

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING  
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2021**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

In Person: Eric Prause, Chairman  
Patrick Kennedy, Vice Chairman  
Electronically: Michael Stebe, Secretary  
Jessica Poland

**ALTERNATES SITTING:**

Electronically: Bonnie Potocki

**ALTERNATES PRESENT:**

In Person: Julian Stoppelman  
Electronically: Teresa Ike

**ALSO PRESENT:**

In Person: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning  
Megan Pilla, Senior Planner  
Electronically: David Laiuppa, Environmental Planner/Wetlands Agent  
Nancy Martel, Recording Secretary

The Chairman opened the public hearing at 7:00 P.M. The Secretary read the legal notice when the call was made.

TOWN OF MANCHESTER – For proposed activity including building additions, redesign of the parking lot and bus loop, and associated site improvements at Bowers Elementary School at 141 Princeton Street. – Special Exception Modification (2021-058); Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan (2021-059)

Mr. Randall Luther, TSKP Studio, introduced himself. Mr. Luther explained that the Bowers project is a continuation of the SMARTR upgrade to all the elementary schools in town. SMARTR 1 was the Cheney project, then Waddell and Verplanck. Phase 2 of SMARTR is Buckley, Bowers and eventually the Keeney project. The goal is to bring these facilities into compliance with current specifications.

Mr. Luther displayed the site plan and reported the difficulties with parental parking on Princeton Street and Henry Street during drop-off and pick-up. The parking lot to the south is always full, and he noted that the school was designed when all children walked to school. He explained that the original entrance faces Princeton Street, and that was the entrance used when it was a pedestrian-oriented building. There is now an entrance on the north side, off the parking lot, and most visitors enter there, causing a security problem since the main office is a floor up.

According to Mr. Luther, education specifications for the project are fairly modest in terms of changes. Enrollment will stay the same, but to accommodate additional teaching spaces, a STEM room, a project room, an additional music room, a larger art room and special education spaces, there will be an additional 9,000-10,000 sq. ft. added to the building's footprint.

Mr. Luther showed a plan depicting the current circulation and its difficulties. As the school's address is Princeton Street, the challenge is that there is no parking there. In the new plan, there will be visitor parking and the bus loop. Included in the plan is the preservation of as many trees as possible. They have estimated the need for 150 parking spaces on the site to accommodate all the parents during on-site pickup, which will be in the back of the school. Mr. Luther explained that the current parking area will be transformed into a green educational space, which will also improve the appearance for the neighbors. Two play areas, one for younger students and one for older students, will be added.

Mr. Luther presented and detailed the areas of expansion. The addition facing Princeton Street is to allow an expansion of the administrative area adjacent to the main entrance. A larger addition to the north will accommodate the music room, the art room and the STEM rooms. All windows will be replaced, according to Mr. Luther, but generally speaking, the building will remain the same exteriorly. After looking at the homes in the area, a gabled entrance with a shed dormer was designed in order to work with the neighborhood.

Mr. Luther reported that, on the east side with the large parking area, they are proposing a gabled canopy over the doors to mimic the west entrance. At the courtyard on the north side, there will be a two-story addition, the center of which will be a breakout indoor-outdoor space with a glass canopy for students to go into the secure courtyard. To the right is the cafeteria with doors to the courtyard as well, which would enable outdoor dining. The gables will be copper for a traditional, natural appearance.

Mr. Van Hopson, Civil Engineer with SLR, noted that traffic is chaotic and dysfunctional in current conditions. Mr. Hopson went through the details of the parking area, including the loading area and service area. During pick-up and drop-off times on Henry Street, it is one-way circulation, which will be changed after the completion of the project. He noted that the bus loop has been lengthened and parking spaces have been added. The circulation has been reviewed by the Eighth Utilities Fire District staff, who were satisfied with the plan.

The mature trees are very important in the plan, stated Mr. Hopson, and they have been very conscious of maintaining many. In addition, they will be supplementing Princeton Street with shade trees, which will be red oaks. He detailed the various trees which will be added to the property. The existing playground will be maintained, though the basketball court will be relocated. According to Mr. Hopson, the bike racks will be relocated.

Mr. Hopson displayed the utilities plan and detailed the storm water management design. The erosion and sedimentation controls are also designed in accordance with the Connecticut 2002 Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Controls as well as the guidance in the Town of Manchester Public Improvement Standards. The school will also be served by a geothermal well field.

The zoning data table shows general compliance with the standards in the Residence A zone for a school use, according to Mr. Hopson. The proposal also complies with all the criteria set forth in Art. IV, Sec. 20 for a special exception for this particular use in the zone as a suitable location for use.

Mr. Luther reiterated that the school will be a net zero school, and he noted that Buckley School will be the first net zero school in Connecticut.

Mr. Stebe pointed out that the landscaping around the new parking by the ballfield is a massive double slope. He asked how the elevation change will be made to accommodate the parking lot. Mr. Stebe also noticed that the service delivery is currently at the east wing and questioned how that will be accomplished.

Mr. Hopson gave a detailed explanation of how the grading will be accomplished as well as the plan for the service delivery area.

Ms. Potocki questioned how they arrived at the 150 parking spaces, based on enrollment and faculty.

Mr. Luther reported that the enrollment is approximately 370. Based on the numbers generated from the other schools, they generated the projected parking requirements.

Ms. Potocki inquired about the net increase in storm water and noted the increase in underground detention. She stated that there is an initiative in town to include school gardens, and she questioned whether low-impact above-ground techniques were considered, and if so, why they were not included in the design. She also asked whether above-ground planters such as raised beds were considered.

Mr. Hopson explained that they always try to incorporate as many low-impact design techniques as possible. With the amount of play area, the geothermal well field, the parking, the necessary concrete sidewalks, and the baseball fields, there is really no room left for surface detention. It is ideal to utilize the underground, and they are providing two treatment practices for storm water quality, both flow and volume. Mr. Hopson acknowledged that there will be some depression areas that will inherently retain some water but it was not included in the overall analysis.

Ms. Potocki questioned whether the walkways will be permeable concrete, and asked whether the concrete will be permeable.

Mr. Hopson confirmed that the walkways are not permeable, for the same reason that they did not use bioretention or rain gardens.

Mr. Hopson went on to display the traffic report and explained the calculations in the plan. He noted that they expect enrollment to be approximately 375 students with a peak number of vehicles at 60-75 parent vehicles in the parking lot with 60-65 staff in the lot. However, the times will not coincide, and based on their experience with other schools renovated in

Manchester, that number would be adequate. After questioning by Ms. Potocki, Mr. Hopson stated that the peak hours would be 8:45 to 9:15 A.M., and 3:00 to 3:45 P.M.

Ms. Potocki suggested run-off planters for the possibility of raised bed gardens. She questioned whether Staff reviewed the tree selections, and Mr. Hopson stated that he did not receive any comments on those selections.

Mr. Stoppelman questioned where the solar panels will be installed, to which Mr. Luther replied that they would be on the roof. He also asked for clarification of the pick-up area as well as the level of the administrative offices in relation to the main entrance. Mr. Luther explained that area and responded to Mr. Stoppelman's other concerns.

Ms. Potocki questioned whether a lighting plan was reviewed showing no trespass, and Mr. Luther assured her that it has been reviewed by Staff. A conversation ensued between Ms. Potocki and Mr. Luther regarding snow removal.

Ms. Pilla reported that there were no Staff comments regarding the light or snow removal plans, as they were satisfactory to the Engineering Division.

Mr. Prause asked for clarification on the elevations, as he believes they were mislabeled. Mr. Luther acknowledged that fact and clarified the elevations. Mr. Prause and Mr. Luther discussed the elevations in regard to the expansions as well as the exterior colors. Mr. Prause concluded that the expansions will not have a brick look to them, but rather a copper look to them, which Mr. Luther confirmed. Mr. Prause noted that the entrance appears taller than the rest of the neighborhood, and questioned whether it will blend in well.

Mr. Luther reported that it will be taller than the rest of the neighborhood but he feels it is appropriate. The houses are approximately 2,500-3,000 sq. ft., and the school is 65,000 sq. ft. A residential scale entrance would appear odd on a building of this size. In his opinion, it is an important building which should stand out as an important building. He added that he was careful to choose a form that he thought would echo the surrounding community.

Mr. Stebe inquired whether the school will be temperature controlled, which Mr. Luther confirmed. Mr. Stebe further asked whether the pathway and steps that lead off the campus to Buckingham Street were part of the scope of this project.

Mr. Luther stated that they are aware of that path. He reported that he has not looked at those steps to see if they need repair. He noted that, if they do, they would probably take care of it because they are encouraging pedestrian access to the school.

Mr. Hopson added that the "Safe Route to School Study" done in either 2006 or 2016 did not mention any walking from Buckingham Street. However, that does not mean improvements to that access should not be considered.

Ms. Potocki commented about heat stress and climate change and questioned whether the play area surfaces will have any shade available.

Mr. Luther responded that there are two play areas, which he detailed. He reported that there are some existing trees to the south of the building which will remain and provide a fair amount of shade for the younger children's play area. However, there is not as much for the older children's, though it is close to the tree line. There has not been any other planting there, as it is close to the property line with utilities running through.

Ms. Potocki questioned the surface for the older children's play area. Mr. Luther responded that it will be basically wood chips and above it will be the hardscape which will accommodate ball sports.

Ms. Pilla reported that the applicant provided revised plans in response to comments after the initial review. The revised plans are still being reviewed, particularly by the Engineering Division, to ensure all their comments were addressed. For that reason, and because there is testing scheduled this week by the Water Department of the existing infrastructure, Staff recommends the Commission leave the public hearing open to allow more time for that review to be thoroughly completed. In response to Ms. Potocki's question earlier, Ms. Pilla stated, the Environmental Planner, Mr. Laiuppa, did review the plans and looked at the tree selection and has no concerns with the tree selection.

Mr. Laiuppa commented that his first concern is if there are any invasive species on the invasive species list or the watch list. There were none in this case. He also looks at compatibility with existing trees and the general landscape; the trees being proposed are compliant and compatible with what is existing and what would typically be planted in this situation.

Mr. Charles Wickman, 127 Princeton Street, next to the school, introduced himself. In his opinion, the plans are well designed. As an aside, last year he served on the Sustainability Commission for the Town of Manchester, which received a bronze certification for sustainable resources. Mr. Wickman believes the net zero aspect of the school is important. Because of the revamped parking, he questioned whether that means there will no longer be parents parking on Princeton Street. He explained that his driveway is frequently blocked and he hopes the additional parking spaces will remedy that situation.

Mr. Wickman noted that the front of the school will be the bus route along with a few parking spots. It appears that the bus route entering that parking lot is adjacent to his property line. He questioned whether that will impede the bus drivers turning in. Additionally, Mr. Wickman asked whether the drainage will have any impact on his property.

Mr. Prause stated that he received a text message from a resident asking about the public hearing, who then sent the Chairman questions about the application.

- She was concerned about a tree that is close to Henry Street that may have historical significance. Mr. Prause said the applicant discussed a tree, though he was unsure if that was the same one.
- She asked if there are accommodations for any unisex bathrooms, if, as a Town, Manchester is looking to provide generalized bathrooms as opposed to bathrooms by gender.

Mr. Luther addressed the parking on Princeton Street and stated that there are no guarantees, but one of the important goals for the project is to eliminate the need for parking on Princeton Street. He stated that there will be adequate parking on site to eliminate the need. He said that they have also provided a fence along Princeton Street to discourage people from parking at that location. There may be the need for training at the beginning of the school year, but once people get in the habit, there will not be people parking along Princeton Street. As far as the buses, SLR has run the turning radii and the curves for school buses and it is adequate.

Regarding unisex bathrooms, the educational specification given to them by the Board of Education does not specifically call for a unisex bathroom. However, there are several single occupant toilet facilities called for as part of the program, any one of which could serve as a unisex facility. Mr. Luther noted that many of the bathrooms ultimately become unisex because it is convenient and they are not heavily used. There are no multi-fixture unisex facilities planned, nor could they be easily accommodated in the current plan, according to Mr. Luther.

Mr. Scott addressed the comment about water runoff. In general, the site is sloping but the drive is curved and there are storm structures to route the water. Additionally, the trees along Henry Street are a cluster at the corner and a lovely specimen tree adjacent to the play facility. All of those trees are to remain.

Ms. Potocki stated that the Commission needs to establish whether the lighting is dark sky compliant with no light trespass to the neighborhood. She added that the applicant's engineers must review a snow removal plan. Ms. Potocki suggested the school consider raised bed gardening utilizing rain water.

Ms. Pilla stated that her understanding regarding the Water Department is that, during the construction at Buckley, there have been some issues that need to be tested.

**MOTION:** Mr. Kennedy moved to continue the public hearing to September 20, 2021. Ms. Poland seconded the motion and all members voted to continue the public hearing.

TOWN OF MANCHESTER PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION – Amendment of Art. IV, Sec. 9 regarding parking surfacing. – Zoning Regulation Amendment (2021-061)

Ms. Pilla reviewed the current requirement for parking area surfacing, which shall be constructed of bituminous or masonry concrete. The regulations do not allow for any alternative materials.

Ms. Pilla stated that the intent of the proposed regulation amendment is to allow for greater flexibility in the selection of pavement materials for parking areas, specifically to allow and encourage the use of permeable surfaces that promote direct infiltration of storm water and reduce runoff. This is a low-impact development technique which the Planning Department encourages in the recently-adopted low-impact development standards and this would be a good

step toward accomplishing that goal. The plan is consistent with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development.

Ms. Pilla read an excerpt from the Summary Matrix of the 2020 Plan: "Reduce impervious surfaces and treat and control storm water through low-impact alternatives to traditional control and treatment, and also revising the Public Improvement Standards and reducing minimum surface parking requirements." The Public Improvement Standards were revised last year and this regulation amendment is intended to work towards the reduction of impervious surfaces and minimize the addition of new impervious surfaces, where appropriate.

According to Ms. Pilla, the proposal is to add text to Art. IV, Sec. 9.02.01, which is the section that currently explains that parking areas must be constructed of bituminous or masonry concrete. The Planning Department seeks to add to that alternative surfacing materials which are permitted, including but not limited to paving units, pervious concrete (either bituminous or masonry), clean asphalt millings, pervious pavers and interlocking grid systems, examples of which Ms. Pilla displayed and detailed. She stated that the proposed review process of the requests would have the developer, contractor, or property owner apply for approval to ensure it is used in an appropriate location.

Ms. Pilla reported that, in considering the best approach, it was not felt that a special exception was appropriate because, in cases where that is the only item for special exception, it seemed excessive to require them to come before the Commission. What seems to be the best approach, according to Ms. Pilla, is a process similar to the current management of lot line revisions, which is an administrative approval, still reviewed by Staff. Particularly in this case, Planning would want Engineering Staff and the Environmental Planner to review, and if it is deemed appropriate, it would be approved by the Director of Planning or his or her designee. There is also a short list of criteria to ensure that the pavement materials are used in appropriate locations, which Ms. Pilla summarized:

- a. All ADA requirements for accessible parking must be met.
- b. No pervious pavements are to be located within a designated aquifer protection area, in accordance with the aquifer protection area regulations from the State.
- c. Any pervious paving systems must be designed in accordance with the low-impact development guidelines, adopted last year.
- d. A standard impervious material, i.e., asphalt or concrete, must be used at the driveway aprons within the Town right-of-way or Town easements, and for a minimum of 20 ft. from the roadway. The intention is to prevent any transfer of loose material.
- e. The parking surfaces shall be maintained so the pervious material does not constitute a nuisance by virtue of its appearance or condition. Basically, there should not be loose material leaving the site, or water ponding if the pervious material is not maintained properly and gets clogged.
- f. Parking spaces constructed of pervious material that are routinely used by customers or visitors to a site must include delineation of the individual spaces, the same way bituminous pavement is striped. Areas that are intended to be used only by the property owner or for overflow parking which is beyond minimum parking requirements can be constructed without such delineation.

- g. All selected materials must comply with the drainage requirements of the Town of Manchester Public Improvement Standards.
- h. In areas where pervious material is proposed, the receiving area must be adequate to accept the projected volume of storm water that is designed to permeate the surface. Ms. Pilla remarked that the proposed regulation would require the applicant to provide one or more of the following items to make sure the ground is capable of taking on the storm water:
  - 1. Detailed mapping of the soil drainage classifications based on recent field studies (not historic soil mapping); or
  - 2. A percolation test to adequately map the hydraulic capacity of on-site soils; or
  - 3. Piezometer testing to adequately map the depth to groundwater on site.

Regarding item G, Ms. Potocki asked about the status of updating the Public Improvement Standards, to be done by Engineering as part of the Plan of Conservation and Development. She speculated on whether it has been updated to include low-impact development.

Ms. Pilla reported that it has been updated. However, there is the supplemental information from the Low-Impact Development Guidelines, which is separate.

Mr. Stebe remarked that, because this is in general regulations, this change affects all properties in town. He speculated whether, as a homeowner with a 20 ft. length untouchable between the road and where he can start, it effectively cuts out the ability of any homeowner in the vast majority of sections of town to do anything on the front end of their house as a result.

Ms. Pilla confirmed that is true. Depending on the property, generally the first 8 to 10 ft. is within the Town right-of-way and that is included in that 20 ft., so that includes the driveway apron and the public right-of-way. She agreed that, in many cases, that would be close to the front of the house. In consultation with Engineering, she stated, they did not want to risk the transfer of any loose material, especially if it were to get into the storm drain system, or the interruption of shoveling or plowing of snow.

Mr. Stebe reiterated that the existing properties with gravel or a non-paved driveway are not affected; i.e., they are able to retain the current make-up of their driveway. Ms. Pilla agreed. Mr. Stebe inquired whether the Broad Street developers would be able to petition to have this applied to their applications. He recalled that it was a discussion in Phase 1, and Ms. Pilla agreed that they could make that change in their detailed plans.

Mr. Prause praised the work on the regulations and questioned whether they were taken from any model recommendations regarding pervious surfaces.

Ms. Pilla responded that they were not. They did research to find some model regulations and there are not any. In fact, no municipality in Connecticut has any specific regulations regarding pervious pavements.



Mr. Prause contemplated the last section referring to “demonstrating capacity.” He asked if those were methods that Staff found somewhere about the right ways to demonstrate the capacity.

Mr. Laiuppa stated that those arose in discussions he had with DEEP regarding the drainage classifications for disturbed soil. DEEP recommended those techniques for helping to define drainage classifications.

Mr. Prause questioned whether those are based on a certain time of year. He wondered how that result could always be the same when testing in certain conditions.

Mr. Laiuppa explained that, when defining soil, there are certain standards for demarcation of different soil types. Typically, when delineating different soil types, it is a wide variety that should carry through different seasons or years; i.e., soil colors, soil texture and soil structure, which will not change year to year. The percolation test and piezometer test have the potential to change year by year, according to Mr. Laiuppa, but percolation tests conducted for a septic system are always conducted in the same way. The soil is saturated first, then water added to it to check the extra capacity. He stated that these should be done in the growing season to avoid frozen ground conditions or inactivity of microorganisms. In his opinion, piezometer testing has the most potential to change.

Mr. Prause assumed that the applicant would perform the tests and submit them as part of a package, and then the Staff would review them to ensure they are correct. Ms. Pilla agreed.

Mr. Laiuppa stated that the detailed mapping of soil drainage classifications is not more to ask of an applicant than having a wetland delineation done.

Ms. Potocki expanded upon Mr. Laiuppa’s information. Referring to “H,” she said she has typically seen a list of how to demonstrate, particularly in municipalities that have lot coverage. If they exceed lot coverage and they need infiltration in order to have no net storm water leaving the site, they need onsite infiltration with low-impact techniques.

There were no members of the public requesting to speak.

**MOTION:** Mr. Kennedy moved to close the public hearing. Ms. Poland seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The public hearing was closed at 8:50 P.M.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

September 20, 2021  
Date

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Eric Prause, Chairman

**NOTICE: A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THIS PUBLIC HEARING CAN BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.**