



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Design Review Committee Meeting

Tuesday August 1, 2023 at 8:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Present: Cathy Rooney, Chair (CR)
Kevin Mowatt, Vice Chair (KM)
Bill Novakowski (BN)
Ujwala Pawnarkar (UP)
Hannah Stein (HS)
Brendan Carey (BC)

Public: Mark Dassoni

1. 8:05 PM – CR opened meeting.
2. Discussion of having recordings done by WACA TV, in response to the Asst. Town Planner's email about recording all of our meetings.
It was agreed that we do not need our own recordings to take minutes. Using the WACA TV recording would be sufficient for our note taking.
Kevin Mowatt emailed Alvaro Esparza, Asst. Town Planner to confirm the process of bringing WACA on board.
3. Discussion of letter to PB regarding 9-49 Homer Ave and our concerns about the development's impact on the community. See below for the letter as sent to the Planning Board on 8/2/2023.

Mark Dassoni asked questions about the process of compiling the letter (receiving public and internal opinion on the matter at prior meetings) and congratulated the Committee on voicing our concerns.

After discussion, BN made a motion to approve the letter and to send it to the Planning Board. KM seconded. Voted: 6-0-0

4. Minutes
 - May 25, 2023 minutes reviewed and approved. Vote: 6-0-0
 - CR to compile minutes from June 15 meeting, which supplements the 9-49 Homer Report #1 written during that meeting.

5. Adjournment.
HS moved. UP seconded. Unanimously approved.

August 2, 2023

From: Design Review Committee

To: Ashland, MA Planning Board

Concerns Regarding Proposed 9-49 Homer Avenue Project

This letter is being sent to underline our serious concerns about the proposed project and its potential impacts to adjacent parcels and buildings as well as to highlight possible economic consequences for the Town of Ashland. We appreciate your review of these items and request that you please consider these points when you hold the next meeting to discuss this project.

1. Understanding the impact on the citizens of Ashland and the future of the town.

Ashland's downtown is of historic nature, and that character should be maintained as it marks the aesthetic of our downtown landscape. It is important to encourage developers of current and future projects to respect this aspect of our town and work within this vernacular architecture. The towns still have character here and we must consider the impacts of setbacks, massing and scale, parking congestion, traffic, and more.

2. Environmental Impact Study

The applicant needs to produce an EIS (Environmental Impact Study) assessing the impacts of developing the entire site, in particular, putting in the below-grade parking garage, the constant vibration of the trains, and the property's proximity to the railroad tracks less than 100 feet away. Currently, the ground is considered settled within 100 feet of the railroad tracks due to the vibrations of the train traffic. Once ground is broken, a large area of unsesttlement of the soil will be created. It is essential to understand the implication of this as existing foundations may crack, utility lines could be damaged, sidewalks may buckle, and underground tanks and supply lines could be severed.

3. Critical Neighboring Properties for EIS Consideration

Specifically, an EIS for each of the Historic Railroad Station Building on Homer Avenue and the gas station on the corner of Homer Avenue and Alden Street must be required to provide an accurate preconstruction assessment. It is imperative that demolition and construction be undertaken with these properties in mind as the digging, jack hammering, drilling, and blasting will create additional significant vibrations to both parcels as well as other nearby structures.

4. Logistics Plan

It is suggested that the Planning Board require the applicant to produce a logistics plan covering all phases of the construction and development. It is important to fully understand the approach to demolition, soil removal, and construction to allow for proper mitigation of dust, noise, and other effects of construction of a project of this size.

These concerns require meaningful discussion and requests/requirements to be placed upon the project such that it enhances our downtown and respects all surrounding properties and infrastructure.

Sincerely,

Design Review Committee