

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

November 19, 2019

The regular meeting of the Planning Board held in the Charles River Room, Public Services Administration Building, was called to order by Martin Jacobs, Chairman, on Tuesday, November 19, 2019, at 7:05 p.m. with Messrs. Owens and Alpert and Mmes. Grimes and McKnight, as well as Planning Director, Ms. Newman, Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee and Recording Secretary, Ms. Kalinowski.

Public Hearing:

7:05 p.m. – Sunrise Terrace (formerly 1001 and 1015 Central Avenue) Definitive Subdivision Amendment: Hillcrest Development, Inc., 78 Pheasant Landing Road, Needham, MA, Petitioner (original owner and Petitioner RRNIR LLC, 20 Beaufort Avenue, Needham, MA), Petitioner, (Property located at 1001 and 1015 Central Avenue, Needham, MA).

Mr. Jacobs noted the following correspondence for the record: a legal notice; a letter from Attorney George Giunta Jr., a letter from Dainius Kuper, of Hillcrest Development; a letter from Daniel J & Alison M. Mazza, of 5 Sunrise Terrace; a letter from James Galagan & Kristine Schwenck, of 6 Sunrise Terrace; an email from Pavan Sekhar, prospective owner; an email from Fire Chief Dennis Condon with no issues; two emails from Tara Gurge of the Board of Health; an email from Police Chief John Schlittler and a letter from Assistant Town Engineer Thomas Ryder.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Ms. Grimes, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to waive the reading of the public hearing notice.

George Giunta Jr., representative for the applicant, noted this parcel received subdivision approval in February 2016. The plan was amended in July 2016 and increased to 6 lots with a short cul-de-sac. It is 325 feet from Central Avenue to the back of the subdivided parcel. The plan shows a 40 foot street layout and 24 feet of pavement with a sidewalk on one side. Most of the infrastructure is in. Three houses have been sold. Hillcrest bought the last 3 lots and has agreed to complete the subdivision. The owners have asked if a sidewalk is necessary as they would not like one. It makes sense not to have a sidewalk because it is a small subdivision at only 6 lots. It is a cul-de-sac and there will never be roads off of it. He feels it is appropriate to waive the sidewalk requirement. He has letters from 2 owners and one prospective buyer requesting there be no sidewalk. He feels it is likely the only people on the street would be the owners.

James Galagan, of 6 Sunrise Terrace, stated the road has not had a sidewalk up to now and there have been no issues at all. It never occurred to him a sidewalk would be needed. He prefers to have the additional green space. Pavan Sekhar, of 20 Sunrise Terrace, stated he is a prospective owner. The sidewalk would only be on part of his property. He does not see the benefit of it. He would prefer the green space. Mr. Galagan stated he was not aware it was only a sidewalk on one half of the street that went to nowhere. Ms. Newman sought clarification that this request for relief was only for the cul-de-sac and not the sidewalk on Central Avenue and was informed that was correct. Mr. Sekhar feels the sidewalk on Central Avenue is satisfactory and a sidewalk along the cul-de-sac would not contribute anything.

Gary Kaufman stated this is a great opportunity to add green space. He feels green space is more valuable than sidewalk. Ms. McKnight asked if this was a private way and was informed it was. She noted it slopes up steeply in the back. She stated she does not understand the comment from the Police regarding the Charles River Center and children walking to school. She asked Mr. Sekhar if he would feel comfortable that his children could walk down Sunrise Terrace safely to Central Avenue for the bus. Mr. Sekhar stated he is comfortable with that. Ms. McKnight noted the police comment regarding plowing. A concern was expressed, but the only greenery that could

be put in is grass. She is not sure about the concern with plowing. Mr. Giunta Jr. thought the snow banks were the issue.

Mr. Alpert stated he does not understand the reason for the petition. Why do the residents not want a sidewalk? Mr. Galagan stated it comes down to the utility of putting it in as opposed to green space. He does not feel it would be useful to them. Mr. Sekhar commented it is also for not even half of the cul-de-sac. Mr. Jacobs asked if there is a precedent for waiving a full sidewalk. Mr. Giunta Jr. stated the requirement for sidewalks has been waived on both sides only for the smaller single home subdivisions and there are at least 2 or 3 with no sidewalks. Ms. Grimes stated it is a small road and she does not feel there is a need for a sidewalk. Mr. Owens stated, in principal, he likes sidewalks, but feels there is no practical reason for a sidewalk here.

Ms. McKnight stated she is prepared to vote for a waiver. She would like a condition that in the layout of the way only ground cover and grass would be planted. Mr. Alpert stated he would vote no. He lives on a street with no sidewalks. He feels it is safer walking along sidewalks. He sees a safety concern that children learning to ride bikes could go downhill on to Central Avenue. Mr. Jacobs stated he is not in favor. He would not counter the police department safety concerns. There is no precedent to waive sidewalks on both sides. Mr. Owens and Ms. Grimes are ok with the waiver. Mr. Jacobs and Mr. Alpert are against the waiver. Ms. McKnight stated she cannot see a safety problem. As long as the road can be maintained and snow plowed she is not concerned.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Owens, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to close the hearing.

ANR Plan – 766 Chestnut Street, LLC, Petitioner (Property located at 766 Chestnut Street, Needham, MA).

Ms. Newman noted a letter from Attorney Robert Smart requesting this be taken off the agenda for tonight. She noted the action deadline would need to be extended to 12/31/19.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Ms. McKnight, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: to extend the action deadline for the ANR Plan for 766 Chestnut Street to 12/31/19.

Discussion regarding Pediatric Medical Facility Zoning Article – Children’s Hospital.

Ms. Newman noted an email from Attorney Robert Smart noting Children’s Hospital would like to postpone this to the 12/3/19 meeting. This is off the agenda for tonight.

Board of Appeals – November 21, 2019.

Chestnut Street, Inc. – 397-399 Great Plain Avenue

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Ms. Grimes, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: “No comment.”

Highland Avenue Donuts, Inc. – 1201 Highland Avenue

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Ms. Grimes, it was by the five members present unanimously:
VOTED: “No comment.”

ATC Watertown, LLC – 350 Cedar Street

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Ms. Grimes, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: "No comment."

Entravision Communications Corporation – 350 Cedar Street

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Ms. Grimes, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: "No comment."

Westview Partners, LLC – 642 Webster Street

Ms. McKnight stated she likes it. The design is elegant and keeping within the context of the street. She likes the separate garage in the back. Mr. Alpert stated he is confused with a 2 family here but trusts the Zoning Board of Appeals to hear any concerns.

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Ms. Grimes, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: "No comment."

Ms. McKnight noted that now that the new large house regulations have been in effect for a little while, the Board should compare the building permits issued prior to the change and those submitted after the change. She wants to see if what the Board worked so hard on is working and is it effective. Mr. Jacobs agreed.

Minutes

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to accept the minutes of 7/16/19 with the one change discussed.

Correspondence

Mr. Jacobs noted a letter from Planning Director Lee Newman to Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick regarding the Green Communities Determination; a 9/4/19 letter from Planning Director Lee Newman to Jon Schneider of the Zoning Board of Appeals with recommendations; a memo dated 11/18/19 to Steven Popper from Planning Director Lee Newman regarding the Temporary Police and Fire facilities stating that they would like to have occupancy in the next week or so.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Grimes, and seconded by Mr. Owens, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to authorize the Planning Director to authorize a temporary or permanent occupancy permit.

Report from Planning Director and Board members.

Ms. Newman noted she and Ms. Grimes have a meeting on proposal to talk about next steps in the Highway Commercial 1 Zoning District. Ms. Grimes stated she wants to see if they can come to a consensus with the Finance Committee or if it should be dropped. She was referring to the Muzi site. Mr. Owens feels they should stress if the zoning is left alone it could be a warehouse and that is not what the town wants. Ms. McKnight stated members of the League of Women Voters told her they did not like the visuals that were presented at the Annual Town Meeting. They felt the buildings looked like boxes.

Ms. Newman stated she has a meeting on 1479 Dedham Avenue next Tuesday with the Historical Commission and Moe Handel to try to save the house. Building Inspector David Roche will speak with the owner. They have been told it is in great shape. Ms. McKnight spoke on the Town Pedestrian Safety Audit Report and her thoughts. She wants the Board members suggestions. She felt it was an excellent report with guidance for further studies.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Grimes, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

Elizabeth Grimes, Vice-Chairman and Clerk