms. Brown said the project will be advertised in the May 24, 2017 issue of the Environmental Monitor.

Ms. Brown said GPI reviewed the safety of the intersection and five years of collision data. The crash rates are below the state-wide average and the travel speeds are at or below the 85th percentile. The average speed on Boston Road is 38 MPH and the average speed on Sandy Pond road is 36 MPH. Sight distance requirements are 290 ft on Boston Road and 350 ft on Sandy Pond Road. Sight distance exceeds 400 ft in all directions except 360 ft to the east on Boston Road. All sight distances provide safe operations. The traffic counts for the proposed project were done in March when school was in session. Traffic from other projects including the NESSP Temple, Indian Hill Music, and 7200 SF of vacant space at Shaw's were considered.

Chairman Burke asked if the Groton Inn, now under construction, was considered. Ms. Brown said the Groton Inn is not a factor in this location.

Ms. Brown described the pass-by rates for each use, the AM and PM peak rates. She said the proposed plan generates less traffic than the previously approved plan. There will be 184 new vehicle trips during weekday AM peak hours, 96 new vehicle trips during weekday PM peak hours, and 170 new vehicle trips during Saturday midday peak hours. GPI is recommending that, independent of the proposed project, MassDOT should modify the timing of the traffic signal at the intersection during the weekday PM peak period. If the timing changes are implemented, the LOS will be improved to LOS D (see GPI report, page 33).

The Board's traffic engineer, Jeffery Dirk, presented his peer review reports dated May 15, 2017 and May 18, 2017. He recommended that the Planning Board include a condition in its approval of the project, subject to MassDOT's approval, that the applicant or MassDOT make the recommended changes to the timing of the traffic signal.

Chairman Burke asked if the request should go to MEPA or MassDOT. Mr. Dirk said, "both." Chairman Burke said if the signal timing is part of the existing condition, why isn't it MassDOT's responsibility to correct it.

Mr. Dirk said it is common practice to have a developer work with MassDOT to be sure the signal functions. MassDOT may want to wait and see the impact from the development after it is open.

Chairman Burke said he would accept LOS F for vehicles if it makes the intersection safer for pedestrians. Mr. Dirk said the traffic engineer must consider pedestrian safety as well as all factors in the decision.

Member Barringer agreed that the traffic signal should not be modified until after the project is open. In the meanwhile, LOS F will slow down the speeds at the intersection.

Mr. Dirk said the applicant must look at the traffic signal with the crosswalks. He said he does not recommend the proposed crosswalk at the Shaw's entrance. Chairman Burke said the Shaw's entrance is the preferred location for the crosswalk. Mr. Dirk said the crosswalk must be designed properly and have advance warning signs for pedestrian crossing.

Member Giger agreed that it makes sense to wait until the project is open before changing the timing of the signal.

Member Svarczkopf said if you wait until the project is open, you are shifting the responsibility from MassDOT to the applicant. If you make the change now, you will know if the future impact is from the development.

Ms. Brown said MEPA will require that a monitoring study be done after the project opens regardless of changes to the signal. The Board must decide if it wants to address the failing condition now or wait until later.

Land Use Director Michelle Collette said it is important for the Planning Board and Town officials to attend the MEPA scoping session and to send written comments to MEPA.

Frank Harnett said the access onto Route 119 is part of the value of the site. He said Shaw's and the Catalano properties at the Four corners also contribute to traffic at the intersection.

Ms. Brown said she agreed with the recommendation that there be no left turns onto Boston Road and that Sandy Pond Road should be used instead.

Ms. Brown said GPI addressed the peer review comments in its report dated May 17, 2017 and the analysis in the report has been updated.

Design engineer Bruce Ringwall said he would submit the requested turning diagrams for delivery trucks. Member Perkins expressed concern for deliveries in the drop-off area. Mr. Ringwall said deliveries would be in the very early morning hours.

Mr. Ringwall said there is an analysis for fire truck access shown on the plan. Member Barringer said it looks like the fire trucks will crash into the dumpster. Mr. Ringwall said the dumpster pads are over-sized for easier trash removal.

Mr. Ringwall said the intersection information will be added to the site plan as requested by Nitsch Engineering and Vanasse & Associates. The access road on Boston Road is 28 ft wide and the access road on Sandy Pond Road is 28 ft wide. He said they agree with conditions to add a stop line at the access road intersections and with the three (3) ft high maximum snow bank requirement. Mr. Ringwall said they would present a textured concrete island, rather than a raised island, at the intersection of the access road and Boston Road.

Member Giger asked if the proposed crosswalk on Sandy Pond Road could have push button lights in addition to signage. Ms. Brown said the traffic volume on Sandy Pond Road is much lower so she is not sure the push button light is necessary. She said she did agree with signage.

Chairman Burke said the Board is trying to increase synergies between the Shaw's development and the proposed development.

Member Giger said he was suggesting a push button, not a motion detector light such as the ones on Main Street installed by Lawrence Academy. Member Giger said the sidewalk should be extended down Forge Village Road and Sandy Pond Road. Ms. Brown said she would prefer people crossing at the intersection with the traffic light.

Mr. Dirk said safe pedestrian access is a very important consideration. Drivers going right from Boston Road to Sandy Pond Road are looking to the left and accelerating in the area of the proposed crosswalk. There is not enough time for a driver to react to pedestrians using the crosswalk. The pedestrian crossing must be well thought out and designed properly. If the town requires a crosswalk in this location, the Town is saying it is a safe place to cross. Crossing at a slip road does not meet Architectural Access Board requirements. There would be conflicting messages for the slip road if there is a crosswalk there.

Member Barringer asked if the Board should ask the applicant to remove the proposed crosswalk on Sandy Pond Road. Chairman Burke said pedestrians should come first. He said he would prefer the crosswalk at the Shaw's access rather than at the signalized intersection.

Judy Anderson suggested moving the crosswalk further down Sandy Pond Road to the west side of the site. Member Perkins said then the sidewalk should be extended on both sides of Sandy Pond Road.

Mr. Higgins said he never sees anyone walking on Boston Road in this location. He said he agrees to install a crosswalk at Shaw's with safe signage. Board members agreed that the crosswalk must be as safe as possible.

Mr. Dirk said he agreed with the GPI report that traffic impact from the proposed development is not significant. The MEPA submission is an important consideration because it is circulated to other State agencies. He said the traffic signal should be retimed prior to the first occupancy permit and evaluated six months later. A monitoring program will trigger adjustments to the timing of the traffic signal. He said both MEPA and MassDOT are sensitive to pedestrian access. He reiterated his concern that there should be no left turn from the site onto Boston Road and that a raised island be installed to channelize access to and from Boston Road.

Chairman Burke suggested that the applicant meet with the Fire Chief to review the proposed fire truck access plans prior to the continuation of the public hearing.

Member Perkins suggested that the Board do a site walk. The Board will walk the site on Saturday, May 20, 2017 at 7:30 AM.

The Board reviewed the special permit application for the Water Resource Protection Districts.

Mr. Ringwall said the special permit is required because the uses within the site may store hazardous materials in quantities greater than normal household use. The medical office will have a minimum quantity with appropriate storage. Retail uses will be reviewed by the Planning Board in the future. Calcium chloride will be used on the parking lot rather than salt. The on-site sewage disposal system is no longer an issue because sewer will be extended to the site. The stormwater management system meets Massachusetts and Groton regulations with more than 80% TSS removal.

Member Barringer said there would be no baking at the coffee shop. Mr. Ringwall said that is correct.

Member Barringer asked if the medical practice includes five doctors and one physical therapist. Mr. Higgins said, "yes."

Chairman Burke said he agreed that the island in the access road onto Boston Road should be elevated. Mr. Higgins said MassDOT will probably change the curb cut plans.

Mr. Ringwall submitted a revised landscaping plan showing more shrubs including hydrangeas, river birch, bayberries, and high-bush blueberries. Member Perkins requested that more plantings be added to provide screening and block the view of the cars.

Member Perkins asked about the snow storage area. Mr. Ringwall said snow would be stockpiled at the edge of the drives and then removed from the site.

Member Svarczkopf said he likes the internal islands with plantings.

Chairman Burke said he likes the architectural plans.

Member Perkins asked if the coffee shop would have its own dumpster for food waste. Mr. Ringwall said there will be two dumpsters – one for trash and another for recycling. The dumpsters will be located as shown on the plan. He said they did not want the dumpsters near the intersection.

Member Giger asked if the shrubs would lose their leaves in the winter. Mr. Ringwall said all shrubs would lose their leaves except the bayberry.

Member Perkins said she would still like to see a greater variety of plantings.

Mr. Ringwall described the photometric plans, lighting and 20 tall light poles. All lights will be shielded and pointed downward.

Member Perkins asked about the hours the lights would be on. Mr. Ringwall said the hours of operation are shown on the site plan. Member Giger asked if the timing of the lights would be consistent with Shaw's. Mr. Ringwall said, "yes."

Mr. Ringwall presented the plans for the proposed signage on the buildings and on the road.

Land Use Director Michelle Collette said the developer must submit an application under Chapter 196 Signs, §196-8 Special and Unique, because the signs on the road exceed the maximums in the Sign By-Law. The Board must hold a public hearing under the provisions of the by-law.

Member Giger said he would like to see a design plan submitted by the applicant and not dictated by others.

Member Giger suggested sending the applicant the condition for Phase I of the Indian Hill Music site plan that included restoration of the site if the project does not move forward.

Mr. Ringwall said his list of outstanding items includes the crosswalk, the landscaping plans, the entrance onto Boston Road, and the sign permit application.

The Board said it would discuss the construction phasing at its next meeting. The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on June 8, 2017 at 7:00 PM.

ANR PLAN – ACADEMY HILL, LLC

The Board considered the Approval Not Required plan submitted by Academy Hill, LLC, to change internal lot lines between Lots 8A, 9A, and 10A on Cherry Tree Lane. The motion was made by Wilson, seconded by Barringer, to endorse as Approval Not Required the plan entitled, “Plan of Land in Groton, Massachusetts, for Academy Hill Realty Trust,” prepared by Stamski & McNary, Inc., dated May 1, 2017. The motion passed unanimously.

REORGANIZATION

The Board voted unanimously to elect the following officers effective June 9, 2017:

Chairman	Scott Wilson
Vice Chairman	Tim Svarczkopf
Clerk	George Barringer

JUNE MEETINGS

The Board discussed its June meeting schedule and members’ availability. The Board will meet on June 8 and 29, 2017.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette, AICP
Land Use Director/Town Planner