



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Select Board Meeting Room / Zoom Conferencing
Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland, Massachusetts 01721

August 10, 2023, at 7:15 PM

Approved by the Ashland Planning Board on Sept 28, 2023

1 Present: Tricia Kendall, Chair
2 Anna Tesmenitsky, Vice-Chair
3 Catherine Jurczyk, Clerk
4 Marcelo Arjona, Member
5 Deepa Venkat, Member
6

7 Others: Peter Matchak, Town Planner
8

9 **Call to Order**

10 Tricia Kendall called the meeting to order at 7:58 p.m. and said the 45-minute delayed start was due
11 to technical difficulties. She mentioned that the session was being recorded and broadcast. Ms.
12 Kendall reviewed the meeting agenda.
13

14 **Clerk's Report**

15 Catherine Jurczyk, the Planning Board gave the Clerks Report. There were no updates.
16

17 **Public Comment:**

18 Mark Dassoni asked Ms. Tesmenitsky what her goal was as a Planning Board member. Ms.
19 Tesmenitsky responded that her goal is to continue providing helpful input to the board, be effective
20 as part of the Comprehensive Plan, and allow the public's voice to be heard.
21

22 Steve Morgan, 136 Concord St., said he applied via the Talent Bank for the open position mentioned
23 in the Planning Board minutes and hoped his application would receive consideration. He also
24 commented on the Scenic Road Bylaw, the Planning Board and the Sustainability Committee's delay
25 in posting meeting minutes, and issues related to Mindess School construction in progress behind his
26 residence. Regarding the Mindess School construction, Ms. Kendall responded that the Building
27 Commissioner is in charge of enforcing the decision the Planning Board approved two years ago. Mr.
28 Matchak has been on-site, and he and other depts. are observing the ongoing construction. Mr.
29 Matchak added that any property line dispute is a legal matter and needed to be handled in court.
30

31 **Discussion with the Design Review Committee (DRC) Re DRC Letter to the Planning Board on**
32 **August 2, 2023.**

33 Kevin Mowatt, the Design Review Committee Vice Chair, explained the DRC’s letter sent to the
34 Planning Board regarding 9-49 Homer St. stressed the need for an environmental impact study to
35 address the surrounding properties and how the development could potentially affect the
36 community, in terms of the character, massing, scale, and the excavation required for the
37 underground parking.
38

39 Hannah Stein, a DRC member, expressed concern regarding maintaining the viability of the historic
40 structure across from the property and the nearby gas station safety issues. She also wanted to
41 ensure the town protects itself from potential costs associated with liability.
42

43 Mr. Matchak said on Tuesday, Ms. Kendall, Mike Carter from GCG Consultants, and he conducted a
44 site visit to review DRC’s concerns. They discussed potential risks associated with excavation
45 methods, determining proper procedures for downtown developments, and the actions required to
46 protect the train station. Ms. Kendall summarized the recommended guidelines they discussed. She
47 noted that (according to Mr. Carter) the Fire Dept would likely not permit blasting in the downtown
48 area, and hoe rammering only would be allowed. She said Mr. Carter recommended putting
49 conditions in place to address these points and that he offered to assist with drafting them.
50

51 Mr. Matchak and the members agreed that developing a Construction or Logistics Plan would be
52 good practice for all developments and especially for 9-49 Homer St., given that the proposed
53 construction area is downtown and the site abuts public ways.
54

55 Ms. Tesmenitsky cited the town’s bylaw to confirm the Planning Board’s purview, including the
56 technical and design considerations and checklist items the board should review more thoroughly.
57

58 The DRC requested that GCG respond to the concerns and document their recommendations. Ms.
59 Kendall thought scheduling an educational session with GCG may be more efficient. The DRC
60 members thanked the board for their consideration and the constructive discussion.
61

62 **Public Hearings**

63 **9-49 Homer Ave. – Site Plan and Special Permit – continued from May 11, 2023**

64 Mr. Matchak introduced the application team, Terry Morris, the attorney representing the applicant
65 WJK Homer LLC., Ron Borque, and Rick Salvo. He explained that the team met twice with the DRC
66 since the last Planning Board hearing, their revised plans were distributed to the board, and their
67 response letter would be posted online shortly.
68

69 Mr. Morris started by stating his familiarity with construction management plans, controls, and
70 provisions he anticipated for this project. He said they had no plans for blasting, and large
71 equipment would be used to excavate the foundations and structures, drive piles, and use sheathing
72 to retain the holes.
73

74 Mr. Morris, per the DRC’s recommendation, said they would not seek to copy the historic train
75 station’s line or materials, given a private architect designed it for a specific purpose. The project
76 team reviewed the significant issues noted in GCG’s response that have been resolved, such as the
77 underground parking garage, the circulation, and the turning ratio at the end of the ramp.
78

79 Rick Salvo, from Engineering Alliance reviewed the current site layout and condition. He said a test
80 pit was excavated, and standing water was found at 8 ft. to 9 ft., which corroborated the proposed
81 subsurface drainage system and the soil material, which is loamy sand and favorable for infiltration.
82 The system is sized to reduce the rate of runoff for the 2-, 10-, 25-, and 100-year storms. Mr. Salvo
83 also noted the increased amount of proposed green space. He confirmed a 40 ft. fire truck’s ability
84 to access and traverse the site through the location of the existing utility poles onsite recently
85 installed.
86

87 Ron Borque reviewed the parking spaces in and outside the building, which are 9 ft. by 18 ft. and 8 ft.
88 by 20 ft., respectively. He reviewed the building layout, outdoor seating, and the landscaping plan.
89 Mr. Borque reviewed the building elevation and façade material options in response to the DRC
90 recommendations. The members discussed varying the materials or colors to break up the massing.
91 They also discussed the 23 questions the DRC noted in the report in red, which require further
92 consideration and examination by the board and the DRC and responses by the applicant. Mr. Morris
93 stressed that the building would be fossil fuel free, fully electric, with electric vehicle charging
94 stations.
95

96 It was agreed that Marcelo and Trica would review the DRC list and parse out which items should be
97 reviewed by the DRC and applicant before coming back to the Planning Board.
98

99 Mr. Morris said a written response to GCG’s comments was provided. Mr. Matchak said the
100 applicant approved extending the Site Plan Review deadline, which expires on August 31, 2023, to
101 September 30, 2023.
102

103 Ms. Jurczyk motioned to continue the 9-49 Homer Ave. hearing to August 24, 2023, based on a verbal
104 grant followed-up with a written agreement to continue the process until September 30, 2023. Ms.
105 Tesmenitsky seconded. Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye,
106 with a vote of 5-0-0.
107

108 **12-16 Union St. – Definitive Subdivision Plan – continued from May 25, 2023**

109 Mr. Matchak explained that in November, the applicant submitted a Preliminary Subdivision to
110 freeze zoning. Upon the denial of the town’s housing moratorium by the state and without an
111 appeal, the applicant chose to withdraw the application. GCG Consultants completed an initial
112 review that the applicant paid for but the applicant did not respond or submit additional materials.
113

114 Ms. Jurczyk motioned to allow the withdrawal without prejudice for 12-16 Union St. Definitive
115 Subdivision. Mr. Arjona seconded. Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and
116 Kendall-aye, with a vote of 5-0-0.
117

118 **10-60 Main St. – Special Permit and Site Plan Review – continued from May 11, 2023**

119 Mr. Matchak said an email from the applicant, dated July 28, 2023, requested a continuance. Ms.
120 Kendall questioned why the applicant has repeatedly asked for long continuances. She felt in the
121 interest of the Planning Board’s time, only one more continuance should be granted, after which
122 progress should be made or the applicant should withdraw the project if it is not ready for review.

123
124 Ms. Jurczyk motioned to continue the 10-60 Main St. Special Permit and Site Plan Review to
125 September 14, 2023. Ms. Tesmenitsky seconded. Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-
126 aye, and Kendall-aye, with a vote of 5-0-0.

127

128 **Discussion with Sustainability Committee Re the Development of New Tree Bylaw**

129 Given the late hour, Ashwin Ratanchandani, the Sustainability Chair, asked to postpone the
130 discussion with the Planning Board.

131

132 Ms. Tesmenitsky suggested scheduling a retreat with the Sustainability Committee. Ms. Kendall
133 recommended putting this item at the top of the next Planning Board meeting agenda. The board
134 members agreed to review the summary submitted by Margy Gassel and to forward their questions
135 to Mr. Matchak.

136

137 Regarding the timing, Mr. Matchak said at least three meetings would be required to develop a
138 bylaw, and he estimated the earliest it could be completed would be late August or early September,
139 which would be impractical to present at the Fall Town Meeting. Mr. Matchak said he would draft a
140 one-page memo outlining past discussion points and work expended towards completing the
141 proposal thus far.

142

143 The discussion was rescheduled for August 24, 2023, from 7:15 to 8:15.

144

145 **Report on Planning Topics:**

146 **Scenic Roads Outreach**

147 No discussion.

148

149 **Economic Impact Tool**

150 No discussion.

151

152 **Parking Memo**

153 No discussion.

154

155 **Housing Moratorium**

156 No discussion.

157

158 **MBTA Communities: Sept 14, 2023, Upcoming Joint Meeting with Select Board**

159 No discussion.

160

161 **Reports from Board Members and Town Planner:**

162 Comprehensive Plan
163 Ms. Jurczyk said she spoke over the phone today with Jen Goldson, Ashland Comprehensive Plan
164 consultant. Ms. Goldson would like to attend a Planning Board meeting at the end of each
165 Comprehensive Plan phase. She was pleased that two Planning Board members were participating
166 but noted the need to be careful regarding the open meeting law if other board members attend the
167 committee meetings.
168
169 Design Review Committee (DRC)
170 No discussion.
171
172 Sustainability Committee
173 No discussion.
174
175 Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
176 No discussion.
177
178 Other
179
180 **Administrative Matters: future meetings, public hearings**
181
182 Associate Member Update
183 Ms. Kendall reported that the Planning Board Associate Member description is posted on the Town
184 Website on the volunteer page and the Town Manager’s newsletter. The members said they would
185 contact Comprehensive Plan applicants not selected for that project to inform them of the open
186 position. The members extended the application deadline to August 31, 2023.
187
188 **Planning Office Updates**
189
190 Whitmore Estates Definitive Subdivision
191 No discussion.
192
193 100-130 Chestnut Street (Village of Americas)
194 No discussion.
195
196 501 Pond Street
197 No discussion.
198
199 399 Union Street / Starbucks
200 No discussion.
201
202 12 Pond Street
203 No discussion.
204
205 Applications Received

206 No discussion.

207

208 Next Meeting

209 The next meeting is scheduled for August 24, 2023.

210

211 Minutes Review

212 Ms. Jurczyk motioned to accept the May 25, 2023, Planning Board minutes, as presented. Mr. Arjona
213 seconded the motion. Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye, with
214 a vote of 5-0-0.

215

216 Ms. Tesmenitsky motioned to accept the June 8, 2023, Planning Board minutes, as amended. Mr.
217 Arjona seconded. Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye, with a
218 vote of 5-0-0.

219

220 **Adjournment**

221 Ms. Tesmenitsky motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 p.m. Mr. Arjona seconded. No
222 discussion. Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye, with a vote of 5-
223 0-0.

224