



# Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

## Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Remote via Zoom Video Conferencing

February 10, 2022, at 7:15 PM – Approved at March 17, 2022 meeting

1 Present: Tricia Kendall, Chair  
2 Lakshmi Krishnan, Clerk  
3 Anna Tesmenitsky  
4 Deepa Venkat  
5 Marcelo Arjona  
6 Kevin McClean  
7  
8

9 Others: Peter Matchak, Town Planner  
10 Emma Snellings, Asst. Town Planner  
11  
12

### 13 *Call to Order*

14 Tricia Kendall called the meeting to order at 7:20 pm. Ms. Kendall read a statement regarding  
15 the town's response to Covid-19 and explained that per the Governor's order the meeting is  
16 being held remotely via Zoom, and recorded and broadcast by WACA TV. Ms. Kendall  
17 introduced the Planning Board members, staff in attendance, and reviewed the meeting  
18 agenda.  
19

### 20 **355 West Union Street Site Plan Review – Continued from the January 27, 2022, meeting**

21 Mr. Matchak explained that the 355 West Union Street Site Plan Review is for TJ's Food and  
22 Spirits restaurant, and Mr. Connors, the attorney representing the applicant, is seeking  
23 approval for outdoor seating in their parking lot area.  
24

25 Mr. Connors reviewed the updated proposed placement of the planting boxes in front of the  
26 large concrete blocks around the perimeter of the outdoor seating area. He noted that the  
27 seating during the pandemic was expansive, and the proposed occupancy is now reduced by  
28 half. Mr. Connors talked about the paved parking lot surface that will remain and indicated  
29 that the applicant is in the process of completing remedial work in various areas of the parking  
30 lot.  
31

32 Mr. Connors said that the outdoor seating will be used seasonally, weather permitting. There  
33 are lights around the deck area and parking lot lights that are adequate for the expanded area.  
34 Mr. Connors also explained that propane heaters will be used when needed.  
35

36 Mr. Matchak noted the applicant has alcohol beverage control commission (ABC) licensing.  
37

38 There was a brief discussion about the planting boxes and repositioning them so they wrap  
39 around the seating area to improve the visual appeal while maintaining the barrier protection.  
40

41 Mr. Matchak was asked to prepare a draft decision with the conditions as discussed, including  
42 ADA accessibility compliance, securing furniture and canopies, appropriate furniture storage,  
43 overflow lighting specifications, safe electrical sources, Fire Dept. approval of the propane  
44 heaters, and the Select Board approval of the ABC compliance and liquor service.  
45

46 The members also discussed that given the application is for a permanent structure their  
47 review must be comprehensive. Mr. Connors, Mr. Matchak, and board member Marcelo Arjona  
48 will work through the design solution before the next meeting.  
49

50 Ms. Tesmenitsky made a motion to continue the 355 W. Union St. Site Plan Review public  
51 hearing until March 3, 2022, at 7:15 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Krishnan-  
52 aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

53

54 **501 Pond Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review**

55

56 Ms. Kendall opened the hearing and explained that associate member Kevin McClean will step  
57 into the 5<sup>th</sup> voting member seat of the Planning Board, as Ms. Tesmenitsky is a direct abutter of  
58 the site and therefore recused herself from the hearing.

59

60 Mr. Matchak explained that the applicants, Ben and Matt Stevens from Trask Development, had  
61 previously been before the board. Issues were raised concerning the proposed building's  
62 architecture design, commercial space allocation, and green space. The applicants requested  
63 the board's input and direction before addressing the concerns and developing a full Site Plan  
64 and Landscape Plan.

65

66 Matt Marotta, from Icon Architecture, reviewed the Locus Plan and referenced nearby  
67 commercial and residential developments. Mr. Marotta mentioned that the Design Review  
68 Committee (DRC) commented on the architecture and questioned the site's location as the  
69 gateway to the town.

70

71 Mr. Marotta reviewed the updated proposed plan that addressed the board's initial feedback.  
72 The new design has approximately 6,800 sq. ft. of commercial space on the ground floor and  
73 the same number of residential units at 120. The building's setback was increased in order to  
74 extend the open green space at the front of the building. Mr. Marotta reviewed site sections  
75 and elevations and noted that on the front side the building's height is similar to the senior  
76 living residences at Valley Farm. The height at the rear of the building is roughly one-half story  
77 above the roofs of existing townhomes on Meeting Path Rd., however, the homes on Spyglass  
78 are considerably higher. Mr. Marotta reviewed the massing of the building, which was  
79 reduced, and the linearity and horizontal breakup of the building to improve the facade. The  
80 residential entry is moved to distinguish it from the commercial space. Regarding the  
81 materials, brick is proposed for the base of the building with fiber cement siding above.

82

83 Ms. Kendall explained that public comments would likely not be included tonight (as they were  
84 the primary focus at the last discussion of the project), and opened the meeting to the board  
85 and the DRC for comments.

86

87 Given there were several DRC members in attendance, they were asked to speak as individuals,  
88 share only their opinions, and not converse with each other.

89

90 Ujwala Pawnarkar commented that the neighboring Valley Farm development has a greater  
91 setback, and more open space compared to the proposed development.

92

93 Catherine Rooney mentioned the letter she sent to the board that included comments from the  
94 DRC pertaining to the percentage of residential to commercial, general lack of green space, the  
95 mass and density of the project, and that there is no precedent for this development in the  
96 neighborhood. Views in and out of the property were also of concern, especially headlights  
97 that are directed towards Valley Farm communal spaces. Ms. Rooney also noted suggestions  
98 such as solar panels, improved architectural detail, and additional plantings to approve the  
99 visual appeal at the back, the Valley Farm side, and the street side of the property.

100

101 Bill Novakowski asked, and Mr. Marotta responded, that the building's height will not be scaled  
102 down, and the main façade has an emphasized line across the third story, and at the rear of the  
103 building, the fourth story will remain.

104

105 Ms. Kendall asked for comments from the Planning Board.

106

107 Mr. Arjona felt the proposed project is appropriate for the area, as a dense mix-use  
108 development aligns with the intent of the bylaws. However, he raised concerns about the  
109 number of affordable units and the density of one- versus two-bedroom units. He also  
110 suggested designating parking at the front of the building for the commercial space.

111  
112 Ms. Venkat asked how the design was adjusted to result in 6,800 sq. ft. of commercial space.  
113 Mr. Marotta responded that the average net sq. footage dropped slightly. Ms. Venkat asked for  
114 more specifics regarding the residential and commercial dimensions and parking space  
115 requirements.  
116  
117 Ms. Krishnan asked, and Mr. Marotta responded that the breakdown between the one- and  
118 two-bedroom units are 56 and 64, respectively. Ben Stevens mentioned that there is a party  
119 currently interested in occupying a portion of the commercial space.  
120  
121 Mr. McClean questioned whether the increase in green space will allow for the number of  
122 parking spaces that were initially proposed, and therefore thought the overall size of the  
123 development would need to be decreased.  
124  
125 Ms. Kendall appreciated the increased commercial space but questioned the total unit count.  
126 She asked about the function and advantages of the green space, and if below-grade parking is  
127 an option to support expanding the green space.  
128  
129 There was a brief discussion about considering destination retail to occupy the commercial  
130 space and develop the open space with more street presence that would benefit the  
131 community.  
132  
133 Regarding below-grade parking, Matt Stevens responded that it did not make economic sense,  
134 and from an engineering standpoint there were several disadvantages, such as the high level of  
135 groundwater, no significant grades, and the building height would increase at least 8 to 9 feet.  
136 He also said that 4 parking spaces are required for every 1,000 sq. ft. of commercial space, the  
137 parking spaces count has increased, and the parking space size is 9 ft. by 20 ft.  
138  
139 Ms. Kendall made a motion to continue the 501 Pond St. Site Plan Review public hearing until  
140 March 3, 2022, at 7:45 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Krishnan; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-  
141 aye, McClean-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.  
142  
143 **311 Pleasant Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review**  
144 Ms. Kendall explained that the applicant requested a continuance, and the date change will  
145 allow the board to reschedule a site visit.  
146  
147 Ms. Krishnan made a motion to continue the 311 Pleasant St. public hearing until March 3,  
148 2022, at 7:45 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Arjona; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye,  
149 Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.  
150  
151 **100 Chestnut Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review**  
152 Ms. Kendall reopened the public hearing that was continued from the December 9, 2021  
153 meeting.  
154  
155 Mr. Matchak summarized the project's status and explained that the number of units was  
156 reduced from 200 to 176, but no change to the proposed commercial space. The applicant has  
157 met with the Village of Americas residents and will provide an update on those conversations.  
158  
159 Roy MacDowell, from Baystone Development and Baystone Ashland LLC, reviewed the revised  
160 set of plans for 100 Chestnut St., updated since the prior Planning Board meeting to reflect the  
161 board's comment concerning the architectural design, and the landscaping and parking plans.  
162 Mr. MacDowell said that the project team met with the neighboring management company and  
163 the infrastructure committee and discussed potentially funding a community playground, road  
164 lighting, and other capital improvements.  
165  
166 Mr. MacDowell explained that there are now 72 one- and 86 two-bedroom units. The parking  
167 ratio is 2.0 per unit, 325 surface residential parking spaces, 54 garage spaces, and 23  
168 commercial spaces. The development's proposed amenities have not changed. There is a  
169 proposed dog park for the entire development.  
170

171 Matt Marotta, from Icon Architecture, reviewed the building's revised design. He explained  
172 that gables were added to the roofline, and balconies, insets, and different siding materials  
173 were used to separate the massing into smaller building sections to improve the architectural  
174 appeal. Low sloping roofs were added above the commercial and amenity space on the ground  
175 floor to add an arcade.

176  
177 Todd MacDowell explained that the driveway was relocated, and the paved area parking was  
178 moved away from the property line by 30 ft. to increase the buffer between the site and the  
179 existing development. The elevation of the property was reduced by 10 ft., so the top roof line  
180 height is similar to the surrounding properties.

181  
182 Ms. Kendall opened the meeting for comments from the board.

183  
184 Ms. Tesmenitsky questioned why the 10,500 sq. ft. of commercial space covenant that was  
185 agreed upon by the town and the Fafard Co. was not being discussed. Todd MacDowell  
186 responded that the residents of the Village of the Americas were not in favor of expanding the  
187 retail and commercial use, due to the potential increased traffic.

188  
189 Mr. Arjona suggested adding banding colors on the façade to differentiate the floors, and he  
190 asked about privacy plantings outside of the windows of the first-floor residential units.

191  
192 Ms. Kendall questioned the building height, the rooflines, and mentioned various businesses  
193 that could use the commercial space, drawing on improving the innovation, design, and use of  
194 the commercial and outdoor areas.

195  
196 In lieu of accepting public comments during the meeting, Ms. Kendall invited the public to send  
197 comments to the Planning Office. Todd MacDowell also said comments and questions can be  
198 submitted on [www.ChestnutAshland.com](http://www.ChestnutAshland.com).

199  
200 Ms. Kendall made a motion to continue the 100 Chestnut St. public hearing until March 17,  
201 2022, at 7:15 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Tesmenitsky; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye,  
202 Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

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204

#### 205 **Report from Board Members and Town Planner**

206  
207 **Update: Save the Mill Buildings Letter dated Jan 13, 2022, from Helen Nickole, Organizer**  
208 Mr. Matchak reported that the letter was received by the Planning Office, and it was sent to the  
209 members. The project is not before the Planning Board at this time.

210  
211 Helen Nickole was in attendance to answer any questions, and Ms. Kendall reported that a  
212 discussion about the possible forum is on the next Planning Board retreat agenda. Ms. Nickole  
213 suggested that the forum should present downtown zoning in general, and then focus on the  
214 Mill Building site.

215

#### 216 **Update: Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities**

217 Mr. Matchak offered to share his notes from the recent Mass Municipal Forum. The Planning  
218 Office has begun its analysis on the impact on the town's zoning in the MBTA area. Mr.  
219 Matchak also noted that he has begun looking into available grants to help fund a consultant to  
220 work changes needed to comply with the legislation. They are also drafting a presentation for  
221 the board's review on March 3, 2022, that will be submitted to meet the March 31, 2022  
222 response deadline.

223

#### 224 **Update: Auto Dealers Exchange of Concord, LLC (dba ASECA Boston)**

225 Mr. Matchak said a letter drafted from the Chair to the Holliston Planning Board Chair was sent  
226 to the Planning Board for their review concerning the Odessa.

227

228 Ms. Tesmenitsky made a motion to approve sending the letter to the Holliston Planning Board  
229 as drafted. The motion was seconded by Ms.; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye,  
230 Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

231

232 **Update: Outdoor Seating Standards**

233 Ms. Kendall asked the member's opinions on how to formalize the process for outdoor seating.  
234 She asked if the applications should automatically go before the DRC. Ms Tesminisky noted  
235 that a checklist for outdoor seating would be useful, and asked if the Select Board should be  
236 consulted about considering fees for the use of public space, such as sidewalks, for outdoor  
237 seating.

238

239 **Administrative Matters: future meetings, public hearings**

240 Mr. Matchak provided an update on the following items:

- 241 1. Applications received:
- 242 a. Eversource Scenic Road Application regarding Tree Trimming: Cedar, Chestnut,  
243 Eliot, Main, Spring Streets. This includes trimming only to clear the utility lines.  
244 The scenic way natural gas line permit is renewal is also pending.  
245
  - 246 b. Cellco Partnership Application regarding Modification to Existing Wireless  
247 Communications Facility at 400 Cedar Street. Verizon is looking to replace cell  
248 phone antennas on the town's water tower.  
249
  - 250 c. Preliminary Subdivision Application for 100 Fountain Street. This is a four-lot  
251 buildable property.  
252
- 253 2. Other Projects:
- 254
  - 255 a. Bill Rodenhiser (81 W. Union St.) is planning to begin construction of the  
256 engineered retention wall at the back of the property.  
257
  - 258 b. 12 Pond St. will come back before the board for final approval of the exterior.  
259 Internal drywalling work is in progress.  
260
  - 261 c. The Public Safety Building's rear retaining wall construction will begin shortly.  
262 Mechanicals and the exterior envelope are being installed.  
263
  - 264 d. The Mindess School is completing blasting work tomorrow, however less ledge  
265 as was anticipated was found. Grading at the site is in process.  
266
- 267 3. Retreat Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022, from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm in the Select  
268 Board meeting room. The agenda will be distributed tomorrow.  
269

270 **Approval of Minutes**

271 Ms. Kendall made a motion to approve the minutes of January 13, 2022, as amended. The  
272 motion was seconded by Ms. Tesmenitsky; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye,  
273 Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.  
274

275 **Adjournment**

276 Ms. Tesmenitsky made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 pm. The motion was  
277 seconded by Mr. Arjona; Krishnan-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-  
278 aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.  
279