

PLANNING BOARD

DATE: January 28, 2016
TIME: 7:00 P.M.
PLACE: Large Meeting Room
FOR: Regular Meeting
PRESENT: Jonathan Hankin, Chairman; Suzanne Fowle; Jack Musgrove; Brandee Nelson;
Malcolm Fick
Jeremy Higa, Associate Member
Chris Rembold, Town Planner

Mr. Hankin called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

FORM A'S:

There were no Form A's presented.

MINUTES: JANUARY 14, 2016

Mr. Musgrove made a motion to approve the minutes of January 14, 2016 as amended, Ms. Fowle seconded, all in favor.

SITE PLAN REVIEW: 79 BRIDGE STREET

Applicant Vjay Mahida was present with his attorney Kate McCormick, engineer Jim Scalise from SK Design Group, Dave Carpenter, landscape architect Craig Okerstrom Lang, traffic engineer Jon Dietrich from Fuss and O'Neil.

Mr. Scalise said the plan has been revised to restore a significant portion of the building. The two end sections and the center will remain in place. The two "hyphens" will be taken down.

Mr. Scalise said the number of rooms has been reduced to 88. The footprint is smaller than the previous plan as the revised plan follows the existing footprint. The 18 foot wide driveway will be maintained. There will be minor cut and fill in the north parking lot. The storm water management plan is the same even though the impervious area has been reduced.

Mr. Scalise said there is a mitigation plan for the river front. The River Walk group has requested that their consultant be allowed to weigh in on the plans which are 75% complete. He said there is a lot of consensus on the plans.

Mr. Scalise said there will be a complete reconstruction of the gymnasium. The reconstructed building will have a footprint of 11,450 SF, 4,100 SF larger than the existing building. He said the new building would be located 18 feet 3 inches closer to the road.

Mr. Scalise said the turning radii in the north parking lot show that all vehicles can maneuver in the lot.

Mr. Scalise said there are 88 parking spaces required for the project. There are 99 parking spaces proposed. There are 3 loading spaces required but we are requesting a waiver to allow 1 loading space.

Mr. Scalise said there is 4,000 square feet of meeting space proposed. He said there will be 40 off-site parking space provided, if required, to accommodate the use. Mr. Scalise said "we feel that the meeting space is an accessory use and we have adequate parking."

Ms. Nelson said she is happy to see shared parking for the project.

Ms. Fowle asked if 1 loading space is adequate for the project.

Mr. Scalise said a larger hotel owned by the applicant has one loading space and it is adequate.

Ms. Fowle asked where trucks would wait if there is more than one delivery at a time.

Mr. Scalise said he would expect the truck would be pulled off the road to wait if that were to happen.

Mr. Fick said the bylaw requires on site parking for the meeting space. He said if the meeting room use were determined not to be accessory, there would not be enough parking.

Ms. McCormick said the applicant could request a waiver of the parking requirements if necessary. She said "we feel we meet the requirements so a waiver should not be required."

Mr. Fick said he does not believe that the requirements of the bylaw have been met.

Mr. Musgrove said they could get a waiver.

Mr. Fick said they have not requested a waiver.

Mr. Hankin said the bylaw is silent on if a meeting room is an accessory use. He said it is up to the SPGA to decide.

Mr. Fick said the meeting room space is big. He said there are already issues with parking in town. He said he would vote for a waiver if one is requested. He said he thinks a waiver is necessary.

Mr. Scalise said there are no clear answers regarding how many parking spaces are required for a meeting room. He said he followed his engineering judgment. He said in the old days more would be added but some times it is a clear mistake to follow zoning. He said often more spaces would be added that would never be used. He believed this project would not need the number of spaces the math would show to be required.

Mr. Fick said he thinks the valet off site parking is a good idea but it is still off site, requiring a waiver.

The discussion moved to landscaping. Mr. Scalise said the green space will be increased along the River Walk. Five trees will be added along the east side of the driveway. He said the landscaping on the site will be similar to the landscaping on the Iredale campus.

Mr. Scalise said there will be no change to the lighting plan. There will be no change to the water management plan which meets or exceeds all 10 standards of the Wetland Protection Act.

Ms. Fowle said she is concerned about the Waste Water Treatment Plant. She said the previous use did not have any overnight occupants. She said there were no showers and no laundry

Mr. Scalise said the WWTP has adequate capacity for the use. He said the hotel will pay for the use of the WWTP. He said the hotel will be good for the plant it will not overload the system.

Ms. Fowle said she has concerns about the chlorine from the pool going into the WWTP as well as phosphates from detergents and soaps.

Mr. Scalise said he does not see those concerns. He said the pool will be managed and monitored by the WWTP.

Mr. Mahida said a UV light will be used to manage the pool. Chlorine will be 1 part per million.

Ms. Fowle asked about phosphates in detergents.

Mr. Mahida said he plans to use green products. He said environmentally friendly cleaning and laundry products will be used.

Mr. Dietrich said he redid the trip generations for the project when the number of rooms was reduced. Mr. Dietrich said the number of vehicle trips was reduced by 5 for each morning and afternoon peak period. Overall, the number of daily vehicle trips was reduced by 60. The level of service in all affected intersections will remain the same as it is now.

Mr. Fick asked if the valet service had been considered in the traffic count.

Mr. Dietrich said he looked at the hotel use as well as the meeting room use to calculate the trip numbers. He said the Parking Generation manual from the Institute of Traffic Engineers calculates parking demands at the 85th percentile, which means the maximum numbers are exceeded only 15% of the time.

Mr. Fick said but all 15% will happen in the summer when there is already a parking problem.

Mr. Scalise said parking will be managed. He said Mr. Mahida will work to provide his patrons with a pleasurable experience.

Mr. Dietrich said the numbers that have been provided are based on the 85th percentile.

A member of the audience said she is an abutter on School Street. She asked if there will still be parking on School Street.

Mr. Dietrich said there will be no change.

Mr. Hankin pointed out that there will be a net gain because the existing curb cut will go away.

The same member of the audience asked about the baseball games.

Mr. Scalise said they will have to be managed at peak times.

Mr. Mahida said they will be welcome to park in the parking lot when we are not busy. He said we will be good neighbors and will allow that whenever possible.

Ms. McCormick said there are discussions in process to work out something that will work for everyone.

Mr. Carpenter said we want to work with the Park Commission for scheduling. He said "the Town has scheduling responsibilities for Memorial Field. We feel Memorial Field is an integral part of our hotel."

Mr. Hankin said the Town could have kept the parking lot or imposed conditions allowing for use of the parking spaces, when the property was sold. That was not done. The buyer is willing to work with the Town. That is the best we can ask.

The audience member said the west parking lot is pitched toward the gym.

Mr. Scalise said the parking lot will be leveled by lowering the grade.

The audience member asked about truck traffic. She said commercial truck should not be allowed on Dresser Avenue or Front Street.

Mr. Hankin said there are currently a significant number of delivery trucks on those streets.

The audience member said there will be more trucks with the new hotel.

Mr. Hankin said the roads the trucks use is beyond our purview.

The audience member asked if laundry would be done on site.

Mr. Mahida said we are planning to do the laundry on site.

Mr. Scalise said there will be no change from the previous plan for the sign or the refuse disposal. The sign will be ground mounted at the entrance. A screened wall will be around the dumpster.

Mr. Hankin asked if there will be a roof over the dumpster.

Mr. Scalise said no.

Ms. Fowle asked if a bike rack would be provided.

Mr. Scalise said a bike rack will be located to the right of the porte cochere.

Mr. Musgrove said he is disappointed in the building that is proposed to replace the gym. He said when you go down the hill it looks like the back of a building. He said you have an opportunity to make it charming.

Mr. Scalise said there will be a tree on the corner. He said it is not shown on the elevation.

Mr. Musgrove said a tree may help. He said he thought it would be an opportunity to make it elegant.

Mr. Hankin asked if the front door is handicap accessible.

Mr. Scalise said there is handicap accessibility from the corner to the porch.

Mr. Hankin asked if there is a way to make the front door to the conference center accessible from the sidewalk.

Mr. Scalise said he will look at it. He said he should be able to make it work.

Mr. Fick said by moving the conference center forward you have to be by it before seeing the front of the hotel building.

Mr. Scalise said he couldn't make it all work.

Mr. Musgrove said he wished the building had more charm.

Ms. Fowle said it is important to note that there is a serious departure from the original gym building. She said it is also important to realize there will be trees.

Mr. Scalise said he heard loud and clear from the Design Advisory Committee that the building needed to be closer to the street. He said the proposed building is significantly more attractive than what exists.

Mr. Carpenter said a conscious decision was made on the design based on the view from Bridge Street.

A member of the audience said the hotel building should be welcoming not blocked.

David Magadini said the Board should be concerned about the destruction of the gym. He said it is part of the Town's history and should be preserved.

Mr. Hankin said he would like to see a manhole added to install the sewer connection outside the drip line of the existing canopy of the Red Oak tree at the southeast corner of the property. Mr. Scalise agreed that would minimize the impact on the tree.

Mr. Musgrove went through the Site Plan Review.

Ms. Fowle was concerned about the increased waste water and phosphorous. The Board made a condition that the detergents used by the hotel will be approved under the Massachusetts Phosphorous and Fertilizer law of 2010.

The Board made a condition to direct traffic toward Bridge Street to limit the amount of traffic on Church Street. Directional signs in the north lot will be installed.

The Board made a condition that the applicant will follow the orders put in place by the Conservation Commission.

Ms. Nelson asked if the Board should send a recommendation to the Conservation Commission regarding the concerns that have been raised.

Ms. McCormick said we have worked very hard with the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Hankin said that if Ms. Fowle feels strongly that concerns from the Board should be shared with the Conservation Commission, she can send a letter to them with the support of the Board.

Ms. Fowle said she would defer to the recommendations of the Conservation Commission.

A member of the audience commented on the unreasonable departure from the character of the structure. She said the architectural significance is detracted from the faux façade.

Mr. Nelson said there is a very dramatic change in the overall character of the project but the applicant has worked very hard to acknowledge the comments from a variety of sources. The project is not unreasonable as proposed.

The Board discussed a recommendation to the Selectboard for the 40 off-site parking spaces, saying they should be adequate and the need can be reviewed after the 3-4 years of operation of the hotel.

Mr. Musgrove made a motion to approve Site Plan Review with the conditions discussed, Ms. Nelson seconded, all in favor.

The Board spent a considerable amount of time discussing the amount of parking proposed and what could be required.

Mr. Hankin said the revised plans are very different from the original plans. The Board will make a new recommendation to the Selectboard on the revised plans.

Mr. Musgrove made a motion to send a positive recommendation to the Selectboard that a parking waiver is not required and that only one loading space is adequate, Ms. Nelson seconded.

Mr. Fick said he thinks the applicant needs a parking waiver. He did not feel there is adequate parking for the conference center use. He agreed that review of the off-site parking after a period of time would be a good idea and if it is determined that the additional parking is not necessary the permit could be amended. He said he wants to establish that the conference center is a primary use of its own requiring its own dedicated parking. He said if it is determined that a waiver is required he would support such a request.

Mr. Musgrove made a motion to withdraw his motion, Ms. Nelson seconded, all in favor.

Mr. Fick made a motion that the Board make a recommendation that the Selectboard grant all of the special permits requested by 79 Bridge Street Realty LLC, with a condition that there be 40 off-site parking spaces provided, and that after three years of hotel operation the Selectboard may, at the applicant's request, review whether those off site spaces are still needed. The Planning Board also finds that only one loading space is required, Ms. Nelson seconded.

Ms. Fowle said that she voted against a favorable recommendation the first time. She said she felt the project was out of scale for the Town. She said she still feels the project is out of scale. There would be a 30% increase in hotel rooms in Great Barrington with this hotel. She said she doesn't think it is a good idea to make this large scale leap without an economic study. She said she is also concerned about a chain hotel purchasing the property in the future. Ms. Fowle said she has a lot of faith in this team but it would be tempting to have a chain hotel purchase the property. She said she would vote against the recommendation.

Mr. Hankin called for a vote on the motion, Mr. Musgrove, Ms. Nelson, Mr. Fick, Mr. Hankin in favor. Ms. Fowle opposed. The motion passed 4-1.

ZONING AMENDMENTS:

Ms. McCormick brought a proposal to the Board for a helicopter landing pad at Fairview Hospital for emergency use.

Mr. Hankin said emergency use is not defined in the bylaw.

The Board had some discussion of the proposal. The Board decided the easiest way to address the change would be to add a helipad for emergency use as an accessory use to the hospital definition .

Mr. Musgrove made a motion to send the helipad proposal to the Selectboard, Ms. Nelson seconded, all in favor.

The Board continued discussion of proposed zoning amendments. Mr. Rembold had a power point presentation of the proposed amendments dated January 26, 2016.

After a thorough discussion of the language for the proposed amendments, Mr. Musgrove made a motion to approve the language of the zoning proposals as amended and send to the Selectboard for inclusion on the warrant, Ms. Nelson seconded, all in favor.

Having concluded their business, Mr. Hankin adjourned without objection at 11:11 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Kimberly-L. Shaw
Planning Board Secretary

Material submitted at the meeting:

- Revised plan for The Berkshire 79 Bridge Street Realty dated January 20, 2016
- E-mail from Town Planner Chris Rembold dated January 26, 2016