



# Town of Ashland

## MASSACHUSETTS

### Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Board of Selectmen Meeting Room  
Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland Massachusetts 01721

February 27, 2020 – approved at March 26, 2020 meeting

1 ***Call to Order***

2 Preston Crow, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm. Joe Rubertone, Member; Dale  
3 Buchanan, Member; and Tricia Kendall, Member were present. Peter Matchak, Town Planner  
4 and Emma Snelling, Assistant Town Planner were also present.

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6 Mr. Crow mentioned that the meeting is being recorded and broadcast by WACA TV and  
7 reviewed the meeting agenda. Mr. Crow also mentioned early voting available tomorrow and  
8 the procedures.

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10 **Public Hearing – 81 West Union Street Phase II Special Permit and Amended Site Review**

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12 Mr. Crow reopened the Site Review hearing continued from the February 23 meeting.

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14 Peter B. Barbieri, Attorney representing the applicant appeared. The applicant is proposing  
15 the development of three new buildings totaling 28,913 sq. ft., and parking. All three  
16 buildings are proposed to be mixed-use to include both residential and commercial uses.  
17 Building 1 is proposed to have non-medical office and retail services on the first floor, four  
18 residential units on the second floor and four residential units on the third floor. Building 2  
19 is proposed to be a mixed-use building, with two residential units and three general services  
20 units. Building 3 is proposed to be a mixed-use building, with two residential units and  
21 seven general services use units.

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23 Concerning Building 1, Mr. Barbieri reviewed the site changes concerning the depth of the  
24 parking spaces and the relocated loading areas. He also mentioned a meeting with the  
25 Design Review Committee (DRC) and commented on their recommendations regarding  
26 landscaping, additional greenspace and crosswalks, as well as the design separation  
27 between the commercial and residential spaces. Mr. Barbieri pointed out that the site  
28 changes do not jeopardize the 86 required parking spaces. The project team reviewed other  
29 modifications, including the roofline, façade, window style, egresses and access to the tenant  
30 storage and a mechanical area in the basement.

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32 Mr. Barbieri reviewed the Building 2 changes to address the DRC's suggestions, including  
33 modifying the architecture to create a more residential feel, as well as the height of the  
34 building and positioning of the garage doors and windows.

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Regarding Building 3 Mr. Barbieri explained the access to the second-floor residential unit and options to ensure its ADA compliance. He reviewed the roof mounted mechanical vent system. He also mentioned the specifications for the exterior wall at the wetlands.

Mr. Crow questioned the size of the Building 1 windows on the rendering plan versus the size indicated on the floor plan. He asked the project team to make those items uniform on the two plans.

Mr. Barbieri indicted that the proposed building sign would be roughly 36"x 36". Mr. Buchanan requested more details concerning the signs' specific size and style.

Ms. Kendall asked Mr. Barbieri about the process the project will follow to ensure the interior design adheres to building code. There was a lengthy discussion concerning what are allowable changes to the interior after the Site Plan is approved, how those changes may affect the exterior of the building. They also discussed whether the project needs an architect to verify the interior design and drawings are compliant with the building codes, and to ensure the interior design criteria is understood. Mr. Matchak clarified the items the board is approving, include the site plan, the civil site plan, the architecture of the building the renderings. Mr. Barbieri contended that the board has no control over the interior layout of a building, and the boards purview is only the site plan, architectural drawings, interior uses, unit counts and the number of bedrooms. Bill Rodenhiser, Contractor, questioned the overall Site Plan and Special Permit processes. The board concluded that Town Council will be consulted regarding these points and asked to attend the next meeting.

Cathy Rooney, DRC member, appeared and outlined design items the committee questioned, such as Building 1's front loading area and the egresses. Mr. Barbieri added that the front driveway is sunken, and the board questioned whether that design is appropriate given the location on Rte. 135.

Additional discussion involved the primary access for Building 3's residential unit, the stairs and whether a switchback would be suitable, and ADA compliance considerations. In addition, the board asked about the amount of asphalt in the rear of the building.

Mr. Crow opened the meeting for public comments.

Mark Dassoni commented on the Site Design process.

Emory Bond questioned the draft plans dated January 27, 2020 and February 27, 2020 and referenced the fencing size and material change. He also asked for clarification on the height of the arborvitae plantings. The project's Landscape Architect indicated that the plans and details include a six-foot privacy fence, and the 4 ft. notation will be corrected.

78 The board noted that Building 3 has ADA design compliance concerns. Concerning Building  
79 1, the board asked the applicant to submit a new signage design plan. They questioned the  
80 front sunken driveway, the storage area access, and the stairs' location and compliance. The  
81 board also requested improved landscaping at the backside of the Building 1 lot. Regarding  
82 the interior the board questioned the layouts and the 4 ft. wide hallways.

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84 There was a discussion about the need to draft a very detailed decision. Mr. Matchak  
85 suggested the board review prior mixed-use decisions, and asked Mr. Barbieri to email a  
86 decision continuance request.

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88 Mr. Rubertone made a motion to continue the 81 W. Union St. public hearing until March 12,  
89 2020 at 8:30 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kendall with a vote of 5-0-0

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#### 91 Other

92 Cathy Rooney, DRC member, brought to the board's attention an occurrence downtown on  
93 Main Street, where a new building appears to have been constructed next to a mature tree,  
94 which violates the board's ruling. Mr. Matchak indicated that he has reviewed the board's  
95 decision and he has been in contact with the tree's owner to ensure the tree is not further  
96 impacted.

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#### 98 Non-televised Working Meeting:

99 Mr. Crow explained the following agenda items that will be discussed during the non-  
100 televised portion of the meeting, including the following possible zoning amendments:

- 101 a. Amendments to Definitions
- 102 b. Non-Conforming Small Parcel Amendment (especially looking at the north Pond  
103 Street residential area)
- 104 c. Commercial/Residential Setback Amendment
- 105 d. Tree Bylaw e. Floor Area Ratio
- 106 e. New possible zoning amendment

#### 107 **Non-Conforming Small Parcel Amendment (especially looking at the north Pond Street 108 residential area)**

109 Mr. Crow presented his thoughts on the current zoning in the north Pond Street residential area. The  
110 area is in the RB district, and most of the lots are non-conforming. Mr. Crow is concerned that the  
111 current zoning laws would allow very large buildings in neighborhoods that are predominantly  
112 smaller homes, and is interested in creating a bylaw that would disincentivize the tearing down of  
113 small homes to build large ones. Mr. Crow presented information about the sizes of homes and  
114 parcels in the area. Mr. Crow shared that a resident suggested using Floor Area Ratio as a way to  
115 control house sizes, however due to the wide variety of parcel sizes this would not result in the  
116 desired outcome. Mr. Crow reviewed the current zoning requirements and how, with the average lot  
117 sizes in the area, it leads to nonconforming buildings. Mr. Crow shared the idea of creating a new  
118 residential district that restricts the living area of buildings to 2000 square feet. All but five houses in  
119 the area would fit the new criteria. The lots and buildings would still be non-conforming, but it  
120 would control any rebuilding of a pre-existing small home. Mr. Crow also suggested limiting the  
121 building height to 24 feet. Mr. Crow wants to have a discussion with the residents to see if that is the  
122 approach they want. Ms. Kendall added that they should talk to the people with the big lots, since it  
123 would limit their use of their land. Mr. Crow added that they can reduce minimum lot size, but that

124 might add an unwanted incentive to subdivide larger lots, or the 2000 square feet limit on living  
125 space could be limited to certain size lots. Ms. Kendall suggested requiring a height limit, but not a  
126 livable space limit to maintain the feel of the neighborhood but not limit large lot owners. Mr. Crow  
127 added that he would want to reduce side setbacks, possibly to 5 feet. The Board discussed the merits  
128 and drawbacks of reducing the side setbacks. The board discussed next steps, including discussions  
129 with the neighborhood. Ms. Kendall suggested having some special permit options in a new zone to  
130 help handle some of the discrepancies in lot size. A discussion of how to handle these discrepancies  
131 ensued. Mr. Matchak shared that a lot coverage limit could also achieve the same objectives. A  
132 discussion of building heights in the RB district and the northern Pond Street neighborhood  
133 followed. Mr. Crow has reached out to a resident of the neighborhood to get some feedback, when  
134 he gets feedback the board will then plan a public discussion if appropriate.

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### 136 **Commercial/Residential Setback Amendment**

137 Ms. Kendall proposed that if there is a commercial property that abuts a residential property, there  
138 should be a larger setback on the commercial property. Mr. Matchak and the board discussed that the  
139 abutting property would have to be an occupied residential use. Mr. Rubertone clarified that it would  
140 create a new setback for commercial properties. Mr. Crow suggested using residential zone instead  
141 of residential use, and a discussion of using zone versus use followed.

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### 143 **Tree Bylaw**

144 Mr. Matchak gave a brief update on the development of a tree bylaw, which will be presented to the  
145 board at a later date.

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### 147 **Definitions**

148 Mr. Matchak shared that there is a definition in the zoning bylaw that needs to be amended.  
149 Currently there is a definition for animal hospital or kennel, however this should read animal  
150 hospital or clinic to match the use table.

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152 Ms. Kendall asked if there is a requirement for a licensed architect for certain sized projects.  
153 Ms. Kendall also asked about the process of how projects are sent to the DRC. The board discussed  
154 how projects were sent to DRC in the past, and how projects come to the town.  
155 Mr. Buchanan stated that he will present a farm porch bylaw idea in the future.

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### 157 ***Adjournment***

158 The meeting was adjourned at 10:55PM.

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### 160 ***Documents***

- 161 1. Feb. 27, 2020 Agenda
- 162 2. 81 West Union Phase II Building 1 Plans dated 2/27/20
- 163 3. 81 West Union Phase II Building 2 Plans dated 2/27/20
- 164 4. 81 West Union Phase II Site Plans dated 2/27/20

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