



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Remote via Zoom Video Conferencing

August 25, 2022, at 7:15 PM

Present: Tricia Kendall, Chair
Anna Tesmenitsky, Vice Chair
Catherine Jurczyk, Clerk
Deepa Venkat, Member
Marcelo Arjona, Member
Kevin McClean, Associate Member

Others: Peter Matchak, Town Planner
Emma Snelling, Asst. Town Planner
Mike Kennefick, Town Counsel

1 **Call to Order**

2 Tricia Kendall called the meeting to order. She reviewed the meeting agenda and said that due to
3 ongoing permission by the state, the meeting is being held remotely and is being recorded by WACA-
4 TV.

5

6 **Planning Board Clerk's Report**

7 Catherine Jurczyk, the Planning Board Clerk, reported that between mid-July 2022 to August 22,
8 2022, eighteen correspondences were sent the Planning Dept., and the board's general response was
9 sent to 7 of those correspondences. She noted that several recipients thanked the board for
10 acknowledging their correspondence.

11

12 **225 Pond Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review – Continued from August 11, 2022, meeting**

13 The 225 Pond St. Special Permit is concerning the McDonalds double drive-thru. Mr. Matchak
14 reported that he is awaiting a response from MassDOT regarding the ingress and egress from the site
15 to Pond St. He noted that the double drive-thru has been approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals
16 (ZBA), and the Conservation Commission (ConCom) approved the Site Plan and stormwater permit for
17 the application. The applicant will go before the Design Review Committee (DRC) next Thursday.

18

19 The board reviewed the Site Plan and identified items for the DRC to focus on. Those items included
20 the size and visibility of the signage, lighting, the lighting impact on the adjacent properties, the
21 fencing along the property line, the plantings throughout the site, the trash enclosure, and a proposed
22 bike rack and its location.

23
24 Eric Dubrulle, a project manager from Bohler Engineering, agreed with the DRC review list, and the
25 date to continue the review.
26
27 Ms. Kendall made a motion to continue the 225 Pond St. Special Permit and Site Plan review until
28 September 8, 2022, at 7:15 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Tesmenitsky; Venkat-aye,
29 Tesmenitsky-aye, Jurczyk-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.
30
31 **311 Pleasant Street - Special Permit**
32 Mr. Matchak explained that the applicant, represented by Valerie Moore, appealed the Planning
33 Board's denial of the Special Permit in Land Court. He said the Planning Board discussed this item in
34 an Executive Session and signed an agreement dated July 14, 2022, which was filed with the court.
35 The judgment on the original application decision was remanded back to the Planning Board,
36 therefore a new public hearing is being held.
37 Mike Kennefick, Town Counsel, also provided an explanation of the settlement, the public hearing,
38 and the application review that will require the Planning Board's vote. Mr. Matchak read the public
39 notice into the record to open the hearing.
40
41 The members reviewed the last Site Plan dated March 9, 2022, and the proposed changes. The
42 changes included moving the solar panels so they are a minimum of 50 ft. from the property lines,
43 noting that the trees will be maintained for the next five years, including 3 red maples and 6 Leland
44 cypress at the rear of the property, 9 Leland cypress that will be a minimum of 6 ft. on the west side,
45 and 15 Leland cypress on the east side of the property. Mr. Matchak also pointed out where the
46 utility connections for the overhead wires are located.
47
48 The members reviewed the draft Site Plan decision and conditions with Mr. Kennefick's recommended
49 changes, and made minor tweaks.
50
51 Ms. Kendall opened the meeting for public comments.
52
53 Roberta Soolman, 28 Woodridge Ln., commented that the screening should obstruct the existing
54 view from the Riverwalk. She also stated known problems with Leland cypress trees and suggested
55 choosing a different species.
56
57 Cathy Rooney asked why native juniper trees or mixed evergreen hedges are not being
58 recommended instead of deciduous red maples and Leland cypress trees. She also questioned how
59 the town's water ban will affect the maintenance plan.
60
61 Mr. Kennefick advised the members to refrain from changing the vegetation types stated in the
62 agreed-upon Site Plan, and after the decision is made contact NextGrid and the VFW regarding the
63 more suitable planting options.
64
65 Joel Arbeitmen asked whether adding more rigor to the maintenance requirements would address
66 the planting selections.

67
68 The members asked Mr. Matchak to draft a letter to the applicant and request more details
69 concerning the exact placement of the trees to minimize possible replacement and maintenance of
70 the trees in the future, and to put forth the recommended species.

71
72 Ms. Kendall made a motion to approve the 311 Pleasant St. Special Permit, as modified. The motion
73 was seconded by Mr. Arjona; Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Jurczyk-abstain, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-
74 aye; with a vote of 4-0-1.

75
76 **300 Elliot Street - Site Plan Review Modification**

77 Mr. Matchak said the applicant, Bank of America, is seeking approval to modify a previously
78 approved Site Plan, dated December 2020, for two parking lot lights at their drive-thru. Since the
79 decision, there was a taking of a portion of the property by MassDOT, because of the Pond St.
80 project, and a portion of the parking lot was removed. The applicant must relocate the parking lot
81 lights and, therefore, modify the Site Plan. Because Mr. Matchak also requested additional
82 information to make the Site Plan clearer, the applicant requested a continuance.

83
84 Ms. Kendall made a motion to continue the 300 Elliot St. Site Plan Review modification until
85 September 8, 2022. The motion was seconded by Ms. Tesmenitsky; Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye,
86 Jurczyk-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

87
88 **399 Union Street – Site Plan Review**

89 Ms. Kendall explained that the application is for a proposed Starbucks restaurant where the
90 Walgreens building is located.

91
92 Mr. Matchak read the public notice to open the hearing, and introduced Jerry Effren, the attorney
93 representing the applicant, and Gregory Salvador, the property owner.

94
95 Ms. Tesmenitsky disclosed that she worked for Mr. Effren’s law office while attending high school,
96 and concerning the application, she stated that she has no personal interest or bias.

97
98 Mr. Effren explained that due to Walgreens’ nationwide consolidation, they notified Mr. Salvador
99 that they would not be renewing their lease scheduled to end in the spring of 2023. Mr. Salvador
100 pursued a new tenant, Starbucks, and finalized a long-term leasing agreement for the location.

101
102 Regarding the Site Plan, he explained that there are no proposed changes to the existing access ways,
103 however, they are seeking a Special Permit for a fast food restaurant and drive-thru. Mr. Effren also
104 noted that a filing with ConCom is in progress, feedback from town departments is incorporated in
105 the proposal that is before the board, and the Traffic Review was received and is under review.

106
107 Scott Rogers, from JK Holmgren Engineering, introduced the project and reviewed the Site Plan. He
108 said there are 40 planned parking spaces including ADA spaces. The drive-thru will accommodate
109 queuing for 12 vehicles, and outdoor dining and bike racks are planned. He noted that there is a
110 large underground infiltration system that will be maintained with improvements to the drainage

111 system. The utilities will be upgraded and extended, and the plans show an increase in green space,
112 thus decreasing the paved area. Mr. Rogers reviewed the protections that will be in place during
113 construction.

114
115 Ms. Kendall asked about the curb cut at the drive-thru and questioned how traffic entering will
116 navigate around the drive-thru. She also wanted to be sure Starbucks' plan will address the traffic
117 flow, especially in the drive-thru queue, so as not to disturb the residential neighborhood. Ms.
118 Kendall asked that the applicant include a high percentage of native vegetation, and recommended
119 sending the applicant the Sustainability Committee's checklist.

120
121 Ms. Tesmenitsky commented on Starbucks' commitment to achieve NetZero goals. She was
122 interested in designing a Starbucks that aligns with Ashland's vision of the town, integrating the
123 space with Stone Park, and supporting Starbucks interest in hiring people with disabilities. She also
124 asked for a Complete Streets report on the site.

125
126 Mr. Arjona asked about the existing curb cuts and whether they should remain as is.

127
128 Ms. Jurczyk expressed her interest in incorporating public space.

129
130 Ms. Venkat echoed the recommendations to include element of public space and making the site a
131 feature, given the location's prominence on the Marathon route.

132
133 Mr. McClean expressed interest in expanding the green space and reexamining the curb cuts.

134
135 Ms. Kendall opened the meeting for public comments.

136
137 Hannah Stein, 6 Coburn Dr., commented that this redevelopment is an opportunity for Ashland to
138 raise and set the standard for future developments and rehab projects.

139
140 Cathy Rooney, 136 Fountain St., commented on the plantings and curb cuts and questioned whether
141 a rotary should be considered for the location. She also recommended using water from the
142 retention basin for the landscaping maintenance.

143
144 Mark Dassoni, 49 Hawthorne Rd., commented on the potential traffic at the entrances, and asked if
145 the parking spaces will be changed. Mr. Effren responded that there is a new parking plan.

146
147 Roberta Soolman, 28 Woodridge Ln., commented on Starbucks' labor law violations.

148
149 Joel Arbeitmen, 28 Woodridge Ln., mentioned the similar businesses in the immediate area and
150 questioned whether another coffee shop is needed. He also expressed concern about the potential
151 traffic volume a Starbucks will generate.

152
153 Chris Gazard 21 Park Rd., commented on the heavy traffic on Park Rd., the curb cuts, and sidewalks.

154

155 Ms. Kendall made a motion to continue the 399 Union St. Site Plan Review until September 22, 2022.
156 The motion was seconded by Ms. Tesmenitsky; Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Jurczyk-aye, Arjona-
157 aye, and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

158

159 **10-60 Main Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review**

160 Mr. Matchak read the public notice to open the hearing.

161

162 Ms. Kendall acknowledged the questions, comments, and concerns coming from residents regarding
163 the project. She explained that the project is currently in a demolition delay through the Ashland
164 Historical Commission and neither the Planning Board nor the Planning Dept. have the authority to
165 delay or deny the public hearing process due to the demolition delay. Ms. Kendall said the
166 acceptance and the start of the public hearing in no way mean the Planning Dept., nor the Planning
167 Board approves the project, and final approval or disapproval will happen after the public hearing
168 process is completed. Also, given the complexity of the hearings and the many participants, at times
169 public comments will be restricted in time per speaker and further comments may be emailed to the
170 Planning Dept.

171

172 Rich Gordan, the property owner, provided a high-level overview of the proposed Ashland Mills
173 development and its connection to the planned Ashland redevelopment initiative. He said the new
174 development will include 200 apartment units and 25% will be affordable, with 30,000 sq. ft. of
175 mixed-use space, and a shuttle to the commuter rail station.

176

177 Joe Antonellis, the attorney representing the applicant, introduced himself and expressed his interest
178 in the development, given its plan to rehabilitate existing historic structures.

179

180 Scott Richardson, a principal from Gorman Richardson Lewis Architects, and George Connors, an
181 engineer from Connorstone Inc., described the project, building design, and concepts.

182

183 Mr. Connor talked about the new locations for the egresses, and how they will affect the traffic flow
184 and access to the streets. He also mentioned the planned water pumping and drainage system, and
185 high-powered generator.

186

187 Mr. Richardson explained that the existing site is 8 acres, or 348,349 sq. ft., and the development is
188 approximately 292,701 sq. ft., with a floor area ratio (FAR) of .084. Regarding the apartments, he
189 said there will be 16 studios, 153 one-bedrooms, and 31 two-bedrooms. There will be 378 parking
190 spaces including surface and lower level spaces. An outdoor patio area is planned for the front of
191 building #50, and a community room for the town's use. Mr. Richardson reviewed renderings of the
192 buildings that showed the façade design and materials and an elevated walkway with views of the
193 riverfront.

194

195 Craig Seymour, the Economic Consultant, talked about the financial aspects of the project and the
196 fiscal impact on Ashland. He said the new project will generate \$977,300 in annual property taxes,
197 which is an increase of \$948,800, and \$31,000 in annual automobile excise tax. The apartments will
198 generate approximately 311 residents, and between 16 and 20 school-age children. School costs are

199 estimated to be \$184,000 per year, and municipal costs are estimated to be \$331,000. He
200 summarized the other proposed fiscal benefits and revenue generation opportunities.
201
202 Mr. Matchak noted that the project will be required to go before the DRC, ConCom, and the Board of
203 Health. He said he will also seek input from the EPA and the DEP, given the proximity to the plume.
204
205 The members summarized the topics they wanted to discuss and their expectations. Those items
206 included obtaining more information about how the applicant is addressing the Historical
207 Commission's concerns, stating that the previous public forums are not relevant to the new hearing,
208 learning how the project will integrate with the riverfront and the downtown district, including the
209 results of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review, ensuring the project's
210 compliance with the town's bylaw. They also wanted to know more about the site's walkability, the
211 economic development elements, the data behind the fiscal aspects, details regarding the
212 preservation of the granite and the historic architectural design, the impact to utilities, the
213 construction precautions to mitigate impact to the river, the updated traffic review, the review of the
214 buildings design assumptions. The members discussed arranging a site walk for the board, and an
215 open retreat to focus on the project.
216
217 Ms. Kendall opened the meeting for public comments.
218
219 Chris Gazard, 21 Park Rd., agreed that the historic aspects of the buildings must be maintained, and
220 he raised concern regarding the lack of open space and questioned how 200 apartments will support
221 the town's economic development.
222
223 Helen Nicole, 4 Elliot Cir., questioned why the planning process is continuing and disregarding the
224 bylaw.
225
226 Michael Herbert, the Town Manager, expressed his support for the redevelopment of the site and
227 appreciation of what the project team has done so far. However, he said that he has a number of
228 concerns with the design and he looks forward to how the Planning Board will help shape the project
229 moving forward.
230
231 Mark Dassoni, 49 Hawthorne Rd., expressed his support for the 30,000 sq. ft. of commercial space
232 and the degree of economic development it will provide.
233
234 Joan Gonfrade, 1 Shore Rd., felt the project should have to wait until the demolition delay is
235 resolved. She wanted the third building to be retained and raised concern about the loss of 110,000
236 sq. ft. of commercial space, and the development's impact on the town's water supply. She asked to
237 have the Ashland Mill project survey results shared with the developer.
238
239 Cathy Rooney, 136 Fountain St., expressed concern regarding the project's economics and the
240 possibility of barely breaking even on the 2022 costs.
241

242 Elizabeth, the owner of the BN Beauty Salon and Spa, 30 Main St., said she is a current tenant and
243 expressed her interest in maintaining her business at the location.

244
245 Tomaasz Karczmariski, 1 Robert Hill Way, said he as an abutter he is in support of the redevelopment
246 of the area, but has concerns regarding the number of apartments that are planned and the impact
247 on the community.

248
249 Hannah Stein, 6 Coburn Dr., as a business owner expressed concern regarding the impact
250 construction has on existing businesses, and the impact this project will have on the area’s small
251 business community.

252
253 Ms. Kendall summarized the next steps and asked Mr. Matchak to send a Doodle Poll to find a time
254 to schedule a site visit. She said the focus of the September 22nd meeting will be to determine how
255 the project will respond to the concerns of the surrounding neighborhood, to better understand the
256 aspects of the design and the impacts on utilities, and to review the regulations and the bylaw
257 criteria that the board is obligated to examine.

258
259 Mr. Gordon stated his interest in working together with the board and he welcomed the board to
260 conduct a site visit.

261
262 Ms. Kendall made a motion to continue the 10-60 Main Street Special Permit and Site Plan Review
263 until September 22, 2022. The motion was seconded by Ms. Tesmenitsky; Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-
264 aye, Jurczyk-aye, Arjona-aye, and Kendall–aye; with a vote of 5-0-0.

265

266 **Planning Topics**

267 **Scenic Roads Outreach**

268 No new updates.

269

270 **MBTA Communities**

271 Mr. Matchak reported that the MBTA final guidelines were published by the state two weeks ago,
272 and they have scheduled training sessions. He will report to the board how the guidelines have
273 changed.

274

275 **Bylaw 9.4.5.3 (Public Information Meeting)**

276 No new updates.

277

278 **Economic Impact Tool**

279 No new updates.

280

281 **Reports from Board Members and Town Planner**

282 **Sustainability Committee**

283 Ms. Jurczyk and Ms. Kendall reported that they would reach out to the Sustainability Committee
284 regarding the document the board recently received, and the Sustainability Checklist. The members
285 discussed the positive benefits the checklist will provide as a tool to evaluate future projects.

286
287 Design Review Committee (DRC)
288 No new updates.
289
290 Comprehensive Plan
291 Mr. Matchak reported that September 14th was the date proposed for a joint meeting with the Select
292 Board and the Planning Board. Three of the members confirmed their availability to attend.
293
294 Inclusionary Zoning
295 No new updates.
296
297 Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
298 Ms. Kendall said that she will continue on as the Planning Board’s CPC representative, as her current
299 stint ends on August 31, 2022.
300
301 Ms. Jurczyk made a motion to nominate Ms. Kendall for the position of CPC representative. Mr.
302 Arjona seconded the motion; Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, McClean-aye,
303 and Kendall-aye; with a vote of 6-0-0.
304
305 **Administrative Matters: future meetings, public hearings**
306 Applications Received
307 No new applications.
308
309 Meeting schedule
310 The next meeting is scheduled for September 8, 2022.
311
312 Topics for Future Meetings
313 No new updates.
314
315 Approval of Minutes
316 The approval of the minutes of July 14, 2022, was postponed until the next meeting.
317
318 ***Adjournment***
319 Ms. Kendall made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:09 pm. The motion was seconded by Ms.
320 Tesmenitsky; Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, McClean-aye, and Kendall-aye;
321 with a vote of 6-0-0.
322
323
324
325