



# The City of **WORCESTER**

Planning Board

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

Thursday, June 9, 2022

Worcester City Hall – Levi Lincoln Chamber,  
with remote participation options available via WebEx online at  
<https://cow.webex.com/meet/planningboardwebex> and  
call-in number 415-655-0001 (Access Code: 1601714991).

**Board Members Present:** Albert LaValley, Chair  
Edward Moynihan, Vice Chair  
Conor McCormack  
Brandon King

**Board Members Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Stephen Rolle, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Stephen Cary, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Michelle Johnstone, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Jodie Kennedy Valade, Inspectional Services  
Sean Quinlivan, DPW

### Call to Order

Board Chair LaValley called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

### Request for Continuances, Extensions, Postponements, and Withdrawals

2. **248 & 253 Mill Street (PB-2022-021)**
  - a. Public Meeting – Parking Plan  
Request to postpone the public meeting to June 29, 2022 and extend the constructive grant deadline to July 21, 2022
  
5. **0 (aka 29) Steele Street (PB-2022-031)**
  - a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan  
Request to postpone the public meeting to June 29, 2022 and extend the constructive grant deadline to July 21, 2022

**On a motion made Mr. Moynihan and seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 3-0 to grant the continuances and postponements.**

## **New Business**

### **6. 17 Hermon Street (ZA-2022-002) – Taken first out of order.**

Public Hearing – Zoning Map Amendment

Ahmad Hatima, developer for the project, spoke on behalf of the applicant. He described the intention of the requested Zoning Amendment.

Mr. Cary provided additional context on the existing and requested zoning districts and what is allowed by right or by special permit.

*No comments from law, DPW or zoning.*

Mr. Moynihan asked the applicant what their intentions are for the building. The applicant described the potential use for the building as a mixed use residential building with some affordable units.

Mr. McCormack stated he was in favor of endorsing the amendment. Mr. LaValley agreed.

**On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 3-0 to close the public hearing (King absent).**

**On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 3-0 to favorably recommend and refer back to City Council (King absent).**

## **Other Business**

### **9. Review of and Request for Comments on a Preliminary Study Report for a Proposed Local Historic District in the Elm Park Neighborhood from the Worcester Historical Commission – Taken second out of order.**

Michelle Johnstone, the Preservation Planner or the City presented a preliminary study on a proposed local historic district (LHD) in the Elm Park Neighborhood. Ms. Johnstone described what a LHD is and does and on the inventory efforts taken by DPRS staff.

Ms. Johnstone explained the steps involved in designating an LHD, and gave a description along with photos of the history and diversity of the homes in the proposed LHD.

Mr. Rolle provided additional context for the LHD-planning effort.

Mr. LaValley asked about the different between the existing National Register district and the proposed LHD district.

Mr. Moynihan asked why Saint Spyridon was excluded from the district; Ms. Johnstone explained; Mr. Moynihan noted that ostensibly less historically significant buildings were included.

Mr. Moynihan noted that the Board had recently improved developments within this area; asked how developments like that would be impacted; Mr. Rolle explained.

Mr. Moynihan stated his concern that the LHD will have inequitable impacts, making it less affordable to buy and renovate property in this area; Mr. Rolle pointed to the fact that the nearby Crown Hill LHD has a diversity of economic status in spite of that existing district. Mr. Rolle explained the option of certificate of hardship.

Mr. LaValley asked about the “teeth” provided by the LHD, i.e. the “stick”, asked if there were incentives (“carrot”); Ms. Johnstone described tax credits available to residents.

Ms. Johnstone described more specifically the difference geographically between the National register district and the proposed LHD district.

Mr. McCormack asked about outreach and buy-in from property owners in the district; Ms. Johnstone described outreach process.

Mr. Rolle added additional information about the outreach process.

Mr. King stated that he was glad to hear that there was public education on this and supports the LHD.

Mr. Moynihan asked for clarification on the proper motion; Mr. Rolle clarified.

On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack; 4-0 to support and endorse the Preliminary Local Historic District in the Elm Park Neighborhood and refer it to City Council, with an added comment to encourage City Council to consider making tools available to help property owners afford the regulations stipulated by the LHD.

**1. 9 Dalton Street (PB-2022-003)**

Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Carl Hultgren of Quinn Engineering described the proposal before the Board. Mr. Hultgren described the reason for Site Plan Approval in this proposal is a 15% or greater slope on the property. He described the parking; stormwater mitigation; lighting; snow storage; and designated trash pickup location.

Mr. Cary gave a brief description of the proposal and the changes it has been subject to through the approval process at the Zoning Board of Approval; described stormwater mitigation efforts; discussed recommended conditions of approval; asked the applicant to confirm if the existing trees on-site will remain; and noted some new DPW comments.

Mr. Rolle described abutter comments on the project.

Mr. Hultgren responded to the abutter comments.

Ms. Kennedy Valade asked the applicant to confirm the percent of impervious surface. Mr. Hultgren responded.

Mr. Quinlivan gave DPW comments.

*No public comments.*

#### Board Discussion

Mr. Moynihan asked Mr. Hultgren about staff comments regarding site lines for cars exiting onto Dalton.

**On a motion made Mr. Moynihan and seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 4-0 to approve the Definitive Site Plan with staff recommendations.**

### **3. 500 Salisbury Street (PB-2022-023)**

Public Meeting – Parking Plan Amendment

Carl Hultgren of Quinn Engineering explained the reason that the parking plans changed and needed an amendment, described the newly proposed lot, landscaping, and site improvements.

Mr. Rolle asked Mr. Hultgren to explain the hatched area on the plan; Mr. Hultgren explained.

Mr. Rolle asked the applicant to consider revising the northern most handicap space to allow a hammerhead turnaround.

Mr. Rolle described condition of adding trees to the western parking lot; Mr. Hultgren described limitation to tree planting but offered a tree on the west side.

*No comments from zoning, law or DPW.*

#### Public Comment

Meg Giarusso, a nearby abutter, asked for clarification on where the Title IX requirement came into play; Mr. Hultgren stated he did not know; Mr. LaValley clarified.

William O'Connor, 12 Deborah Road, commented about wildlife diversity and the negative impacts of the parking lot; questioned how large of a lot they needed (comment was referring to PB-2022-024).

#### Board Discussion

Mr. Moynihan asked for clarification on pedestrian safety and access and whether they can safely traverse this lot; Mr. Rolle stated that the new layout did address staff concerns.

Mr. Moynihan asked whether pedestrian walkway along north side of western lot was protected; Mr. Hultgren stated that it was a continual curb at that location.

Mr. Moynihan reiterated Board support for more trees.

Mr. McCormack stated his support for a reduction in parking spaces.

Mr. King also stated his support for trees, asked for clarification on vehicles backing out from far western space; Mr. Hultgren clarified with regard to pedestrian paths.

**On a motion made Mr. Moynihan and seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 4-0 to approve the Amendment to the Parking Plan with staff recommendations, all waivers requested and to modify condition 1f to reflect one additional tree for eight total trees.**

**4. 500 Salisbury Street & 64 Nelson Place (PB-2022-024)**  
Public Meeting – Parking Plan

Mr. Hultgren described the new parking lot and the reason it is necessary; described the layout relative to existing buildings; described where stormwater discharged; stated they have met with Conservation Commission and they are reviewing the stormwater report; stated that no EV charging spaces are proposed as they are elsewhere on campus. Mr. Hultgren continued, and stated they are trying to obey wetland buffers while also maximizing buffer from Deborah Road properties; stated that a screening fence would not be feasible due to snow storage; described other efforts made to resolve staff comments.

Mr. Rolle reviewed staff comments; stated that overarching issue is how to screen the parking lot from nearby properties; asked applicant if there is alternatives to snow storage, whether there were areas where fencing could be proposed; and stated condition i should say “eastern”.

Mr. Hultgren addressed staff comments regarding the installation of a fence.

*No comments from zoning.*

Public Comment

Ray Lamothe, 48 Nelson Place, stated his opposition to the lot, citing that he is opposed for emotional, social, and environmental reasons; described history of development in the area; citing song lyrics in his case against the plan; stated that Assumption University has been slowly growing and encroaching on their property; reminded the Board that Worcester has declared a climate emergency and stated that this plan would not be in line with environmental efforts.

Mr. LaValley reminded Mr. Lamothe of the Board’s purview.

Brian Foster, 54 Nelson Place, stated that there is a parking area to the south that has already been opened up and the new plan will exacerbate the problems this has caused. He also discussed other places where parking is available; described the historical heritage of the woods.

Mr. LaValley reminded Mr. Foster of the Board’s purview, which is how they can best screen this parking lot from their properties.

Mr. Foster asked when neighbors should be brought in in a process like this; Mr. LaValley responded that there are no legal requirements.

Mr. Rolle reiterated the Board’s purview.

Margaret Foti, Deborah Road, described how close she lives to the parking lot; stated concern about light and sounds system of the new stadium; asked about laws lighting and sounds and loss of privacy between neighbors.

Mr. LaValley described; Mr. Rolle elaborated on control laid out by the ordinance, stating that light is not allowed to spill over onto other properties, although it may be seen from off of the property.

Ms. Foley stated that she does not understand why they cannot proposed parking on the tennis court; Mr. LaValley recommended she reach out the university.

Matthew Firmani, 19 Deborah Road, stated his opposition and the impacts to his property.

Meg Giarusso stated that they have drafted a petition; Mr. LaValley encouraged them to direct their concerns to Assumption University.

Tim Michalowski, 14 Deborah Road, stated his opposition and the impacts to his property.

Ray Lamoss asked about the Planning Board's role; Mr. LaValley explained.

Michael Fermani asked about lighting; Mr. Rolle clarified.

#### Board Discussion

Mr. LaValley suggested that the remaining time be spent discussing how screening can be added; Mr. Rolle suggested hedgerows or shrubbery; drew attention to buffer on eastern side of northern lot.

Mr. Hultgren stated hedgerows could be planted there.

Mr. McCormack stated that he generally does not support removal of mature vegetation but that their scope is fairly limited.

Mr. LaValley and Mr. McCormack discussed alternatives that were considered for where parking location was selected and the process by which Assumption made this decision.

Mr. Moynihan asked for clarification about the site plan buffers; Mr. Hultgren clarified; Mr. Moynihan asked about Conservation Commission's approval; Mr. Hultgren described that approval process and the Commission's concern.

Mr. Moynihan asked why there could not be less parking; Mr. Hultgren stated that with athletic field the college is losing spaces and explained the parking calculations.

Mr. Moynihan asked for EV parking spaces.

Mr. LaValley reminded audience that staff does review plans for conformance with zoning ordinance.

Mr. King stated that a photometric plan could be helpful for assuaging resident concerns.

Mr. Rolle suggested condition 1g to be modified to say denser evergreen planting shield headlights from #19 Deborah Road and suggested they keep condition 1i.i. for hedgerows along easterly side of northern lot.

Susan Forgit asked for arborvitae along the other lot to the south.

Meg Giarusso, 69 Nelson Place, described issues with ongoing projects at this location and lack of communication from Assumption; clarified about Mrs. Forgit's comment.

Mr. Rolle described process for conditioning approval.

Carl Hultgren clarified on status of construction of other lot.

Mr. Moynihan, Mr. Rolle, and Mr. Moynihan clarified about the conditions of approval.

Amendments

1.g. strike 4ft fence to replace to read "evergreen screening which will prevent headlights reaching residences" in accordance with staff review.

1i. western to eastern edge, add that screening will wrap around eastern and first portion of southern side of eastern most lot.

**On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 4-0 to approve with staff recommendations, subject to amendments, and to grant waivers.**

- 7. 767 Main Street; 24, 36 & 40 Jackson Street; 5, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22, & 24-26 Lagrange Street; 93-95 & 109 Beacon Street (ZA-2022-003)**  
Public Hearing – Zoning Map Amendment

Mr. LaValley recused himself.

Mark Borenstein presented the proposed changes.

Mr. Rolle provided additional context on the transformation of the neighborhood.

Zoning had no comment.

DPW had no comments.

Public Comment

No comment.

Board Discussion

Mr. McCormack state his support for cleaning up split-zones; stated that manufacturing use has been receding; asked why 108 Beacon was not included; Mr. Borenstein explained that outreach efforts were made but the owner did not desire the rezone.

Mr. King stated that he thought the rezoning made sense.

Mr. Moynihan stated his support.

**On a motion by Mr. McCormack, seconded by Mr. King, the Board voted 3-0 to close the hearing (LaValley recused).**

**On a motion by Mr. McCormack, seconded by Mr. King, the Board voted 3-0 to recommend favorably and refer back to City Council (LaValley recused).**

**8. 96 & 98 (aka 100) Beacon Street (ZA-2022-004)  
Public Hearing – Zoning Map Amendment**

Mark Borenstein gave context on last year’s extension of BG-6.0 and stated that this would be a further extension.

Mr. Rolle provided additional detail.

Board Discussion

The Board stated their support.

Public Comment

No public comment.

**On a motion by Mr. McCormack, seconded by Mr. King, the Board voted 3-0 to close the hearing (LaValley recused).**

**On a motion by Mr. McCormack, seconded by Mr. King, the Board voted 3-0 to favorably recommend and refer back to City Council (LaValley recused).**

Adjournment

**On a motion by Mr. Moynihan and seconded by Mr. McCormack, the Board voted 3-0 to adjourn at approximately 9:13 p.m.**