



Town of Ashland

M A S S A C H U S E T T S

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Remote via Zoom Video Conferencing

September 20, 2021, at 7:30 PM

Minutes Approved on Oct 28, 2021

1 Present: Tricia Kendall, Chair
2 Joe Rubertone, Vice Chair
3 Lakshmi Krishnan
4 Anna Tesmenitsky
5 Deepa Venkat
6
7 Others: Peter Machak, Town Planner
8
9
10

Call to Order

Public Hearing – 90 Concord St. Special Permit and Site Plan Review

15 Please note that the meeting video started after the discussion began, as a result the call to order and
16 the initial comments from the reopening of 90 Concord St hearing were not recorded.

18 Mr. Rubertone explained that tonight’s meeting would focus on finalizing commentary included in
19 the Special Permit and Site Plan draft decisions, but the Planning Board would not vote on this topic
20 this evening, given the updated plans are still pending.

22 Mark Dassoni, 49 Hawthorne Rd. asked if changes had been made to the underground water system.
23 Michael Quinlan, Sr. Project Manager from Compass Project Management representing the town,
24 explained that changes to the water recharge side were noted on slide two, and there might be a
25 small tweak in the location of the parking lot underground recharge system.

27 Cathy Rooney asked that the applicant try to save the heritage oak tree, and she offered to provide
28 her insights into methods that might help preserve it.

30 Rob Scherer commented in regard to preserving the oak tree noting that he submitted several
31 suggestions to the School Building Committee, such as considering reducing the corner of the
32 building, investigating alternative foundation digging methods, and removing the retaining wall to
33 give the oak tree’s root systems room to grow in that direction. He asked the board to support his
34 request for a detailed response to these measures.

35
36 Roberta Soolman commented on a memo she submitted to the Building Committee that noted her
37 concerns about preserving the oak tree given the historic aspect of the site.
38
39 Curtis Hoffman, 58 Hilldale Rd. commented on the need for cost details to preserve the oak tree and
40 the lack of information concerning the gravesite that is required to ensure all of the graves are not
41 disturbed.
42
43 Steven Morgan, 136 Concord St., asked that the requested parking lot variance be denied and that
44 the board discuss whether the open-pit drainage at the front of the school is a good idea. He also
45 asked for a copy of the revised plans that address the steep slope and the easement modifications,
46 and for an update on Ed Bell's request for a Historic Site Preservation and Avoidance Plan. Mr.
47 Quinlan responded that a copy of the protection plan was provided to Mr. Bell, from Mass Historic,
48 and a follow up call was made to him to ensure he had all of the information needed.
49
50 Janet Platt, 11 Rodman Rd., commented on the importance of preserving the gravesite and the oak
51 tree.
52
53 Ms. Tesmenitsky felt the public commentary shared this evening was important and agreed that the
54 cost estimates associated with the historic site preservation are needed and there was adequate time
55 to obtain those details.
56
57 Mr. Quinlan responded that the project costs are fixed and already subject to overruns. He also
58 noted that the arborist indicated that removing the retaining wall would negatively affect the tree,
59 and there is little flexibility concerning the proximity of the building to the tree. Mr. Quinlan also
60 addressed the suggestion to reduce the proposed square footage of the administration wing of the
61 building.
62
63 Claudia Bennett, the Principal of the Mindess School, explained that currently three guidance
64 counselors are sharing space and overall office space is not adequate. She felt losing the tree is
65 necessary to construct a building that will benefit the students and staff.
66
67 Mr. Caira, the Assistant Superintendent, commented that the planned administrative space is
68 necessary and not extensive.
69
70 Jim Adams, the Superintendent, stated that the current office space is inadequate and unprofessional.
71 He mentioned that the Mass School Building Authority's (MSBA) process included an evaluation of
72 the space required for staff. He also noted that student enrollment numbers are expected to increase.
73
74 The board discussed the project relative to several points raised during public comments, such as the
75 current and proposed number of administrative space and the cost to modify the corner of the
76 building to provide the oak tree the required 30 feet of clearance needed to preserve it. Based on
77 information shared from the prior meeting to this meeting it was understood that value engineering
78 was in progress, and any redesign change would come at a cost. Also, saving the tree would be at
79 the loss of elements of the project that might not be supported by the entire community.
80

81 Mr. Quinlan indicated that the exact number of trees to be removed would be clarified in the tree
82 survey, as the 500 trees recently mentioned was extremely high and inaccurate. He also explained
83 that given site work is scheduled to begin in November/December 2021, the cost of a six-month
84 delay in the project schedule to accommodate a redesign would be a 2% to 2.5% increase or an
85 additional \$1.2 to \$1.6 million in inflation costs.

86
87 The board discussed the feasibility of preserving the tree versus the project remaining on time and on
88 budget. Keeping to the project timeline was the general consensus and they determined the best
89 course of action would be to move on from this point and complete the Special Permit conditions.

90
91 Mr. Matchak displayed the draft **Special Permit and Site Alteration Special Permit** document.
92 The members reviewed the Facts and Findings.

93
94 Paragraph 3:

95
96 Section b. Traffic flow and safety, the members asked to have noted the exact number of agreed
97 upon parking spaces.

98
99 Section d. Neighborhood character and social structures, a question was raised regarding the
100 existence of the noted planning document relative to parking. A suggestion was made that in the
101 future the board revisit the planning issue of parking in the community.

102
103 Section f. Potential fiscal impact, the members discussed clarifying in the conditions that an equal
104 number of trees cut will be replanted. Ms. Tesmenitsky raised that only two additional classrooms
105 will result from the project, and future enrollment numbers are expected to increase.

106
107 Special Project Condition:

108 1. White Oak Tree: The members discussed softening the language to allow the applicant the
109 flexibility and discretion to preserve or remove the tree. The members asked that in both
110 documents all references to the “grave marker” and the “Frances Poole Memorial” site be
111 replaced with “historical gravesite”.

112
113 Section a.: If the tree is cut down, the members discussed adding language consistent with Mass
114 Preservation guidelines, to stipulate the trunk cut, the manner in which the tree is removed, how
115 the lumber will be preserved for future use, and seek proper input from the School Building
116 Committee, and the Historical Commission.

117
118 There was a discussion concerning the final tree survey that will specify the number of trees that
119 will be removed, in order to determine the replanting plan.

120
121 Section b., the members discussed Town Counsel’s guidance shared at the prior meeting,
122 concerning the board’s purview to specify how the materials are used. Mr. Matchak was asked to
123 obtain clarification on whether the Town Counsel’s input concerning the project is on behalf of
124 the Planning Board or the applicant.

125
126 Section c. - No changes.

127
128 Section d. - No changes.
129
130 2. Memorial Site – Regarding stormwater runoff, the members strengthened the language to require
131 effort to minimize runoff.
132
133 3. Abutting Property Fence – No changes.
134
135 4. Digital Sign – No changes
136
137 General Project Conditions
138
139 Building and Site Design - The members agreed to replace the “façade material” with “all
140 exterior/envelope materials”.
141
142 Building Use - No changes.
143
144 Pre-Permit Procedures – No changes.
145
146 Mr. Matchak displayed the draft **Site Plan Approval and Design Approval** document. The
147 members reviewed the Facts, Findings, and Conditions.
148
149 Mr. Rubertone explained that the Conditions are intended to be identical in the Special Permit and
150 the Site Plan decision, therefore the changes previously discussed should be tracked into this
151 document.
152
153 The members reviewed the Site Plan decision Facts and Findings.
154
155 Paragraphs 1 and 3 – Mr. Matchak noted that the findings are consistent with the Special Permit
156 decision, and reflect the bylaws.
157
158 Paragraphs 4 and 5a - The members asked to have the language modified, because although the
159 wetlands were mentioned during the Planning Board hearings, they recognized that the item was in
160 the ConCom’s jurisdiction, and the Planning Board’s decision would be contingent.
161
162 Paragraph 5b - Concerning the electronic signage, the members asked to have the language modified
163 to include the Dover Amendment and reference paragraph 5k.
164
165 Paragraph 5c - Reference the “historical gravesite”.
166
167 Paragraph 5d - The members discussed modifying the language concerning the oak tree, so it is
168 consistent with the related condition.
169
170 Paragraphs 5e and 5f – No changes.
171
172 Paragraph 5g – The last sentence concerning the students and school was modified.

173
174 Paragraph 5h through 5k. – No changes.
175
176 Paragraph 5l – Language was added concerning the funding being voted on by the citizens of
177 Ashland.
178
179 Mr. Matchak indicated that all changes discussed would be included and the updated drafts
180 distributed to the board prior to Thursday’s meeting.
181
182 Ms. Kendall made a motion to continue the 90 Concord St. Special Permit and Site Plan Review
183 public hearing until September 23, 2021, at 7:15 pm. The motion was seconded by Tesmenitsky;
184 Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Kendall–aye, Krishnan-aye, and Rubertone-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.
185
186 ***Adjournment***
187 Ms. Kendall made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms.
188 Tesmenitsky; Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Kendall–aye, Krishnan-aye, and Rubertone-aye; with a
189 vote of 5-0-0.
190