



City of Lowell - Planning Board

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Monday June 1, 2020 6:30 p.m.

Conducted via Go-To-Meeting

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For a recording of the meeting, visit www.ltc.org

Members Present

Thomas Linnehan, Chairman

Gerard Frechette, Vice Chairman

Richard Lockhart, Member

Caleb Cheng, Member

Russell Pandres, Associate Member

Sinead Gallivan, Associate Member

Members Absent

Robert Malavich, Member

Others Present

Jared Alves, Senior Planner

A quorum of the Board was present. Chairman Linnehan called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

I. Minutes for Approval

May 18, 2020

R. Lockhart motioned and R. Pandres seconded the motion to approve the minutes from May 18, 2020. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

II. Continued Business

III. New Business

Definitive Subdivision: 66 State Street 01852

George Theodorou on behalf of Loon Hill Development, Inc. is seeking Definitive Subdivision approval to extend State Street. The property is located in the Traditional Neighborhood Two-Family (TTF) zoning district.

On behalf:

George Theodorou, Applicant's Attorney, 978-866-3195

Matthew Hamor, LandPlex, LLC

Attorney Theodorou said the request is for an approval of an extension of State Street, which is necessary to complete the development. Back in March, the applicant appeared before the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) and obtained variances to construct a two-family home on the lot and received variances for lot area per dwelling unit, setbacks, and frontage. They have 66-ft. of frontage, but the requirement is 80-ft. To do this, they need to extend State Street. As part of the project, they proposed to build an emergency turnaround on an unnamed 40-ft. right-of-way that is adjacent to the property. That turnaround was incorporated into the ZBA decision. Along with that, they have received comments about the trees that will need to be removed for the creation or extension of State Street. They went out with DPD and identified trees to save. They sent a site plan to the Members today to show trees that will remain there. They are good sized trees. Also, as part of the approval with the ZBA, they will provide a landscaping plan. They plan

to plant additional trees along the rear of the property and along the railroad side of the property. They agreed to do so as a buffer. They also provided stormwater infiltration on the site. They have agreed and made a condition of the variance to keep the snow storage away from the proposed emergency turnaround. They are installing some of the sidewalks. All of the sidewalks will meet the ADA accessibility minimum standards. There is a question about the location of a utility pole. There is one that is existing and is directly across the street and on the other side of state street, the 65 State Street side. Part of the approval that they are requesting tonight is to do a waiver for the installation of new utilities since water, sewer, and electric are all available on the site. Engineering has gone forward with this, detailing the type of vertical curb that will need to be installed. They will need to include a sidewalk detail and to meet those requirements. He asked Mr. Hamor to review more specifics of the road extension plan.

Mr. Hamor thanked the Board for hosting the virtual meeting. State Street doesn't have a mechanism to turn around a vehicle other than on private property. At the beginning of the project, they sat down with DPD and determined that there is an unnamed way that is 40-ft. wide that provides access to the City of Lowell Parks Department parcel in the rear of 66 State Street. During those initial discussions, it was deemed beneficial to provide the emergency turnaround. Additionally, the roadway will be extended 30 lineal feet and with that extension of the roadway it will allow for the additional curb cut to access one of the two duplexes that are on the property. On the improvement plan they show the two curb cuts, but they realized that they need to show how the curb cuts relate to the driveways. They recognize that at the end of State Street there is one catch basin. The extension will slope the water back toward catch basin. They will replace the catch basin with a double-graded inlet. It will help with existing drainage and accommodate the extension. The extension will be widened to the full width of the existing roadway, which is 26.4-ft. As Mr. Theodorou indicated, they will also improve the sidewalks. The sidewalks will be bordered with vertical granite curbing, as required by the City. They will utilize existing utilities. They will need to move one utility pole, which is in the location of the turnaround. They received an email from Natasha Vance, the City Transportation Engineer, this afternoon. Initially, the sidewalks will be 4-ft. in width. They recognize that that the utility pole will need to be moved. The sidewalks will be ADA compliant. There is a question about emergency turnaround being 19-ft. from the duplex. That will not be a problem. She also asked about the height of the lines of the utility lines to make sure a vehicle can pass underneath. He doesn't see that to be an issue, but they can check on it. They will make sure that the height of the utility lines will be sufficient. There is a question about a light. There is a street light on the utility pole, directly across from the duplex. Not shown on the plan, but he confirmed it using street view. Going through Staff comments, #3, the exact length is 30.1 lineal feet of the street extension. #4 is the location of the existing and proposed light. There is one across the street, that will remain. Snow storage will be at the end of the street. Ample area there. #6 is about marking trees. The trees are more sapling type trees. Not that they are not insignificant. They are maple trees that are all in one area at the end. Not like a significant street tree that would have a large breast height diameter. During the site plan process, identified quality trees within the site to be preserved. Proposing to put trees along the roadway and along the southerly portion of the property. #7 when install the new trees they will be 8-ft. in height. There is a tree detail on the plans. 2" diameter trees. Trees meet the city of Lowell's minimum tree specifications, per the tree ordinance for public trees. #8 specifies the requirement for seeding the lawn grass and provision of compacted loam. They understand that they need to meet those requirements. #9 recognize that the improvement once completed will need to go through the one-year period to release the bond and to get approval for acceptance once the City Engineer approves the improvements. They need to formally put that to the City Council. They recognize that they need to install erosion and sedimentation controls before any work is completed. Th plan shows silt sack detail for existing catch basin during construction. Regarding the Engineering comments, they agree to all of them. They will need to add a detail related to the granite curbing. They will make sure that he curbing can't be more than 6". They will include a sidewalk detail.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

Chairman Linnehan asked if they covered everything related to the traffic engineer, including the swept path analysis.

Attorney Theodorou said his understanding is that while a swept path analysis is tight, it does provide enough room for Fire Department to pull in and out of the location.

Chairman Linnehan asked about utility poles and whether the sidewalks will meet ADA compliance.

Attorney Theodorou said that's correct.

Member Frechette asked about the sidewalk on the opposite side of the lot. He noticed that there is a sidewalk in front of the house. When looking at the reveal for the granite curb, he assumes that they will line up with the existing sidewalk.

Mr. Hamor said they will not redo the existing sidewalk. They will meet up with it and the existing vertical curbing.

Member Frechette said it might be sunken down a little more than it supposed to be. Obviously, they will need to meet up with it. He wouldn't want to see a problem for the neighbor across the street.

Mr. Hamor said they would work with the inspectors to ensure they tie in the way they prefer. Tie the pavement in along with the granite.

Member Frechette reiterated that he doesn't want to see a problem created for the neighbor across the street. He noted the existing foundation on the site.

Attorney Theodorou said that foundation would be removed. Back in 1987, there was permit pulled for four units. That foundation is in disrepair.

Member Frechette said it looks like traditional garage is underneath. Looks like units built adjacent to it.

Attorney Theodorou they pulled the permits in '87 and installed the foundation, but stopped.

Member Frechette asked if they are working with Engineering Department to establish dollar amount of the bond.

Attorney Theodorou said they haven't yet, but if successful they will work with Engineering to quantify the amount.

Member Frechette said that the photos he took do not show the pole with the light, but he will take Mr. Hamor's word on it. Looking at the landscape plan, he said it looks a little light in trees.

Attorney Theodorou said that the plan is not the actual landscape plan. As part of the condition of approval, they will be filing one with DPD. This plan shows some of the trees that will remain and some of the trees and shrubs that will be planted. They will provide a more detailed plan showing additional trees planted along the boundary at the end where the railroad is and along the rear of the property.

Member Frechette clarified that they do not have the landscape plan in front of them this evening.

Attorney Theodorou said that's correct.

Mr. Hamor said the extension area is essentially comprised of all pavement, sidewalk, and curb cuts. Landscaping will be within the lot as part of the permit they already got. That's where the plantings will occur. Plantings along the

street line. Traditional landscaping around a residential property. Identified mature trees within the property that could be salvaged and saved that are healthy trees.

Member Frechette summarized the trees shown on the plan. There are not a lot.

Attorney Theodorou said that's correct in what's on the plan. That plan is not the landscape plan that they intend to file with DPD.

Member Frechette asked if the plan will include any street trees.

Mr. Hamor said yes. The tree at the corner of lot as you are facing the lot to the left. To the corner of the lot if facing the lot to the right. Two, two-inch diameter, eight-foot trees planted there.

Member Frechette asked about the turnaround and whether it is part of the lot.

Attorney Theodorou said it is not part of the lot. It is an unnamed right-of-way.

Member Frechette asked who would maintain the turnaround, the grass, etc.

Attorney Theodorou said part of what they intend is... when they create... part of the decision for the ZBA, they would put a restriction in the master deed to maintain the area and to keep it clear of snow and debris. However, 66 State do not own it. Will need some approval from the city.

Member Frechette asked if it is technically city property.

Attorney Theodorou confirmed that it is. They will construct it. They will agree not to obstruct it. When everything is approved through the city, it will all be dedicated to the city.

Member Frechette asked if when the city accepts the 31-ft. extension it will also accept the turnaround.

Attorney Theodorou said that's correct.

Member Cheng asked to verify that the utility pole will be moved, but it won't count as providing the services.

Mr. Hamor said that the utility is provided by National Grid. That utility is a private utility. It's underground utilities that they are asking a waiver for.

Member Cheng said he would like to see a landscaping plan. That would give him a better idea of how the changes will impact the part of the neighborhood.

Attorney Theodorou said that as part of the approval with the ZBA, they required the applicant to submit a landscaping plan. They are committed to doing so and working with DPD. That will be done.

Member Cheng said it would aid the Board's discussion if they already had the plan. He acknowledged the City Transportation Engineer's comments. It seems like her comments have been addressed.

Chairman Linnehan asked about the bond. Usually they have the bond approved by the Law Department too. Work with the Engineering Department and once complete work with the Law Department.

Attorney Theodorou agreed.

Chairman Linnehan said that's past practice to ensure that it is legally binding. Said that all comments have been addressed.

Member Frechette asked if Staff are satisfied with two street trees.

Staff confirmed that two trees would be acceptable for a 30-ft. extension in an area likely to have few pedestrians.

Motion:

G. Frechette motioned and R. Pandres seconded the motion to APPROVE the definitive subdivision with these conditions:

1. The applicant shall work with the Engineering Department to ensure that the proposed sidewalk across the street from the subject home does not have an adverse effect on the existing sidewalk and home that faces the subject property;
2. The applicant must post a bond to cover maintenance of the road for one year or until the City Council accepts the street, subject to approval by the City's Law Department;
3. The applicant agrees to the conditions from the Engineering Department outlined in the staff memorandum dated May 26, 2020 regarding the granite curb reveal, the curb cut, and the ADA compliant sidewalks as well as the conditions of the City Transportation Engineer outlined in an email dated June 1, 2020; and
4. The Board grants the requested waiver to not need to create new utilities within the roadway (i.e., water, sewer, gas, and electric) since utility services are already available to the property.

The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

Site Plan Review & Special Permit: 776 Lakeview Avenue 01850

Peter Marlowe on behalf of Louis Gagnon is seeking Site Plan Review, Special Permit, and Variance approval at 776 Lakeview Ave. The applicant is seeking to convert the second and third floors of AG Hardware store into 10 residences. The property is in the Neighborhood Business (NB) zoning district. The proposal requires Special Permit and Site Plan Review approval from the Planning Board to create more than three dwelling units, Variance approval from the Zoning Board to exceed the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and for any other relief required of the Lowell Zoning Ordinance.

On behalf:

None

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

None

Motion:

T. Linnehan motioned and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to continue the hearing to the June 15, 2020 meeting. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

Site Plan Review & Special Permit: 450 Chelmsford Street, Unit 7 01851

Mayflower Medicinals, Inc. is seeking Site Plan Review and Special Permit approval to open a medical and a recreational marijuana dispensary at 450 Chelmsford Street, Unit 7. The property is in the Regional Retail (RR) zoning district and the uses require Site Plan Review approval under Section 11.4.2(8), Special Permit approval under Section 12.4, and any other relief required of the Lowell Zoning Ordinance.

On behalf:

Brian Akashian, Applicant's Attorney

Andy Plante, Mayflower Medicinals

John Henderson, Mayflower Medicinals

Attorney Akashian said the applicant wishes to operate a medical marijuana treatment center and a recreational dispensary. 450 Chelmsford is in a RR zoning district. The City Manager's taskforce identified this as a suitable location. The City entered into Host Community Agreements for both these uses. Mayflower only intends to use this property for the sale of medical and recreational marijuana. They are not looking for cultivation, manufacturing, or social consumption. The location is probably better known as Manufacturers Street as the site of the old RMV. There is sufficient parking at the site. The Zoning Code would require 7 parking spaces. The lot provides in excess of 260 spaces. All the public will enter the facility through a secure vestibule. Customers first demonstrate that they have the appropriate ID to enter the facility. Staff will enter the facility at the side of property through keycards. Mayflower will employ live on-site security during all opening hours. The equipment will include perimeter alarms, panic alarms, and video cameras in all areas containing marijuana plus points of entry and exit. Any individual that is in or admitted to the building must be over 21. Their ID and age will be verified at all time. Once inside the facility, there are 8 point of sale systems and a consultation room and a restroom. Mayflower will use a point of sale security system approved by the Cannabis Control Commission (CCC). There will be very little waste at the property and if there was any disposal of marijuana waste, all of it would be disposed of in a secure package and transported to a cultivation facility in Holliston, MA operated by Mayflower. There will be no disposal within the City of Lowell or in the dumpsters on the property. Mr. Andy Plante will be the designated community liaison with the Lowell Police. Right now, Mayflower is operating a dispensary within Boston. In-line to begin operating in Worcester. Well-versed in what it takes to secure the property: how to admit people to the building and how to track people who enter and exit the building. There is an opening day plan provided with the application. If approved, would take appointments-only, limited to 15 per hour just at the start to determine what the traffic of patrons will be. They have read all the comments received from Mr. Alves. They have received approval from the Lowell Police Department, Solid Waste & Recycling, and just this afternoon, Lowell Fire Department has approved the location as well. The business will be both recreational and medical and a certain portion of the product must be reserved for medical patients. In addition, there will be lighting installed in the parking lot to allow increased security for any patrons of the facility. Late this afternoon, received comments from the traffic engineer. The first is her question about the pass by rate. He spoke with their Traffic Engineer, and with his experience as more dispensaries come online the actual number of customers will decrease. They can address that further with the City of Lowell Traffic Department. Manufacturers Street. The city may have accepted that way. Ms. Vance expressed concern about speeding on Manufacturers Street. She suggested possibly putting speed tables with crosswalks to slow speeds through the site. Those locations would need to be coordinated with the City. Mayflower and the landlord are committed to installing speed bumps or tables if required. DPW tends to frown upon speed bumps. But if required, Mayflower and the landlord would be more than willing to install them. Another item was ridesharing programs. Other dispensary, rideshare vehicles have been used. Because there are so many spaces, it would be very easy to designate four or so spaces for the rideshare pick-up/drop-off and appropriate signage. The landlord is on board with that. He drove by the lot today, there are a ton of spots. They are striped. They have access to the entire lot. If there are some spots that need restriped, the landlord would be more than willing to restripe them. Ms. Vance also asked about deliveries. They are made in unmarked vans. They are vans are not box trucks, as required by CCC. They are more like sprinter vans. Deliveries will take place not while customers are in the facility. They will occur prior to opening of the facility or after closing. There is ample room for those vans to pull up, enter the building. Any delivery takes less than 30 minutes. Ms. Vance also referenced the crash area at Plain and Manufacturers Street. It has always been a high crash area. The RMV was at that location. The past traffic flow is much greater than what Mayflower will have. He understands that it is a dangerous location with the oil company and gas

station. But it has been that way consistently. They were asked to provide a stormwater management plan for the building. Their position is that by having only 8% of the building, it would be difficult to come up with the plan for a 260-space for the building or roof management for such a large building would be cumbersome. He asked the Board to approve the Special Permit and Site Plan.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

Gustavo Garcia, 30 Angle Street, Apt. 51

Mr. Garcia said he hasn't done any studies of feasibility. He is not versed in the subject. He does not have the resources that Mayflower has. He just lives around the corner with his family. They feel unsafe with the idea of having this business there. It is a business that can bring unsafety, otherwise the attorney would not have gone to such lengths to describe the safety plans. He walks around the site all the time with his family and neighbors. He doesn't feel safe. He doesn't know what it takes. If he could stop it, he would do it. This is a business. They are only interested in money, doing what they can approve to make money. Sure, they have big houses and mansions. They could run the businesses there, but it wouldn't be safe for them. They say it is an industrial area, but if it is a business to sell books, he would say go for it. They could say that he is an ignorant man but he was never in favor of marijuana legalization. He doesn't think anyone would want a marijuana business near them. It's his backyard.

Discussion:

Member Lockhart asked if the bike storage is on the site, it was brought up in a comment.

Attorney Akashian said there is not currently bike storage, but they will install bike racks.

Member Lockhart asked about loading/unloading. They are in the rear. He asked about access to them.

Attorney Akashian said that the loading will occur in the front of the building. The rear loading docks will be sealed off.

Mr. Plante, said they will seal off the back. The operation will have loading/unloading through the front entrance. 30-35 minutes at a time. No need for a large loading dock.

Member Gallivan asked if the back would be used for egress purposes.

Mr. Plante said the back would not. There will be a side emergency exit plus the front egress.

Member Gallivan said she saw the note about the Fire Department approval and reflected on original fire hydrant.

Attorney Akashian said the Fire Department spoke with landlord about what is necessary. He can't say about the hydrant, but they will do what is necessary.

Member Gallivan asked about the number of employees.

Attorney Akashian said there will be 20 total employees: about 4-5 salaried and the rest will be hourly. Not all 20 persons at the same time.

Member Cheng said that as relates the public comment the Police Department has approved the security plan. This location is chosen by the commission. They have a right to do business here. With that said, the attorney mentioned that there will not be any consumption on presence. He asked if the parking lot includes on-premise.

Attorney Akashian said they will have security on-site to prevent that from happening. Just like a package store, someone buys alcohol and then gets in their care and leaves. No intent to have people using the product in the lot and security will enforce that.

Member Cheng asked about operating hours.

Attorney Akashian said from 10am to 8pm.

Member Cheng asked about off-hours whether lights will still be on.

Mr. Plante said they will have a 24-hour security operations center in Holliston, MA. Will monitor site via video surveillance and alarm systems. Have perimeter lighting. Have two third party alarm monitoring companies, that monitor primary and back-up systems. His staff also have access to video surveillance on their laptops and smart devices. It's a very well-protected facility.

Member Frechette said that at first glance he thought it was the ideal location, RR, not necessarily on a main arterial route. Visible, yet allowable by zoning. From that perspective, it seems like an ideal location. Part of what the applicant is before them is Site Plan Review (SPR) and approval for the sale of marijuana. His concern is Section 11.4.10, under SPR maximum pedestrian and vehicular safety on-site, to the site, and egressing the site. He was out there on 11:30am on Sunday. A restaurant started serving takeout. Since the RMV left he hasn't been to the site. Manufacturers way is really the surface parking lot. It really isn't defined. He saw a car race through the McDonald's parking lot, cut out the back egress of the McDonald's lot into this lot. On a Sunday morning, he was pivoting looking at cars coming across the lot in every direction. This is probably one of the few large surface lots left in the city that doesn't have islands, landscape island and clearly defined driveways or drive paths. If not the last, one of the last. His concern is the safety. The cars really were cutting through going right past the plaza building exiting out Manufacturers Street. There is a school within site distance. He knows it meets the distance requirement. There are a lot of positive things from a location perspective. His concern is safety with the traffic and pedestrians as well. He thinks that there needs to be more work on that. He doesn't know whether the RMV needed to go the Planning Board since it was state and not sure if there was a focus on how to handle surface lots. he is very concerned about safety. He knows that the intent is to have appointment-only. He asked if the plan is to switch to non appointment only.

Attorney Akashian said the intention would be after gauging the number of customers the facility would have, then it would become a retail location.

Member Frechette said this location is really close to the highway, so it has easy access from NH. Given the comment from the City Transportation engineer, the likelihood that there will be more traffic from NH is a real possibility. Cars would look to exit onto Plain Street. More potential conflicts at a very dangerous intersection. From a safety perspective, he has concerns about the parking lot and the operation of the retail marijuana shop. The speed tables... he knows some heads of DPW that don't love speed bumps, but they also don't like street trees... all the things that planners like. The cone that is in the middle of manufacturers street with the sign that says slow pedestrians is not doing much to slow the cars he saw yesterday. Something must be done with speed tables. They can use as a crosswalk and to deter speed. The way the lot is designed, may take the cars instead of going along the Manufacturers Street, the cars may take the path of least resistance, the open space on the lot. Would be a free-for-fall to get around the speed bumps. Need to work on the safety of the flow of the cars within the site. He would like to see their traffic engineer work with the city traffic engineer to address that concern. too easy to skirt anything they would do in front of the building. He asked if the traffic engineer is present.

Attorney Akashian said he was unavailable tonight. He would consult with the City to come up with a plan that would work. Both the applicant and the landlord understand the concerns. Manufacturers isn't really defined. There could be some striping that could more define. Some sort of barriers that could be put up.

Member Frechette said the location in many ways is ideal, but the site has challenges as relates SPR. It incumbent upon the Board for the safety of pedestrians and vehicular traffic throughout the site. There has to be certain level of service to meet business model profitability. They did this exercise with Market Basket in Pawtucketville.

Mr. Henderson said that they recognize that their may be some customers from NH. They did all their studies considering in and around Lowell. There will be other dispensaries in Lowell and regionally, so didn't focus on NH. recognize that it's a possibility, but that's not where they drew the numbers from.

Member Frechette asked if traffic engineer took account whether people will drive off of Plain Street. Business won't be peak hours; it will be all day. Restaurant nearby likely with a noontime peak operation.

Mr. Henderson said they do have peak hours in their experience. It's a normal flow for retail.

Member Frechette said he would like a plan for the Board to see for Site Plan Review. he noted that the Police Department approved the security plan. They don't obviously want to disclose the security plan in public. They have Fire approval. They have met that requirement. Not the same concern about odor as manufacturing. Operationally, he is comfortable with what has been presented. They can approve it with reasonable conditions, but he doesn't feel that they have enough information to address the safety of the site for pedestrians walking from where they park. He's not convinced that they have it addressed to be able to vote on SPR this evening. He would like to continue the hearing.

Attorney Akashian said their traffic engineer would be more than willing to work with the city. The site plan... it has been a retail location for years and years. The restaurants are there. Willing to stripe and do what they need to do. They have put forth a good site plan. He understands Member Frechette's concerns, but with added lighting and willingness to put in speed table/bumps and restripe the lot they are doing best to address safety concerns.

Member Pandres seconded Member Frechette's concerns about pedestrian safety and access. Referred to comment from traffic engineer for Lyft/Uber drop-off.

Attorney Akashian said they would designate spots for rideshare pick-up and drop-off.

Chairman Linnehan said they have plenty of parking spots. He asked about the wishes of the Board regarding a continuance. He noted that in fairness to the applicant the traffic engineer only provided her comments late this afternoon.

Member Frechette said he would be looking for a continuance. It's incumbent upon them for the flow of the traffic within the site and exiting the site as well as pedestrian safety really needs to be addressed.

Attorney Akashian said he is sure that is fine.

Attorney Akashian asked if the votes are separate for the Site Plan Review and the Special Permits. He asked if it would make sense to go forward with the Special Permit tonight and then address the SPR later.

Member Frechette said he has no issue with doing that.

Chairman Linnehan said it does require two votes. The SPR is a majority vote. The Special Permits are supermajority vote.

Attorney Akashian said they could focus the issues on the SPR. That would narrow the issue for the June 15 meeting.

Motion:

G. Frechette motioned and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to continue the hearing for the Site Plan Review approval to the June 15, 2020 meeting. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

G. Frechette motioned and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to APPROVE the Special Permits under Section 12.4. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

Site Plan Review: 50 Father Morissette Blvd., 55 French St., & 75 Arcand Dr. 01852

Perkins Eastman is seeking Site Plan Review approval on behalf of the City of Lowell to demolish existing buildings, and renovate, rebuild, and expand the Lowell High School at 50 Father Morissette Blvd., 55 French St., and 75 Arcand Ave. The property is in the Downtown Mixed-use (DMU) zoning district and requires Site Plan Review approval under Section 11.4.2 to construct or expand a non-residential structure or structures greater than 10,000 sq. ft. and for any other relief required under the Lowell Zoning Ordinance.

On behalf:

Joe Drown, Perkins Eastman
Jonathan Hedlund, Nitsch Engineering
Chris Walenten, Suffolk Construction
Ashley Iannuccilli, Traverse Landscape Architects
Todd Brayton, Bryan Associates

Mr. Drown introduced the project team. He said that they have been working on the project since 2016. They have met with almost every City department and have coordinated with them. Most recently, they had a meeting last Wednesday with the Conservation Commission. They are in the middle of construction documents. They will be completing that phase in February 2021. Prior to that they will have an early bid package for foundations and steel for the gymnasium. The project is phased into four portions. The new gymnasium is phase 1. That is planned to be completed in the Spring of 2022. Phase 2 is the new Freshman academy and the southern portion of the 1980s building, completed in the winter of 2023. The next portion is the main building and auditorium. Scheduled to be completed in the Spring of 2025. At that phase, doing construction on both sides of the Merrimack Canal. Complete the project with the southern portion of the 1922 building in the summer of 2026. He discussed the existing site plan and the configuration after the renovation and construction completes. He noted that the northern bridge will be moved further south. Southern bridge reconstructed in the same location. They are creating an accessible entry into the 1922 building and auditorium. He presented renderings of the campus.

Ms. Iannuccilli said that the old school didn't have a sufficient plaza space for the number of students. The new alignment of the building has a greatly improved streetscape, including improved crosswalks. Bioretention areas to create an innovative way to deal with stormwater. Some new parking spaces that will also be used for morning drop-off. She is excited to be greening up the streetscape and use low-impact design techniques. New quad that is centrally located that will be used for ROTC, gym classes, graduations, and after school activities. Surrounded by plantings, but also benches and other seating areas. Lots of new trees and bike racks. Have gone through great measures to secure the quad area, but the fencing is see through. It's secure, but visually open to the street. Space for stacking of four buses along Arcand for after school sports activities. Questions from DPD about bike racks. Currently there are 25 spaces. The new plan will have 158 in total. Specifically located at the main entrances for security purposes. Huge improvement over what exists today. She noted the flexible parking space location and drop-off locations.

Mr. Hedlund reviewed the utilities. Three infiltration systems for the half-inch storm on the West campus. The infiltration systems will connect to the city drainage system. There is one sanitary line on the southern side of the building. It will have a grease trap because of kitchen waste. Will connect to existing city services. Another sanitary

line from the Freshman Academy. Proposing new 8” water line on the west side. On the east side, will install a new detention system to reduce peak flow rates from building roof to Kirk Street. On norther side, will install new 12” connection. For sanitary, project proposes to install three sanitary lines to replace the existing lines. For water, they will connect new fire protection line and water service line.

Speaking in Favor:

Mr. Cordes, Director of Facilities, Community Teamwork

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

Mr. Cordes said he watched the presentation with interest. His main concern is the impact of traffic and access on Kirk Street. They have two properties that they operate out of that have Kirk Street frontage. Have a parking lot that they need to access. Whether traffic on Kirk will be impacted during the project.

Mr. Brayton said the plan is not to make any changes to the way traffic operates on Kirk Street. in the morning there will be similar drop-offs with parents. In the afternoon, the short duration of contraflow to allow movement of the LRTA buses.

Mr. Cordes asked about during construction.

Mr. Walenten said that it will be free-flowing. At some points they may need to take one lane, when they are working on the sidewalks.

Mr. Lockhart referred to the DPD memorandum from Perkins Eastman. He noted the LRTA bus stops around the site. Perkins Eastman is not addressing those stops. He asked about how many and where the LRTA pick-up and drop-off spots are and whether they are opposed to improving them. He thinks it’s imperative for the safety of students and others that they should try to improve them.

Ms. Iannuccilli said that looking at the site plan, the locations where some of the bus stops are will be improved relative to the streetscape. Much larger cross section of pavement, benches.

Mr. Lockhart said that is helpful because the current image is not very inviting.

Member Cheng said he seconded Member Lockhart’s comment about the bus stop. It’s a narrow stretch of pavement right now, so not comfortable for even a few people to wait there. He sees the illustration, but there is not a close-up photo showing the improvement. He knows that the south part of the building is sticking out close the right-of-way. He understands that there is a certain scope to the High School project, but it would be good to see some improvement.

Ms. Gallivan asked about how the landscape improvements will be phased. Whether the improvements will occur as the building phases occur.

Mr. Drown said that as the work gets done to do as much of the landscape as practical. The utility work is intended to go forward as the portions of the project come online. Sometimes the landscape has to lag behind because of other work that needs to be done. Expects that some landscaping will be done, but other aspects would not be completed in the same phase as shown in the phasing diagram.

Mr. Walenten, said it's as Mr. Drown said. They try to get as much landscaping in with each successive phase. As complete a phase, like to turn whole area over at a time. Some areas trees would be out because of construction access or utility work.

Ms. Gallivan said that's good to hear, as feasible it will be done. She asked about Lucy Larcom park and whether it will be accessible to pedestrians throughout construction.

Mr. Walenten said that the park will be open for the majority of construction. Will only need to close when taking down the old bridges and replacing with the new ones. Will need to close for safety reasons.

Ms. Gallivan asked about lighting on the site. She didn't see much description of site lighting and signage. Given how dark it gets early in the winter.

Mr. Drown said they have a slide showing the lighting ideas. They are not as developed. They have developed concepts of how to light specific areas. The big driver is to be designed around a dark night sky. all the light is intended to be kept on the site. Utilizing canopy lighting to the maximal extent, downlighting too. On the landscape side, looking at areas to incorporate lighting into the landscape.

Ms. Iannuccilli said there will be street lights as there are today. Most of the lighting is almost hidden. In the front, there are security bollards with LED lights. Lighting in all the handrails. Interior looking at up lighting for trees. Lights that sit and integrate into wood bench tops.

Ms. Gallivan asked about daylight sensors and occupancy sensors for the internal building lighting.

Mr. Drown said they have daylighting controls throughout the project. Interior illuminates as the sun goes down, within the parameters of the occupancy of the school. Intended so that they use the least amount of energy as possible with regards to light. Maximize sunlight and daylighting into the building. Automated system. Regarding night lighting, they are working on those strategies Now. They have ideas about how it may work on the historic side, to reinforce the historic building.

Ms. Gallivan asked to describe the materiality and how it relates to Lowell and the surrounding site, on the building facades.

Mr. Drown said they are drawing reference from the materials on-site. They are using a masonry product that mimics the stonework on the east side of the campus. They are using brick for the majority of the building. They will tie in materials to existing materials without mimicking the exact colors. Complementary color palates. They have a fair amount of masonry on the project including metal panels on the upper levels.

Mr. Lockhart said they may want to touch base with the Administrator for the Historic Board. He may be able to help them with material selection. He is a great resource.

Member Frechette he asked to see some of the landscaping slides. He likes what is being presented. He asked about sustainability and maintenance.

Ms. Iannuccilli said that the plant pallet is solely native and ones that do not require a lot of pruning or maintenance activities. They are also drought tolerant. She is confident about the survival of the street trees and other landscaping in this type of urban environment.

Member Frechette thanked Perkins Eastman for the responses to all of DPD's memo. That was extremely helpful. Improving the connection to the Ayotte Garage. Notes that every crossing will be ADA compliant and address safety concerns. The clarification where bus pickup will be for athletic teams. Moving the freshman academy will help with

the traffic flow. He asked them to elaborate on the disruption from a construction process. He asked if students will need to attend school off-site.

Mr. Drown said that all of the students will remain at the campus. It is their intent to not move the freshman into the high school location until all construction is done. By building the freshman academy, they are able to create enough classroom space to allow them to do the renovation work. By building the gymnasium first, they can remove the existing gymnasium so that the students are never without one.

Member Frechette said that's critical and it is a well-thought out plan. It's an urban school. Drop-off and pick-up have challenges, overall, it flows pretty well. He graduated from LHS in 1980. Then he drove his daughters there for eight years. He crossed the bridge into and out of Pawtucketville. His graduating class demonstrated on Lucy Larcom park in support of the field house that will be removed and the new building that they are renovating. He remembers when the site was a vacant lot and the teachers were parking in basically a dirt lot. To see the school, go up with what is there now and what is proposed really takes what is there now and take it to another level. The children of the city deserve. He likes the plan presented and looks forward to the project progressing.

Member Pandres he asked if they did anything to minimize solar gain and other sustainability features.

Mr. Drown said that they oriented the building the way they did. Looked into the planning of the city and understood the need to reinforce the city grid, to start to realign edges of the city and nit it aback together. Other reason to have a north-south orientation for the freshman academy. Have screening on the south side. Mechanical system designed to work for a building of 620 thousand plus square feet. It's a huge project. The efficiencies obtained from this type of project are always looked at from a number of different perspectives. Sustainability is a major and continuing part of the conversation. They discussed leaving as much free open space on phase 1, the gymnasium on the roof and the freshman academy to accommodate future solar panels.

Chairman Linnehan asked if the school will have central air, or how it will be heated.

Mr. Drown said it is a central system. It will have air conditioning. It's a system referred to as displacement. The air comes in and is treated locally. It is a very energy efficient system.

Chairman Linnehan said it's a very good project and a long time coming. The presentation was excellent. He appreciates the responses to staff comments. He is looking forward to it being built.

Motion:

G. Frechette motioned and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to APPROVE the Site Plan pursuant to Section 11.4.2. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

IV. Other Business

Staff announced that the Planning Board will now be responsible for tree hearings pursuant to MGL Ch. 87 § 3.

V. Notices

VI. Further Comments from Planning Board Members

R. Lockhart said that the Historic Board has not had nay public hearings scheduled for some time. The Board has been extremely quiet.

VII. Adjournment

R. Lockhart motioned and C. Cheng seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 PM. The motion passed unanimously by acclamation, (5-0).