



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Zoom Video Conferencing

Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland Massachusetts 01721

April 9, 2020 – Approved at 5/28/20 meeting

1 ***Call to Order***

2 Preston Crow, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm and announced the meeting is
3 being conducted via Zoom Video Conferencing and recorded and broadcast live by WACA TV.
4 Mr. Crow reviewed the meeting agenda.

5
6 Also attending remotely were Joe Rubertone, Member; Dale Buchanan, Member; Tricia Kendall,
7 Member, and Phil Williams, Member. Peter Matchak, Town Planner and Emma Snelling were
8 also in attendance.

9
10
11 **Public Hearing - 29 & 41 Alden Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review**

12 Mr. Crow reopened the 29 & 41 Alden St. hearing, continued from the March 26, 2020
13 meeting.

14
15 Terry Morris, Attorney representing the project and development team, spoke and reviewed
16 the Site Plan changes to address the board's concerns regarding the building height, and
17 feedback from the recent Design Review Committee (DRC) meeting. Mr. Morris explained
18 the high-water table will prevent excavation to relocate the first-floor parking underground.
19 He also explained that lowering the parking would result in an 8 ft. to 10 ft. retaining wall
20 running 30 ft. along the left-side of the property that would change the look and feel of the
21 Site Plan. In addition, the DRC raised concern that the change would jeopardize the tree root
22 systems. Mr. Morris also noted that lowering the roof and removing the 4.5 ft. parapet
23 impacted the ridge line and flattened the gable ends of the building. Consequently, he felt
24 the best proposed modification would be to affect the height by 1 ft. for a total height of 41
25 ft., and to remove the far corner element of the building that was representative of the fourth
26 floor and projected out 18 ft. from the rest of the building. Mr. Morris pointed out that
27 removing this element would pull the building 18 ft. away from the residential neighbors.

28
29 Concerning the parking, Mr. Morris explained the previously proposed stacked parking
30 would be eliminated and replaced with tandem parking. Thirty-five parking spaces in total
31 would remain, a surplus over the 75% requirement for 19 units. He also reported that the
32 second curb cut on the right-side of the building was eliminated with the intention of making
33 one access and egress point on the left-side. The delineation with the adjacent street would
34 be improved, as the area next to the access egress would become green space and a sidewalk
35 installed for a pedestrian connection. Rick Salvo, Civil Engineer from Engineering Alliance,
36 pointed out several other landscaping changes.

37
38 Mr. Crow asked about the Cultec water chamber positioned below the eliminated right-side
39 driveway. Mr. Salvo responded that it was also eliminated, as it was specifically for draining
40 the driveway, and all the drainage would be on the left side of the building. Mr. Crow asked,
41 and Mr. Salvo responded that the staircase on the left-side of the building is now positioned
42 further into the interior of the building.

43
44 Cathy Rooney, of the DRC, raised concern about locating the trees on the back-south-west
45 corner and the right-side of the property line. Mr. Rubertone questioned the snow storage
46 and the impact on the plantings. Mr. Morris responded that resistant plantings are planned,
47 and significant snow amounts will be removed from the site.

48
49 Ms. Kendall asked about the parking lot dimensions and for confirmation that there would
50 be adequate space for vehicles to maneuver. Mr. Morris explained the dimensions for the

51 double loaded parking facility aisle width is 24 ft. which would accommodate the 10 ft. x 20
52 ft. parking spaces.
53
54 Mr. Crow opened the meeting for public comments.
55
56 Mark Dassoni thanked the project team for the plan improvements, asked about the location of
57 the handicap spaces and whether splitting the driveway would enhance the egress.
58
59 Cathy Rooney indicated that she submitted tree shrub vine planting diagrams to be included in
60 the landscape plan. Mr. Crow confirmed the DRC recommendations were received and would
61 be shared with the applicant to include in their plans. He also read the DRC recommendations
62 into the record.
63
64 Mr. Matchak asked about the tandem parking space assignment plan. Mr. Zammuto responded
65 that one tandem space would be assigned to each unit.
66
67 Mr. Zammuto also mentioned, and Cathy Rooney confirmed her offer to research and provide
68 the historical aspects of the buildings.
69
70 Mr. Buchanan expressed his support of the proposed changes and appreciation for the thought
71 the project team put into ensuring the building's design aligned with the area architecture. Mr.
72 Buchanan added that the precedent the development is setting is a positive one.
73
74 Ms. Kendall again asked the applicant to consider reducing the number of units and building
75 height to adhere to the zoning bylaw or provide a compelling reason for a Special Permit. Mr.
76 Buchanan pointed out that the bylaw allows a maximum building height of 45 ft. with a Special
77 Permit.
78
79 Mr. Morris indicated that the site is unique, given it is 75%-80% asphalt, and the new building
80 would add to the rehabilitation and economic development of the area. He also stated there is
81 no affordable housing provision in the Ordinance, and although the economic viability through
82 the Affordable Housing Trust currently unavailable, tax revenue is estimated to quadruple over
83 time.
84
85 Mr. Rubertone expressed his support of the project. He acknowledged the need for the
86 development to be impressive and he recognized the thoughtful investment, however he felt
87 an affordable component was important.
88
89 Mr. Williams appreciated the benefits the development would bring to the area and expressed
90 his support.
91
92 Mr. Zammuto pointed out that originally the proposal included 28 units but based on feedback
93 the project team reduced the number to 19 units, which was 3 less than the suggested total.
94 Consequently, affordable units were no longer economically feasible. But as a good will
95 gesture, Mr. Zammuto offered to donate 150, 2-3-inch caliper trees for the town to plant at its
96 discretion.
97
98 The board agreed to close the public hearing and vote contingent on the final decision wording.
99
100 Mr. Buchanan made a motion close the 29 & 41 Alden St. public hearing. The motion was
101 seconded by Mr. Williams; Buchanan-aye, Williams-aye, Rubertone-aye, Kendall-abstain, Crow-
102 aye, with a vote of 4-0-1.
103
104 Mr. Buchanan made a motion to approve the Site Plan, condition on the Planning Board being
105 satisfied with the final written conditions. The motion was seconded by Mr. Williams;
106 Buchanan-aye, Williams-aye, Rubertone-aye, Kendall-abstain, Crow-aye; with a vote of 4-0-1.
107
108 Mr. Buchanan made a motion to approve the Special Permit on the use, subject to the Planning
109 Board being satisfied with the conditions on the final approval. The motion was seconded by
110 Mr. Williams; Buchanan-aye, Williams-aye, Rubertone-aye, Kendall-aye, Crow-aye; with a vote
111 of 5-0-0.
112

113 Mr. Buchanan made a motion to approve the Special Permit on the building height, subject to
114 the Planning Board being satisfied with the conditions on the final approval document. The
115 motion was seconded by Mr. Williams; Buchanan-aye, Williams-aye, Rubertone-aye, Kendall-
116 abstain, Crow-aye; with a vote of 4-0-1.

117
118
119 **Public Hearing – 81 West Union Street Phase II Special Permit and Amended Site Review hearing**

120 Mr. Crow reopened the 81 West Union Street Phase II Site Plan Review and Special Permit
121 public hearing, continued from the March 26, 2020 meeting.

122
123 Attorney Peter Barbieri provided an overview of the proposed Site Plan changes that were
124 made to address the board's concerns regarding the development's size and its proximity to
125 the residential neighborhood. He explained that the mixed-use building was moved, to what
126 was the main parking area, 100 ft from the nearest residence. Mr. Barbieri described the
127 building layout that would include three residential units on the third floor and 6,000 sq. ft
128 of retail space. Regarding the other main building, he noted that it is over 105 ft. from the
129 nearest residence and no change was made to its location. Overall, the development was
130 reduced by roughly 15,000 sq. ft, and includes of 6,100 sq. ft of commercial space with 34
131 parking spaces, 5 residential units with 10 parking space. All parking spaces are 10 ft. x 20
132 ft. Two loading areas would be located at the rear of each building.

133
134 Given the significant changes there was a discussion concerning re-advertising the project,
135 as well as the completeness of the revised proposed plan. Mr. Barbieri responded that
136 before developing the formal plans the sketched rendering and conceptual plans were
137 presented to obtain the board's initial feedback on the new layout and overall changes.

138
139 Ms. Kendall questioned whether 5 residential units represents mixed-use, and if the building
140 meets the social structure of the neighborhood. She also raised concern regarding the
141 complexity of the several uses together in one development.

142
143 Mr. Buchanan commented that he would prefer additional commercial space and the need
144 for more greenspace throughout the development. In general, he felt the proposed changes
145 were workable due to the reduced congestion and traffic, and said he looked forward to
146 reviewing the final renderings.

147
148 Mr. Rubertone and Mr. Williams felt the proposed changes were a step in the right direction
149 and addressed the board's feedback.

150
151 Bill Rodenhiser summarized the changes, including more retail space and landscape
152 improvements. He also noted that due to the eliminated space and lost revenue, the rear
153 building's exterior, given it is not visible from the street, would not fully match the front
154 building's design.

155
156 Mr. Matchak and Mr. Crow reviewed the procedure to submit a new application and re-
157 advertisement. They suggested the applicant consider those steps.

158
159 Mr. Crow opened the meeting for public comments.

160
161 Mark Dassoni asked how much time would be needed to develop the new plans. Bart Lipinski,
162 of Grady Consulting, estimated two weeks, and thought scheduling the continued hearing in
163 one month would provide ample review time.

164
165 Cathy Rooney asked, and Mr. Crow responded that the new plan would need to go back to the
166 DRC.

167
168 Mr. Barbieri indicated he would request a final decision extension until May 21, 2020.

169

170 Mr. Buchanan made a motion to continue the 81 W. Union St. public hearing until May 14, 2020
171 at 7:30 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Williams; Rubertone-aye, Kendall-aye,
172 Buchanan-aye, Williams-aye, Crow-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

173
174

175 **Review and Approval of Minutes**

176 Mr. Buchanan made a motion to approve the minutes of March 12, 2020 as amended. The
177 motion was seconded by Mr. Rubertone; Buchanan-aye, Kendall-aye, Williams-aye, Rubertone-
178 aye, Crow-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

179
180

181 **Administrative Matters: future meetings, public hearings**

182 Mr. Matchak reported that there no pending new cases to go before the Planning Board.

183

184 Mr. Matchak mentioned that Town Meeting has been postponed until June and the Select
185 Board would determine the exact date. Two minor Zoning Bylaw changes were advertised,
186 one to correct a definition and the other to correct a typo related to how the DRC is reflected
187 in other sections of the bylaws. He explained that the more significant zoning matters would
188 be addressed at the fall town meeting after the state of emergency is lifted.

189

190 Mr. Crow pointed out new legislation that addressed authorizing Planning Board Chairs to
191 postpone or extend permit application business up to 45 days past whenever the state of
192 emergency ends, and the board will not require final decision extensions from developers.

193 Mr. Matchak clarified that the Order essentially stops the “clock” on all applications and
194 negating the constructive approval process, which Planners and Planning Boards were
195 concerned about.

196

197 **Report from Board Members and Town Planner**

198 **Peter Matchak**

199 The next meeting will be held on April 23, 2020.

200

201 ***Adjournment***

202 Mr. Buchanan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:54 pm. The motion was seconded by
203 Ms. Kendall; Buchanan-aye, Kendall-aye, Rubertone-aye, Williams-aye, Crow-aye; with a vote
204 of 5-0-0.

205

206 ***Important Documents***

- 207 1. Planning Board Agenda April 9, 2020
- 208 2. 29 and 41 Alden Site Plan dated 4/8/20 and architectural plans dated 4/9/20
- 209 3. 81 W Union Concept Plan dated 4/7/20
- 210 4. Draft March 12, 2020 minutes