



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Remote via Zoom Video Conferencing

January 13, 2022, at 7:15 PM – Approved at February 10, 2022 meeting

- 1 Present: Tricia Kendall, Chair
2 Lakshmi Krishnan, Clerk
3 Anna Tesmenitsky
4 Deepa Venkat
5 Marcelo Arjona
6 Kevin McClean, Associate
7
8 Others: Peter Matchak, Town Planner
9 Emma Snellings, Asst. Town Planner
10
11

Call to Order

12 Tricia Kendall called the meeting to order at 7:18 pm. Ms. Kendall read a statement regarding
13 the town's response to Covid-19 and explained that per the Governor's order the meeting is
14 being held remotely via Zoom, and recorded and broadcast by WACA TV. Ms. Kendall
15 introduced the Planning Board members, staff in attendance, and reviewed the meeting
16 agenda.
17
18

355 West Union Street Site Plan Review – Continued from the December 9, 2021 meeting

19 Mr. Matchak explained that the applicant requested a continuance until February 2022 to
20 allow time to obtain renderings from the project architect.
21
22

23 Ms. Tesmenitsky made a motion to continue the 355 W. Union St. Site Plan Review public
24 hearing until January 27, 2022, at 7:15 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan;
25 Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.
26

311 Pleasant Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review

27 Ms. Kendall opened the public hearing and Ms. Krishnan read the public notice. Mr. Matchak
28 summarized the proposed project and introduced Nathan Collins, a principal with CLC Design,
29 appearing on behalf of the applicant.
30
31

32 Mr. Collins explained that the applicant NextGrid is proposing the development of solar canopy
33 structures within the parking area at 311 Pleasant St., a two-acre parcel within the Residential
34 B Zoning District. He noted that the location is a VFW owned by the Ashland Memorial
35 Associates since the 1950s, and there are no proposed changes to the existing building.
36

37 Mr. Collins reported that a Special Permit was granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)
38 to continue the non-conforming use in the residential district. He reviewed the project plan
39 that includes the proposed three new solar canopies to be installed in the rear of the property.
40 Mr. Collins indicated that the structures will meet the setback requirements for the district,
41 and there is no plan to add to the impervious area. Regarding comments from the abutters, he
42 noted that one abutter requested and was provided a copy of the plans and no others have
43 contacted them. Concerning the property line vegetation buffer, he indicated that no
44 vegetation will be removed.
45

46 Mr. Collins explained that the canopy footings are similar to a light pole and if the driveway
47 surface required repaving that work can be done around them or in close proximity. A
48 question was asked about how well the canopies fit with the neighborhood's character, and
49 whether mounting the panels on the building's roof was ever considered. Mr. Collins explained
50 that he had not received a shading report for the roof, and only the underside of the front
51 panels would be visible from the sidewalk, as the grade at the street is 201 ft. and the

52 structures will be set about six feet lower. Also, the building will help shield the view of the
53 panels from the street. Mr. Collins noted that he would consider adding evergreens to the front
54 right-side of the property if doing so addressed the abutting neighbor's concerns.

55
56 Ms. Kendall opened the discussion for public comments.

57
58 Kathy Rooney commented on possible solutions, such as swales, to help address the sheet flow
59 from the property.

60
61 Joe Magnani asked about the depth of the structure's support column. Mr. Collins responded
62 that it would range from 10 ft. to 12 ft. deep, depending on the soil conditions, with a diameter
63 of 3 ft. The final structural drawing will be submitted with the building permit. Mr. Magnani
64 asked if any preliminary testing was done to determine if there are any hazardous materials
65 related to the Nyanza plume are present on the site. Mr. Collins responded that no exploratory
66 test pits have been dug in the location of the parking lot.

67
68 Mark Dassoni asked several questions about the town's Code 8.3 and 8.3.3, diagrams
69 submitted with the proposal, and voltage controls.

70
71 Joel Arbitemen commented on the visual impact of the panels, and the need to preserve the
72 aesthetics of the community, especially along the Sudbury River and Marathon Park. He
73 suggested that the board conduct a site visit to evaluate these points.

74
75 Roberta Soolman commented on the proximity of the project to the final phase of the
76 Riverwalk and urged the board to complete a site walk to assess the impact.

77
78 Ms. Kendall asked that the board members to consider conducting a site walk. She also
79 summarized the comments from the Board, asking for the applicant to consider additional
80 vegetation, to obtain feedback from the owner of the abutting property on the eastside, and to
81 obtain the Conservation Commission's input.

82
83 Ms. Tesmenitsky made a motion to continue the 311 Pleasant St. Special Permit and Site Plan
84 review until the first Planning Board meeting in February 2022. The motion was seconded by
85 Ms. Krishnan; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a
86 vote of 5-0-0.

87
88 **501 Pond Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review**

89 Ms. Kendall opened the hearing and explained that associate member Kevin McClean will step
90 into the 5th voting member seat of the Planning Board, as Ms. Tesmenitsky is a direct abutter of
91 the site and therefore recused herself from the hearing. Ms. Krishnan read the public notice.

92
93 Mr. Matchak explained that the applicant, Trask, Inc., is proposing the development of 120
94 rental apartment units. Twenty-five percent of the units will be affordable and allocated to the
95 80% area median income (AMI); therefore all 120 units will count towards the town's shared
96 housing inventory.

97
98 Mr. Matchak introduced the applicant's team, including Matthew Stevens and Ben Stevens,
99 from Trask Development, Mark Kablack, the attorney representing the applicant, and Matt
100 Morata, from Icon Architects.

101
102 Matthew and Ben Stevens provided a presentation that included an overview of their
103 organization and the proposed mixed-use development at 501 Pond St. Matthew noted that
104 the project's civil engineer is Bruce Saluk & Associates, the landscape architect is Grady
105 Consulting, and the traffic consultant is MDM Transportation.

106
107 He explained that the site is 180,396 sq. ft., and walkable to grocery stores and public
108 transportation. The development will be serviced by town water, sewer, and underground
109 electric and gas, however off-site work will be completed to increase the area's sewer
110 connectivity. The site will be accessed by Converse Way, has no wetlands, and will mark the
111 beginning of the ongoing MassDOT project.

112

113 In addition to the 120 residential units (64 two-bedroom and 56 one-bedroom), there will be
114 approximately 2,351 sq. ft. of ground floor, street-facing retail space. The project provides a
115 total of 163 parking spaces: 9 spaces designated for retail use, and 155 designated for
116 residential tenants and guests. The building is 4-stories, with onsite electric vehicle charging
117 stations, solar panels and mechanical equipment on the roof hidden from the street view.
118

119 Matt Stevens said the project team met with the Board of Trustees of the Ledgemere condo
120 association. Their primary concern was the vehicular connection between Converse Way and
121 Meeting House Path, and they requested as much landscaping as possible in that area for
122 buffering between the complexes. Five feet of landscaping is planned at the front of the
123 property along the new 8 ft. pedestrian walkway.
124

125 Atty. Kablack reviewed the project's zoning analysis and noted that the property is within the
126 Highway Commerce Zoning and the Pond St. Mixed-Used Overlay Zoning Districts.
127

128 Matt Morata provided an overview of the site, including the exterior green space layout,
129 landscaping plan, building design, and floor plans. He indicated that only the top floor of the
130 building will be visible from the Ledgemere condo development, due to dense landscaping and
131 evergreen trees on the property line. Mr. Morata reviewed the proposed building materials,
132 including 4- or 7-inch exposure lap siding in arctic white and Boothbay blue, board and batten
133 for the attic story, and grey shades of brick at the front.
134

135 Ben Stevens explained that MDM Transportation completed a full traffic study, and concluded
136 there were no alarming statistical evidence of a negative impact to Route 126 in relation to the
137 proposed project. He also responded to a question about the size of the commercial
138 component and said an economic study supported the proposed 2,300 sq. ft. of retail space,
139 given the location, the deed restriction that prohibits tenants from operating a food
140 establishment, and the lack of heavy foot traffic. Ben noted that an arborist reviewed the
141 landscaping along Meeting House Path and felt the trees' root systems would not be impacted
142 by ground water or runoff, and if there were issues the applicant would address them.
143

144 Ms. Kendall opened the meeting for public comments.
145

146 Mark Dassoni expressed his support of the project.
147

148 Kelly Smith commented that she is a direct abutter, and the applicant has not contacted her.
149 She raised concern regarding the impact the development will have on her privacy, and
150 questioned the pathway from the property that is directed towards her front yard.
151

152 Joel Arbitemen raised concerns about the site's entrances and exits onto Rte. 126, the utilities,
153 and the mixed-use designation, given the project is mainly residential and not in line with the
154 town's economic development objectives.
155

156 Catherine Rooney questioned whether an apartment building aligns with the zoning change,
157 and asked the board to consider the residents' wishes.
158

159 Chuck Lidz, the vice chair of the Sustainability Committee, expressed his support of the
160 project's solar and electric utilities. He asked if electric vehicle charging stations are planned.
161 Ben Stevens responded that there are 7 charging stations and heat pumps planned.
162

163 The members commented on whether the project's mixed-use proportions meets the intent of
164 the overlay district, the traffic impacts, the building's design, and the use of open space. They
165 asked the applicant to be prepared to address these points at the next hearing.
166

167 Mr. Matchak asked the applicant to file a letter with the Town Clerk's Office to request a
168 continuance.
169

170 Ms. Krishnan made a motion to continue the 501 Pond St. Special Permit and Site Plan review
171 until January 27, 2022. The motion was seconded by Mr. Arjona; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye,
172 Arjona-aye, McClean-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.
173

174
175 Ms. Tesmenitsky rejoined the meeting.

176
177 **Discussion and appointment of Design Review Committee candidate Hannah Stein**
178 Ms. Kendall explained that Hannah Stein has applied for an associate seat on the Design
179 Review Committee (DRC).

180
181 Ms. Stein said she has lived in Ashland for 23 years. She has 20-yrs experience working with
182 architectural firms prior to starting her own Graphic Design Business specializing in corporate
183 identity, signage and communications. She has owned and operated the Ashland Reiki Center
184 (as a Reiki Master) as well as the gift shop at 54 Front St. for the past 6 years. Ms. Stein noted
185 that she furthered her education in architecture and interior design.

186
187 Ms. Tesmenitsky made a motion to accept Hannah Stein's application to the DRC, as an
188 associate member. The motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye,
189 Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

190
191 **Discussion of Sustainability Committee representative**
192 Ms. Kendall explained that the Sustainability Committee is interested in having a member of
193 the Planning Board attend their meetings as a liaison to help them progress toward their Net
194 Zero goals by 2040.

195
196 Ms. Tesmenitsky expressed interest in the liaison role and to participate in the committee's
197 initial brainstorming efforts to identify specific goals to present to the Select Board.

198
199 Mr. Arjona offered to participate in discussions and as a backup for Ms. Tesmenitsky.

200
201 Ms. Kendall suggested making the liaison role a 6-month term.

202
203 Ms. Kendall made a motion to nominate Ms. Tesmenitsky to the 6-month liaison role on the
204 Sustainability Committee. The motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-
205 aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

206
207 **Discussion of Community Preservation Committee representative**
208 Ms. Kendall explained that per the bylaws a Planning Board member is needed to fill the seat
209 on the Community Preservation Committee vacated by former Planning Board member Joe
210 Rubertone.

211
212 As no other members could currently take on the role, Ms. Kendall made a motion to nominate
213 herself to be the Planning Board representative on the Community Preservation Committee.
214 The motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye,
215 Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

216
217 **2022 Schedule Discussion**
218 To avoid school vacation week, the members agreed to shift the February and March meeting
219 dates to February 10th, and March 3rd, 17th, and 31st.

220
221 Ms. Kendall said she would send potential dates for the Planning Board Wednesday evening
222 retreat date for the members to review.

223
224 **Approval of Minutes**
225 Ms. Tesmenitsky made a motion to approve the minutes of October 20, 2021, as amended. The
226 motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, and
227 Kendall-aye; with a vote of 4-0-0.

228
229 Ms. Tesmenitsky made a motion to approve the minutes of November 18, 2021, as drafted.
230 The motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, and
231 Kendall-aye; with a vote of 4-0-0.

232

233 Ms. Kendall made a motion to approve the minutes of November 23, 2021, as amended. The
234 motion was seconded by Ms. Tesmenitsky; Krishnan-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, and Kendall-aye;
235 with a vote of 3-0-0.

236
237 Ms. Tesmenitsky made a motion to approve the minutes of December 9, 2021, as amended and
238 verified by Mr. Matchak. The motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-
239 aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 4-0-0.

240
241 **Administrative Matters: future meetings, public hearings**

242 None.

243

244 **Report from Board Members and Town Planner**

245 **Peter Matchak**

246 Mr. Matchak reported that a survey will be produced for the inclusionary zoning effort that will
247 be dispersed next week by mail and Facebook. He also noted that Town Hall is currently
248 closed due to the pandemic, but business can be conducted by appointment.

249

250 **Anna Tesmenitsky**

251 Ms. Tesmenitsky reported that the Commonwealth is seeking public comments and comments
252 from Planning Boards concerning laws that impact zoning in MBTA communities.

253

254 Mr. Matchak indicated that Ashland's existing zoning may meet the MBTA's criteria, however
255 further analysis is needed.

256

257 Ms. Tesmenitsky also reported that the ADESA Facility in Holliston is seeking an overflow
258 parking lot that will require car carriers to utilize Rte. 126. This item was continued by the
259 Holliston Planning Board until February 17th.

260

261 Mr. Matchak said he would add this item to an upcoming Planning Board meeting agenda.

262

263 ***Adjournment***

264 Ms. Tesmenitsky made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 pm. The motion was
265 seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, and
266 Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

267