

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

May 14, 2024

The Needham Planning Board meeting, held in person in the Charles River Room at the Public Services Administration Building and virtually using Zoom, was called to order by Adam Block, Chairman, on Tuesday, May 14, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. with Messrs. Alpert, Crocker and McCullen, Ms. Espada, Planner, Ms. Newman and Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee.

Mr. Block noted this is an open meeting that is being held in a hybrid manner per state guidelines. He reviewed the rules of conduct for all meetings. This meeting includes two public hearings and public comment will be allowed. If any votes are taken at the meeting the vote will be conducted by roll call.

Public Hearing:

7:00 p.m. – Amendment to Major Project Site Plan Special Permit No. 2007-10: Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Needham, Inc., 148 Chestnut Street, Needham, MA, Petitioner (Property is located at 148 Chestnut Street, Needham, MA 02492). Regarding request to construct a temporary addition to the Hospital at the former emergency room entrance on Lincoln Street to house medical imaging services during the renovation of the nuclear medicine suite.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to waive the reading of the public hearing notice.

Mr. Block noted the following correspondence for the record: a memo, dated 4/8/24, from the Design Review Board with approval; an email dated 4/16/24 from Tree Warden Edward Olsen noting the hospital has not completed landscape improvements from several years ago and asking the hospital to revisit the landscaping; an email, dated 4/17/24, from Building Commissioner with comments; an email, dated 4/18/24, from Fire Chief Tom Conroy noting no issues; an email, dated 5/6/24, from Assistant Public Health Director Tara Gurge with comments and an email, dated 5/8/24, from Town Engineer Thomas Ryder with no comments or objections. There is nothing from the Police Chief.

Justin Mosca, of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB), stated the imaging suite at the hospital is being renovated. A trailer will be brought in to continue doing imaging during the renovation and will then be removed. There are a few minor site modifications needed to get the trailer in then they will bring it back to what it was. Dr. Gregory McSweeney, Healthcare Administrator/Internist, stated the hospital has experienced growth especially since Covid. There are 10,000 additional annual visits in the Emergency Department. It has been quite dramatic. There is a lot of demand for services from the community and a full-service hospital for in patients. The demand for radiology is high. There has been one camera identified that needs to be replaced. The least impact to the department would be to get the trailer.

Mr. Mosca noted the former Emergency Room entrance is on the Lincoln Street side. The canopy will come down temporarily and stored and the concrete wall will go away. The wall will be cut below grade and removed. The corner concrete walls along the side will get cut down then the trailer will come in. Most landscaping will be put in at this time to provide some coverage. The plantings will be dug up to remove the trailer and then replanted. The geometric walls will remain on either side and the landscaping will be cleaned up. John Fowler, of Margulies Perruzzi, showed the existing condition with the canopy and walls to be taken out and an image of the trailer to be used. The trailer has stairs and a lift for patients in wheelchairs. There will be a connector from the building to the trailer. There will be doors with egress out of the space between the building and the trailer and also exit stairs adjacent to get out of the building. The new enclosure will not obstruct the exit from the hospital.

Mr. Mosca noted the enclosure is rigid, affixed to the pavement and attached to the building. Mr. Block asked the timeframe. Mr. Fowler noted 6 months of construction will start once the trailer is in place for patients to use. Mr. Crocker asked how

patients in beds will get to the imaging center and, once there, how are they moved to the imaging machine? Mr. Fowler believes the patients would be put on stretchers, which the lift can accommodate, then moved around to the imaging platform. The lift can accommodate a stretcher and a person. He will verify this information. Ms. Espada asked if the stairs have handrails and was informed they do. She asked if patients would come out from the hospital, have the test and go back in the hospital? Mr. Fowler stated they would. Ms. Espada asked if there would be push bar egress. Mr. Mosca will have to check and will confirm how it is being locked. Mr. Fowler stated it is only being used as an emergency exit for people in the trailer.

Mr. Crocker asked if the egress being planned from the hospital is wide enough for everything. Mr. Fowler stated the egress will be wide enough and he showed conceptual views with landscaping and the walls removed. He also showed the final condition with the canopy back up and the trailer removed. Mr. Crocker asked what the need for the canopy was. Mr. Mosca noted it was an existing structure and has zero function. Ms. Newman noted removing the canopy is what allows the trailer to be brought in. Will Bradford, Director of Finance, stated, financially, it hurts him to put it back up. Mr. Block asked if there will be a generator, lighting plan and sprinkler system. Mr. Fowler noted there will not be a generator and there is no exterior lighting. They are hoping to install fire extinguishers. The code requirements are ambiguous, but it depends on what the Building Commissioner wants as it is his jurisdiction. There will be a dry pipe type of system. Mr. Alpert stated the Building Commissioner commented it needs to have a fire protection system. Ms. Newman noted that will be a condition. Mr. Block noted fire suppression measures need to be taken to the satisfaction of the Building Commissioner or Fire Department.

Mr. Block asked if there was a plan to come into compliance with the full previous landscape plan. Ms. Newman stated the Building Commissioner was talking about the parking lot on Chestnut Street. The Hospital had committed to do a revised landscape plan for the employee lot across the street. Mr. Block wants to see an updated landscape plan for the hospital to commit to. Mr. Crocker asked if there would be heating in the vestibule area. There will be heat in the trailer but not the vestibule. Mr. Block asked for the timeline. Mr. Fowler stated they will begin as soon as possible. The landscaping will be put in in the Fall with the full project completed by Spring.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to close the hearing.

Decision: Amendment to Major Project Site Plan Special Permit No. 2001-02: Finitumus Associates Limited Partnership c/o Petrini Corporation, 187 Rosemary Street, Needham, MA, Petitioner (Property located at 464 Hillside Avenue, Needham, MA). Regarding request to convert approximately 815 square feet of general office space to medical office.

Mr. Alpert noted in Section 3.2 of the Conditions, last sentence, “The Petitioners request to convert approximately 815 square feet of general office space to medical office space is granted.” He feels the sentence should come out as the Board is only granting a parking waiver. Ms. Newman noted the original decision granted based on the distribution of use and the applicant has asked for an additional 815 square feet to convert to medical. Mr. Alpert noted the first sentence covers that. Also, in the first sentence, square “foot” should be changed to “feet.” All agreed.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. McCullen, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to Grant: (1) an amendment to a Major Project Site Plan Review Special Permit No. 01-02 issued by the Needham Planning Board on June 5, 2001, amended October 21, 2003, May 10, 2004 and February 9, 2010, under Section 7.4 of the Needham Zoning By-Law and Major Project Site Plan Review Special Permit No. 01-02, Section 4.2; and (2) a Special Permit under Section 5.1.1.5 of the By-Law to waive strict adherence with the requirements of Section 5.1.2 (Required Parking) and Section 5.1.3 (Off-Street Parking Requirements); subject to the following plan modifications, conditions and limitations.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. McCullen, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to accept the decision with the 2 changes discussed.

Public Hearing:

7:45 p.m. – Amendment to Major Project Site Plan Special Permit No. 2004-01: Town of Needham, 1471 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA, Petitioner (Property located at 609 Webster Street, Needham, Massachusetts). Regarding request to renovate 4 existing tennis courts, add 4 new tennis courts, install stormwater management improvements, ADA accessible walkways and landscape improvements. Note: This hearing has been continued from the Planning Board meetings of March 19, 2024 and April 2, 2024, and will be further continued to June 4, 2024.

Mr. Block noted a request from Town Counsel to continue the hearing to June 4, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Crocker, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to continue the hearing to 6/4/24 at 7:30 p.m.

ANR Plan – Haven Development, LLC, Petitioner (Property located at 103 Lawton Road and 133 South Street, Needham, MA).

Paul Beaulieu, of Field Resources, noted this is 3 lots becoming 4 lots. Originally this was 103 Lawton Road and what remained of 133 South Street and a lot on South that was previously subdivided. That lot could tie into Lawton Road for better access for an egress rather than egress on South Street. Ms. Newman noted this has been reviewed by staff. All lots have required frontage on a way.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to approve and endorse the ANR Plan as presented tonight.

Request to extend Belle Lane Subdivision Tripartite Agreement.

Ms. Newman noted the subdivision is done. This is the Off-Street Drainage bond. There is still one house being constructed but the bond for that house can't be requested to be released until it's been lived in for one year..

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Ms. Espada, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to extend the agreement as per the packet.

Appointment to Climate Action Committee.

Mr. Block stated there is a new charge now. Ms. Espada and Mr. Crocker were previously appointed.

Upon a motion made by Mr. McCullen, and seconded by Ms. Espada, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to nominate and appoint Mr. Crocker as the Planning Board appointee to the Climate Action Committee.

Minutes

Mr. Block noted on the minutes of 3/5/24, page 3, second paragraph under Reports, "that would meet the MBTAs easily" should be "that will meet MBTA compliance." All agreed.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Espada, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by a vote of four of the five members present (Mr. McCullen abstained):

VOTED: to approve the minutes of 3/5/24 as written in the packet with the change tonight.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Ms. Espada, it was by a vote of four of the five members present (Mr. McCullen abstained):

VOTED: to approve the minutes of 3/14/24 as presented.

Mr. Block noted on the minutes of 3/19/24, page 3, the paragraph regarding solar, “The proposed would expand the definition of solar to reduce any confusion” should say “The By-Law amendment would expand the definition of solar” and take out “to reduce any confusion.” In the next paragraph replace “ground mounted and parking canopies with “energy systems and their applications.”

Upon a motion made by Ms. Espada, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by a vote of four of the five members present (Mr. McCullen abstained):

VOTED: to approve the minutes of 3/19/24 as in the packet and revised tonight.

Mr. Block revisited the 3/5/24 minutes. On page 1, 3rd paragraph, 2nd sentence, should be “property’s,” “he stated there were “issues” should be “questions” and the last sentence “at full build out” should be added after “95 cars” as it relates to a specific development. The last sentence should be “function of the site plan process” not “land.”

Summer Schedule

Ms. Newman stated the MBTA Communities zoning needs to get done as there is a timeline. On 6/18/24 the zoning will be reviewed, and she will invite the people from 100 West Street in to discuss what their goals are, what they need and if changes need to be made. She feels comfortable with the zoning as sent to the state. She will hear back from the state on August 1 and will make any necessary changes. The Board discussed priorities going forward. After discussion the Board set 7/11/24 as a meeting date with a hold on 7/22/24 and 8/14/24 with a hold on 8/27/24 will be firmed up later.

Mr. Block noted there will not be detached ADUs. The Committee for the Large House Review will be brought back. It may be a 9-member Committee. Ms. Newman stated the structure should be discussed. Mr. Block would like it resolved and brought to Town Meeting by October 25. He would like to have a committee by the end of summer and have the first meeting after Town Meeting. Mr. Alpert stated Town Meeting wants a report from the Planning Board and the Board needs to show them a lot of progress. He stated the Board needs to work on the structure of the Committee in the next month by the end of June. Previously there were 2 Planning Board members, 2 Select Board members, 1 or 2 developers, Finance Committee, Zoning Board of Appeals, a Realtor, Architect and Historic Commission member. Mr. Block stated that will be discussed later. There was confusion on what the goals were, and he wants to laser focus the goals. Mr. Alpert noted the MBTA is statutory and a priority. The make-up of the last housing committee seems reasonable to him. They should be ready to talk about this at the July meeting.

Report from Planning Director and Board members.

Ms. Newman discussed the MBTA Communities and the timeline. GPI is doing the traffic work with impacts on major intersections. They are hiring a consultant to come up with design guidelines that the Planning Board will ultimately adopt and are beginning to think through what it would look like. They will get back to the Board at the next meeting. Mr. Block stated, at Town Meeting, it was clear there was a conflict. Mr. Alpert and Ms. Espada disagreed. Mr. Block commented the Board needs to improve their conduct and respect each other. He feels there is a disfunction with the Board. Ms. Espada handed out NUARI Code of Conduct. She feels this should be used as a guide for the Planning Board and be the mission of the Board. They looked at it a year ago and it went nowhere. The Board should set standards. Mr. Alpert suggested putting it on the agenda for 6/4/24. Mr. Crocker stated the Board has to look at the perception of what is going on. They need to be careful with everything they do.

Correspondence

Mr. Block noted correspondence from Jennifer Leonard Schaffstein of 15 Abbott Street, dated 4/29/24, and Paula Dickerman, dated 5/9/24.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Espada, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

Natasha Espada, Vice-Chairman and Clerk