Planning Board Meeting Minutes
Zoom Video Conferencing
Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland Massachusetts 01721

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

Call to Order
Preston Crow, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm and announced the meeting is
being conducted via Zoom Video Conferencing and recorded and broadcast live by WACA TV.

Mr. Crow reviewed the meeting agenda.

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

Public Hearing - 29 & 41 Alden Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review
Mr. Crow reopened the 29 & 41 Alden St. hearing, continued from the March 26, 2020
meeting.

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

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

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

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

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

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Mr. Crow opened the meeting for public comments.

Mark Dassoni thanked the project team for the plan improvements, asked about the location of the handicap spaces and whether splitting the driveway would enhance the egress.

Cathy Rooney indicated that she submitted tree shrub vine planting diagrams to be included in the landscape plan. Mr. Crow confirmed the DRC recommendations were received and would be shared with the applicant to include in their plans. He also read the DRC recommendations into the record.

Mr. Matchak asked about the tandem parking space assignment plan. Mr. Zammuto responded that one tandem space would be assigned to each unit.

Mr. Zammuto also mentioned, and Cathy Rooney confirmed her offer to research and provide the historical aspects of the buildings.

Mr. Buchanan expressed his support of the proposed changes and appreciation for the thought the project team put into ensuring the building’s design aligned with the area architecture. Mr. Buchanan added that the precedent the development is setting is a positive one.

Ms. Kendall again asked the applicant to consider reducing the number of units and building height to adhere to the zoning bylaw or provide a compelling reason for a Special Permit. Mr. Buchanan pointed out that the bylaw allows a maximum building height of 45 ft. with a Special Permit.

Mr. Morris indicated that the site is unique, given it is 75%-80% asphalt, and the new building would add to the rehabilitation and economic development of the area. He also stated there is no affordable housing provision in the Ordinance, and although the economic viability through the Affordable Housing Trust currently unavailable, tax revenue is estimated to quadruple over time.

Mr. Rubertone expressed his support of the project. He acknowledged the need for the development to be impressive and he recognized the thoughtful investment, however he felt an affordable component was important.

Mr. Williams appreciated the benefits the development would bring to the area and expressed his support.

Mr. Zammuto pointed out that originally the proposal included 28 units but based on feedback the project team reduced the number to 19 units, which was 3 less than the suggested total. Consequently, affordable units were no longer economically feasible. But as a good will gesture, Mr. Zammuto offered to donate 150, 2-3-inch caliper trees for the town to plant at its discretion.

The board agreed to close the public hearing and vote contingent on the final decision wording.

Mr. Buchanan made a motion close the 29 & 41 Alden St. public hearing. The motion was seconded by Mr. Williams; Buchanan-aye, Williams-aye, Rubertone-aye, Kendall-abstain, Crow-aye, with a vote of 4-0-1.

Mr. Buchanan made a motion to approve the Site Plan, condition on the Planning Board being satisfied with the final written conditions. The motion was seconded by Mr. Williams; Buchanan-aye, Williams-aye, Rubertone-aye, Kendall-abstain, Crow-aye; with a vote of 4-0-1.

Mr. Buchanan made a motion to approve the Special Permit on the use, subject to the Planning Board being satisfied with the conditions on the final approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. Williams; Buchanan-aye, Williams-aye, Rubertone-aye, Kendall-aye, Crow-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.
Mr. Buchanan made a motion to approve the Special Permit on the building height, subject to
the Planning Board being satisfied with the conditions on the final approval document. The
motion was seconded by Mr. Williams; Buchanan-aye, Williams-aye, Rubertone-aye, Kendall-
abstain, Crow-aye; with a vote of 4-0-1.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Crow opened the meeting for public comments.

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

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

Mr. Barbieri indicated he would request a final decision extension until May 21, 2020.
Mr. Buchanan made a motion to continue the 81 W. Union St. public hearing until May 14, 2020 at 7:30 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Williams; Rubertone-aye, Kendall-aye, Buchanan-aye, Williams-aye, Crow-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

**Review and Approval of Minutes**

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

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

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

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

Mr. Crow pointed out new legislation that addressed authorizing Planning Board Chairs to postpone or extend permit application business up to 45 days past whenever the state of emergency ends, and the board will not require final decision extensions from developers. Mr. Matchak clarified that the Order essentially stops the “clock” on all applications and negating the constructive approval process, which Planners and Planning Boards were concerned about.

**Report from Board Members and Town Planner**

**Peter Matchak**

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

**Adjournment**

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

**Important Documents**

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