

**TOWN OF NEEDHAM
MASSACHUSETTS**



500 Dedham Avenue
Needham, MA 02492
781-455-7550

PLANNING BOARD

APPLICATION FOR SITE PLAN REVIEW

Project Determination: (circle one) Major Project Minor Project

This application must be completed, signed, and submitted with the filing fee by the applicant or his representative in accordance with the Planning Board's Rules as adopted under its jurisdiction as a Special Permit Granting Authority. Section 7.4 of the By-Laws.

Location of Property 1471 Highland Avenue
Name of Applicant Town of Needham Select Board
Applicant's Address 1471 Highland Avenue
Phone Number (781) 455-7500

Applicant is: Owner _____ Tenant _____
Agent/Attorney X _____ Purchaser _____

Property Owner's Name Town of Needham
Property Owner's Address 1471 Highland Avenue
Telephone Number (781) 455-7500

Characteristics of Property: Lot Area 1.36 acres Present Use Town Common
Map #51 Parcel #1 Zoning District Center Business

Description of Project for Site Plan Review under Section 7.4 of the Zoning By-Law:
The Town of Needham Select Board seeks an amendment of Major Project Site Plan
Special Permit No. 2009-06 to authorize the redesign and renovation of the Town Common
located at 1471 Highland Avenue.

Signature of Applicant (or representative) [Signature]
Address if not applicant: 40 Grove Street Suite 190, Wellesley MA 02482
Telephone # (617) 804-2422
Owner's permission if other than applicant _____

SUMMARY OF PLANNING BOARD ACTION

Received by Planning Board _____ Date _____
Hearing Date _____ Parties of Interest Notified of Public Hearing _____
Decision Required by _____ Decision/Notices of Decision sent _____
Granted _____

Denied _____ Fee Paid _____ Fee Waived _____
Withdrawn _____

NOTE: Reports on Minor Projects must be issues within 35 days of filing date.



J. Raymond Miyares Thomas J. Harrington Christopher H. Heep Donna M. Brewer Jennie M. Merrill
Bryan Bertram Ivria Glass Fried Alexandra B. Rubin Ethan B. Dively Maurica D. Miller Rian Rossetti

September 30, 2021

BY EMAIL (lnewman@needhamma.gov)

Planning Board
Town of Needham
Public Services Administration Building
500 Dedham Avenue
Needham, MA 02492

**Re: Request to Amend Major Project Site Plan Special Permit No. 2009-06
Town Common Renovation**

Dear Planning Board members:

I am pleased to submit this application for an amendment of Major Project Site Plan Special Permit No. 2009-06 on behalf of the Town of Needham Select Board (the “Applicant”) to authorize the comprehensive redesign and renovation of the Town Common at 1471 Highland Avenue. The new Common is shown on the site plans submitted herewith, and includes a complete redesign and replacement of the lawn, landscaping, pedestrian pathways, seating areas, lighting, and other amenities discussed in more detail below.

The Major Project Site Plan Special Permit applicable to this property is dated November 17, 2009 (the “Decision”), and has previously been amended several times.¹ The Decision covers the property located at 1471 Highland Avenue, which is shown on Needham Town Assessors’ Plan No. 51 as Parcel No. 1 and contains a total of 1.36 acres. The Decision authorized the expansion and renovation of the Town Hall; it did not authorize any particular work to the Common (none was proposed at the time). Accordingly, this application now seeks an amendment of the Decision to authorize the renovation of the Town Common as shown on the site plans. This application does not propose any new buildings, does not involve any structural changes to Town Hall, and does not alter the established vehicular circulation or parking spaces that the Planning Board has previously approved.

¹ These previous amendments are dated March 2, 2010, November 16, 2010, June 21, 2011, May 1, 2012, April 25, 2017, May 1, 2018 and May 20, 2020.

The Project

The proposed redesign of the Common is shown on the plan set “Town of Needham, Massachusetts Department of Public Works—Needham Town Common Renovation (August 2021)”, which is being submitted along with this application. The key features of the new Common include the following:

- Based on the health and longterm viability of the trees and accumulated wear and tear on the existing Common, all existing trees, except the new ‘Blue Tree’ and lawn areas will be removed. Existing topsoil will be excavated and stockpiled onsite for reuse. Landscaping installed as part of the Phase 1 Streetscape project will be retained. A planting plan for the new Common is included in the plan set as Sheet 7.
- The Common will feature a large, oval-shaped lawn area within the center of the site. Within this center lawn area, nearer to the Town Hall side, there will be a circular area constructed of pavers. This area will be covered by a tent seasonally, with in-ground tent supports built in to allow for ready installation and removal. This tent area was regarded as a key feature of the new Town Common during the Applicant’s design work, based on the popularity of the temporary tent that the Town installed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage outdoor dining and patronage of surrounding restaurants.
- The site will feature wood and metal shade structures with picnic tables and bench swings along both Highland Avenue and Chapel Street. There will also be additional picnic tables installed near the southeast and southwest corners of the Common along Great Plain Avenue. Details of these structures and improvements are shown on Sheet 9 of the attached plan set.
- The site will feature a new walkway across from the front entrance of Town Hall into the Common, and a new masonry wall, similar in style to those along Great Plain Avenue at this location that will double as a seating area.
- The existing MBTA bus stop on Chapel Street will be replaced with a new one, which will be located in the same spot as the existing. Details of the new bus stop are shown on Sheet 9 of the attached plan set.
- The existing Circle of Peace sculpture featuring dancing children and the sculpture of the children on the bench will be preserved and relocated slightly, as shown on the plans. The existing dedication plaque will similarly be preserved and moved within the Common.

- The project will include upgrading the existing globe-top lights to LED and painting, installing flush-mounted uplighting within the main pedestrian pathway, and providing temporary festoon poles to allow for decorative lights to be strung over the central lawn area. Power and connections for public address system will also be provided at the shade structures and at the masonry wall. Additionally, exterior lighting of the Town Hall is being designed for construction by others.

Compliance with Site Plan Review Criteria

The proposed renovation of the Town Common is consistent with all of the approval criteria for a Major Project Site Plan Special Permit under Section 7.4.6 of the Zoning Bylaw. Each criterion is discussed below.

(a) Protection of adjoining premises against seriously detrimental uses by provision for surface water drainage, sounds and sight buffers and preservation of views, light, and air.

The redesigned Town Common will have no detrimental impacts on adjoining premises. The site is already in use as the Town Common, and the redesign of the site does not create any detrimental impacts on the surrounding area. The Planning Board previously found, with respect to the renovation of Town Hall, that no sound and light buffers are required (see Decision at p. 5, Finding 1.15), and in terms of the views, light and air that will be offered, the site had been designed to enhance this property's role as the cornerstone of the vibrant downtown Needham Center.

(b) Convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site and on adjacent streets, the location of driveway openings in relation to traffic or to adjacent streets and, when necessary, compliance with other regulations for the handicapped, minors and the elderly.

Convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site has been adequately provided for. There will be no vehicular movement within the Town Common, and there will be no new driveway openings or changes to established traffic circulation on the streets surrounding the site. Garrity's Way will be used as material laydown area during construction and the existing curb will be reset, but the existing traffic flow will not be altered in any way and the existing parking spaces contained within Garrity's Way will remain in their current, previously-approved configuration. The Planning Board has previously found that "the design of the proposed driveways and location and design of the parking areas are adequate, safe and convenient for vehicular movement." See Decision at p.6, Finding 1.18.

In addition, the pedestrian movement within the Town Common has been redesigned in a manner that will encourage its use. The new design features pedestrian entries at the northeast, southeast, southwest and northwest corners of the Common and will allow for pedestrians to travel safely and conveniently throughout the site.

(c) Adequacy of the arrangement of parking and loading spaces in relation to the proposed uses of the premises.

Parking spaces have been arranged adequately, pursuant to prior the prior approvals of the Planning Board. As noted above, the use of the Property is not being changed, and no new parking spaces are required as a result of the proposed renovation of the Common. Accordingly, the Applicant is not proposing any changes to the existing parking spaces associated with the Town Hall, which have previously been reviewed and approved by the Planning Board in the original Decision. As noted above, the Planning Board has previously found that “the design of the proposed drive-ways and location and design of the parking areas are adequate, safe and convenient for vehicular movement.” See Decision at p.6, Finding 1.18.

(d) Adequacy of the methods of disposal of refuse and other wastes resulting from the uses permitted on the site.

Disposal of refuse and other waste will be adequately provided for. The site plans include solar powered waste and recycling receptacles spaced throughout the Common. The volume of refuse generated is not anticipated to increase relative to the current use of the Common. The proposed receptacles will provide for sufficient disposal for the users of the Common, and the Department of Public Works will continue to be attend to the receptacles, as it has historically done in the ordinary course of operation.

(e) Relationship of structures and open spaces to the natural landscape, existing buildings and other community assets in the area and compliance with other requirements of this By-Law.

The Town Common was redesigned with careful consideration of existing structures and open space. In particular, the new common features an improved relationship with the Town Hall, including: A wider pedestrian entrance into the Common directly accessible from Garrity’s Way, and a decorative masonry wall that also serves as a seating area directly in front of that entrance to Town Hall. The open space within the Common has been redesigned to encourage use by those who visit the common, with a large oval-shaped lawn area in the center of the Common and picnic tables and benches placed throughout the entire site.

- (f) **Mitigation of adverse impacts on the Town's resources including the effect on the Town's water supply and distribution system, sewer collection and treatment, fire protection, and streets; and may require when acting as the Special Permit Granting Authority or recommend in the case of minor projects, when the Board of Appeals is acting as the Special Permit Granting authority, such appropriate conditions, limitation, and safeguards necessary to assure the project meets the criteria of a through f.**

The project will have no adverse impacts on the Town's resources. The site is already in use as the Town Common, and the interior redesign and renovation of the space will not create any new impacts on the Town's water supply and distribution system, sewer, fire protection or streets. The project includes a new drainage system that will connect to existing catch basins installed in the southern portion of the Common area under the Phase 1 Streetscape project, and as noted above does not involve any change relative to vehicular access to and from the abutting streets.

Based on the foregoing, the proposed development complies with all standards and criteria set forth in the provisions of the Zoning By-Law, and the requested amendment is in harmony with the purposes and intent of the By-Law and will have minimal adverse impacts on the surrounding area.

Application Materials

This application includes the following plan set:

Town of Needham, Massachusetts Department of Public Works—Needham Town
Common Improvements (August 2021)

Sheet 1—Title Sheet & Index
Sheet 2—General Notes
Sheet 3—Existing Conditions & Site Preparation Plan
Sheet 4—Layout & Materials Plan
Sheet 5—Grading & Drainage Plan
Sheet 6—Electrical Plan
Sheet 7—Planting Plan
Sheets 8-16—Details

Pursuant to Section 7.4.4, the Applicant requests that the Planning Board waive the submission of any of the required information that is not submitted herewith. The Applicant also requests a waiver of the Planning Board's application fee on the ground that this is a Town project.

In addition, pursuant to Section 7.4.4 the Applicant hereby certifies that the project can be constructed and the proposed use commenced without need for the issuance of any variance from any provision of the By-Law by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this application, and please let me know if I can provide any additional information prior to the Board's meeting on this request for an amendment of Major Project Site Plan Special Permit No. 2009-06.

Sincerely,



Christopher H. Heep

cc: K. Fitzpatrick
C. Lustig
E. Olson
S. Ridder