



**129 Parker Street Ad Hoc Committee Minutes
Town Building, Lower Meeting Room (101)
Wednesday, December 11, 2013
7:00 P.M.**

Committee Members Present: Eric Smith, AICP; Ron Calabria; Ken Estabrook; Amy Hart; Eugene Redner; Lynda Thayer; Bernard Cahill

Others Present: Angus Jennings, Bob Depietri

Mr. Estabrook called the meeting to order.

Review and Approval of November 25, 2013 Minutes: The Committee reviewed the minutes and made changes.

Motion made to accept the minutes of November 25, 2013 as modified. Motion seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Estabrook reviewed the goals of the Committee.

Update on Issues Since Previous Meeting: Mr. Jennings stated a site walk was held on Saturday, December 7 and a majority of the Committee members were able to attend. Mr. Estabrook stated he felt this site walk was very helpful as the property has changed over the years. Mr. Calabria stated the site was larger than he envisioned and he was able to get a sense of how close the abutting properties and schools are to the site. Mr. Smith stated he felt this was a great opportunity to walk the site.

Mr. Jennings stated he was not able to update the map so his goal is to develop a base map which shows the property in a larger context. He will be highlighting specific portions of the site and the key issues that have been discussed during this process. Mr. Estabrook stated it would be helpful to have the traffic mitigations identified. Mr. Cahill requested that the existing buffers be included on the map. Mr. Estabrook stated it may be helpful to have a discussion on what a buffer is, as opposed to setbacks, including pictures.

Mr. Smith referenced the NBOD language, which indicates a buffer shall be landscaped and screened. Mr. Estabrook expressed concern that the term “screened” is not specific in terms of whether it is sight only, or includes sight and sound. He stated a lot of this detail will be addressed during the site plan review process, not in the concept plan. Ms. Thayer asked if crosswalks and

pedestrian access will be included on the map. Mr. Jennings stated this information is not currently available via the GIS system but he can provide some information based on existing conditions.

Developer Presentation and Committee Discussion of Updated Site Concept Plans:

Mr. Depietri stated last week they reviewed the various options relative to retail square footage, office square footage, community space, multifamily units, for sale units, assisted living, and independent living. Mr. Cahill asked if all the options presented are financially viable to the developer at the same magnitude. Mr. Depietri stated they are in the same range and within the realm of what they can do. He stated they presented approximately 20 schemes last week, listened to the Board's and residents' comments and tried to react to those and incorporate them into the plans presented tonight.

The first plan was reviewed. The Board had asked about the possibility of putting residential adjacent to the Field Street properties so this plan reflects for sale properties in that area. The assisted living is tucked in the back with an access road that may assist in site circulation. There are 250 rental units, water storage, site storage, stormwater retention, and some retail which is pushed forward on the site given what they are hearing from their potential tenants. They have been less aggressive on the right in, right out to give some opportunity for a buffer and are considering relocating this entrance. They have approximately 850 feet of frontage on Parker Street and the rule for separation of signalization is 500 feet so to have two major entries will be difficult to achieve from a traffic standpoint.

A second plan included a similar amount of retail square footage, a medical office building, assisted living, stormwater retention, and some open space.

A third plan retains the paths in the front and retail is pushed as far forward as it can be in order to get the required parking. They tried to buffer Field Street with an access roadway, a buffer strip, and service drive for the back of the retail. They also included for sale, assisted living, and independent living.

Another plan subdivided the site into two use groups, residential to the north and retail to the south. It takes advantage of the existing curb cut. There is a fair amount of potential connection from Parker Street into the site, some open space or some type of performance venue.

In reviewing slide three Mr. Estabrook asked what type of screening can be provided for the properties in front. Mr. Depietri stated they held meetings with all the abutters on the Field Street Side, Vose Street side, and Parker Street side. Most of the improvements that would give the residents of the Parker Street screening would be done on their own properties. On the development side they will have to balance what the retailers are looking for versus what is needed. Mr. Estabrook stated he was thinking about having signs on the buildings, but not freestanding signs on the street, assuming that people driving by will see the signs very well. Mr. Depietri stated the parking count is tight but they can make it work.

Mr. Estabrook stated what he likes about this plan is that it gets Cahill Courts up next to Field Street and only puts one building against Vose Hill. He stated the multifamily residential unit is a little close but overall he likes this plan. Mr. Calabria stated he also likes the third plan. He likes the assisted living in the rear and agrees with some of the reasons addressed by Mr. Estabrook.

Ms. Thayer stated she reviewed the plans from last week and it was overwhelming but what she had not really put together was how much more residential there was. She stated she feels the residential

being proposed is a lot for this property. She stated she would like to see less residential and retail. Mr. Estabrook stated they have made statements collectively as a group that they would like less retail and in response they would have to replace that with something from a financial perspective. Mr. Smith asked if she considers the assisted living and senior independent living the same as residential. She responded that she does consider these residential and feels the development as a whole is very big.

Mr. Redner stated he also felt 250 units of residential seemed like a lot. He assumes that studies have been done that support 250 units at this location. Mr. Depietri stated the overall market study done last December showed the area could support over 500 apartment units. Ms. Hart stated she is not a fan of the for sale units as she is concerned about the impact on the schools, and she feels these units in addition to all the rental units is a lot of residential. She stated she does not like that there is no park included in the plan.

Mr. Cahill stated he misread the residential to be of the 250 units 32 units were for sale and 90 were assisted living, he did not realize that was in addition to the 250 units. He would like to see 250 as the max number of residential units. He stated he finds 250,000 square foot of retail to be reasonable. He stated for him on every concept plan the massive residential in the southwest quadrant is going to be a deal breaker. He feels this is creating an isolated neighborhood of high density housing that is completely separated from the rest of the town. He stated the plan which included the assisted living next to the soccer field was a good idea. He stated he would like to see a path to the school included in each concept plan.

Mr. Smith stated he likes having the residential space at the top of the site and he prefers Plan No. 4. He recommended making the connection to the residential area parallel to the street to give more protection to the residents.

The next plan was discussed. Mr. Smith stated he likes the medical building included in this plan. He likes the open space, access to the trails, and the soccer field. He stated he wishes the medical building could be flip flopped. He stated this plan is heavy on the retail and if something else could be done in lieu of that it would be preferable. Mr. Depietri stated he agrees with Mr. Smith on the retail and they would scale the retail back on this plan similar to the other plans.

Mr. Cahill stated he would like less retail. He likes the office flex space for the medical or other facility. He likes the soccer field and park. He stated this layout and No. 6 are two of the best layouts he has seen in the last twelve months. He feels the development is moving in the right direction at this point. Mr. Estabrook stated he likes this plan a lot. He likes the residential area up against Field Street and closer to the schools. He is bothered by residences in the southwest corner due to the isolation. He stated there was a problem with the left turn lane of the central roadway being too short where it was so moving it farther south will shorten that further. He stated he would try to solve the external and internal traffic issues and then start placing the buildings. He stated he would prefer moving the entrance farther north in this plan.

Ms. Hart stated she likes this plan the best as well as there is less residential and she likes the residential located near the schools. Her only concern is the pond area shown in front of the assisted living area. She would prefer to see this on the other side of the assisted living near the park in order to incorporate it into the open space and put a walking trail around it. Mr. Redner stated by moving the 250 rental units up to the corner it looks like the buildings are further apart which he prefers. He asked about the pond and where that might best fit.

Ms. Thayer stated she likes this layout, particularly the location of the residential and the assisted living. Mr. Calabria stated he is not sure if the assisted living residents are going to like having soccer games going on outside their window. He stated there is no apparent parking for using that space and there is no way to get to the school.

Discussion was held regarding landscaping a buffer for the loading docks of the retail area. Mr. Jennings stated this was an issue at Cornerstone Square in Westford where the back of the Market Basket fronts on other buildings within the development. He stated this was handled with a combination of planted screening and physical screening that incorporates a nice design. He stated on the roof they screened all the mechanical equipment.

The next plan was reviewed. Mr. Calabria stated compared to the other two plans he does not feel this is as good. Ms. Thayer stated there looks like there is a lot going on all over this plan and she would prefer the other layouts. Mr. Redner stated there are a lot of residential units on this plan. Ms. Hart stated there is too much residential on this plan and not enough open space. She stated she would prefer the residential feel along Field Street.

Mr. Estabrook stated he feels there is too much residential and would prefer the other plans. He does not like the residential area in the southwest corner. He stated the one thing he does like about this plan is the doubling up at the street because it provides an opportunity for a berm or creating a buffer such as Mr. Jennings recommended. Mr. Cahill stated he likes the path to the school. Mr. Smith stated in the residential area you could do the for sale, assisted living, or independent living as they would all fit that location.

The next plan was reviewed. Mr. Smith stated the retail component is just under 250,000. He likes the park common area near the residential. Mr. Cahill stated he agrees with Mr. Smith and is actually leaning toward this plan. He likes the preserved green space in the southwest which is central and could be used by the assisted living residents as well as the other residents with pathways and walkways. He stated there is a decent buffer in the south to Dettling Road. He likes the retail square footage and would like to see the medical flex space included.

Mr. Estabrook stated he also likes this plan. He likes the fact that they could buffer from Dettling Road the impacts of the retail. This plan preserves the open space on the west. He is concerned with bringing the traffic in and how to deal with it as people will not be able to turn left at the first entrance. He stated if there was going to be such an intersection it would have to be closer to the center of the property and beyond the assisted living.

Ms. Hart stated she also likes this plan as it has less retail and the open space is more in the center and visible from the street. She stated she does not like that this plan does not include a pond. Mr. Smith suggested a pond could be included. Mr. Redner stated the original pond was included as a fire requirement and asked if this is still a requirement. Mr. Depietri stated this is no longer required and is more for drainage issues. Ms. Thayer stated she agrees with what was already said, however, she would like to see the medical building included. She asked if this was done could the retail be reduced. Mr. Depietri stated the medical office is really not an income generator today and it is being included to address people's requests. Mr. Calabria stated he likes that the greenscape separates the residential component from the retail. He stated this plan does have some nice features.

Public Comment:

Ellen Duggen – She stated she hears the concern for the residents of Field Street and appreciates putting layers between them and the project, but asked about Dettling Road and whether there was software that could show what they will see from their homes. She asked if some of the housing will be affordable. She stated too much rental property can change the character of the town so she likes the concept of ownership, however, realizes too much can impact the schools, public safety, water, and sewer. She asked if the amenities for the residents of the site could be used by all the residents of the town.

Michelle Booth, Field Street – She stated she has been to a lot of assisted living and nursing facilities and Life Care Center of Littleton has llamas and quite a bit of open space. They take the residents out in their wheelchairs and do occupational therapy so this should be considered. She stated she walked the property with Mr. Depietri and the area near Field Street has old growth. A lot of the trees in the existing buffer are junk and will have to be removed. She asked what the height of the proposed apartments will be. Mr. Depietri stated they have not determined the height yet but they will probably be three stories along Field Street.

Marie Gunnerson, 119 Parker Street – She thanked Mr. Depietri for coming up with these plans with short notice. She stated the apartment units look very close. She asked if the 100 foot setback applies to the apartments or just to retail. Response was given that the setback applies to everything. She stated these plans begin to address the traffic concerns as well as the roadway concerns and are very nice. She stated all of these plans seem to eliminate PK2. She stated option 6 moves the larger buildings beyond Dettling Road. She stated the difference between Plan No. 4 and No. 6 is that No. 6 has more green space.

Review of Committee Workplan: Mr. Estabrook proposed that the Committee ask Mr. Depietri to focus on Plan No. 6, as he felt this was the consensus of the discussion. He asked if there were any other plans the Committee would like to keep other than Plan No. 6. Question was raised about splitting the residential to provide a buffer for Dettling Road. Mr. Estabrook stated he has a problem requiring school children to cross retail to go to school. He stated from an infrastructure perspective it makes sense to have the various areas together and to challenge the developer to address the Dettling Road issue. He stated he would like the developer to address one plan and see what they can do to address the concerns the Committee has raised.

Discussion was held on having a path to the high school. Mr. Estabrook indicated there is a dirt path that students use now and it is his goal to make it safer for students to use. It was pointed out that whether a path is safe or not students are going to use it if it provides a shorter route to school. It was mentioned that a formal access to the high school from Field Street was requested and denied by the Superintendent and the Board of Selectmen, who indicated there will not be a formal path but they would not block the Field Street access. Mr. Estabrook stated this will have to be discussed as he was unaware of this.

Mr. Redner asked that Plan No. 4 be considered also. Mr. Estabrook asked what features of Plan No. 4 he would like to include. Mr. Redner stated the water feature and the medical building. Mr. Estabrook stated Mr. Depietri has agreed he could incorporate these features into Plan No. 6. The Committee was in agreement that if these changes were incorporated they would focus on Plan No. 6.

Mr. Jennings pointed out that on Plan No. 4 the retail component has a horseshoe configuration and having the assisted living in the upper left portion reduces to almost zero the amount of space that is invisible. He stated one concern he has with Plan No. 6 from an operational standpoint is there is

an area in back of the buildings where there are no eyes and with the school location it is an obvious enticement for kids to loiter. With plan No. 4 the entire site is visible to someone.

Mr. Cahill provided a brief slideshow overview of concept plans that he put together, as he was not able to attend the last meeting.

Mr. Estabrook summarized that they will focus on Plan No. 6 and next week will discuss more detail on the traffic and infrastructure, which will assist with development of the base map. They will also discuss market conditions and fiscal impact. He stated he would like to invite people to attend and comment more publically in early January, with the goal of handing over a plan to the Planning Board in late January or early February.

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 18, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment: *Motion made to adjourn. Motion seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*