

East Greenwich Planning Board

Wednesday, May 20, 2020

Virtual

7:00 PM

Present: Jason Gomez, Chair; Nate Ginsburg, Vice Chair; Eric Jautaikis; Ben Lupovitz; Kevin Murphy; Chris Pels

Absent:

Staff: Lisa Bourbonnais, Town Planner; Aaron Lindo, Planning Technician; Joe Duarte, DPW Director; Mark Conboy, Town Engineer; Andrew Teitz, Solicitor

1. Call to Order

Mr. Gomez called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

2. Roll Call

3. Consent Agenda

A) Extension: Required 5-Year Master Plan update for the New England Institute of Technology Campus located at 1 New England Tech Boulevard - Assessor's Plat 80 Plat 12 Lot 76 and Assessor's Plat 70 Plat 12 Lots 16, 576, 577 & 578. The Campus received a Master Plan approval in June, 2015 and it was acknowledged that full campus build-out would be a very long-term endeavor. Approvals required that the Master Campus Plan be revisited with the Planning Board every five years. The Institute submitted the required plan update in April, 2020 but the current national health emergency has created some uncertainty in their plans. They have requested a one-year extension of the re-visit to allow time to adapt and reconsider as needed. **Section 263-16 (Master Plan General Provisions) Sub-Section G, "Vesting" of the Town's Land Development and Subdivision Review Regulations states,** "Vesting may be extended for a longer period, for good cause, if requested by the applicant, in writing, and approved by the Permitting Authority. Master plan vesting shall include the zoning requirements, conceptual layout and all conditions shown on the approved master plan drawings and supporting materials."

Attorney Joe DeAngelis represented the applicant. Mr. DeAngelis explained the COVID-19 pandemic has created significant issues for the school and the plans for future development are on hold. They are not sure when they are going to revisit any future expansion and any consideration will be based on the economy, and the health of the students and faculty.

Mr. Gomez asked if there were any questions for the applicant. Mr. Lupovitz commented that he is a contractor with New England Tech and asked the solicitor if he should recuse. Mr. Teitz replied that he would have to recuse and to get the recusal form and send it to the Planning Department. Confirming the recusal, Mr. Lupovitz was asked to mute himself and turn off the camera.

Mr. Murphy commented that he and Mr. DeAngelis were colleagues as recently as 2013. Mr. Teitz replied that it has been more than a year and a recusal is not necessary.

Mr. Ginsburg asked if the April update is now void. Mr. DeAngelis replied that the April 29th update is presently pending for review by the Planning staff. Ms. Bourbonnais added that the plans were submitted in

time but then the plans became uncertain. The Planning Department will work with the applicant to figure out the scope of the update and decide what is next. The applicant may not need a full year for the continuance and the submission is still current.

Public comment was opened and closed after there were no members of the public to be heard.

A motion to grant the extension was made by Mr. Ginsburg, seconded by Mr. Murphy, and unanimously approved (Mr. Lupovitz recused).

Mr. Lupovitz rejoined the meeting.

4. Public Hearings

A) Preliminary Plan Review of a **major redevelopment project at 695 Main Street**, being Assessor's Map 75, Plat 3, Lot 76. The former gas/service station would be removed and replaced with a bank with drive-thru. Property is located within the historic district and the Historic District Commission has purview over final plans. The drive-thru use requires zoning relief which was granted by the ZBR in January, 2020. Applicant is The Washington Trust Company and the property owner is 20 Water Street Realty, LLC. Project Master Plan approval by the Planning Board was granted December 4, 2019.

Attorney Joseph Brennen represented the applicant and gave an introduction. He explained that the applicant has received a use variance for the drive thru on January 28th from the ZBR. The applicant has also received permission from the HDC for a demolition and reconstruction. The applicant has been working closely with the Planning Department and has formulated a plan that has worked well. The site has been vacant for over 8 years and the bank is a good use for the corner lot. The applicant will be adding landscaping and trees around the federal style building. The traffic issues have been discussed. The applicant has reviewed the staff report and draft motion with no objections. The applicant asks that final approval be granted administratively as they are eager to get started with the project.

Nicole Reilly, the project engineer, was recognized as an expert and sworn in. She explained that the applicant has taken to heart the recommendation that have been given. The applicant has strong ties to improving the community.

In regards to traffic, there is circulation on 1st Avenue and on 2nd Avenue with no curb cuts on Main Street. There is a proposed landscape buffer between the carwash and the site. The ingress/egress on 1st Avenue is a right-in, right-out access point. There is a full access ingress/egress on 2nd Avenue. DOT has granted physical alteration permits but had a lot of questions. This is reflected in the new sidewalks along the lot on Main Street and First Avenue. A full landscape plan has been submitted which depicts an increase in landscape and a decrease in pavement.

Mr. Ginsburg commented that he appreciated the work that went into the revisions. The circulation flow works better than previous iterations. Regarding the building, the parking lot on the corner of First and Main makes for a lot of sense and gives visibility but the north façade of the building is blank side. The applicant is missing an opportunity to articulate the façade which would address the corner better.

Ms. Bourbonnais commented that the project has followed the standard process. For and administrative final, the plan goes back to full staff review. Staff is recommending that the administrative final be allowed.

Mr. Duarte commented that the Public Works Department is all set and recommended that the project move forward.

Mr. Murphy commented that he is okay with the project moving forward. He noted that in the staff report on the bottom of page 3 says “a signed plan will be approved by the HDC.” Ms. Bourbonnais replied that if the Planning Board grants administrative approval, any design changes would go back to the HDC for final approval the Planning Board would not see the application again.

Mr. Ginsburg asked about the traffic flow out of the drive thru. When going out of the drive thru, a driver must cross the land of the incoming land which looks backwards. He asked if there was any attention given to alternatives. Paul Bannon, the traffic engineer, was sworn and recognized as an expert. He commented that there is a single drive thru on the left hand side. There would not be queuing from 2nd Avenue and there is not an issue. 99% of the time there will only be one driver in the drive thru. Employees would park in the lots off of 2nd Ave and patrons will park near 1st Ave. There will probably be a stop line and stop sign exiting onto 2nd Ave. Ms. Bourbonnais commented that there can be a condition that there will be a stop bar and a stop sign on 2nd Ave.

Public Comment

Dennis Algier, the executive Vice President of the Washington Trust Company, thanked the Board and added that it is a pleasure to work with the Town of East Greenwich. The applicant will work with the Town during the entire construction.

Mr. Gomez asked Mr. Ginsburg to expand on the comment of the north façade. Mr. Ginsburg suggested that a lower roof or a dormer would break up the flat façade. He added that he would not dictate how the design works but the side could certainly be improved. Mr. Algier commented that the applicant would go back and work with the architect. He agreed that it is kind of bland and is cognizant that the corner is a gateway to the community.

Mr. Ginsburg made a motion to accept the draft motion as presented with the addition of a condition to add a stop sign and stop line onto 2nd Avenue. The motion was seconded by Mr. Pels and unanimously approved.

5. Reports

A) Recent Administrative Approval:

Record Plan of the so-called “affordable lot” associated with the Frenchtown Place Subdivision. The 11-Lot cluster subdivision received Final Plan approval by the Planning Board on May 2, 2018 and it represented the Town’s first major project to include an off-site affordable unit. The project was located at Assessor’s Map 29, Plat 18, Lot 60 and the affordable lot was nearby at Assessor’s Map 29, Plat 18, Lot 7. A plan was signed and recorded on May 4, 2020 memorializing the existence of a deed restricted 3-bedroom single family home at this location.

The next meeting will be June 3rd with one item on the agenda. There are a lot of applications that will potentially be heard but there might be a break until after July 4th.

Mr. Lupovitz made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Murphy.

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Aaron Lindo, Planning Technician.