



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Remote via Zoom Video Conferencing

March 3, 2022, at 7:15 PM

1 Present: Tricia Kendall, Chair
2 Lakshmi Krishnan, Clerk
3 Anna Tesmenitsky
4 Deepa Venkat
5 Marcelo Arjona
6 Kevin McClean
7
8 Others: Peter Matchak, Town Planner
9 Emma Snellings, Asst. Town Planner
10
11

12 *Call to Order*

13 Tricia Kendall called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm. Ms. Kendall read a statement regarding
14 the town's response to Covid-19 and explained that per the Governor's order the meeting is
15 being held remotely via Zoom, and recorded and broadcast by WACA TV. Ms. Kendall
16 reviewed the meeting agenda.
17

18 **355 West Union Street Site Plan Review – Continued from the February 10, 2022, meeting**

19 Mr. Matchak explained that the 355 West Union Street Site Plan Review is for TJ's Food and
20 Spirits restaurant's request for approved outdoor seating in their parking lot area.
21

22 As the applicant did not submit an updated plan since the previous meeting, Ms. Kendall made
23 a motion to continue the 355 W. Union St. Site Plan Review public hearing until March 17,
24 2022. The motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye,
25 Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.
26

27 **501 Pond Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review – Continued from Feb 10, 2022, meeting**

28 Ms. Kendall reopened the 501 Pond St. hearing. She explained that Ms. Tesmenitsky is an
29 abutter, and therefore has recused herself from the hearing. Associate Member Kevin McClean
30 will fill the fifth voting member seat.
31

32 Mr. Matchak explained the applicants, Ben, and Matt Stevens, from Trask Development,
33 submitted revised architectural, landscaping, and site plans that reflect feedback from the last
34 Planning Board meeting. The documents are saved on the town's website and distributed to
35 the board members.
36

37 Matt Marotta, from Icon Architecture, reviewed the site plan that showed an increased depth
38 of the minimum setback along Pond St. with additional plantings. He noted that the
39 commercial area will have expanded open space and additional open space is planned along
40 Pond St.
41

42 Bart Lipinski, the landscape architect from Grady Consulting, reviewed the proposed landscape
43 design changes made to the perimeter of the site, including an expanded public park seating
44 area with a quarry-like design, a walking trail, and a pergola structure on the opposite side of
45 the entrance. He reviewed the plantings on the southside, the dog park area on the northwest
46 side, and said shrubs will be planted to shield vehicle headlights. Mr. Marotta added that the
47 parking layout was revised, but the parking count still meets the requirement for the amount
48 of commercial and residential space. Regarding the 18,000 sq ft public park area, he proposed
49 the concept of a smaller version of a Corner Spot type location, with a parking area to
50 accommodate food trucks.
51

52
53
54 Ben Stevens and Ms. Kendall asked for the board's input on the site concept.
55
56 Ms. Venkat asked about the location of the hedges that will aid in blocking vehicle headlights
57 from the neighboring buildings. She also commented that the landscaping enhancements
58 should be used to connect the open areas and commercial space.
59
60 Mr. Arjona asked if there would be dedicated parking for the commercial businesses. He also
61 questioned the overall density, the unit mix, and the lack of a loading and unloading area as
62 residents move in and out of the units.
63
64 Ms. Kendall commented on whether the project addressed the intent of the underlying zoning
65 and the Cecil Report recommendations. She noted that the Commercial Highway zoning allows
66 for 5 residential units per acre and with 180,000 sq. ft. (4 acres) that is 20 to 21 residential
67 units, with a mix of residential and commercial space on the lot. The Pond St. Overlay District
68 zoning allows for 1 residential unit for every 2,000 sq. ft. which is 90 units (4.5 times the
69 underlying zoning). Ms. Kendall then said that this project is proposing 6 times the underlying
70 zoning, and questioned its economic and vitality benefits to the town.
71
72 Regarding the density factor, Mr. McClean commented that unit number increase on 90 units
73 should be 9 units (total of 99 units) when 10% common open land is provided for use by the
74 general public.
75
76 Ms. Kendall opened the meeting for public comments.
77
78 Mark Dassoni commented on the history and intent of the Overlay District zoning, and
79 suggested exploring a medical use for the site.
80
81 Joel Arbeitman remarked that the Cecil Report is over 15 years old, and the intent of the \$20
82 million state-funded Rte. 126 project is to revitalize the corridor. He questioned the project's
83 ability to generate economic development.
84
85 Catherine Jurczyk reminded everyone about other commercial segments. She also asked for a
86 calculation of the impact the project's density will have on town services, as compared to the
87 tax base.
88
89 Beth Reynolds, the Economic Development Director, commented on the project's location at
90 the border of the Rte. 126 corridor and felt its enhanced public space would benefit the area
91 and support a Corner Spot type of an establishment. She felt a residential or destination-based
92 development, such as medical use, would be appropriate for the location.
93
94 Paula Parker, former Chair of the Pond St. Project Working Group, stated that the Cecil Report
95 is accurate, as it reflects the residents' vision for the corridor.
96
97 Margy Gassel asked to review the open spaces and public access areas.
98
99 Several members asked, and Ben Stevens responded that he would explore other massing and
100 density options. However, he added that a reduction in the number of units would reduce the
101 affordable component from 25% to 10%.
102
103 There was a brief discussion regarding the need to consider the bigger picture, and not
104 burdening one site with meeting all of the demands of the area.
105
106 Ms. Kendall made a motion to continue the 501 Pond St. Site Plan Review public hearing until
107 March 17, 2022, at 7:15 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Arjona; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-
108 aye, McClean-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.
109
110 **311 Pleasant Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review – Continued from Feb 10, 2022, meeting**
111 Ms. Kendall noted that the application is for the solar array at the rear of the VFW building, and
112 most of the members completed individual site visits.

113
114 Nathan Collins, from CLC Design, reviewed the revised Site Plan that addressed concerns
115 regarding the visibility of the canopies from the abutting properties and the road, and the need
116 for additional screening. He also said the Plan addressed the proposed trail along Ponderosa
117 Rd. and across the Sudbury River. He noted that the Conservation Commission (ConCom)
118 confirmed that the site is not located within the Nyanza plume, and approved the application
119 as originally submitted.

120
121 Mr. Collins also explained that the revised plan includes slightly larger approved 450-watt
122 panels that will fit within a slightly larger footprint than what was initially submitted, and the
123 array is moved approximately 20 ft. away from the property line. Ms. Kendall stated that the
124 zone requires a 50 ft. setback from residential properties. Mr. Collins said that requirement
125 would be met, and additional vegetation screening would be installed to shield the canopies
126 from the riverwalk. He also explained it would not be feasible to reduce the project to a single
127 array closer to the building or mount the panels on the VFW roof.

128
129 Mr. Arjona expressed that he could not support placing the canopies in close proximity to the
130 riverwalk, given the visual impact on the natural environment. Chris Gazard concurred.

131
132 The board agreed to schedule a group site walk and asked the applicant to revisit a smaller
133 array on the building's roof.

134
135 Ms. Krishnan made a motion to continue the 311 Pleasant St. public hearing until March 17,
136 2022. The motion was seconded by Mr. Arjona; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye,
137 Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

138
139 **400 Cedar Street Special Permit Modification**

140 Ms. Krishnan read the public notice to open the public hearing. Mr. Matchak explained that the
141 application is seeking approval to modify existing Verizon Wireless antennas mounted on the
142 Ashland water tank.

143
144 Michael Giamo, the attorney representing Verizon Wireless, indicated that the cell site was
145 permitted by the Zoning Board of Appeals in 2010, prior to when the Ashland bylaw was in
146 effect, as well as the federal government Spectrum Act. He said the applicant is proposing a
147 modification of the equipment, as the plans have changed from what was originally approved.
148 Mr. Giamo noted that the board's decision is needed within the 60-day Spectrum Act shot-
149 clock, which is by March 31, 2022, or the project is deemed approved. He reviewed the plan to
150 update the existing facility that includes 12 antennas which will be reduced by 3 and not
151 significantly expand the footprint. He went over the Spectrum Act standards outlined in
152 Section 6409 and the bylaw standards.

153
154 Ms. Tesmenitsky questioned why the upgrade to 5G was not included in any of the applicant's
155 information. She also noted that Planning Boards are given latitude to opine on this regulation
156 when information is lacking, such as propagation maps or details concerning the visual
157 changes to the site.

158
159 Ms. Kendall suggested that the members conduct individual site visits, that the item is added to
160 the next meeting agenda, and that the addition of 5G is clearly noted.

161
162 Ms. Kendall made a motion to continue the 400 Cedar St. public hearing until March 31, 2022,
163 and posted with a specific mention of 5G on the agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms.
164 Tesmenitsky; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a
165 vote of 5-0-0.

166
167 **Scenic Road Permit, Cedar Street and Chestnut Street**

168 Ms. Kendall made a motion to continue the Scenic Road Permit review until March 17, 2022.
169 The motion was seconded by Ms. Tesmenitsky; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye,
170 Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

171
172 **Concurrent meeting with the Design Review Committee to discuss:**

- 173 a. Proposed bylaw amendments concerning changes to the design review triggers (section
174 9.6) and the site plan review application requirements (section 9.4) Design Review
175 Committee Chair Cathy Rooney explained the reason for the proposed bylaw
176 amendments is to develop processes and guidelines to ensure project evaluations
177 include Design Review Committee (DRC) examination and agreement.
178
- 179 b. The design review process including how projects are moved between the Planning
180 The members discussed the guidelines outlined in the existing bylaw, such as the size
181 and the types of commercial projects that would warrant DRC input. They also talked
182 about the Planning Board and the DRC's roles, and the need to determine the timing
183 when projects should move from the Planning Board's deliberation to the DRC's
184 assessment.
185
- 186 c. Board and Design Review Committee and communication between the Board and
187 Committee regarding projects
188 The members suggested planning a joint retreat to further discuss the DRC's role and
189 both groups' vision for the town. Ms. Kendall suggested, in the meantime, the members
190 review the zoning to determine where the recommendations would fit in, to review the
191 requirements, and to compile their comments for the DRC.
192

Report from Board Members and Town Planner

Update: Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities

196 Ms. Snelling reviewed the MBTA zoning ordinance requirements and explained where Ashland
197 sits as far as meeting the terms.
198

199 The half-mile radius from the MBTA station encompasses seven different zones and sub-
200 districts, and there are three sub-districts that come close to meeting all of the guidelines,
201 ADD-A ("Downtown Commerce"), ADD-C, and RTD-E. In order to comply, minor zoning
202 adjustments would be required, or a new overlay district defined. ADD-A would need to define
203 the 15 units per acre minimum gross density, and ADD-C would have to allow by-right multi-
204 family dwellings. RTD-E meets the requirement, however, the Cirrus development has a two-
205 bedroom size limit, which does not comply with the family-friendly size requirement. If these
206 sub-districts were included, the town would far exceed the 50-acre limit, however, a
207 calculation is needed to determine if the town meets the required 1,124-unit count capacity.
208

209 Mr. Matchak explained the upcoming requirements, such as providing comments on the
210 guidelines by March 31, 2022, providing a presentation of the guidelines to the Select Board,
211 submitting the MBTA Compliance Information Form, and updating GIS parcels by May 2, 2022.
212 A full determination of full compliance or action plan is due by July 1, 2023. He mentioned
213 that grant funds are available to hire a consultant to study adopting a multi-family zoning
214 district by December 31, 2024, but a determination of compliance must be submitted to the
215 Dept. of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) within 90 days of adoption.
216

217 Regarding the regulation, the members commented that Ashland's housing requirements do
218 not align with the bylaw, as it does not consider single or elder households, which is the area of
219 the greatest need. Also, the half-mile boundary is restrictive, because unless the overall
220 boundary was increased, the downtown falls outside of the zone, which is accessible to the
221 station and an ideal area for the proposed regulation. There were also comments that the
222 focus on multi-family use should not preclude communities with an official housing production
223 plan from addressing the groups in need, or only allocating 50% for multi-family.
224

225 The members were asked to send their comments to the Planning Office, so they can be
226 included in a draft response that will be reviewed at the next meeting.
227

Update: Outdoor Seating Standards

229 No update.

Update: ADESA Letter send February 15, 2022

231 No update.
232

Administrative Matters: future meetings, public hearings

234 No update.

235

236 **Approval of Minutes**

237 The approval of the January 27, 2022, minutes was postponed to the next meeting.

238

239 **Adjournment**

240 Ms. Kendall made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:35 pm. The motion was seconded by

241 Ms. Tesmenitsky; with a vote of 5-0-0.

242

DRAFT