

**MINUTES OF BUSINESS MEETING
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 20, 2021**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

ALTERNATES SITTING:

Electronically: Bonnie Potocki (for 2021-058, 059)
Teresa Ike (for all other applications)

ALTERNATES PRESENT:

In Person: Julian Stoppelman

ALSO PRESENT:

In Person: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning
Megan Pilla, Senior Planner
Electronically: Nancy Martel, Recording Secretary

The Chairman opened the Business Meeting at 10:05 PM.

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)

Special Exception Modification (2021-058)

MOTION: Mr. Kennedy moved to approve the special exception modification under Article II, Section 4.02.02 for renovations to Bowers Elementary School, including building additions, redesign of the parking lot and bus loop, and associated site improvements at 141 Princeton Street. Ms. Poland seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Mr. Prause praised the expansion plan and commented about the geothermal energy and traffic difficulty reduction. He noticed that in reviewing the other school renovations, the emphasis has

been on safety for pickup and dropoff. It is a tough trade-off in this situation because much of the open space is an asset, but we have to balance the current traffic issues. He noted there are other places in town where people can go for recreation.

Mr. Stebe stated that in reality, the Board of Education, in setting up the request for submissions and contracts, laid out their requirement for a redesigned pickup/dropoff area. As a Commission, we need to push back and work to maintain as much of the open space as possible for the kids to run. He agreed that the renovation is absolutely necessary as it is not ADA compliant and will have more space for classrooms.

Ms. Potocki acknowledged the effort put forth prior to the Commission seeing the application, which the members were not party to. She felt the members were not involved in the planning process, and she feels a sense of injustice.

Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan (2021-059)

MOTION: Mr. Kennedy moved to certify the erosion and sedimentation control plan for renovations to Bowers Elementary School, including building additions, redesign of the parking lot and bus loop, and associated site improvements at 141 Princeton Street. Ms. Poland seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

PAREDIM ACQUISITION LLC – For conversion of a hotel to a multi-family market-rate rental development at 191 Spencer Street. – Special Exception (2021-064)

Special Exception (2021-064)

MOTION: Mr. Kennedy moved to approve the special exception under Article II, Section 24.02.01(m) for conversion of a hotel to a multi-family residential development at 191 Spencer Street, with the modifications as specified in memoranda from:

1. John DiBiasi, Assistant Town Engineer, dated August 31, 2021, Items #2-10 and #11(b)-15.

and with a waiver for landscaping based on Article II, Section 9.14.05(c) (10)(b). Ms. Poland seconded the motion.

Mr. Stebe, referring to the landscape waiver, noted that the applicant mentioned repairs to the fence on the eastern side in between their property and the abutting apartments. He questioned whether that should be added because that will be directly next to the neighboring property.

MOTION: Mr. Stebe moved to amend the motion to add the condition that the applicant repair the eastern fence line, including slats, to act as screening from the adjacent property. Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion and all members voted in favor of the amended motion.

The reason for the approval is that the proposed activity meets the special exception criteria in Article IV, Section 20 and the specific criteria in Article II, Section 9.14.05.

Mr. Prause thought the plan to convert a hotel into housing in town is great and will add affordable housing. It is not a new development so will not add a traffic burden. He appreciated the amenities they will put into the property.

80 OAKLAND STREET LLC – For a modification of special exception 2019-051 approved on July 15, 2019 to reconfigure the employee parking for 80 Oakland Street and associated landscaping, lighting, and storm water facilities to preserve the house at 25 Edward Street for reuse as office space at 86 Oakland Street and 11 & 25 Edward Street.

Attorney Greg McCracken, Jacobs, Walker, Rice and Barry, introduced himself. He recapped the highlights of the February pre-application meeting. The above-referenced properties are all part of the Manchester Mazda dealership. He reminded the Commission that the original plan called for the house at 25 Edward Street to be demolished. In 2019, according to Attorney McCracken, no one knew that the house was part of the Union Village Historic District, which was listed on the National Register in 2002. There was no land record that would have alerted anyone to that status, though it is required by statute.

Attorney McCracken reported that 80 Oakland Street took ownership of the dealership, including those parcels, after the approval of the special exception. After taking ownership, to implement the special exception, the applicant applied for a demolition permit in August, 2021. As required by Town ordinance, Greg Smith, Chief Building Inspector published notice twice in the Journal Inquirer. At that time, the applicant and the Town received objections to the demolition which, by ordinance, would delay the issuance of the permit for 90 days. That began a process where the applicant approached the objectors to see if there was a way to remedy the situation. Apparently, there was a petition that made it to SHPO, and they considered the degree of interest and invoked the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) which allows anyone to sue to prevent the unreasonable destruction of historical structures and landmarks. SHPO made it very clear that this would be an unreasonable destruction and they believed there were feasible and prudent alternatives to the demolition of the house.

The demolition permit was extended a couple of times, stated Attorney McCracken, and the applicant tried to work this through and eventually received a meeting date before the Historic Preservation Commission. It became clear that SHPO and the HPC would get the Attorney General involved to save the house. At that time, it made more sense to try to come up with a workable alternative. They worked with SHPO and Crosskey Architects to produce a reconfiguration of the special exception to save the house but provide the necessary parking that Manchester Mazda needs to function.

Attorney McCracken stated that the dealership has continued to grow so the employee parking spaces are quite necessary. The new reconfigured plan calls for 32 spaces, 2 curb cuts which includes a handicapped space, and storm water management facilities that were shifted a small amount. The parking lot is buffered, the lighting is designed to avoid light trespass, and the front of the house will preserve the streetscape and retain a residential character.

Attorney McCracken reported that Todd Levine, SHPO, submitted a letter in support of the application, which was submitted with the application.

Mr. Eric Peterson presented the plan that was approved in 2019 by this Commission. Mr. Peterson went through the details of the prior approval. The current proposal depicts the house at 25 Edward Street which will be used as future office space. He discussed how they reconfigured the parking, saved the house, and lose only two spaces. Mr. Peterson went through and detailed the proposal and the traffic impact on the roadway network. He further explained the drainage system for the project as well as the erosion controls.

The parking lots will be illuminated with four pedestrian-style lights mounted on a 10 ft. pole, stated Mr. Peterson. The poles were chosen to illuminate the parking closer to Edward Street, keeping it relatively dim toward the back, and will include a wireless sensor which will reduce the light to 30% of its regular levels when it senses there is nothing in the parking lots. A lighting consultant ran the calculations and there will be no light spillage beyond the parking lots.

Mr. Peterson reported the landscaping will remain similar to the previously-approved plan. There will be decorative plantings along Edward Street, and between the parking areas flowering pears, hydrangea, gold cone junipers, grasses and day lilies at the curb cuts. Rather than the single row of arborvitaes in the previous plan, it has been switched to a double row of staggered red cedar which is also an evergreen and will create a thick, full screen. The Town Engineering Division provided a review of the design, stated Mr. Peterson, which resulted in 10 comments, all of which request labeling and additional construction details which are very minor in nature and they will be addressed on the final plans

Mr. Stebe questioned whether the parking for 25 Edward Street will be incorporated in the employee parking area.

Mr. Peterson replied that the total number of parking spaces is for (1) the house and (2) the employees.

Mr. Stebe inquired whether the house will be used as part of the administrative offices for the dealership or will it be rented out. He further questioned whether there are conditions from the State agencies to maintain the building.

Mr. Peterson stated that the intention of 80 Oakland is to create a first floor office with the second floor storage. He added that it could be for the dealer or it might be rented. It is a use that is permitted in the zoning district. The rehabilitation must be true to the original form, and the exterior is more significant than the interior which has been vandalized. Mr. Peterson added that they will hash it out with SHPO.

Mr. Jonathan Larabee confirmed that the house is in need of quite a bit of repair and has substantial vandalism inside.

Mr. Prause pointed to an area on the presentation and questioned what trees the applicant is proposing there.

Mr. Peterson replied they will be red cedar, a tall evergreen.

Ms. Pilla responded that there are just a handful of minor technical comments from the Engineering Division. There were no further comments from Staff review. Ms. Pilla reported that Staff looked back at the minutes of the meeting for the previous approval to ensure all the comments have been addressed as a result of that public hearing, as well as the zone change meeting for the parcel.

Mr. Prause confirmed that the plan did not need a full public hearing, but just a special exception modification which Ms. Pilla confirmed. The neighbors' concerns were captured in this plan.

Special Exception Modification (2021-063)

MOTION: Mr. Kennedy moved to approve the special exception modification under Article II, Section 24.02.01(h) to reconfigure the employee parking for 80 Oakland Street and associated landscaping, lighting, and storm water facilities to preserve the house at 25 Edward Street for reuse as office space at 86 Oakland Street and 11 & 25 Edward Street, with the modifications as specified in memoranda from:

- John DiBiasi, Assistant Town Engineer, dated August 20, 2021.

Ms. Ike seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The reason for the approval is that the proposed activity meets the special exception criteria in Article IV, Section 20.

Mr. Prause stated that he is impressed that the applicant has worked with SHPO to ensure the asset is maintained. It has been a difficult task, but he praised the parties for coming to a resolution on the best path forward.

VOTE TO STAY PAST 11 PM

MOTION: Mr. Kennedy moved to continue the meeting beyond 11 PM. Mr. Stebe seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Administrative Approvals

- Frank Strano – Lot Line Revision (2021-062) – 16 and 26 Stephanie’s Way

Ms. Pilla brought up a reschedule date for the workshop regarding recreational cannabis and the recent State legislation. Our next meeting is October 4th, and as of this time, there is not a heavy schedule.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 1, 2021 – Public Hearing/Business Meeting

MOTION: Mr. Kennedy moved to approve the minutes as written. Ms. Poland seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

RECEIPT OF NEW APPLICATIONS

There were no new applications.

MOTION: Mr. Kennedy moved to close the business meeting. Ms. Poland seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The Business Meeting was closed at 11:00 PM.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

October 04, 2021
Date

Eric Prause, Chairman

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