

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

June 3, 2020

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: 730323290#), 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
Edward Moynihan

Planning Board Members Not Participating: John Vigliotti

Staff present: Stephen Rolle, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Michelle Smith, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Gabrielle Weiss, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Jody Kennedy-Valade, Department of Inspectional Services
Nicholas Lyford, Department of Public Works & Parks
Alexandra Kalkounis, Law Department

Call to Order – 6:00 PM

Approval of Minutes – 4/22/2020

Upon a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted to 4-0 to approve the minutes as reviewed.

Requests for Continuances, Extensions, Postponements, and Withdrawals

Upon a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 to continue or postpone the following items:

1. Malden Woods Subdivision (aka 0 Whippoorwill Drive & 0 Danielle's Way, Castine Street, Danielle's Way and Whippoorwill Drive Right of Ways) (PB-2018-026)

- a. Public Hearing – Definitive Subdivision Plan Amendment
- b. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Postpone to 7/15/2020 and extend the constructive grant deadline to 8/6/2020.

2. 185 Madison Street (PB-2019-079)

- a. Public Hearings
 - i. Special Permit for CCOD to allow drive-through facilities and services
 - ii. Special Permit for CCOD for relief from the maximum front-yard setback dimensional requirement
- b. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Postpone to 6/24/2020 and extend the constructive grant deadline to 7/16/2020.

3. 115 Northeast Cutoff (PB-2020-011)

- a. Public Hearings –

- i. Special Permit to allow expansion, alteration, change of pre-existing non-conforming uses within the Water Resource Protection Overlay District
- ii. Special Permit to allow more than 20% impervious surface within the Water Resource Protection Overlay District

b. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Postpone to 7/15/2020 and extend the constructive grant deadline to 8/6/2020.

4. 141 (aka 139 & 143) Southwest Cutoff (PB-2020-008)

a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Postpone to 6/24/2020 and extend the constructive grant deadline to 7/16/2020.

5. 90 Brookline Street (aka 47 Gates Lane) (PB-2020-016)

a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Michelle Smith presented the item and described the project, highlighting the fact that riprap has been eliminated and the slope mitigated through terraced walls. She then discussed runoff from the driveway being captured and drained into storm sewer on Brookline Street. She then reviewed the conditions in the staff memo and waivers requested.

Mr. Hernandez spoke on behalf of the item and stated that the staff accurately reviewed the project.

No public comment.

Ms. Gilmore checked that the applicant is willing to make the changes as listed in the order of conditions.

Mr. Hernandez stated they would.

Mr. Moynihan asked if staff was comfortable with the stormwater design. Ms Smith stated they are.

Mr. LaValley inquired as to whether the home would be receiving third-party certification for its passive design. Mr. Hernandez stated they will be pursuing certification.

Upon a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 to approve the plan with the conditions outlined in the staff memo, as well as the following waivers from the plan requirements:

1. *Providing information regarding trees over 9 inches in diameter.*
2. *Location, size and arrangement of all lighting*
3. *Providing information regarding soil types on the plan.*

6. 75 Park Avenue & Rumford Avenue Right-of-Way (PB-2020-017)

a. Public Hearing – To remove a portion of Rumford Avenue (Private) from the Official Map

b. Public Meetings – Definitive Site Plan

Chapter 12, Section 12 Street Alteration - Rumford Avenue (Private)

Michelle Smith presented the item and described the project. She highlighted a reduction in total parking and paved areas from the current conditions, and explained that parking at other areas on campus would provide adequate facilities for student vehicles, and shuttle buses would be used to bring students from the site to the main campus. Ms. Smith then described the portion of Rumford Avenue requested to be removed from the map and improvements proposed to the remainder of the way. She further described staff recommended conditions.

Jared Gentilucci of Nitsch Engineering appeared on behalf of the item and described newly submitted drawings with changes to the eastern retaining wall, and additional plantings along the north-east property line.

Mr. David Enriquez of SGA Architects described changes to the architecture, adding cornices, changing materials, and adding porches all to make the building blend in better with the surrounding neighborhood.

Ms. Smith noted the emailed public comments in the board packet.

Mr. Moynihan requested additional electric vehicle charging spaces. He then asked why the building has been sited so that there is a solid wall along Park Avenue. Mr. Chris Brown of SGA Architects described that they wanted a south-facing courtyard to allow better daylighting of the building. Additionally, the courtyard

is helping to link existing townhomes with the new residence hall and the main campus of WPI beyond to the south. Mr. Ron O'Brien, director of Capital Projects at WPI spoke to reinforce Chris' statements about siting to link with the larger campus. Mr. Moynihan expressed displeasure with a long, unbroken façade on Park Ave that looks uninviting.

Ms. Gilmore asked the applicant if they had considered making the façade more like the existing Salisbury Estates. Inquired as to why they chose this color palette and these materials. Mr. Enriquez responded that the ceramic coated fiber cement board proposed has a more "masonry-like" texture to it. They did consider brick but it was not feasible to use that material, the changes made to the projections was an attempt to make the building feel more akin to a row of townhouses. Ms. Gilmore stated she appreciates the reasons for the siting of the building.

Mr. LaValley inquired as to the student population proposed to be living in this housing and what kind of path would be added into Institute Park. Mr. O'Brien replied that undergraduates would be housed in this dorm, and explained that the proposed path is being developed in coordination with the friends group, and will coordinate any work with Parks and friends groups.

Mr. LaValley asked about adding electric vehicle parking spaces, and bicycle parking. Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Brown stated this is a LEED project and therefore incorporates bicycle provisions. There is space for approximately 80 bicycles internal to the building. The representative from Bohler stated there are a total of over 30 exterior bicycle parking spaces.

Ms. Gilmore commended the team for their bicycle provisions.

Upon a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 to close the Public Hearing.

Upon a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 to authorize removal of a portion of Rumford Avenue from the official map.

Upon a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 to approve Chapter 12 Section 12 Street Alterations to Rumford Avenue, subject to all conditions outlined in the staff memo.

Upon a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 to approve the plan with the conditions outlined in the staff memo.

7. 124 Rodney Street (PB-2020-019)

a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Ms. Gabrielle Weiss reviewed the project, and outlined staff recommended conditions and suggested waivers.

Mr. Jay Finlay of Finlay Engineering Services appeared on behalf of the item. He described changes currently being evaluated that will be incorporated into final plans – considering guard rails, adding arborvitae and wildflower planting downslope of retaining wall.

Ms. Roberta Adams of Worcester, MA described that she is concerned about adding residences to a high-crime area. Fire and trash trucks cannot make the turn on Velandier Street. Doesn't feel that this is the right time to develop these properties because there are so many issues in the neighborhood.

Ms. Irene Chiarvallotti of Worcester, MA objected to adding dwellings to the area, and adding cars.

Mr. Brian Chiarvallotti of Worcester, MA objected to the development of the property, because it will add traffic to the neighborhood. Complained that the city has reduced the width of the road by constructing a berm, requested a traffic study because emergency vehicles cannot get down the road.

Jennifer Mensa of Worcester, MA agreed with the other abutter comments, stated that the only way to manage the increased traffic would be to pave Breck Street. She is concerned that cars and emergency vehicles will crash into her property or vehicles as they travel along Eastern Ave.

Mr. Jay Finlay responded, stated that the access to the property would be from Rodney Street, which connects to Belmont Street, and parking for the site would be on site. Clarified that the entire site will be cleared with the exception of the triangular portion along Breck, and any hazardous trees in the triangular area will be removed. He then outlined precisely where the retaining wall will be located.

Mr. Michael Conway of Worcester, MA asked how filling the driveway could work, and whether stairs will be provided. Mr. Finlay stated there are no stairs proposed and clarified that the two sites are not connected, cannot travel between them.

Ms. Adams repeated her concern about fire access, mentioned fatalities in neighboring properties because fire trucks were not able to access the homes.

Mr Moynihan inquired where the stormwater runoff will be going. Mr. Finlay described the recharge system and its overflow connection to the City combined sewer.

Mr. LaValley inquired if the Fire Department had any comments, Ms. Weiss stated that they did not.

Mr. Rolle added that abutters have the ability to petition Council for traffic and parking issues. Mr. LaValley encouraged abutters to do so and that if the Board were asked for comment by Council, they would be responsive.

Upon a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 to approve the plan with the conditions outlined in the staff memo, as well as the following waivers from the plan requirements:

1. *Providing information regarding trees over 9 inches in diameter.*

8. 46 Velander Street (PB-2020-020)

a. Public Meeting – Definitive Site Plan

Ms. Weiss reviewed the project including recommended staff conditions, and recommended waivers.

Mr. Jay Finlay Mr. Jay Finlay of Finlay Engineering Services appeared on behalf of the item. He agreed with Ms. Weiss' overall description of the project, and added a description of how the proposed recharge system should function.

Mr. Lyford requested that there be two separate sewer and water connections since the two buildings are separate

Ms. Chiarvallotti of Worcester, MA expressed concerns that there is not enough parking, and icing and water ponding issues on Velander Street.

Mr. Chiarvallotti of Worcester, MA stated that he is concerned about driveway turning maneuvers and the difficult access from Eastern Ave.

Ms. Adams of Worcester, MA expressed her concern that the streets are too narrow in the neighborhood, have serious icing issues in the winter. She is fearful that in the winter, future residents of these properties will back out of their driveway and slide into her home.

Mr. Finlay responded that they are doing their best to prevent contributing to icing on the road.

Ms. Gilmore stated that she is sympathetic to abutters concerns about plowing and surface treatment, but it is not within the purview of the board.

Mr. Moynihan echoed Ms. Gilmore's comments regarding icing and then asked about the steepness of the driveway. Mr. Finlay responded that the slope is approximately 9% and is as gentle as possible.

Mr. LaValley described that he has heard there is a significant winter road condition problem on Velander Street. He recommended that members of the public contact their City Councilor regarding this.

Upon a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 to approve the plan with the conditions outlined in the staff memo, an additional condition that each half of the duplex has its own separate sewer and water connection, as well as the following waivers from the plan requirements:

1. *Providing information regarding trees over 9 inches in diameter.*

Other Business

9. Approval Not Required (ANR) Plan(s)

a. 5 - 9 Madison Street (Public) and Beacon Street (Public) – (AN-2020-024)

b. 36 - 38 Greenhalge Street (Public) – (AN-2020-026)

c. 105 Delmont Avenue (Public) and Cohasset Street (Public) – (AN-2020-027)

Upon a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 to endorse all of the above listed plans.

10. Discussion of Board Policies and Procedures

- a. Discussion of review criteria for applications and review of staff progress on revising application materials

Ms. Smith provided an update on staff progress on updating applications and requested that board members submit comments on the draft versions.

Ms. Gilmore expressed her thanks for staff's working

Mr. Rolle stated he wants to consider a better way to provide notice to abutters that informs them what the Planning Board review is for and the actual purview of the board.

Mr. LaValley agreed with Mr. Rolle's sentiment.

Ms. Gilmore expressed a desire to communicate better with residents what exactly the board has purview over, with more accessible language.

Mr. Moynihan echoed the comments of his fellow board members, and that there will always be concerns that residents don't know how to express their concerns, and can require some patience to direct them to the appropriate venues for their concerns. He then described that the role of the Board as a face of the City and the historical impact that planning and zoning have had on segregation throughout the United States, and that this Board can work to combat that legacy.

11. Communication(s)

Adjournment

Upon a motion by Ms. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. DePalo, the Board voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at 8:35pm