

BEDFORD PLANNING BOARD
Town Hall—Selectmen’s Meeting Room
Regular Session Minutes
July 28, 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT: Amy Lloyd, Chair, Sandra Hackman, Clerk,
Jeffrey Cohen, Lisa Mustapich and Shawn Hanegan

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Glenn Garber, Planning Director; Catherine Perry, Assistant Planner
Cathy Silvestrone, Planning A.A.

OTHERS PRESENT: Residents Gene and Sandra Cody, Karen Kenney, Daniel Yaukoes, Elaine Davis, Carolyn Conte, Sharon Levesque, David Powell (Finance Committee), Phyllis Maurer, Marguerite Widell, Meredith McCulloch (Bedford Citizen), and development team members for 56 Evergreen Avenue, George Dimakarakos, (Stamski and McNary Engineering) Bryan Melanson (Melanson Development) and Attorney Mark Vaughan (Riemer and Braunstein Law Firm)

Amy Lloyd, Chair convened the Planning Board meeting at 7:30 PM

Emergency Evacuation notice - read by Sandra Hackman, Clerk

Sandra Hackman, Clerk, informed the public that the best way to stay informed of town board & committee meetings, agendas, and minutes is by subscribing to E-Info. on the town’s website.

Note: All meeting submittals are available for review in the Planning Office.

DEVELOPMENT PERMITTING

56 Evergreen Avenue, Yaukoes Farm, Preliminary Subdivision Plan application/review and discussion of potential cottage PRD (Planned Residential Development).

The following submittals were provided by the development team in conjunction with the application/review: Cover letter dated July 21, 2015 from Stamski and McNary, Engineering firm on behalf of its client, Melanson Development, stating that they are submitting a preliminary subdivision plan for 56 Evergreen Avenue consisting of 9 lots and plan to discuss a conceptual Planned Residential Development (PRD) consisting of 19 units as an alternative. Attached to letter: Form B Application for Approval of Preliminary Plan dated July 21, 2015, Abutters List and G.I.S. mapping (identifying the parcel) produced by the Assessor’s Office, Preliminary Plan of Evergreen Meadow dated July 20, 2015 consisting of two sheets and Conceptual Planned Residential Development (PRD) Plan dated September 22, 2014 and revised July 20, 2015.

The following is a list of written comments received from town staff:

1) Planning memo dated July 24, 2015 from Catherine Perry, Assistant Planner summarizing the proposed project, sharing background and property description, incorporating other town staff comments received, and sharing points for discussion on the Conventional Subdivision plan and Planned Residential (PRD) plan. Ms. Perry's memo included photos of the property and adjacent areas near Evergreen Avenue. Ms. Perry also provided 2 separate GIS maps: one showing utilities, walls & fences, and the other showing road network classification and intersections; 2) DPW memo dated July 27, 2015 from Adrienne St. John Public Works Engineer and Kristin Dowdy, Civil/Environmental Engineer; Conservation Commission letter dated July 24, 2015 from Elizabeth Bagdonas, Conservation Administrator (letter included a GIS map of the wetland resource area boundaries) and Fire Dept. email dated July 28, 2015 from Fire Captain Stone.

Chair Lloyd opened the discussion by explaining to the public that the applicant is before the Board to discuss a preliminary subdivision plan and not a definitive subdivision plan which requires a public hearing. Ms. Lloyd announced that the role of the Board at this time was to provide direction to the applicant and not look for public input. Ms. Lloyd also mentioned that if time allowed, the Board may consider answering public questions if any clarification was needed.

Attorney Mark Vaughan, Riemer & Braunstein law firm, explained the difference between the two presented plans. The preliminary subdivision plan consists of 9 lots fronting a proposed road that extends from Evergreen Avenue to Wiggins Avenue. The alternative Planned Residential Development (PRD) plan consists of 19 units in a cluster-style development with required open space land that will provide more sensitivity to the environment.

George Dimakarakos, P.E., first reviewed the Preliminary Subdivision Plan layout. Mr. Dimakarakos shared the following: 1) the applicant went through a Conservation Commission process by which wetland resource areas were confirmed; 2) the 9 lots proposed in the preliminary subdivision plan are viable, although Lot 1 has a tightly constrained building envelope, and he commented that he believes this plan will not require any variances and/or waivers; and 3) pointed out that there is no open space set aside on the conventional layout plan because it's not required.

BOARD COMMENTS (Preliminary Conventional Subdivision Plan)

Ms. Hackman asked if any wetlands need to be replicated. Mr. Dimakarakos replied yes, for a short segment of road near Wiggins Avenue, but it could be achieved nearby on the property.

Board members inquired if there will be a connection from the subdivision to the Minuteman Bikeway, and if so where would this connection be located. Suggestions were to consider the old route between stone walls at the end of the existing Evergreen Avenue and also the utility easement located at the northwestern edge of lot one.

Chair Lloyd commented that town staff had some concerns about the road exit near the bikeway and also asked if the development of Lot 1 would be within the 100' wetlands buffer. Mr. Dimakarakos responded that they would work with the town to adjust the position of the road,

and confirmed that development on Lot 1 would be in the 100' buffer. Ms. Lloyd shared her preference to preserve existing stonewalls and trees on the property.

Catherine Perry, Assistant Planner, mentioned that the old house on the property appears to date from around the time of the Revolution and it might be preferable to preserve it. She noted that the applicant has applied to the Historic Preservation Commission to determine its status in relation to the Demolition Delay Bylaw.

Mr. Dimakarakos said that preserving various features depends on the layout and geometry of the site.

Catherine Perry drew attention to her written comment that the existing portion of Evergreen Avenue may need to be widened and the lots adjusted. Also she pointed to DPW's written comments which were received after she wrote her memo. DPW asked that the right of way for the proposed road be shifted to align with the south side of the existing right-of-way on Evergreen Avenue and lots be adjusted; maintenance of any detention basins is the responsibility of the lot owners or a Homeowners Association; PRD plan should show visitor parking; proposed sidewalks should be constructed with porous pavement; in the conventional subdivision, the developer should note advantages/disadvantages for showing the roadway extension close to the bike path, rather than shifting further south; standard subdivision should show a trail easement; proposed water main needs to be looped to the existing main in Wiggins Avenue; and commented that the Town shows interest in an easement to construct an 8-10 car parking area at Wiggins Avenue to be designated for the REV bus. Ms. Perry also reviewed Fire Department's comments/concerns regarding the proposed roadways on presented plans. The conventional subdivision roadway that proposes to go through to Wiggins Avenue is narrow along Lot 1. The PRD roadway's turning radius and width will need to be checked. Fire Department suggested that the length of the dead end road may require fire sprinklers in the units and commented that either way, a water flow test should be conducted to verify proper flow for the development.

Mr. Dimakarakos next reviewed the Planned Residential Development (PRD) plan. He explained that the PRD plan concentrates on smaller cottage-style housing units versus larger homes found in conventional subdivisions. PRD's add more open space, and there is more chance to preserve existing trees and/or stonewalls. Mr. Dimakarakos pointed out a small parking area on the PRD plan, and mentioned that they are looking to keep access to the rail trail. Other features discussed: 1) out of 19 total units some are duplexes but the majority are singles-- 4 units will be designated as affordable; 2) plans for a sidewalk along the entire teardrop roadway; 3) units are directed toward empty-nesters; however no restrictions on families; 4) price point of units should be less expensive than a traditional subdivision house.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS:

- Questions were asked about the Fire Department's requirements for emergency access. Ms. Perry explained that for a cul de sac development, since the road is over 500 feet long, a waiver will be needed and sprinkler systems will be required in the houses. Jeffrey Cohen suggested that an emergency access route from Wiggins Avenue might be

an option to consider. Ms. Perry agreed this was worth exploring. The developer's engineer observed that wetlands permitting would be needed.

- Sandra Hackman asked if the units will have a garage, are the garages single or double, and what the price point is per unit. Mr. Dimakarakos replied; there will be single garages for each unit and the market rate will be around \$700k range. Ms. Hackman further asked if the open space land will be deeded to the town. Mr. Dimakarakos said that it could be. Ms. Hackman stated she would like to see pedestrian access to Wiggins Avenue from the development and that she prefers fewer than 19 units.
- Mr. Cohen asked if the teardrop roadway is one way; Mr. Dimakarakos said it's one way, but wide enough to be two-way. Mr. Cohen inquired if a 20' versus 24' roadway would be wide enough for visitor parking and preserve access for emergency vehicles. Mr. Cohen mentioned that he was in favor of having a connection from the development to the bike path and would like to preserve the existing stonewalls where possible. If not possible, he hoped the existing stones could be salvaged and reused. Mr. Cohen also asked how many spaces would be available in the parking area. Mr. Dimakarakos answered: around five. Mr. Cohen noted that the existing ownership parcel includes land across Wiggins Avenue and asked about the developer's plans for the parcel.
- General questions board members raised regarding the units: (*replies from applicant/developer in bold italics*): 1) How many bedrooms in each unit? *Proposing three bedroom units because empty-nesters may have grown children and others visit.* 2) What is the approximate size of each unit? *Approximately 1,800-2,200 sf.* 3) Will there be a Condominium Association? *Yes.* 4) Will units have basements or be built on slabs? *basements.*
- Lisa Mustapich expressed the following: 1) a connection to the bike path was important; 2) would like to see trees near the teardrop roadway be maintained as best as possible to absorb sound and heat; 3) noted that a playground in the center of a parking lot is dangerous; 4) stated she was concerned about the total number of units; welcomed affordable units and suggested that the applicant discuss their plan with the Affordable Housing Partnership; 5) commented that a 2-car garage per unit is more desirable than 1.
- Shawn Hanegan raised the following questions regarding other features within the development (*replies from Mr. Dimakarakos in bold italics*): 1) Will the open space in the center have a gazebo? *The center open space has not been designed; however it will be some type of outdoor gathering area.* 2) Are there some shared amenities? *There will be common land, but nothing formal.* 3) What is the lighting plan? *There will be lights on each residential unit.* 4) Mr. Hanegan asked if post lights were considered. *No, the lighting plan has not been fully thought through.* 5) What is the height of the houses; will there be mounding? *The level of the units will be designed to keep the porches interacting with the sidewalk as far as possible.* 6) Will there be an access easement between the 2nd and 3rd unit? *The plan simply avoids placing any buildings on the old private right-of-way easement.*
- Chair Lloyd applauded the applicant/developer's effort for creating a concept PRD plan that will keep people interactive. Ms. Lloyd had the following comments: 1) Noted that the units are targeted for empty-nesters; however mentioned that the unit size is large enough to attract families with school aged children; 2) Asked: if the developer returned to constructing 11 units (without affordable housing) would the project still be financially feasible?; 3) Reiterated that the old retaining walls are a precious resource, and therefore

suggested altering the development layout so that the unique site-specific features in the center of the parcel can be preserved. To that end, she inquired if it were possible to construct a service alley around the perimeter of the development, with car access at the rear and the housing facing into a central open space. 4) Requested that the applicant/developer grant a trail/generous width easement at the far northwest of the property; 6) Prefers to have some bollard lighting.

- Planning Director Garber asked if the total floor area for the 19 units in the PRD would be about the same floor area as the 9 large houses in the conventional subdivision. Bryan Melanson confirmed that the floor area in both developments is pretty comparable. Director Garber also asked what the percentage of open space is in the PRD. Mr. Dimakarakos replied approximately 70%. Mr. Garber said that the site lends itself to a cluster or PRD development especially because of the existing wetlands and mentioned that he prefers smaller units versus voluminous ones.
- Catherine Perry, Assistant Planner, reviewed DPW comment # 8—town is interested in an easement to construct an 8-10 car parking area at Wiggins Avenue to be designated for the REV bus. Board members commented that this is a wetland area. Ms. Perry thought the idea might be worth considering if an emergency access is to be constructed.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Overall Board members and Planning staff favored a Cluster or Planned Residential Development for reasons discussed and conveyed that this style development lessens the impact of a neighborhood, serves a housing market that is needed, gives opportunity for more open space, and has potential to preserve existing site features. Some Board members shared concern with the applicant/developer's decision to propose three bedroom units versus two because the additional bedroom may encourage families with children thereby adding potential to overwhelm the number of school age children in town.

Bryan Melanson said that input is welcomed and that the development team will continue to work with town staff and the Board. Board members requested that the applicant forward a copy of the renderings presented this evening so Planning staff could post it on its Facebook and Webpage.

OLD BUSINESS

Planning staff update on Industrial Zoning Amendments: database and case studies—

Planning Director Glenn Garber presented a first draft of the industrial district studies that staff has been working on for some time, pursuant to eventual new zoning articles amending the bylaw. These studies consisted of a) spreadsheets analyzing what is built on the ground in several Bedford business districts among a representative cross-sample of 24 developed addresses; and b) an exploration in greater detail of case studies on 7 of the properties, testing floor area expansions (via adding 1 to 2 stories of height) in terms of their impact on parking, floor area ratio, height limits and ability to fit within an envelope of net usable land area.

The ensuing discussion brought out various issues and questions from board members and staff. Sandra Hackman pointed out that the FAR of .50 in the General Business zone was higher than

in any industrial district, pertaining to a possible rezoning of the GB district on Middlesex Turnpike to IND B. Jeffrey Cohen inquired about maximum building height for firefighting purposes; Glenn Garber replied that no height would exceed what is now the highest height allowed, at 45 feet, but that the Fire Chief would be consulted. Shawn Hanegan asked if height increases greater than 45' could be regulated by special permit, and Mr. Garber replied in the affirmative. Sandra Hackman raised issues of height limits constraining economic development. Catherine Perry, Assistant Planner summarized discussions with Economic Development Coordinator Alyssa Sandoval about the relative effects of adding a third story to two story buildings.

Mr. Garber outlined some preliminary conclusions in terms of what actual zoning amendments might be indicated by the studies, such as raising floor area ratios by reasonable amounts in IND B and C, and increasing height limits to 45', as well as reducing the 50% landscaping requirement to 25% and possibly rezoning GB on Middlesex Turnpike to IND B. Staff agreed to further refine both the studies and the conclusions for the next Board discussion.

REPORTS/DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (verbal reports; non-deliberative)

Board member questions on Development Update Chart—

- Chair Lloyd asked if the Salem 5 Bank is expected to come before the Planning Board. Director Garber replied that most likely they will only need to go before Conservation Commission.
- A question was raised regarding the status of 152-162 South Road; Director Garber stated that the applicant is altering its design such that parking is in front of the site and housing is designed in a tighter cluster with a loop road. The design also promotes less pervious area and will use low impact stormwater treatments by incorporating several rain gardens.

Planning Board members (as liaisons to other boards & committee) verbal updates:

Sandra Hackman informed board members that the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) has drafted a Complete Streets Policy for Bedford by reviewing other town's policies and adapting them to Bedford; and that TAC would like to incorporate Planning Board comments. TAC plans to present the draft policy to the Selectmen (who will oversee the committee of stakeholders) and will pursue a vote at Special Fall Town Meeting on an application to qualify as a Complete Streets Community.

A further discussion took place regarding the criteria a town has to satisfy to be certified as a Complete Streets Community, which will help the town to obtain grants. Ms. Hackman said there are more than 7 steps involved and that additional work is needed. Others observed that more town staff may need to get involved.

OTHER BUSINESS

- 1) Board members agreed to change September 29 meeting to September 30.
- 2) Chair Lloyd spoke about a recent article titled: The Exceedingly Strange State of the Laws for Planning, Zoning and Subdivision Control in Massachusetts and Why this Affects Everyone (by Glenn Garber, Planning Director) and applauded Director Garber for providing this information. She also thanked Assistant Planner Catherine Perry for producing an article on the renewal underway at Bedford Marketplace, and Admin. Assistant Cathy Silvestrone for posting the items on Planning’s website and social media.
- 3) July 14, 2015 Minutes—*a motion was made by Lisa Mustapich and seconded by Shawn Hanegan to approve July 14, 2015 minutes with minor edits. Unanimous vote: 5-0-0*

ADJOURNMENT

*MOTION: Shawn Hanegan moved to adjourn the meeting. Jeffrey Cohen seconded the motion.
VOTE: 5-0-0
Meeting ended at 9:27PM*