

Minutes of
The Williamstown Planning Board
TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2015
7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Building

Members Present: Elizabeth McGowan, Amy Jeschawitz, Chris Winters, Carol Stein Payne.

Others Present: Andrew Groff, Attorney James Art, Craig Wilbur, Peter Montiel, Vincent Guntlow, Stephen Weihe, Mike Singer

Ms. McGowan opened the meeting at 7:03 PM.

Development Plan Review Public Hearings

South Street: Miller House / Parking Determination / Access Determination

Mr. Guntlow and Atty. Art were present to represent the College.

Mr. Winters noted that in order to proceed with this project the Board must invoke the Rule of Necessity. A number of Board members have a conflict of interest as they work for Williams College. No quorum is available if all with a conflict will recuse themselves.

Mr. Winters, Ms. McGowan, and Ms. Stein Payne stated they have a conflict as they work for Williams College.

Atty. Art began by noting that Miller House is located currently on Morley Science Circle. It stands in the way presently of the proposed expansion of the Science Center. Moving it is an effort to preserve the house and its function which is currently faculty staff offices, presently the Psychology Department.

Atty. Art noted that the project has been amended slightly. 15 Parking spaces are now proposed and a slight grade change was added to the proposal. The additional parking spaces were added due to questions on how many faculty are present. This number of spaces is significantly lower than what would be required by the bylaw.

Atty. Art noted that the increase in parking spaces is due to the construction of a walk out basement.

Atty. Art stated that the project complies fully with the Development Standards all standards including parking standards are met.

Mr. Winters asked if the screening requirement is something that carries through in perpetuity on the parcel.

Mr. Groff stated it is and it is something that has been enforced by the Town on various occasions.

Ms. Jeschawitz asked where the driveway goes to the east.

Atty. Art stated the road will continue towards Brinsmaid House.

Ms. McGowan asked what the parking at that location is.

Atty. Art stated it is mostly faculty and in summer theater festival.

Peter Montiel of 68 South Street stated he is quite concerned with lighting, drainage, and the change of the overall residential character of the neighborhood. Is there any way to address some of these issues or is there really no way to address anything?

Atty. Art apologized to the neighbors for not conducting earlier outreach. This was likely due to the fast moving nature of the project but this is not an excuse. In terms of the impacts and the concerns surrounding them Mr. Guntlow will address them.

Mr. Guntlow explained that the Town has an easement for sewer and drainage over the property line between the Montiel residence and this parcel. When this line was recently televised by the Town. There were many old tile laterals into the drain line.

Ms. Susan Montiel stated that she paid to have the sewers televised as well and it is likely the old Town water line that is still carrying water and causing a sink hole.

Mr. Guntlow stated that this old line continues down to Spring Street. Also the line will be upgraded as part of this project and the Stetson Dorm project.

Ms. Stein Payne asked if this line can be upgraded to fix the sink whole problem.

Mr. Guntlow stated that this is possible however conventional cut and cover construction might not work. A conversation between the Town and the College might resolve this situation.

Mr. Montiel noted that the clay soils are very wet. How will the stormwater system prevent further issues?

Mr. Guntlow stated that the entire parcel post construction including area drains, roof leaders, and parking will pitch towards a rain garden area. According to the bylaw we must treat it, retain it, detain it and that is achieved by the rain garden. An overflow ties in to the previously discussed drain line.

Atty. Art stated that water post grading should have an increased propensity to leave the Montiel property and go to the rain garden.

Mr. Guntlow stated perhaps a drain manhole could be placed at the east end of the Montiel property to achieve this.

Mrs. Montiel stated that this project is quite elaborate and the College should have provided flexibility to the

neighbors.

Atty. Art stated that the College is willing to have a serious conversation about fixing the drain lines, however we cannot take up the Town infrastructure. We can work with the town to find a solution to the sinkhole problem. Additionally Mr. Guntlow has offered a solution to provide a solution to the stormwater concern.

Atty. Art stated that the screening of the parking lot is required to be six feet in height at 90% opacity. There is no bylaw standard to require screening a building. However the College will consider screening of the building to minimize visibility.

Ms. McGowan asked who is in charge of these projects at the College.

Mr. Wilbur stated that Rita Coppola Wallace is the person in charge.

Ms. Montiel stated she would like the board to not act tonight for persons in charge at the College to be able to address some of these concerns.

Ms. Jeschawitz asked with the timeline is.

Atty. Art stated that it is hoped the house can be moved in late July.

Mr. Winters stated that the reason for the regulations are for developers large or small to have a predictable course of action.

Atty. Art stated that he can commit to the College working with the neighbors and if approval is granted they will return to revise the site plan at a later date.

Ms. Jeschawitz stated that it is understood that the regulations say certain things but the College needs to be a better neighbor. A discussion must be had with the neighbor.

Mr. Winters asked if this discussion needs to stop the process. No it should not stop our process if we have a plan that can be approved we must approve it.

Mr. Montiel asked if there is any discretion in this process.

Mr. Winters stated he believes if the proposal meets the standards it must be approved.

Atty. Art stated the College is committed to being a good neighbor we can return with plan amendments but approval tonight is needed due to the tight timeline.

Ms. Jeschawitz asked if it is possible to do a different arrangement and condition the College to come back to the Board after agreeing with the neighbors.

Atty. Art stated that the Board cannot delegate its responsibility to the neighbors.

Mr. Groff noted that the Bylaw states the following in regards to the Board's authority on this matter; The Planning Board shall determine whether or not the development plan complies with the requirements of Article V, **Development Standards, and § 70-6.1, Off-street parking, and shall notify the applicant and the Inspector of Buildings** of its determination within 45 days of the time that complete materials have been received by the Town Planner. Failure of the Planning Board to act within 45 days shall be construed as determination of compliance, and the Planning Board shall forthwith make such endorsement on the submitted plans or, on its failure to do so, the Inspector of Buildings shall issue a certificate to the same effect.

Mr. Winters stated the Board must issue this approval tonight.

Atty. Art added that he agrees with Mr. Winters and notes that the College is fully committed to meeting with the neighbors to find common solutions.

Ms. Stein Payne asked what happens if the site plan is not met.

Mr. Groff noted what happens if site plan is not met.

Mr. Winters stated this is an opportunity to place changes on the site plan.

Mr. Montiel noted that if the site plan meets the standard it should be approved, if that is in fact the process.

Ms. Jeschawitz stated that the College has to be more sensitive when doing development around individual homes. This is concerning because this situation shouldn't be happening. No one has issues with this plan it is simply the way it was done. The Board's hands are tied, there isn't much the Board can do but the College can be proactive.

Ms. McGowan stated that the College is creating a standing committee on architecture, perhaps this can help the situation.

Ms. Montiel asked how the lot became available.

Atty. Art stated that the parcel was purchased on the 26th of May from some private individuals.

Ms. McGowan called for a motion.

Mr. Groff noted that the Board requires three motions.

Ms. McGowan discussed the parking spaces.

Atty. Art stated the College believes 15 spaces is the minimum that will meet the demand however the College could revisit the requirement.

Mr. Winters asked if the Board is hoping the Board goes smaller on the lot. The consequences of this could be fairly dire at this location. It is on the periphery of the campus people could be pushed to park on South Street or on lawn area.

Mr. Winters moved that the access utilities and drainage provided is functionally equivalent to that required by the subdivision rules, additionally the 15 parking spaces required are adequate and that the project meets the development standards as presented.

Ms. Jeschawitz seconded.

The motion carried unanimously (4-0).

Simonds Road: Landfill Solar Array / Parking Determination

Mr. Stephen Weihe from Weston and Sampson the design engineer for the project noted that the project meets the newly passed Solar Bylaw. Additional description of the entire selection process and a description of the cap section.

Mr. Mike Singer noted the array is 1.902 megawatts. There are 6,023 panels on the array.

Mr. Weihe noted that the permits for Mass Historical Commission, Natural Heritage Endangered Species, Mass DEP Post Closure, National Grid connection, and local Conservation Commission have all been either filed or are in pre application process.

Mr. Singer added that the post closure use permit with DEP has some presented some minor changes to the proposal these include sandbag sedimentation controls instead of stakes.

Mr. Weihe added that the connection and access points have been moved from previous plan approvals it is now located away from the transfer station and this allows for less interference with the operation and easier access for Solar City.

Mr. Winters asked about how the loading of the system impacts the landfill.

Mr. Singer stated that the system is designed by looking at a worst case scenario of snow, wind, and panel loading. This is a very lightweight system that on average is less than 50 psf. The standard for a landfill cap is about 1,000 psf. At the highest point the loading is about 150 psf near gravel installations.

Mr. Singer added that the developer is now responsible for maintaining the cap on the section they are leasing.

Mr. Winters asked essentially if it's broken you own it?

Mr. Singer added that his company has a long background in environmental remediation and re use. This is what Brightfields does, things are very carefully planned and Solar City and Brightfields will share full responsibility.

Ms. Stein Payne asked how long the cap lasts.

Mr. Singer noted that these last essentially forever. Also there are protections in the 20 year agreement with the Town that allow the Town the power to ensure that the cap is always kept in good repair.

Mr. Weihe ran through the development standards as outlined in the supplemental narrative submitted with the plan.

Mr. Weihe noted that that Conservation Commission will be on site this Thursday at 4:30 for a site visit in conjunction with a Request for Determination of Applicability.

Mr. Singer added that the system itself will actually increase the depth of the cap and the ease of the system from a construction standpoint means it will likely be fully built in about 4 months.

Mr. Weihe added that the fence system is ballasted and has a small gap for wildlife access.

Mr. Weihe added that in terms of lighting the single flood light at the equipment pad will be switch operated and only on if necessary.

Mr. Singer added that in terms of support structures there is an inverter station at the top of the landfill, there is a switch gear at the bottom of the landfill. No noise will be generated by the installation off site.

Mr. Weihe noted there is no permanent parking proposed for the project. A single service vehicle will park on the access road.

Mr. Weihe stated in terms of the solar requirements, the project meets the interconnection evidence requirement, appurtenant structures are provided but placed in reasonable locations, there will be a kiosk on site as well noting system information.

Mr. Singer added there will be a kiosk in Town Hall or the School or Library perhaps that show more info about the project.

Ms. Stein Payne asked if there will be public outreach following approval.

Mr. Singer stated there are many other permits issued and after this there will absolutely be outreach.

Ms. Stein Payne asked where the funding is coming from.

Mr. Singer stated that Solar City and Brightfields are funding the development.

Mr. Groff on the benefit for the town being the ability to purchase power at a highly reduced rate for many years.

Ms. McGowan called for a motion.

Ms. Stein Payne moved that the application as submitted meets the development standards in the bylaw and that one parking space is adequate.

Mr. Winters seconded.
The motion carried unanimously.

New Business

Housing Planning Project

Ms. McGowan stated that individual Board members had required assignments.

Ms. Stein Payne noted that she spoke to the Clark and only one third of Clark employees lived in Williamstown. The major issue is that there is a 50% premium to live in Williamstown compared to North Adams, Adams, or Pittsfield. The average median age of their employees now is over 50 so for those not here for the strong schools it just isn't worth it.

Ms. Stein Payne also asked when this Board will have a joint meeting with the EDC.

Mr. Groff on EDC schedule.

Ms. Stein Payne Brenda Rondeau the Financial Assistant at MGRHS stated that the primary housing demand for their employees was for single family housing, half of their staff live in Williamstown.

Ms. McGowan stated that she spoke to a number of real estate firms. Recent demand noted by realtors seems to be driven by rentals. One big issue in town is that everyone wants to be able to afford to walk to the downtown campus area. These types of units are very limited. Accessibility to the College is a plus but hard to come by and sometimes unaffordable.

Ms. Stein Payne stated of 100 total employees at MGRHS 40 total live in Williamstown.

Ms. McGowan stated there are also a significant population of individuals who live in Williamstown that commute to areas outside of town to businesses like Sabc, Specialty Minerals, etc.

Ms. Stein Payne stated she spoke with her neighbor Albert Cummings who directed her to find out information about Cable Mills. Cable Mills is not fully leased out and that in Mr. Harsch's opinion is that a building has to be about 4 units to be a truly profitable apartment building.

Ms. McGowan stated that she was led to believe by some realtors that dividing a house into two is an ideal plan.

Ms. Stein Payne added that Mr. Cumming's big push was for additional jobs not housing changes.

Ms. Jeschawitz stated that there is a list of 450 interested individuals on the Cable Mills list.

Mr. Winters stated he has not been in touch with Mr. O'Grady yet but this is an opportunity to connect some of these issues to the senior population and try them out.

Mr. Winters added that if you do not have a child in school it is less affordable to live here so aging in place in Williamstown should be an interesting conversation.

Reorganization

Ms. McGowan stated she would be interested in stepping down as Chair Person.

Ms. Stein Payne stated due to family commitments she should not be considered for chair.

Ms. Jeschawitz stated she would be happy to chair the board if the rest of the Board feels comfortable with this.

Ms. McGowan stated that she has relied on the sage advice of the whole board for creative and energetic input and thanked the Board for their support.

Mr. Groff stated that the positions to be filled are as follows; Chair, Vice Chair, BRPC Delegate, CPC Delegate.

Ms. Stein Payne moved to appoint Amy Jeschawitz as Chair, Ann McCallum as Vice Chair, and Amy Jeschawitz as representative to Berkshire Regional Planning and Chris Winters as representative to the Community Preservation Act Committee.

Mr. Winters seconded.

The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.