

**MINUTES OF BUSINESS MEETING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
JANUARY 18, 2017**

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Eric Prause, Chair
Andy Kidd, Vice Chair
Jessica Scorso
Timothy Bergin

Alternate Member Sitting: Julian Stoppelman

Alternates: Patrick Kennedy
Teresa Ike

Absent: Michael Stebe, Secretary

Also Present: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning
Renata Bertotti, Senior Planner
Kyle Shiel, Senior Planner
Katie Williford, Administrative Secretary

Time Convened: 7:01 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS:

TOWN OF MANCHESTER – Pre-Application Review to discuss the proposed expansion and renovation of Verplanck Elementary School.

Mr. Randall Luther of TSKP Studio, the project architects, said the applicant would like the Planning and Zoning Commission's input on traffic circulation. The existing school, built in the 1950s, will be expanded as part of redistricting, with enrollment growing from 390 to 530 students. The 53,000 sq. ft. building will require 18,000 sq. ft. of new construction to accommodate the added enrollment, Mr. Luther said.

Mr. Luther said that parents currently park along Olcott Street and Trebbe Drive during dismissal due to insufficient onsite parking, which is a safety concern as students cross back and forth. The bus loop is currently shared with cars, which is also not optimal, he said. One area functions as parking, paved play, and a loading zone. A playscape on the site is shared with the adjacent park. From a security standpoint, play areas should be in a more secure, less exposed location, Mr. Luther said.

Mr. Luther said that three zones were proposed: one for the park area, one for the school, and a shared zone. The park is not used much by the school. There is currently no parking devoted to the park, so visitors either park on the street or in the school parking lot, and it makes sense to continue the idea of shared parking, Mr. Luther said. The area in back is protected by a grade change and fence, making it a very private location that would be ideal for a school play area.

The paved play area would overlap with the shared zone, Mr. Luther said. The bus loop would be expanded and separated from car traffic, which would be beneficial because the bus loop also

serves as emergency access. Dumpsters, shipping and receiving, and custodial services would also be moved out of prominent areas of the building, to an area in the back, he said. The intersection would be realigned and there would be a buffer between the park area and residential properties.

The area where the applicant needs direction from the Planning and Zoning Commission is the access to the site, Mr. Luther said. One access is proposed for buses, with a separate access for cars. A spur off of the bus loop is proposed for the service drive. A realigned entrance drive is proposed with parking, and there would be some additional parking. Projections suggest 170 parking spaces will be needed, he said.

A building addition in the front would create a new entrance both from the north and from the east side, Mr. Luther said. The primary addition would be a classroom addition in the back of the building, which would create an interior courtyard. In the back, there would be a large grassy play area, a kindergarten playscape, and a playscape for grades 2 through 4. A portion of the parking lot would be gated to be a paved play area during the day, but when there is increased need for parking during morning drop-off and afternoon pickup, the gates could be opened to provide additional parking.

There are currently two baseball fields; the larger field will be maintained and the smaller will be relocated, Mr. Luther said.

Mr. Luther said there was a concern about the potential for traffic to back up during dismissal time, when everyone would be leaving within a very small time window. For emergency access, he said, it would also be prudent to have a secondary access to the site. The applicant proposes a 2-way drive secondary entrance in the back, where there is currently a pedestrian walk. The school may decide to assign parents to either the north or south parking lot, so parents assigned to the north lot would come in from Olcott Street, and parents assigned to the south lot would come in at a separate entrance.

Mr. Tom Sheil of Milone and MacBroom, the landscape architect, discussed more details of the project. He said the site is generally open with selected large trees. The site drains in front toward Olcott Street and a large part drains back to the brook. The bus loop would have a tiered system of rain gardens to capture runoff. The new parking would have a new drainage system. Some trees would be maintained and some would be added along the parking lots. There would be sidewalks in the islands, around the parking lot, connecting to the building entrances, and to the back to the two play areas, he said. Fencing around the site will stay and the back play area will be completely fenced. Teacher parking will be in the back, and there will be an increase of 15 to 20 new teachers on top of the current 75, Mr. Sheil said.

Noah Yaskowitz, a traffic engineer from Milone and MacBroom, discussed the traffic study. A traffic count of the two main entrances and neighboring intersections was done, and the number of pickups and drop-offs on neighboring streets were also counted. The numbers were increased by the proposed expansion of 115 students, which equates to 40 morning drop-offs and 31 afternoon pickups, he said. The staff increase will be 5 new trips in morning and 10 new trips in the afternoon. The level of service would be B in the morning and C in the afternoon at the main school driveway. If all traffic is funneled out of the main drive, it would still operate at a level of service of C or better. No additional offsite improvements are needed, and the alignment of the school driveway across from Falknor Drive is a good improvement, Mr. Yaskowitz said. The intersection is an all-way stop and will continue to be. 170 parking spaces are proposed. Peak

usage is estimated at 90 parent vehicles and 72 staff at a time, so the proposed parking is adequate, he said.

Mr. Prause noted that, because this is a pre-application review, any recommendations made by the Commission are not binding and can be changed once more details are provided.

Ms. Bertotti asked whether the level of service at the driveway entrance would remain the same regardless of whether or not there is a second access drive. Mr. Luther clarified that the level of service would go from B to C if the second drive were not there, but that the level of service is still acceptable.

In response to questions from Mr. Stoppelman, Mr. Luther said that the additional students will be coming on buses or by car, but he did not know which direction they would be coming from. The construction on Verplanck School would take place after construction at Waddell is finished, he said. While Verplanck School is closed for construction, students may go to the Cheney-Bennet school, or possibly a different school, Mr. Luther said.

Mr. Stoppelman was concerned about siblings in different grades needing to go to different locations for pickup, and wondered how well this arrangement would work for the teachers monitoring dismissal. Mr. Luther said that, at Waddell School, the principal plans to make sure siblings are assigned to same lot. In terms of staffing, this is an easier situation because all students being picked up in one lot would exit through one door, and all students being picked up in the other lot would exit through another door, he said. The administration would be located to have a complete sight line of the parent pickup and drop-off on the entire site. Because circulation is simple, clear, and differentiated, it is more manageable than one large lot or having cars and buses mixed, and no one is crossing traffic in this scenario, Mr. Luther said.

Mr. Kidd said the design was very nice looking, but he thought parents would be more likely to queue rather than parking to pick up their children. Mr. Luther responded that, based on the analysis of what it would take to queue 70 to 80 cars, the site did not have enough space for that. A sufficient number of parking spaces would be provided for parents to park their cars, and all parking spaces would be immediately adjacent to sidewalks. For drop-offs, parents would most likely not park, he said, but there are loading zones around the center paved area where parents can pull up and drop their children off by the front door.

Mr. Kidd said cars may back up in the drop-off area, and parents who need to get to work may pull up parallel to other cars, creating a safety problem. Mr. Luther agreed and said the school would need to have staff there to prevent that.

Mr. Kidd asked if having traffic flow in one direction through the parking lot would be less confusing than having traffic going in two directions. Mr. Sheil of Milone and MacBroom said that this plan was designed to have parents park to drop off their children.

Mr. Kidd asked if the school administration was in support of this design. Mr. Luther said he had not talked to the principal yet about how he planned to manage this. He said that hurried parents are an important reason why a second way in and out of the parking lot is critical. There was some discussion about creating an access point through the back of the park instead, but that area serves as a buffer between the residential houses and the public park. Mr. Luther noted that, during the day, there would not be traffic at the rear exit.

Mr. Kidd said he would be more concerned about the proposal if there was not a plan to have the parents park and walk their children in. Mr. Luther said that, when the applicant comes before the Commission, they will have a firm understanding from the school administration of what their policy will be.

Ms. Scorso asked whether there would be any construction at the main entrance to update security measures. Mr. Luther said the current main entrance is far from the parking and not very visible, with poor sight lines to the main office. The new entrance doors would open in the morning for drop-off, then after 15 to 20 minutes, the doors would lock, he said. At another door, there would be access into a vestibule, where visitors would need to be buzzed in through the main office. The town has a group that established security measures for all the schools, and the state has adopted mandatory school security standards. The applicant has gone through that checklist and will meet with the Town security task force, Mr. Luther said.

Ms. Scorso asked for more information about walkways and how bikers would be able to leave the space safely. Mr. Sheil said walkers currently have a system coming in through a landscaped area with no road connection from the neighborhood to the southeast. That sidewalk system will be connected in with the other sidewalk systems. Walkers from Falknor Drive and neighborhoods to the north have a sidewalk system on both sides of Olcott Street, and there are crossing guards at the four-way stop intersection. For students biking to school, Mr. Sheil said the applicant could talk to the principal at Verplanck School to see what kind of activity they have for bikers, and bring that information when making their application to the Commission.

Ms. Scorso asked if the school, with the addition, would be filled to capacity. Mr. Luther replied that the design was for a maximum capacity of 580 students, with one room allocated as a swing classroom, and two special education classrooms that were upsized so they could be repurposed as full classrooms if needed.

Mr. Prause asked about the location of the gate in the south parking lot. Mr. Luther indicated the location on the plans. During the day, the gates would be closed to create a play area, then in the afternoon when everyone would need to park, those gates would be open for additional parking. Mr. Prause asked whether the gates would be open during non-school hours and Mr. Luther said that was an operational question. If additional fence were provided elsewhere, the gate could be left open on weekends so the community could access the paved play area to play basketball, etc., but he had not discussed that with the school administration yet.

Mr. Prause agreed with Mr. Kidd's and Ms. Scorso's concerns about the drop-off of students. In general, the practice has been to design more of a drop-off lane as opposed to designing parking spaces for everyone, Mr. Prause said. He asked what the expected capacity of the visitor lot during the day would be. Mr. Luther replied that there would be 60 visitor spaces in the front, and during the school day maybe a dozen of those spaces would be used. Mr. Prause suggested removing parking spaces on the west side of that visitor lot and turning that into a drop-off lane. Mr. Luther said that if cars queued, they would back up onto the street, but he would discuss this idea with the school administration. Mr. Luther said the model planned for Waddell School is the safest model, which is that parents have to park their cars and walk their children to the door.

Mr. Kennedy asked if the southern driveway would be exit only. Mr. Luther said a two-way driveway would give the most flexibility, but if that were undesirable, having a one-way out would still solve the problem of large numbers of cars exiting at once. If having a one-way out is undesirable, then that driveway could be an emergency vehicle only access, he said. Mr.

Kennedy thought the school should have an exit at the southern driveway because of the large number of cars that would be trying to enter and exit at the same time from the north. He was wary of making it a two-way because it could become jammed, he said.

Mr. Bergin asked if the onsite parking would be sufficient for events, or if there would be overflow parking on Thompson Road. Mr. Luther said there would be occasional events where the parking lot would be at or over capacity, but because there is more parking than would normally be provided, this lot would be better situated to deal with events than other current elementary schools.

Mr. Bergin asked for clarification of how the number of parking spaces was determined. Mr. Yaskowitz said the parking was designed for peak hour and was calculated based on the total number of existing parkers, inflated for the inflation of enrollment. Mr. Bergin asked how the 160 number was arrived at, noting that the existing trips table listed 135 for the peak, without the increase in enrollment, and there would also be parking for 90 staff members. Mr. Yaskowitz said the 135 number is trips, not parking. Mr. Bergin pointed out that the traffic study differentiated between cars going in and out vs. cars stopping in the parking lot, but if everyone were to park, a higher number of cars would be there.

Mr. Bergin asked if the natural buffer in the back would be sufficient to prevent the residents to the south from being disturbed by noise from the play area. Mr. Luther responded that there is a substantial distance between the play area and the residences to the south. Mr. Sheil said the area is wooded and fenced, so he did not think students could get there. As far as noise, the neighbors could probably hear the children on the playscape currently, he said. Mr. Bergin noted that Verplanck Trail is nearby and there should be a balance between being able to use the trail and not having children go down the trail.

Mr. Kidd noted that the number of people parking would be different in the morning and afternoon, and Mr. Luther replied that they would consider that. Mr. Kidd said that having a drop-off area is efficient, but would require space to queue enough cars. If he had to choose one option, Mr. Kidd said, he would choose having parents park, if it could truly be enforced. However, that would still mean having more people walking across the parking lots. He asked for more information on how this design is working at Waddell School. Mr. Luther replied that Waddell is not under construction yet. Mr. Kidd asked if there are other schools in other municipalities doing this. Mr. Luther said they could look into it. Mr. Sheil said that, for elementary schools, parking and walking in is more common as opposed to middle school or older, where queues are more common.

EVERGREEN CROSSING, LLC –To add one additional multifamily building with 26 units at 317 New State Road. – PRD Zone Change and Combined Preliminary and Detailed Plan of Development (2016-139) – Request for extension until February 1, 2017; Inland Wetlands Permit – Determination of Significance (2016-140) – Request for extension until February 1, 2017; Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan (2016-141) – Request for extension until February 1, 2017

Ms. Bertotti said the applicant had requested an extension to the February 1, 2017 meeting in order for staff to be able to review the revised plans.

MOTION: Mr. Stoppelman moved to consent to the extension of time until February 1, 2017 for the PRD Zone Change and Combined Preliminary and Detailed Plan of

Development, the Inland Wetlands Permit – Determination of Significance, and the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan. Mr. Bergin seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:

Bill O'Neill – Lot Line Revision (2016-004) - 525, 533R, and 543 Gardner Street

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

November 21, 2016 –Public Hearing/Business Meeting/Workshop

MOTION: Mr. Stoppelman moved to approve the November 21, 2016 Public Hearing, Business Meeting, and Workshop minutes as written. Ms. Scorso seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

January 4, 2017 – Public Hearing/Business Meeting

MOTION: Mr. Stoppelman moved to approve the January 4, 2017 Public Hearing and Business Meeting minutes as written. Ms. Scorso seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

RECEIPT OF NEW APPLICATIONS:

1. **JOSEPH D'ASCOLI (MANCHESTER HOUSING AUTHORITY) – Special Exception Modification (2017-005)** – Request a special exception modification for a photo voltaic solar array at 11 Bluefield Drive, Residence A zone.
2. **JONATHAN C. KEANE – Inland Wetlands Permit (2017-006)** – For construction of a single family house within the 100' upland review area at 4 Fir Grove Road, Rural Residence zone.
3. **ALEX AND ROSHAN PATEL – Zoning Regulation Amendment (2017-007)** – To revise Art. I, Sec. 2.01 to add definitions for "go-kart" and "go-kart track", and to revise Art. II, Sec. 24.02.01 to add outdoor go-kart tracks as a special exception use in the General Business zone.

The Chairman closed the business meeting at 8:23 p.m.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

February 1, 2017
Date

Eric Prause, Chairman

NOTICE: A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THIS BUSINESS MEETING CAN BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.