



City of Lowell - Planning Board

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 17, 2021 6:30 p.m.

Conducted via Zoom

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For a recording of the meeting, visit www.ltc.org

Members Present

Thomas Linnehan, Chairman
Gerard Frechette, Vice Chairman
Richard Lockhart, Member
Robert Malavich, Member
Caleb Cheng, Member

Members Absent

Russell Pandres, Associate Member
Sinead Gallivan, Associate Member

Others Present

Dylan Ricker, Assistant Planner
Peter Cutrumbes, Assistant Planner

A quorum of the Board was present. Chairman Linnehan called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

I. Minutes for Approval

April 22, 2021 Minutes

R. Malavich motioned, and C. Cheng seconded the motion to approve the April 22, 2021 Minutes. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

II. Continued Business

Special Permit and Site Plan Review: 60 Fletcher Street 01854

Kazanjian Enterprises has applied for Site Plan Review and Special Permit approval to rehabilitate the existing structure at 60 Fletcher St. and convert it into a bank and office building. The property is in the Urban Neighborhood Mixed-Use (UMU) zoning district and the Downtown Lowell Historic District. The conversion requires Site Plan Review approval per Section 11.4 to modify a parking lot with more than fourteen (14) parking spaces, and Special Permit approval per Section 12.4.g(2) for the proposed drive-through teller.

On Behalf:

Ken Cram, Applicant's Transportation Engineer

K. Cram stated he is from Bayside Engineering and completed the traffic study following state guidelines, and taking into account changes in traffic due to Covid, as well as the Lord Overpass construction. K. Cram said that they estimate 84 trips in morning peak hours, and 104 trips during evening peak hours, the previous use was a hardware store with an estimated 33 trips in morning peak hours and 75 trips during afternoon peak hours. K. Cram stated there is a queue which builds up on Dutton Street as it approaches Fletcher Street during peak hours. The bank has agreed to restrict all exiting traffic from the bank to turn right into the parking lot and exit at the west driveway. K. Cram stated that vehicles parked in the small parking area at the bottom of the plan would have to drive through the lot and exit at the west driveway. Only drive thru traffic would be allowed to leave through the exit nearest to

Fletcher Street, the drive thru is only open 8:30aam-4:30pm and there is minimal overlap with peak hours. K. Cram said that five (5) cars can queue in the drive thru waiting area.

Brian Milisci, Applicant's Engineer

B. Milisci stated that the new site plan also looked into pedestrian traffic, and a pedestrian connection to Cushing Street was added. The addition will include steps near the existing retaining wall which will allow pedestrians to access the site.

Alan Kazanjian, Applicant

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

T. Linnehan brought up the major questions from the previous meeting including the inclusion of bike racks, the addition of shade trees, and the location for snow storage.

B. Milisci stated that there are many locations where a bike rack can be added and that will not be a problem, and said that the plan includes as many as shade trees as is possible. B. Milisci stated that there are a few locations for onsite snow storage, but they will need snow removal for significant snowfall. B. Milisci said there was a landscaping plan in the original application.

A. Kazanjian stated they plan to maintain the exterior of the building and have been working with the Historic Board. A. Kazanjian said some stone work and grouting will be necessary, and the windows will be replaced. A. Kazanjian added that they have the necessary equipment for snow removal and it will not be a problem to move the snow offsite.

C. Cheng thanked the applicant for making the site more pedestrian friendly, and inclusion of a bike rack.

G. Frechette said his biggest concern was the left hand turn out of the parking lot and this was addressed. G. Frechette asked if the triangle in the center of the lot would be elevated or if it was just marked on the pavement. B. Milisci stated that this is a painted feature for snow removal purposes. B. Milisci stated they could put scored concrete in the triangle, and are trying to avoid raising the triangle, but if the Planning Board requires it, it can be done. G. Frechette expressed support for raising the triangle citing that many people ignore signage prohibiting certain turns. A. Kazanjian said they could add fencing or a guard rail around the triangle. G. Frechette said that other developments have added a curb to create an island. A. Kazanjian stated that they could add a curb to create an island.

G. Frechette noted that 1-2 trees were lost as a result of the sidewalk, and said that the applicant should work with DPD to find a place to replace the tree. G. Frechette asked if the applicant was able to secure overflow parking. A. Kazanjian said that they have not been able to find overflow parking, but they do not foresee this as an issue, and if it does become an issue they will address it.

G. Frechette asked where the signage for the ATMs will be located. B. Milisci said that the plan is for there to be signage on the lower lot saying no left turn so customers must exit through the western exit. G. Frechette asked if

there will be signage directing motorists to the drive thru. B. Milisci said there will be signage directing people to the teller. G. Frechette added there should be signage directing traffic through the parking lot.

R. Lockhart asked about pedestrian traffic across Dutton Street, and asked if any crosswalks will be added. B. Milisci said there are existing crosswalks on Dutton Street which is a City project, and the applicant would be willing to add a crosswalk at whatever location DPD suggests.

R. Malavich agreed with previous board members, and said that this is a good project which will change the neighborhood.

G. Frechette asked for clarification that the curbing would be vertical granite. A. Kazanjian confirmed the curbing will be vertical granite.

Motion:

G. Frechette motioned, and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to approve the Site Plan with conditions. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

Conditions:

1. The applicant shall construct a raised triangle with granite curbing to discourage vehicles from turning left out of the parking lot's easterly exit;
2. The applicant shall finalize the signage and landscaping subject to DPD approval;
3. The applicant agrees to install vertical granite curbing along the street;
4. The applicant shall monitor for parking for 6 months to determine if overflow parking is required;
5. The applicant shall install a bike rack on site; and
6. The applicant will work with DPD to determine the appropriateness and location of a crosswalk on Fletcher Street.

R. Lockhart motioned, and R. Malavich seconded the motion to approve the Special Permit with conditions. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

Conditions:

1. The applicant shall construct a raised triangle with granite curbing to discourage vehicles from turning left out of the parking lot's easterly exit;
2. The applicant shall finalize the signage and landscaping subject to DPD approval;
3. The applicant agrees to install vertical granite curbing along the street;
4. The applicant shall monitor for parking for 6 months to determine if overflow parking is required;
5. The applicant shall install a bike rack on site; and
6. The applicant will work with DPD to determine the appropriateness and location of a crosswalk on Fletcher Street.

III. New Business

Site Plan Review Amendment and Special Permit:

357 Pawtucket Street 01854 Franco American Holdings LLC has applied to the Lowell Planning Board for a Site Plan Review Amendment and a Special Permit approval for 357 Pawtucket Street. The applicant is seeking to increase the total number of units at the development from 53 units to 62 units. The subject property is located in the Traditional Mixed-Use (TMU) zoning district and requires a Site Plan Review Amendment per Section 11.4, and Special Permit approval per Section 12.1(e).

On Behalf:

None

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

G. Frechette stated he must recuse himself from this project.

P. Cutrumbes said that the applicant was unable to meet the abutters notice requirement and requires a continuance to the next Planning Board meeting.

Motion:

T. Linnehan motioned, and R. Malavich seconded the motion to continue the application to the June 7, 2021 Planning Board meeting. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

Westlawn Tree Hearing:

305 Boston Road 01852 Pursuant to MGL Ch. 87.5, the City of Lowell is proposing to remove two (2) public shade trees at Westlawn II Cemetery located at 305 Boston Road. The removal of the trees is required for the construction of a new access road to a new area of cemetery plots. The City is proposing tree replacement at a 1:1 ratio and the work will take place in 2021.

On Behalf:

Shannon Cohan, City of Lowell, Superintendent of Parks

S. Cohan stated that the City is constructing a gravel road at Westlawn Cemetery to gain access to a new area for plots. They are going to try to keep the trees, but if they are damaged and die as a result of the construction then they will be replaced in the same area. S. Cohan said they do not plan on removing the trees, but will only remove them if it is necessary.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

David Ronaur, 78 Swan Street, Unit 214

D. Ronaur is concerned about drainage since the area has experienced flooding in past years. D. Ronaur expressed concern that the road will cause additional flooding into his basement. D. Ronaur asked what consideration has been put into water drainage. S. Cohan asked if there have been any flooding problems in the last 2 years, and stated that the road will be pervious.

D. Ronaur asked if the road was necessary. S. Cohan stated that the section needs to be divided to create another section for more cemetery plots. D. Ronaur asked how the road will be plowed in the event of heavy snowfall. S. Cohan answered that the snow would be removed to ensure that the snow will not block the basin at the end. D. Ronaur expressed concern that a fast snow melt may cause basement flooding. S. Cohan stated that he would ensure that the snow is plowed in a way that does not block the basin.

D. Ronaur asked if the tree at the end of the road would be removed. S. Cohan said that that tree will not be touched.

Gay Rinker, 78 Swan Street, Unit 214

G. Rinker stated that she shares the same concerns. G. Rinker asked whether the additional road was necessary, and asked whether a path could be added instead of a road. S. Cohan stated that they will need to get equipment down the road to load the caskets in, and the road must be accessible for these vehicles. S. Cohan said the road will be at most 20 feet wide, and confirmed the road will be gravel. G. Rinker asked whether this was the only property in the cemetery which abuts residents, S. Cohan confirmed this.

G. Rinker stated that the trees block light, and provide privacy between residents and mourners. S. Cohan stated that the trees will be replaced in the direct proximity of their current location if they must be removed.

George Brooks, 78 Swan Street, Unit 212

G. Brooks stated that he is concerned about the road since this is a major pathway for water. G. Brooks said that it is difficult to pump the water out of the basement since it pumps out into the area which is causing the flooding. G. Brooks said the flooding has been reduced the last few years as a result of the drought.

S. Cohan stated within the past 2 years the basin drain was cleared out and there has not been flooding since, and stated that this may have relieved the flooding.

G. Brooks asked if the road will be permanent or temporary. S. Cohan said it would be a permanent road.

Discussion:

T. Linnehan clarified that the road will be pervious and they will try not to remove the trees. If the trees must be removed they will be replaced at a 1:1 ratio in a location as close to the trees original location as is possible.

Motion:

R. Malavich motioned, and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to approve. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

Cawley Stadium Tree Hearing:

424 Douglas Road 01852 Pursuant to MGL Ch. 87.5, the City of Lowell is proposing to remove eighteen (18) public shade trees at Cawley Stadium located at 424 Douglas Road. Of the eighteen (18) trees, three (3) are dead or unhealthy, and three (3) are over 24 inches in diameter. The trees are being removed as a part of a track rehabilitation project which will begin June 15, 2021. The City is proposing a tree replacement plan of 1:1 for trees less than 24 inches in diameter, and 2:1 for trees greater than 24 inches in diameter.

On Behalf:

Shannon Cohan, City of Lowell, Superintendent of Parks

S. Cohan stated that a new turf field was added to the stadium, and they are redoing the track. The tree location is detrimental to the track, there is sap dripping onto the track, and tree branches falling on the track. The trees will be relocated outside of the stadium in the future.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

T. Linnehan stated that most of the trees to be removed are located behind the scoreboard. S. Cohan confirmed this and said that the majority are located near the ticket booth on the inside of the fence. S. Cohan added that wastewater will add a holding tank under Cawley Stadium, and there will be an island located within the parking lot where the trees will be relocated.

C. Cheng stated that having more trees in the parking lot will have a positive impact on abutting residents, and will soften the hardscape.

Motion:

R. Malavich motioned, and C. Cheng seconded the motion to approve. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

IV. Other Business

Minor Modification: 14 McIntire Street 01851

Madjack7, LLC has applied to the Lowell Planning Board for a minor modification of a previous Site Plan Review and Special Permit application at 14 McIntire Street. The applicant is seeking permission to modify their project to reduce the number of proposed dwelling units from eight (8) dwelling units to six (6) dwelling units. The property is in the Neighborhood Business (NB) and Urban Neighborhood Mixed Use (UMU) zoning districts.

On Behalf:

George Theodorou, Applicant's Representative

G. Theodorou stated that the modification refers a lot to the previous approval for the construction of 8 condos. The modification widens the units, and creates larger units while decreasing the total number of units to 6. G. Theodorou said that it was clear that the Board was concerned with the building's design. The applicant redesigned the project as best possible to reflect the prior design by breaking up the façade to make the building more aesthetically appealing.

Matt Hamor, Applicant's Engineer

M. Hamor said that the design was similar to the prior approval. M. Hamor stated that doghouse dormers were added which is in line with the previous design, and material changes were made to the siding to provide depth, and the windows were wrapped with trim. M. Hamor stated that the side entries will now have exits that lead onto Marshall Street, and these entrances are now roofed. Trash enclosure units were added to the front of the building similar to the original design. There are overhangs over all entrances which are side facing, and the only way for the stairways not to go over the property line was for the doorways to be recessed. M. Hamor added that siding and trim elements were added to the rear of the building.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

G. Frechette addressed the DPD memo dated 5/14. G. Frechette asked about the comment stating the side entrances were not addressed, but will defer to C. Cheng. C. Cheng stated that he believes the entrances are turned around.

G. Frechette stated he agreed with the comment that building does not have a great rhythm. M. Hamor said the architect is trying to fit a garage which can't be perfectly aligned, and stated that it just so happens this is the way that it turned out.

C. Cheng suggested connecting the bump outs into three pairs. C. Cheng asked whether the bump outs could be combined. M. Hamor said he can check with the architect. M. Hamor clarified that C. Cheng is asking to combine bump outs into one continuous bump out for each of the three sets. R. Lockhart and G. Frechette agreed it would soften the appearance. M. Hamor said he does not believe that would be a problem.

G. Frechette asked if it was possible for the front stairs to come straight down toward the street. G. Frechette said that based on the depth of the trash receptacle it's hard to get an idea of the depth of the building. M. Hamor stated that a combined bump out in the back can be done, and said the face of the building is 3 feet from the property line.

G. Frechette asked if the doors can be pushed further into the building so the steps can go straight down into the street. G. Frechette stated that the project does not have the look of a city townhouse, and said the front of the building does not have a front façade look with the steps being side facing. M. Hamor said the only solution to the problem was to have side facing stairs.

G. Frechette asked how the prior design had front facing steps. M. Hamor said that didn't work. M. Hamor said the previous developer's solution was to recess the doorway into the building to ensure there was room for the front facing steps. G. Frechette stated that the front steps look like back decks. M. Hamor stated there are challenges due to the grading of the front of the property.

G. Frechette cited the front stairs of the Mother Hubbard development on Perry Street as what he envisioned for this development. M. Hamor stated that that development had 6 feet of space before the right of way, this development has only 3 feet. G. Frechette asked if the elevation of the first floor could be brought down make front facing stairs more feasible. M. Hamor said this could not be done due to the rear elevations and the need for 7.5 feet of elevation in the garages. M. Hamor added that the building cannot be moved back either due to the shape and topography of the lot.

M. Hamor stated that the project will be a positive for the neighborhood. G. Frechette agreed and reiterated that while the new elevations are an improvement he would have preferred to have the steps going straight into the side walk. G. Frechette asked if all the windows will have trim. M. Hamor stated they will all have trim and that can be included as a condition.

C. Cheng asked if the applicant can work with staff for final architectural design approval. G. Theodorou stated that that would not be a problem for the applicant to work with staff on the final design and style of the building. C. Cheng thanked the applicant for the efforts to improve the design. M. Hamor agreed they would work staff for final architectural approval, and stated that the applicant would combine the rear bump outs into 3 pairs.

Motion:

G. Frechette motioned, and R. Malavich seconded the motion that the proposal was not a substantial and material change to the Site Plan. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

G. Frechette motioned, and R. Malavich seconded the motion that the proposal was not a substantial and material change to the Special Permit. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

G. Frechette motioned, and R. Lockhart seconded the motion that the changes were minor in relation to the Special Permit with conditions. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

Condition:

1. The applicant shall work with DPD to finalize architectural elements of the project.

G. Frechette motioned, and C. Cheng seconded the motion to approve the Site Plan Review with conditions. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

Conditions:

1. The applicant shall work with DPD to finalize architectural elements of the project; and
2. The applicant shall work with storm water to obtain final storm water approval.

V. Notices

VI. Further Comments from Planning Board Members

R. Lockhart stated that many projects were reviewed at the Historic Board meeting. There was a mural policy update presented to the City Council on May 11th, and there will be a public hearing on May 25th.

Planning Board members congratulated Christine McCall on her promotion to DPD Director.

VII. Adjournment

R. Malavich motioned, and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0). The time was 8:15.