

PLANNING BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 9, 2020 VIA “GO TO MEETING”

Members present: Mark Schafron/*Chairman*, Robert J. Swartz/*Vice Chairman*, Robert J. Bettez, Sr., Steve Cormier, and Paul A. Cormier/*Members*, and Trevor Beauregard/*Director-City Planner*.

Members absent: *None.*

Also present: Chris Coughlin-*Engineering*, Christine Fucile-*DCDP*, Eric Bernardin and Victoria Houle of Fuss & O’Neill, Margo Jones of Jones Whitsett Architects, Sara Lawrence and Bryan Obara of Stimson Studio Landscape Architecture, City Councilors Scott J. Graves and Judy Mack, and several Gardner residents (*copy of attendance on file*).

ANNOUNCEMENT - Any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a meeting, or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to reasonable requirements of the Chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. Any person intending to make such recording shall notify the Chair forthwith. All Documents referenced or used during the meeting must be submitted in duplicate to the Director of Community Development & Planning pursuant to the Open Meeting and Public Records Law. All documents shall become part of the official record of the meeting.

Mr. Schafron called the meeting to order at 7:58 p.m.

1. VOTE TO APPROVE MEETING MINUTES:

✓ April 28, 2020:

Public Hearing & Public Informational Meeting via Go To Meeting

[Site Plan Modification and Drive through Special Permit for Timpany Crossroads, LLC]

Motion to accept and approve Planning Board Public Hearing/Public Informational meeting minutes as presented.

S. Cormier/P. Cormier.

Vote - All in

favor.

✓ May 14, 2020:

Regular Meeting via Go To Meeting

Motion to accept and approve Planning Board Regular Meeting Minutes as presented.

R. Swartz/S. Cormier.

Vote - All in favor.

2. NEW BUSINESS:

2.1 New Gardner Elementary School Project ~ Site Plan Approval:

Mr. Schafron asked if any further discussion is needed amongst the Board, and noted there are some things up in the air, and also asked T. Beauregard what is going on with the Conservation Commission. T. Beauregard responded this project is in front of the Conservation Commission currently. The Conservation Commission requested a “peer review” for the wetlands impacts

and drainage through construction. T. Beauregard commented he has had initial talks with the school building committee, and will be talking to them tomorrow as well. The work includes reviewing of all the documents, overview of construction on site which consists of 8 visits to the site, which addresses the first comment Mr. Rockwood spoke of.

Mr. Bernardin confirmed they filed with the Conservation Commission the beginning of April.

In addition, have had two hearings, as well as a site walk out in the field. Further, they are waiting for comments from the peer reviewer in the next week or two. Mr. Bernardin anticipates working through one or two more hearings to try and get all their permits in line for the middle to end of July.

Mr. Schafron pointed out he thought signage was non-conforming at this time. Mr. Bernardin said, as discussed, they could not get a waiver from the Planning Board for this, therefore, the architects are in discussions with the Building Commissioner about the variance process for getting the signs. Would like to have 3 directional signs, one at the bottom of the 2 driveways, and one mid-site announcing the sign, one sign on the building to identify it, because of the distances.

Mr. Schafron asked if any of the Board Members had any questions, comments, etc.

S. Cormier commented Mr. Rockwood spoke of the traffic study that was done with the corner he has very close to his home, coming down Pearl Street heading west, and asked if this was addressed by the traffic commission. T. Beauregard replied this would not be something the traffic commission would address, but rather the project engineer. T. Beauregard added there is some tree-cutting going on there, but not sure which side.

Mr. Schafron stated the Board has the option to vote on site plan approval, and strongly recommends with conditions.

Mr. Swartz suggested postponing a vote until the next Planning Board meeting since there may be more input from the residents.

Mr. Schafron asked the Board if they concur, and all agreed. Mr. Schafron also agreed and added he is not concerned with what is going on with the Conservation Commission, but the traffic is of a concern.

Mr. Swartz made a motion to postpone acceptance of new school until next meeting. S. Cormier seconded.

T. Beauregard suggested giving the Engineers some guidance regarding the traffic concerns, and what to address for the next meeting coming up. Mr. Bernardin explained further regarding traffic study, and said they were engaged to study intersections around the whole area, which was over 20 intersections and did the counts, and completed a thorough review of the site profiles in accordance with all Mass D.O.T. standards. Mr. Bernardin said he believes the issues Mr. Rockwood spoke of are in fact true, mostly because the people travelling on that road are above the design speed for that roadway, and it was found some of the average speeds were in significant excess of the roadway. In addition, have added safety improvements for the pedestrians. Mr. Bernardin mentioned he can have the specific traffic engineer that worked on this address some of the traffic counts if needed.

Mr. Schafron remarked it sounds like speed is of concern, which boils down to local enforcement. Mr. Swartz noted when the Chief of Police was with him during one of the presentations, he realizes there is a great deal of speeding on this road, and already addressed that the school district zone is going to be instituted on that part of the road. In addition, there will be more emphasis on additional patrolling of which is already being done, and also when construction begins.

Mr. Schafron commented, in light of this information, does the Planning Board still wish to continue to hold this until next Planning Board meeting?

Mr. Swartz stated, in his opinion, it would be a good idea to wait until next month, as in the previous motion he made, but if needed, will withdraw the motion.

Mr. Schafron said if there is no punch list of specifics for the engineers to address, he is not clear as to why hold until next meeting.

S. Cormier believes the line of site issue coming around the corner is of concern, but since the speed is slowed down to 30 mph, the line of sight must apparently be approved as far as getting in and out of that area. Also noted there is awareness 300 Pearl Street has always been a tough area to pull out of.

The other issue not addressed, is the old cellar hole, and if the historical and archeology resources were checked.

Ms. Lawrence replied the information was submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Society and the Gardner Historical Commission and received a Massachusetts Historical official letter stated they have no concerns.

Mr. Schafron asked Mr. Swartz if he still has concerns regarding the traffic. Mr. Swartz withdrew his motion.

T. Beauregard commented the traffic issue has been addressed based on the discussions from the Board, and the engineers.

Motion to approve the “definitive site plan” for new Gardner Elementary School as presented with conditions as follows: Conservation Commission approvals, Zoning Board of Appeals approvals, and all state approvals.

R. Swartz /S. Cormier.

Voted – All in favor.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

3.1 Bailey Brook/Leo Drive Open Space & Recreation Project:

T. Beauregard indicated he kept this on the Agenda due to the comments and concerns received at the last Planning Board meeting about the initial concept plan, therefore, some of the issues were addressed.

T. Beauregard pointed out on the plan the following changes:

- ✓ Updated the roadway and parking along the eastern portion of the fields which increased the buffer from the rear properties of the Leo Drive residents.
- ✓ Buffer increased to 100 feet from property lines to recreation field.
- ✓ Accessible gravel trail is now 80 feet from the property lines.
- ✓ Added a multi-sport court which could be for tennis, basketball, or what the City/Residents would prefer there.
- ✓ Shifted the play area over to the north somewhat.
- ✓ Eliminated the small recreation field which will remain open space recreation area in its natural state and/or if something else is proposed there. At the last meeting, there was mention of a potential dog park.
- ✓ Include a 4 to 5 foot vegetated berm along the east side of the accessible walkway which will increase the buffer from the residential area. The field is proposed to be about 5 feet below the accessible trail, and with the 5 foot berm will be a good 10 feet below grade from the top of the berm.

T. Beauregard recapped the Board voted to accept the original concept plan, however, the scope has been reduced per comments from the last meeting. Therefore, informing the Board of these changes.

T. Beauregard noted this information will be posted onto the City's website within a few days once the berm gets placed on the plan. In addition, the construction plans and specs will be completed by the end of next week and also placed on the website.

Mr. Schafron asked if this modification is considered Phase I. T. Beauregard replied no, this is still a concept plan. Phase 1 is basically the gravel road and a portion, maybe one-third, of the gravel parking area to be built, as well as the accessible trail to be built. There is an extensive trail system within the site. A one-mile loop trail will be constructed, as well as improving the existing trails on the site. There will be space for about 20-30 vehicles to access the trails in the first phase. Further phases will be determined by the City as they move forward.

Mr. Schafron questioned if each phase will have to go through an identical review, such as public hearings, etc., providing funds are available for future phases. T. Beauregard replied there will have to be public meetings associated with the phases since the funding is appropriated through the City Council, and for approval of potential grant submissions to the state if required. The PARC grant is what is typically used for recreation projects requiring a 70/30 split. The city would have to come up with a 30% match.

T. Beauregard added Phase 1 should be going out to bid sometime this fall, and will then go back to the Planning Board for site plan approval in about a month or so thereafter.

Mr. Schafron asked if the Board had any further questions. S. Cormier asked how many parking spaces for Phase 1. T. Beauregard said about 20-30 parking spaces, and has a sketch he can provide.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS~~NEWS~~ARTICLES~~EVENTS

Next Planning Board Meeting scheduled for July 14, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn.

R. Bettez, Sr. /S. Cormier.

favor.

Vote --All in

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

All documents referenced or used during the meeting are part of the official record and are available in The Department of Community Development and Planning pursuant to the Open Meeting and Public Records Law