

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
MEETING OF FEBRUARY 2, 2006

A regular meeting of the Lexington Planning Board held in Estabrook Hall was called to order at 7:40 p.m. by Chairman Manz, with members Hornig, Harden and planning staff Schilt and Tap present. Mr. Galaitsis and Mr. Canale were absent.

***** PLANNING BOARD ORGANIZATION, SCHEDULE *****

COMMITTEE LIAISONS

Lighting Options Committee: Mr. Hornig reported that the Lighting Options Committee was absorbed into the Energy Options Committee. The Board agreed that it would like to receive the minutes of that group's meetings to stay informed.

Senior Center Siting Committee: Mr. Hornig reported that the Senior Center Action Plan Committee is scheduled to report on its findings to the Selectmen on February 6. The recommended site will be the Monroe School Building.

Center Committee: Ms. Manz reported that she attended a meeting about a feasibility study for a senior center and parking structure, either at the Depot Square lot or the lot behind stores on the south side of Massachusetts Avenue.

Community Preservation Act (CPA) Committee: Ms. Manz reported that the CPA Committee asked for a letter of support from the Planning Board for the upcoming ballot question about the town accepting the CPA. The Board agreed to send a letter of support.

***** MINUTES *****

Review of Minutes: Ms. Manz asked for more detail in the minutes of the November 16, 2006 executive session. The Board agreed to review more detailed minutes at a future meeting.

***** ADMINISTRATION OF LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS *****

SUBDIVISION OF LAND

Public Information Meeting, Lexington Hills Conventional Subdivision Revised Preliminary Plan (off Walnut Street, part of the former Middlesex County Hospital site): Present for the development team were Mr. Joseph Lerman and Mr. Habib Aminipour, August Realty Trust, applicants; Mr. Gary Larson and Mr. Ti Johnson, landscape architects, Larson Associates; and Mr. Edmund Grant, attorney.

Mr. Larson presented a plan that he indicated responds to the Board's comments on the previous preliminary plan, reviewed on January 4, 2006, as follows: the context map includes the development across the Town line in Waltham; the amount of impervious surface is less, due to smaller house footprints and two-car garages instead of three; and, the communications tower is on a separate lot of a size to satisfy safety concerns, 90 feet from the Town line with a planted buffer. The plan is now for 18 lots, as one lot was lost in order to accommodate the size of the lot for the communications tower. Mr. Larson said that he measured the sight distances at the intersections of proposed roadway with Walnut Street, and in both directions on Walnut Street he found they exceed AASHTO parameters of 200 feet. The sewer will connect into the town system in Walnut Street via gravity feed to a pump station. He noted that all utilities are in Walnut Street.

Changes in the stormwater management system allow the drainage system to handle all runoff on the property even though the designers have reduced the size of the system's underground structures. The dwellings will each have dry wells for roof runoff, which allowed the reduction in the size of the infiltration system. Erosion control measures will be applied to all slopes over 3 percent. Mr. Larson explained why creating a vehicle easement to Lot 1 is impractical, citing in particular the 40-foot grade change which would make construction of any roads financially infeasible, It could result in the loss of up to two lots in the Lexington Hills subdivision. There would be significant site disturbance to accommodate a 12 percent grade for the road. In addition, the presence of a vernal pool on Lot 1 would prohibit permitting of the road.

Board Questions and Comments:

The sight distances on Walnut Street are a major consideration. At the definitive stage, the Board will require a peer review of the applicant's traffic analysis of Walnut Street, which should determine whether Walnut Street is a collector street or an arterial street. The grade where the new road meets Walnut Street should be reduced for at least 75-feet from the intersection.

At the definitive stage, the Board would like to see a pedestrian access to Lot 1, if possible, as it is part of the Western Greenway.

Mr. Hornig had questions about the sewer system pumping station. His concern is that it be set back from the Walnut Street right of way in case the street is ever widened or a sidewalk installed. Sidewalks along the new subdivision street should extend all the way along Walnut Street, with an easement shown on the plans. He suggested moving the water line from the north to the south of the site to reduce site disturbance and asked Mr. Larson to make sure that the proposed utilities do not interfere with the street trees, on Lot 12, for example.

Responding to a question raised at a previous meeting, Mr. Larson said that when the hospital was closed the old utility connections for the Middlesex County Hospital were plugged so as to be unusable.

Mr. Hornig also asked that utilities be brought onto the site underground, perhaps when the force main is constructed, so no utility pole is needed at Walnut Street. He noted that when the conditions for the required special permit for the development are taken up, he will want to hear about the applicant's plan for managing construction of the force main, construction plans for Walnut Street and any needed improvements, and more details about the drainage plans.

Ms. Manz also expressed her concerns about the imprecision of various aspects of the plan, including pedestrian connections to Lot 1, landscaping on the slopes and the intended use of the triangle of land below the new roadway at Walnut Street. She asked if the portion of the property that is located in Waltham could be used for recreational activities, but it was noted that the land was very steep and was probably not suitable for active recreational use. Ms. Manz noted that the overall impervious surface ratio still seemed to be too high. Mr. Schilt said that the town engineers are requesting more detail also. He added that the plans should go before the Development Review Team again. Mr. Larson suggested a mid-term review by the Board, which was agreed to.

Audience Questions and Comments

Questions from the audience had to do with the length of the force main in Walnut Street and what could be done to reduce the speed and volume of traffic on Walnut Street. Mr. Schilt noted that a traffic study is not required for a development of this size, though the study done for a previous proposal for the site could be reviewed. Mr. Chuck Highland, Potter Pond, pointed out that the large development being built just over the town-line in Waltham renders a traffic study in connection with this subdivision moot.

Mr. Roger Wrubel, director of Habitat, in Belmont, asked if the developer would consider a conservation easement. He also suggested collecting rainwater for domestic use.

Mr. Harden reiterated that a traffic analysis is required, along with a peer review to be paid for by the applicant. These should be supplied before the midterm review.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted 3-0, to approve the preliminary plan and to authorize the applicant to prepare a definitive plan, conditioned on a midterm review by the Board. Mr. Schilt told the Board that the Traffic Mitigation Group (TMG), newly appointed by the Selectmen, would have its

first meeting later this week. Its charge is to look at traffic management holistically and with a long-term view. It will also oversee TDM funds. Mr. Hornig stated that Walnut Street will face long-term impacts given the amount of development in the area, and that the TMG should review the plans for Lexington Hills.

Ms. Diane Terry, 25 Walnut Street, asked who considers the impact of additional development and traffic on the residents of Walnut Street. Neighbors love it the way it was and hate to see it change. Mr. Steven Heinrich, Potter Pond, likened Walnut Street to a roller coaster track and stated that potential dangers need to be addressed in any event. He regretted that an initiative begun by the former Assistant Town Engineer to come to agreement with the City of Waltham about restricting trucks from Walnut Street seems to have come to naught.

***** ARTICLES FOR 2006 TOWN MEETING *****

Inclusionary Housing Zoning By-law Amendment: Mr. Schilt pointed out revisions that were made to the draft language of the inclusionary zoning by-law amendment. The Board agreed that separating the terms 'inclusionary unit' and 'inclusionary credit' helps to clarify the proposed amendment's concepts.

The need of older residents for dwellings with less than three bedrooms was discussed. The Board acknowledged the need to give developers options and guidelines. Staff was asked to write up potential options to be discussed at a meeting held just for reviewing the by-law amendment, as the Board's regular night meetings last too long to leave time and energy for discussing the zoning amendments.

Mr. Harden said he would work on the language of the amendment presentation.

***** PLANNING BOARD ORGANIZATION, SCHEDULE *****

Community Preservation Act - Designate Planning Board Representative: Mr. Schilt noted that the CPA Committee wants a Planning Board representative on the committee. On a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to appoint Ms. Manz as the Board's representative to the CPA Committee.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 p.m.

Charles Hornig, Acting Clerk