

Town of Norwell
BOARD OF APPEALS
Public Hearing Minutes
15 High Street
September 28, 2021

TOWN OF NORWELL
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MEETING DATE: Tuesday, September 28, 2021
TIME SCHEDULED: 7:30 P.M.
LOCATION: Osborn Room at Norwell Town Hall, telecast via Harbor Media with Zoom option
PANEL MEMBERS: Lois S. Barbour, Chair via Zoom
William J. Lazzaro
Stephen H. Lynch
OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT Ralph J. Rivkind, Clerk
Daniel M. Senteno
MEMBERS ABSENT Philip Y. Brown, Vice Chair
Nicholas K. Dean

On behalf of the Board of Appeals R. W. Galvin, Town Counsel: via Zoom arv. 8:10
Clifford J. Boehmer, AIA of Davis Square Architects via Zoom

15 High Street 40B Representatives Stephen Gallagher, Development Manager of Northland
Peter Freeman, Project Attorney

CALL TO ORDER: The public notice for the continued public hearing of the 15 High Street Comprehensive Permit application was read at 7:30 PM with introduction of the panel, including Members Barbour, Lazzaro, and Lynch.

7:30 P.M. Zoom participation instructions by Mr. Lynch

Information received and ZBA actions (since last meeting 9/9/21):

Traffic Working Group: Update by Bill Lazzaro, report posted on ZBA website for 15 High Street; Group purpose: Focus traffic issues already raised with public safety officials; thanked members who participated

Correspondence received and posted on 15 High Street webpages:

Town comments:

Community Housing Trust: 9/22/21

Public comments (written) Emails to Water Department from:

Roberts 9/17/21

Sheehan 9/17/21

Holmes 9/19/21

Roberts and Savoy 9/26/21 (letter to ZBA)

Therrien 9/27/21

Roberts and Savoy 9/27/21 revised (letter to ZBA)

Architectural Working Group: Mr. Lynch, Attorney Galvin, and Cliff Boehmer. Mr. Boehmer provided peer review, relating to concerns about site plan, setbacks; 9/15/21 deadline met with report posted on website and sent to Applicant.

Public Hearing DISCUSSION TOPIC: Architectural

PRESENTATION: Cliff Boehmer

- Fenuccio report of 3/31/21 should be reviewed; Boehmer supports many conclusions, especially the recommendations at the end
- Two important issues (external and internal) to help it fit better into the neighborhood
 - Difference between role of commercial and significant residential neighborhoods; commercial development in area could be considered amenities; walkability to nearby amenities
 - Limitations of existing infrastructure not recognized; need space for improving infrastructure to make space more conducive to walking
 - Streetscape: walkway currently deficient; move away from road and add plantings; make safe and pleasant for pedestrians
- Line between Town and developer responsibility for improvement to infrastructure
 - Pedestrian traffic needs to be away from roadway with adequate separation between walkway and residential buildings
 - Traffic calming strategies for High Street;
 - Entryways to development close to CVS and Kappy's
 - Crosswalk placement for access to CVS and Kappy's
 - Setback should be increased to provide additional options to Town for improvements; currently options are limited
 - No parking on High Street
- Internal Design concept works well but:
 - Program open-spaces; role of pavilion?
 - Community room?
 - Landscape screening on South side of property
 - Too close to High Street
 - Change orientation of development for broader open space and improved screening
 - Plantings along easement?

Board Comments and Questions to Applicant's consultants and Town's consultants

Applicant wants to incorporate concerns in updated drawings

- CHA report
- Traffic including public comments
- Will be taking additional traffic counts, based on COVID concerns

Future Meetings

- Mr. Gallagher of Northland discussed the following:
 - Traffic discussion will be ready for next meeting
 - Update drawings (cover on pipe varies from 7' at front to 11' at rear; mix in evergreen and deciduous trees for buffer – 10-12' material to begin)
 - Open Spaces and landscaping will be included in updates

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- Challenging to move buildings to meet other setbacks; not a perfect rectangle—narrower toward the back; if these adjustments are made, waivers would be needed. No dramatic changes anticipated for building movement
 - Civil, Architecture, and Waivers to be based upon final set of documents
- Member Barbour is happy peer review comments and recommendations will be addressed. Mr. Gallagher says traffic and then peer review responses with updated plans
- Member Barbour asked Town Counsel about holding working session meetings between designers and peer reviewers, which he encouraged.
- Member Lazzaro asked Mr. Boehmer about density and height of buildings proposed.
- Response by Mr. Boehmer is buildings are in spirit to smaller scale but larger toward the center with open space; nature of 40B development at larger scale than existing buildings nearby; density is number of units per acre is greater; setback from street helps larger buildings fit into streetscape; certainly exceeds what is close by; raises “intensity” versus “density” relates to open space and infrastructure or too close to wetlands; number of units can work as it can service residents; mitigation strategy close to working; working session ok but consider pushing buildings farther back would be helpful without pushing problem somewhere else should be pursued; all setbacks not equal. Suggestion buildings be rotate so different building types with same unit count with narrower units in buildings
- Member Lazzaro wondered about making units smaller or reducing number; similar to other projects or unique to this project?
- Mr. Boehmer suggested substitutes creating smaller units will likely be more acceptable from developer side but could impact pro forma.
- Member Lazzaro raised recent highway design, included in working group report
- Mr. Boehmer stated high quality residential development has good opportunity for connectivity
- Mr. Boehmer stated developer should provide comps. Mr. Gallagher stated

Upon a motion duly made and accepted, Members Barbour, Lazzaro, and Lynch **VOTED** to approve working groups to report back to the Board at the next public hearing.

Public Comments: Comments limited to architectural concerns only:

- Bill Lavery of 125 High Street: asking for any variances? Mr. Lynch responded that waiver discussion and votes are part of the process.
- Glenn Bernstein of 237 High Street: Take a ride out to Acton to see developments and also Wellesley; does SHI expire after ten years? Member Barbour confirmed that all 40B decisions require affordability in perpetuity.
- Charles Harkins of 26 Millwood Circle: Concerns about holiday parties and where excess cars will be parking; Member Lazzaro said guest parking
- Olivia Roberts of 105 High Street: Trying to keep in perspective how number of units will fit on 3.8 acres; behemoth in a very small space; how can it work?
- Michelle Harris of 39 Oak Street: Does not understand how everything can fit; concerned about parking spaces.
- Joy Lavery of 125 High Street: feels that too much is being squeezed in; developer should have looked for larger piece of land

- Rose Feneck of 148 High Street: wants to make sure report on Route 53 Corridor Study is on record
- Matthew Kwedor of 84 Ridge Hill Road: concerned about how traffic study is being crafted
- Kim Zayotti of 122 High Street: annoyed topic of meeting is not traffic; doesn't want 3-story buildings on High Street; developer hasn't met with neighbors to address concerns
- Kevin Roberts of 105 High Street: water concerns.
- Matt Zayotti of 122 High Street: why isn't density important to discussion; what steps could be taken to mitigate
- Response by Mr. Boehmer: can mitigate for density relating to Kim's comment; can mitigate height by moving farther back; 3rd floor within pitched-roof space, most people would perceive the height as 2 ½ stories rather than 3 of current proposal. Change units facing street to be lower. Does not talk about density because it is a ratio; some dense neighborhoods work well, where others do not. Higher unit count per acre is origin of 40B, because low-density restrictions restricting development of affordable housing; MHP supported through Project Eligibility Letter.
- Matt Zayotti of 122 High Street: What is process for waiver
- Michelle Harris of 39 Oak Street: developer question about how number of units arrive at; response: pro forma and other development considerations

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, Members Barbour, Lazzaro, and Lynch were individually polled and **VOTED** unanimously to continue the public hearing to Monday, October 18, 2021, at 7:15 P.M. at which time traffic will be the discussion topic.

These minutes have been approved with reading of the minutes waived by unanimous vote of the Board of Appeals at a public meeting duly held on 10/13/21 in accordance with M.G.L. c40A, Section 11, and the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

Signed:  Date: 10/13/21
As Clerk/Assistant Clerk

Next scheduled public hearings on this project:

Monday, October 18	Traffic
Thursday, October 21	Partial Review of drawing updates, including civil, landscape, and architectural peer review
Thursday, November 4	Waivers?

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