



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Design Review Committee Meeting Minutes

Remote via Zoom Video Conferencing

January 20, 2022, at 7:00 PM

Attendance: DRC members Cathy Rooney, Ujwala Pawnarkar, Bill Novakowski; Asst. Town Planner Emma Snellings; Matthew Stevens and Matthew Marotta representing Trask Development.

Meeting opened by Cathy Rooney at 7pm.

First agenda item, 501 Pond Street, Cathy Rooney asked for motion to move to 8pm.

Bill Novakowski so moved, Ujwala Pawnarkar seconded.

Cathy Rooney, Bill Novakowski, Ujwala Pawnarkar voted Aye.

Review of minutes of 12/21/21. No discrepancies noted. Cathy Rooney asked for a motion to accept; Bill Novakowski so moved, Ujwala Pawnarkar seconded.

Cathy Rooney, Bill Novakowski, Ujwala Pawnarkar voted Aye.

Review of DRC Plan Review application contents as drafted by Cathy Rooney.

Agreed to by Ujwala Pawnarkar and Bill Novakowski as drafted. Emma Snellings will insert new verbiage into part 9.4.10 for review by the Planning Board.

Protecting and Planting Guidelines.

Looking to include as Appendix C an instruction/requirement regarding snow storage so as to not damage trees and woody plantings.

Emma Snellings explained that it can be included in DRC guidelines w/o town vote and included in 5.4 (General Landscaping) in by-law as a reference. This will be discussed with the Planning Board prior to town vote.

Parking Lot Guidelines

Emma Snellings presented the draft prepared by the former town Sustainability Coordinator.

Bill Novakowski and Ujwala Pawnarkar asked for stronger language requiring EV readiness in new parking lots. Needs to be discussed with the Sustainability Committee.

Cathy Rooney stated that Natural Drainage and Green Infrastructure need to be incorporated into the standards of parking lot construction. She will come back with examples at a future meeting for discussion.

Staff Updates

Emma Snellings stated that 501 Pond is the only DRC project in the immediate future. 101 Chestnut has been continued to a later date by the planning board.



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All DNC members agreed regarding the necessity of filling out the committee. Cathy Rooney expressed the need for greater synergy between the Planning Board and DRC

Cathy Rooney asked Emma Snellings why the 311 Pleasant Street project didn't trigger DRC involvement. Emma Snellings replied that the DRC triggers proposed have not been included into the town by-laws.

Cathy Rooney expressed the need for DRC to meet for at least short periods during Planning board meetings to discuss common issues, as well as directing a letter to the Planning Board delineating the need for meetings.

Emma Snellings, at 8pm, welcomed Matthew Stevens and Matthew Marotta to the meeting.

Cathy Rooney opened the hearing for the Trask Development/501 Pond Street development and declared a quorum to be present. The format would be a presentation by Trask, followed by questions and comments by DRC members, followed by questions and comments by the public.

Matthew Stevens opened with an introduction to the Trask team, the background of the firm and listed the relevant architects, engineer, consultants and counsel.

The project was described as a "gateway" mixed use development of 120 units (56 1br, 64 2br) and 4 stories in height on 4.1 acres of land. The building would total 130,000 square feet, of which 6,000 would be amenities (fitness room and meeting space) and 2,351 square feet would be commercial space.

The project would include 30 Affordable Units, be Energy Star Certified and 100% Electric. There would be 6 on-site EV charging stations and conduits for "additional EV charging stations." There would be an easement for patrons to access Putts&Greens immediately to the south, in Holliston.

The original plan called for 90 units, but Trask is "negotiating" for the increase of 30 units as affordable units as a "density bonus", said units to be deed restricted in rent in perpetuity to 80% of the area median.

In addition, Trask would enhance/repair/augment the Ledgemere area sewer system at its own cost***.

Matthew Stevens further stated that as there is no prescription percentage for commercial space in the PSMUOD zoning, the project falls under the definition of "mixed use."

Matthew Stevens further stated that as Green Space is "encouraged" in the town by-laws, the 10,000 square feet of space on the property satisfies that obligation.



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Matthew Marotta described the physical layout of the project, with renderings, as “C”-shaped, showed the retail portion, with access points, dog park, easement, green buffer and green spaces and refuse holding area. Mechanical units to be on the roof, screened by roof line, massing on front to be broken up by two gabled ends. Siding and roofing materials were described/shown and a rendering of the building in the back was shown as to be viewed from the condominiums abutting.

Cathy Rooney invited questions and comments from the DRC members.

Bill Novakowski (addressing Matthew Stevens) questioned research into alternative uses/occupancies, asked if actions would be taken in response to the comments of owners in the abutting condos (height of structure, location of dog park/dumpsters, ingress into condo development, lack of green space),

Bill Novakowski commented on the lack of green space, erroneous description of landscaping as green space, height of the building, mass of the building, minimal percentage (<2%) of the total square footage as commercial, the height being obtrusive to all abutters, and the design being 3 unattractive rectangular boxes. There was a further question as to alternative uses for the money proposed for sewer repair.

Matthew Stevens replied (in sequence to the above) that alternative occupancies were not financially viable and that the requests of the abutters in the condos were mostly addressed, except the dog park would be difficult to move. The abutting Valley Farms property is higher at 57 feet. Reiterated that as greenspace is “encouraged” and there is no specific prescription for commercial space in the mixed use language of the zoning that the project is within the parameters.

Bill Novakowski commentary ended

Cathy Rooney expressed concern that the proposed structure had no area precedent, lacked architectural details on sides facing North and South, and is uninteresting compared to 21 Main St., Ashland Woods and the abutting Valley Farms. There is a concern for the upper floors being obtrusive to the condo owners behind the structure and the lack of commercial space on the first floor. The buffer between the project and Rt. 126 is thin.

Cathy Rooney also expressed concern regarding Matthew Stevens’ comments regarding the “encouraged” language of the zoning not being within the spirit and



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intent of the zoning. There is a lack of commercial space and green space. Asked the developer to rethink the design.

The traffic patterns also need to be rethought due to the anticipated expansion of area residential units, and there are too many driveways in too short a distance on a busy road. Asked if traffic study had been peer reviewed. The lack of a stormwater management plan was questioned and use of native plantings suggested with clustering to accommodate snow storage. Snow storage total area was questioned, possibly being insufficient. Trash area odor might be intrusive to the condo units. Might it be moved? Asked that attractive native trees be preserved. Cathy Rooney asked the developer to consider venting through the roof, and/or hiding any venting on the sides in architectural details. Further questions were asked about making the parking lot fully EV ready, and if there would be backup batteries in the event of power outage.

Matthew Stevens and Matthew Marotta responded that the developer would look into moving the dumpster area and consider the feasibility of venting through the roof. Deferred to the traffic engineer regarding traffic patterns and said the plan had not been peer reviewed. Battery backup for building is part of the design.

Cathy Rooney opened the floor to the public.

Josh Murray, 10 Meetinghouse Path. Expressed concern regarding the obtrusiveness of the height of the structure, lack of privacy inherent and poor esthetic of the increased roof height to hide utilities. Expressed agreement for a 3-story structure and no objection to the site being developed.

Cathy Rooney asked Associate Member Hannah Stein for comment

Hannah Stein expressed concern regarding the dearth of commercial space in the proposal, unbalanced signage and traffic issues with ingress/egress /parking issues with Putts&More patrons.

Edward SanClemente, VP, LCB Senior Living, representing Valley Farms (abutter) expressed concern regarding 60 parking spaces facing Valley Farms, headlights shining into amenity spaces, and asked for consideration to mitigate this.

Commented on proposed retaining wall, asking for high quality material to be used as well as further enhanced buffering. Asked for information regarding said wall.

Mark Dassoni, 49 Hawthorne Rd., agreed with the committee on traffic issues, buffering and height of the building. Asked if the developer sought a type of tenant.

Asked if renderings were done after considering the Cecil Report of 2014.

Matthew Stevens responded yes, the Cecil Report was studied and one rendering was based on it. Absorption rates for retail have changed since 2014. An optometrist



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is interested in occupying the commercial space. A covenant between the former owner and Shaw's precludes any food-based occupancy on the premises. He will forward a copy to Emma Snellings to be a part of the record.

Cathy Rooney asked if the funds for the sewer improvement (\$50,000.00-100,000.00 not including labor) could be used in other areas.

Matthew Stevens replied that it was in the town's interest to have the sewer improved.

Cathy Rooney asked for any further comments.

Ujwala Pawnarkar responded that Valley Farms is more acceptable in design due to scale, setback and green space. Proposed project will be overwhelming with no green buffer and minimal landscaping. The project needs more landscaping.

Cathy Rooney described the need to continue to gather information for the DRC Report to the Planning Board. Asked the developer for responses to comments and concerns expressed in the meeting.

Asked for a motion to continue the discussion of 501 Pond Street to the next meeting on February 3rd. Bill Novakowski so moved, Ujwala Pawnarkar seconded.

Cathy Rooney, Ujwala Pawnarkar and Bill Novakowski voted for Aye.

Cathy Rooney asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Emma Snellings so moved, Ujwala Pawnarkar seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 10pm.