

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
PLANNING BOARD OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER**

**February 10, 2021**

Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 23, 2020 Order, as amended, imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting was conducted through remote participation. The meeting was livestreamed from the City of Worcester website and via the local cable access channel and is available for streaming online. Public participation was facilitated through a call-in number, 415-655-0001 (Access Code: 1601714991), which was publicized on the posted meeting agenda and during the video broadcast.

**Planning Board Members Participating:** Albert LaValley, Chair  
Paul DePalo, Vice-Chair  
Eleanor Gilmore, Clerk  
Toni Molinari  
Edward Moynihan

**Planning Board Members Not Participating:** None

**Staff present:** Stephen Rolle, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Michelle Smith, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Marisa Lau, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Stephen Cary, , Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Jody Kennedy Valade, Inspectional Services Division

**Call to Order** – Mr. LaValley called the meeting to order at 6 pm.

**Approval of Minutes**

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 (Ms. Molinari absent) to approve the minutes of 9/23/2020 & 1/20/2021.

**Requests for Continuances, Extensions, Postponements, and Withdrawals**

**Postponements**

**Item 3: 47R Fourth Street (PB-2020-072) - Special Permit – Cluster & Definitive Site Plan**

Request to Postpone the Public Hearing to March 3, 2021  
Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to March 3, 2021  
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to March 25, 2021

**Item 5: 1103 Millbury Street (PB-2020-076) – Definitive Site Plan**

Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to March 24, 2021  
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to April 15, 2021

**Item 6: Narragansett Avenue (West of Steele Street) – 81G Street Opening (PB-2020-082)**

Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to March 3, 2021  
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to March 25, 2021

**Item 7: 1 Topsfield Road (aka Clarence Street) – Definitive Site Plan (PB-2021-002)**

Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to March 3, 2021  
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to March 25, 2021

**Item 14a: 857 Main Street & 19 Ripley Street – ANR (AN-2020-054)**

Request to Postpone the Public Meeting to March 3, 2021  
Extend the Constructive Grant Deadline to March 25, 2021

**Withdrawals**

**Item 2: 11 & 22 (aka 24) Canterbury Street – Definitive Site Plan (PB-2020-058)**

Request to Leave to Withdraw Without Prejudice

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the request for leave to withdraw without prejudice, and the requests for postponements for the above named applications.

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In reference to Item 1 on the agenda (Zoning Ordinance Amendment to keep chickens/poultry in RS-7 zoning districts) Mr. LaValley noted that since the public hearing had been closed, the Board would hold this item until the end of the meeting.

**New Business**

**4. 18 (aka Lot 25A & Lot 27) Adelle Circuit (PB-2020-065)**

a. Public Hearing- Definitive (Frontage) Subdivision

Ms. Smith provided an overview of the application. The existing development on Lot 25A would remain as it is today. The proposed Lot 27 is currently vacant and has received a variance from the ZBA for minimum lot frontage. The inadequate frontage impedes ANR plan endorsement.

Attorney Don O'Neill presented on behalf of the applicant. He noted that the parcel was conforming except in respect to lot frontage (being 5 feet short of requirement) for which the ZBA had granted relief. He requested the 3 waivers mentioned in the staff memo for all requirements in the Subdivision Plan Regulations except those that would apply to an ANR plan and in Sections 8, 9, and 10 since no new street is proposed.

**Board Discussion**

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 5-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the frontage subdivision with conditions of approval and grant waivers.

**8. 15-17 Mountain Street East (PB-2021-003)**

a. Public Hearing – Special Permit to allow Adult Use Marijuana Retailer

Ms. Smith provided an overview of the application. The AUM retail establishment is proposed for a storefront formerly occupied by Verizon in a 10,000 SF multi-tenant commercial building. Site

improvements consist of restriping for circulation and minor lighting upgrades. A pedestrian walkway and accessible spaces will be striped in the front, the rear parking area will be restriped, and a new loading space will be demarcated. She noted that since the staff memo was circulated, certification from a professional land surveyor had been received as required for the proposed use.

Attorney Joshua Lee Smith presented on behalf of the applicant. He noted the new establishment is located in the center of the commercial district, zoned BL-1, which includes a variety of businesses with retail and professional services. The other tenants in the building are a doggie daycare and sandwich shop. This is largely a renovation project with no changes to building footprint, pedestrian or vehicular access to the site, or the number of parking spaces. He also noted that the hours of operation for the establishment were typical for AUM retailers in the City, and that his client had experience operating another successful AUM retail establishment.

#### Board Discussion

Ms. Gilmore noted the applicant that this property would greatly benefit from site improvements in the future to improve vehicular flow. The only indication of the property/parking lot boundary is a change in paving so more direction would be appropriate at some point.

Mr. Moynihan asked if employee parking was in the rear and whether the site plan showed a new or existing crosswalk on Mountain Street East. He also asked about pedestrian connections and transit options for customers. Mr. Smith confirmed the rear parking area was intended for employees and also loading. The existing crosswalk is highlighted on the plan for emphasis. It expected that most customers will drive to the site, in addition to walking, biking, or taking public transit; there is a bus stop nearby.

Mr. Moynihan stated that the City should look at improving the pedestrian connection across Mountain Street to make it safer considering the new foot traffic this business will likely generate. Mr. Rolle replied that there are discussions about pedestrian safety in this area as part of the City's long-range planning initiatives. Mr. Smith agreed that his client shares these concerns and commitment to customers' safety in this commercial area.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 5-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 5-0 to accept the findings of fact and approve the permit with conditions of approval and grant waivers.

### **9. 661 Main Street & 2 Ionic Avenue (PB-2021-004)**

#### **a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan**

Ms. Smith provided an overview of the application. The applicant is proposing the renovation of the former Worcester Boys Club into a creative hub with a daycare run by the Guild of St. Agnes and art space with different amenities for the community. Egress modifications and façade improvements are proposed, and the parking lot will be reconstructed with two separate parking areas. The lot closer to the building will be paved, and the lot to the north will remain gravel. The applicant has agreed to add an apron there to help retain the gravel on site. Additional hardscape areas and the proposed landscaping are a dramatic improvement over existing conditions. Because the site is located in the CCOD district, no parking minimum is required but 49 spaces are proposed to serve this site and an adjacent site as well.

Matt Mrva, Project Landscape Architect, presented on behalf of the applicant. He noted the building will remain in its configuration today with some interior improvements. The bulk of the work is to reconstruct the parking area with new circulation and a drop-off area, along with overflow parking for the Creative Hub that will be utilized primarily by the abutting building. The four floors have a total area of 38,000 SF and will be used for a daycare, art studios, classrooms, performance space, etc. He stated that a driveway apron allowing cars to remove gravel on the way out and flush sidewalks across the driveways will be incorporated into the revised submission. Also requesting a waiver from labeling soil types, prompted by Ms. Gilmore's question.

DPW staff commented that several small issues relating to utilities had been identified due to type of materials proposed and that those changes should also be reflected in the revisions.

### Board Discussion

Ms. Gilmore stated that her excitement to see this project in front of the Board. It's an excellent example of reusing a building to serve the arts and community and she hopes to see more projects like this. She asked if at least two additional trees could be added to the parking lot, while noting that a minor criticism is that the northern parking lot is located on Main Street; an active use along this corridor would be better.

Mr. Moynihan asked for additional details about the project. Ms. Smith clarified that the Fire Department had not issued comments about the proposed design. Mr. Mrva replied that they are working with the applicant on laying conduit to provide charging stations in the future, but the intention is not to install any at the moment. Mr. Moynihan thanked him for the response and noted that the City needs to look at building EV infrastructure. He seconded Ms. Gilmore's comments on this exciting project.

Mr. DePalo appreciated the prior comments by Board members.

Ms. Molinari had no additional comments.

Mr. LaValley echoed other Board members' comments. To help educate the public who may not be as familiar with the site as some of the Board members, he asked the applicant to talk about the historic preservation of the building. He noted the proposed green space will be a huge benefit in this area of the Main Street corridor. Mr. Daigle, Project Architect, replied that the original intent of the building, interior spaces and character of the building will be preserved. He characterized the project as general maintenance and beautification of the site, without significant modifications to the building exterior. He pointed out several features of the renovated building such as a rooftop terrace and updated gym.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the definitive site plan with conditions of approval and grant waivers with the following additional conditions:

- 1y. The 15" private drainage main into the Main Street right of way must be reinforced concrete.
- 1z. The proposed 12" HDPE catch basin connection into Beacon Street must be 8" DR-18.
- 1aa. Chimney style connections are not permitted.

## **10. 222 Brooks Street (PB-2021-005)**

a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan Amendment

Ms. Smith provided an overview of the application. 2 multifamily low-rise buildings with 111 units had previously been approved for this site. The applicant had received a Special Permit for the use and is seeking an amendment to the permit from the ZBA for this project. In the modified layout, the buildings have been combined into one building oriented towards Brooks St with the same number of units and parking spaces including 40 EV spaces being proposed. Ground-level units have been added to the building plans, decreasing the number of proposed garage parking spaces. The rear surface parking lot has been enlarged as a result and the proposed pool has been eliminated. Additionally, the grading in the rear has been adjusted to a gentler slope of 2:1 at the steepest point. The applicants have worked with staff to address initial comments on the building design, specifically relating to the length and massing of the structure, and revised the building elevation to reflect a more modern architectural style and break up the façade using different colors and articulation. Staff has requested additional vegetation for screening along the front since the modified design includes a more open air garage.

Chris Anderson, Project Engineer, presented on behalf of the applicant and introduced the project team members. He stated the redesign had been necessary due to project costs. He noted the general intent of the approved plan has been maintained and described site circulation and building egress to/from the upper and lower parking lots. On-site amenities were reevaluated and it was decided that since a pool can only be used seasonally, expanding the useable green space, which will include a dog park, would be a better option. Additional trees will be provided around the upper lot, building perimeter, and dog park/green space.

#### Board Discussion

Ms. Molinari had no comments.

Ms. Gilmore asked for clarification on the revisions to the building elevations. Ms. Smith showed the applicants' preferred alternative noting that the Manserd roof and brick materials had been removed and that the applicant is seeking feedback on color palettes for the exterior. Ms. Gilmore stated she does not like the modern style demonstrated here and finds it flat and not very architecturally interesting. Regarding the different color palette options for balconies and windows, she described the black-on-black option as "intense," noting that a multi-colored exterior would not affect the overall visual impact of the building given its massing. Given the large increase in surface parking, she encouraged as much landscape to be incorporated as possible beyond the minimum required and supported the addition of more open space.

Mr. Moynihan agreed that open space is a better use than the pool that was proposed and asked about Fire Department comments. Ms. Smith replied that the Fire Dept. did not have comments for the application. Mr. Anderson recapped the project team's discussion of the project with the Fire Dept.

Mr. Moynihan stated his appreciation of the EV spaces provided and asked about the split of market rate and affordable units, and ADA accessible units in the building. The project team confirmed all units were market rate and meet compliance with regulations requiring that all units are adaptable and that 5% of units have accessible areas. Mr. Moynihan commented that he does not personally like the architectural trends represented by the project.

Mr. DePalo had no comments.

Mr. LaValley had several questions about building height and grading on the site. Mr. Anderson stated the height from the garage floor to the roof was 44'; additional parapets could add up to another 4'. Once site work is complete, the new hill in the rear of the property will be taller than the height of the building.

Mr. LaValley described existing pedestrian connections in the area and asked applicants to consider adding a pedestrian walkway to the sidewalk south of the site, which is a residential area. He also questioned the new building configuration and whether the additional landscaping proposed for the site was sufficient. Mr. Anderson stated that the building configuration allowed new ground-level units to be incorporated and that the landscaping would help break up the "parking lot feel" of the site and create a more natural environment. Ms. Smith and Mr. Rolle also responded about the landscaping and pedestrian connections in the area. Staff believes the proposed plantings will effectively cool and buffer the new residential development in what was historically a manufacturing area.

After discussion between the project team and property owner about the feasibility of adding a new pedestrian connection, with input from Mr. Rolle on the procedural aspect for the Board vote, the Board agreed to create a new condition to provide a pedestrian walkway to/from the south.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 5-0 to approve the definitive site plan amendment with conditions of approval and grant waivers with the following additional condition:

1k. Add a pedestrian path along the southerly driveway to provide access to the adjoining ROW

**11. 45 Green Street (aka Pickett Lot) (PB-2021-006)**

a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Mr. Rolle and Amanda Cornwall, EOED Project Manager, presented on behalf of the applicant, the Worcester Redevelopment Authority. Ms. Cornwall described the project as repurposing the General Pickett municipal parking lot into a new community asset with year-round programming. It will be designed as a public green space to serve as a flexible outdoor venue to be programmed in conjunction with Polar Park or on its own. In addition to hosting activities like entertainment and pop-up retail, the space will serve as a pedestrian gateway to the north entrance of the stadium. Phase 1 of construction will include removal of the existing pavement and installation of sidewalks, lighting, utilities, and a water feature paying homage to the Blackstone Canal, as well as new landscaping. Future phases may include the development of complimentary structures on the site.

Mr. Rolle provided an overview of the project. He stated the site will be transformed into a useable public space at a prominent entrance into Canal District. He also noted the District has always had outdoor spaces used organically for public gatherings, and that the new space will continue to serve that important function. Main considerations are the layout, pedestrian accommodations, new landscaping and utilities. The site is relatively flat except for a steep slopes along the adjacent railroad corridor. A low retaining wall along that northerly border will separate two landscape areas; the upper area will be more low-maintenance and other will have more formal plantings and a curved wall with seating space. The proposed landscaping will provide much more screening than exists today. He discussed how the space will be accessed and used, noting the wide paved path can be programmed for active uses. It also serves as a gateway to the outfield section, and provides seating around the water feature. Adjacent development of sidewalks along Canal Street and Green Street will complement the site design by creating

a natural extension of pedestrian paths. Lastly, he discussed the utility plans noting that these were designed so as to support future development on the site along the eastern edge facing Green Street. Drainage will be improved through installation of such features as a long trench along the promenade and a drain behind the retaining wall to capture runoff from the railroad grade. In addition to the increase in stormwater management capacity, impervious area on the site will be decreased by about 50%. He also noted that staff had confirmed the proposed lighting for the promenade would be switched from 3500 to 3000 Kelvins to provide warmer, dark sky compliant lighting.

#### Board Discussion

Mr. Moynihan asked if the historical memory of General Josiah Pickett will be commemorated in the plaza. Mr. Rolle replied that a statue of Tobias Boland and Tobias Wright will be installed at the east end of the water feature, and the plaque in General Pickett's memory will be restored and installed next to the flagpole at the western edge. Mr. Moynihan stated his appreciation for the work that went into incorporating aspects of the City's history into the design.

Mr. DePalo had no comments other than to compliment the design.

Ms. Gilmore stated that this area of the City is in need of more green space, making this project particularly welcome as a new community asset. She stated that for inclusivity purposes she hoped the proposed seating would not be "hostile architecture" meant to prevent homeless residents from sleeping there. She also asked about the water source for the fountain. Mr. Rolle described the water treatment process to take place underground, and confirmed the water would be recirculated. He referred to a construction detail in the plan showing the proposed seating.

Mr. LaValley stated his appreciation of the discussion about incorporating history into this site.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 (Ms. Molinari absent) to approve the definitive site plan with conditions of approval and grant waivers.

#### **12. Belisle Avenue (from 18 Belisle Avenue to the Worcester/Auburn line) (ST-2020-016)**

##### **a. Public Hearing – Private Street Removal from the Official Map**

Ms. Smith provided an overview of the application. Belisle Ave is partially improved. Petitioners are seeking to remove the unimproved section (157 feet in length) from the applicants' property at 20 Belisle Ave to the Auburn town line. Practically speaking there is no road there today and if approved the application would remove the paper street.

Mr. Wayne LeBlanc presented on behalf of the applicant, Ronald and Angela Valinski. The property in question is behind the applicants' residence on Malvern Road. He stated the applicants intend to continue to use 20 Belisle Ave as an extension of their backyard and keep the lot in its natural state as a wooded area. Since they have no intention to build on the lot they are seeking removal of the unimproved section of Belisle Ave from the Official Map.

#### Board Discussion

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 (Ms. Molinari absent) to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 (Ms. Molinari absent) to approve the street removal.

**13. Amendment to the Planning Board's Rules & Regulations for Site Plan Review (RR-2021-001)**

a. Public Hearing – To add provisions to allow for third party (peer) review

Ms. Smith provided an overview. She indicated the proposed language mirrors the language for third party review in the Special Permit Rules & Regulations.

Board Discussion

Ms. Gilmore indicated she was in favor of updating the regulations accordingly.

Mr. Moynihan asked about fee structure and whether surrounding communities utilize similar provisions. Ms. Smith replied if the Board determined a third party review was needed the cost would be borne by the applicant. She went over the options the Board would have if applicants refused to pay the fee for the review. She noted that peer review was common practice in other communities particularly if they don't have professional staff or if specialized expertise is required, and that the Conservation Commission has utilized this option in the past. Mr. Rolle added that he believes it necessary to have this tool available for applications which require certain areas of expertise not represented on the staff.

Mr. Moynihan stated that he would be in favor of making the option of peer review available although he doesn't see it being utilized that often.

Mr. LaValley stated the review option would be a good tool to have in their toolbox if needed.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 (Ms. Molinari absent) to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 (Ms. Molinari absent) to approve the amendment to the Planning Board's Rules & Regulations.

**Old Business**

**1. To keep Chickens/Poultry in RS-7 (ZA-2020-007)**

a. Zoning Ordinance Amendment

Board Discussion

Mr. LaValley noted that while the Board generally supports allowing poultry in RS-7 as well as other residential zoning districts, members had agreed to support the staff recommendation of denial of the specific petition at the previous meeting. The Board would now discuss the language of the recommendation to City Council.

Ms. Smith and Mr. Rolle stated the draft recommendation had been revised from an earlier draft circulated for this meeting to better articulate that the Board is interested in seeing a more fully developed proposal.

Mr. Moynihan stated the recommendation captured the Board's general support of the ordinance well. He hopes Council will take the petition under advisement and follow up on it in the future.

Ms. Gilmore agreed that the Board discussion was accurately captured and hopes the Board will be able to take action on a similar petition in the future.

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 (Ms. Molinari absent) to recommend denial of the petition as written.

### **Other Business**

#### **14. Approval Not Required (ANR) Plan(s)**

- b. 30 Miscoe Road & 7 Dolly Drive (Public) (AN-2021-009)
- c. 663 Burncoat Street (Public) (AN-2021-010)
- d. 20-26 Scenic Drive (Public) (AN-2021-011)
- e. 119 Endicott Street & 50 Richland Street (Public) (AN-2021-012)

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 (Ms. Molinari absent) to endorse all ANRs.

#### **15. Communication(s)**

- a. Notice of appeal of decision for 757 Salisbury Street; from Premier Property Group, LLC; received 1/27/2021.
- b. Chapter 91 Waterways License Application for Lots 2 & 3 at 249, 261, & 265 Lake Avenue; from Amjad Bahnass; received 1/26/2021.

There was no discussion by the Board.

#### **16. Discussion of Board Policies and Procedures**

- a. Special meeting date for long-range planning

Ms. Smith provided two possible dates: March 8<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm and suggested members hold these dates until staff can verify availability of cable services.

### **Adjournment**

On a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted to adjourn.