

**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**May 09, 2023**

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

Members absent: *Mark M. Schafron/Chairman.*

Also present: Rob Oliva-City-Engineer, Mark Hawke-Gardner Public Schools-Director of Finance & Operations, Dan DeLany-Fuss & O'Neill, Christine Fucile-Administrative Assistant, and Steve Rockwood-Gardner Resident.

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. Swartz, Vice Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.***

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- ✓ April 11, 2023
- ✓ April 20, 2023

*Motion to approve minutes as presented.*

*R. Bettez/S. Cormier.*

*Vote: 4 – 0*

*(M. Schafron absent)*

**2. NEW BUSINESS:**

**2.1 Gardner Elementary School ~ Additional Parking.:**

Mr. Swartz introduced Dan Delany from Fuss & O'Neill to speak about the changes needed to the Site Plan.

Mr. DeLany provided an illustration of the existing conditions and current plan of the school and stated they are requesting an amendment to add 22 parking spaces to the Site Plan at two distinct locations. Mr. DeLany pointed out a large parking lot on one side and another large parking lot straight out from the entrance, as well as another small lot, which will not be impacted. Mr. DeLany directed on plans where they are proposing to extend the parking which will consist of two parking spaces at the end of each of four parking aisles, for a total of eight parking spaces in these locations. In addition, Mr. Delany pointed out the large parking lot at the main entrance where it is proposed to add 14 parallel parking spaces along the access road.

Mr. DeLany stated both of these proposals were designed with a couple of ideas in mind to be minimally invasive and will not require any changes to the storm drainage or the storm drainage system, and will not be moving any light poles in order to minimize any impacts that would result from that. Therefore, both of these areas would be just a matter of removing and resetting curbs as well as adding pavement and blending it in. Mr. DeLany stated they did tweak the

grades a little bit just to make sure they had positive drainage since there are catch basins there now in order to maintain the same drainage patterns. Mr. DeLany pointed out an area where the road is crowned so they will maintain this as a gutter for the water to stay in that gutter area and will not go up against the curb to maintain the existing storm basins there and will not have to adjust the storm drainage. Mr. DeLany noted the memo that was provided with their application summarizes the changes as well as the changes to the stormwater system. Mr. DeLany stated since this is an addition of a few thousand square feet of impervious area to the site he re-ran the calculations and verified the storm drainage system will still meet the City's regulations.

P. Cormier asked how the existing drainage is working so far. Mr. DeLany replied he is not aware of any problems but noted at the back of the site where there is still some work being done, there are some erosion issues that are on-going but they are working with another Landscape Architect to fix some of the issues in that area. Mr. DeLany added the main stormwater basins and the stormwater system has been performing as intended.

R. Oliva stated he reviewed the package that was submitted and the stormwater calculations that were provided do demonstrate the system designed has extra capacity so with an increase in runoff from the parking areas it will be fine and the system functions still below what would be allowable.

R. Oliva noted himself and T. Beauregard visited the areas proposed for the new parking and a couple of topics came up. One was the existing grading at the ends of the islands where it looked like they were graded slightly different from the plans. R. Oliva said the middle island is "mounded up" grade-wise a little bit more than what the proposed contours would have shown, so there is a little concern about the grading within the island when cutting in for those new spaces and what the grade is going to end up being. R. Oliva added he does not know if the plans reflects the asphalt grades or if they were in the existing grades, but that island in particular, suggest taking a look at just grade-wise because it may end up being a grade too steep between the two parking areas. Also looked at the backing out/turning movements of cars parking in those spots and thought a car could end up backing way out into the main driveway that connects those lots, just a little bit tighter than what it is under the approved design but thinking more into it, believes the concern would be during the busy hours with cars and buses coming in creating lots of traffic on site and would not want to see those cars backing out into the driveway, but in reality it will probably be teachers or school staff that will be leaving before and after the rush.

R. Oliva said the other concern is the light poles along the main driveway where the parallel parking is going to be. T. Beauregard added he is not sure how wide the parking will be since it did not look like there is enough width for a standard parking spot. Mr. DeLany replied they are going to extend that six feet and then restripe the road so there will be two eleven (11) foot aisles to get the eight foot width. R. Oliva asked if he is pulling some width from the driveway. Mr. DeLany said yes, and the idea is to go from a 12 foot driveway lanes to 11 foot and then only kick it out six feet instead of the eight feet to get just inside the poles. T. Beauregard commented he thinks there will still be issues with people hitting them if they are that close to the curb in the parallel parking section.

T. Beauregard asked if there is a standard they engineer to when it comes to that type of parking as well as designing those type of islands and if there is a standard length. Mr. DeLany answered not typically if it is within a parking lot, but if it was a roadway then it would have to be a full

car length away. Mr. DeLany added with these spaces he believes it is still going to be close pulling out but trusts there is enough room there that would not cause a conflict.

T. Beauregard commented when he and Mr. Oliva visited the site they noticed there were a lot of empty parking spaces in the lots and said it could have been timing or the day. T. Beauregard directed to Mr. Hawke and asked if he could speak to this. Mr. Hawke stated there have been a lot of absences by teachers and some of the staff, but did note the other day there were two spots available at the lot and some parked on the street where the 14 proposed parking spots will go, and really do not want this blocked, especially for emergency vehicles. At the beginning of the school year, they had an average of 10-12 cars parking on the street blocking one whole lane. The MSBA (*Massachusetts School Building Authority*) did not want too much parking when the school was being designed or started designing some six (6) years ago or more at which time had 150-155 staff at the two schools combined. Further, a couple of years ago the City received more funding from the Student Opportunity Act and added about 34 staff members at the elementary school which now makes 189 staff members as well as the custodial staff, the outsource custodial staff and outsourced school lunch folks, therefore, if everyone shows up, there is no parking. Further, if a parent wants to stop by, they are parking on the street somewhere.

R. Oliva asked Mr. DeLany what the total parking count with the 22 proposed will be. Mr. DeLany answered about 220 parking spaces, and said the original design was for 50 visitors and 150 staff. Mr. Hawke commented you have to take out four (4) spots for electric vehicles as well as seven (7) spots for handicap vehicles. Also had some “reserve” spots for the District Staff that visits the different schools but are all taken up by staff. Mr. DeLany commented the MSBA is very tight with what they will allow and want the parking minimized as much as possible which makes it a tough balance.

T. Beauregard directed to Mr. DeLany regarding the parallel parking area again and asked once the proposed parking is added, he wonders if people might still park on the road at either end outside where the designated parking area will be, and if so, suggested signs to say, “No Parking Beyond this Point”. Mr. Hawke stated the only time this might happen is if there is an open house.

P. Cormier questioned the future and adding on. Mr. Hawke stated right now they do not accept school choice for the younger grades. In addition, the Student Opportunity Act allowed them to “right-size” so they are under staffed in certain areas, particularly special education, so according to all parameters right now, they are “right-sized” and what they should have for staff.

T. Beauregard stated the Board should determine whether they find this to be a minor or major modification to the original site plan approval. A major approval would have a major impact on the site for example increased stormwater and would also trigger a public meeting process through Site Plan Approval all over again. A minor modification would not create any significant impacts to the site itself and would simply require a vote by the Planning Board.

S. Cormier commented he considers this to be a minor change especially with the runoff being well within in the limits.

***Motion to classify this as a minor modification change to accept the minor modification change to the original Site Plan Approval.***

*R. Bettez/S. Cormier*

*Vote: 3 – 0 (Bettez/S. Cormier/P. Cormier)*

*(M. Schafron absent)*

*Abstention: (R. Swartz)*

### **3. ANNOUNCEMENTS~~NEWS~~ARTICLES~~EVENTS:**

*S. Cormier asked if there is still a meeting on May 23, 2023. T. Beauregard replied yes.*

#### *Adjournment*

*Motion to adjourn.*

*R. Bettez/S. Cormier.*

*Vote: 4 – 0*

*(M. Schafron absent)*

**The meeting adjourned at 6:53 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.