

TOWN OF DEDHAM
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

John R. Bethoney, Chair
Michael A. Podolski, Esq., Vice Chair
James E. O'Brien IV, Member
Jessica L. Porter, Member
James McGrail, Esq., Member
Ralph I. Steeves, Associate Member



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PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
July 8, 2020, 7 p.m., Zoom Video Conference

Present: John R. Bethoney, Chair
Jessica L. Porter
James McGrail, Esq.

Not Present: Ralph I. Steeves, Associate Member
Michael A. Podolski, Vice Chair
James E. O'Brien IV

Staff: Jeremy Rosenberger, Planning Director
Michelle Tinger, Community Planning and Engagement Specialist
Jennifer Doherty, Administrative Assistant

The Chairman of the Planning Board, Mr. John Bethoney, read a statement to open the Planning Board meeting:

“It being 7:00 pm, Wednesday, July 8, 2020, welcome everyone to the virtual public meeting of the Town of Dedham’s Planning Board.

Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Dedham’s Planning Board is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort has and will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order.

Members of the public may access this virtual webinar by going to **zoom.com**, select **Join A Meeting** in the right-hand corner, and enter Webinar ID: 930 2186 2082

In addition, Members of the public may phone into the webinar by dialing:

1-646-558-8656 and then enter Webinar ID: 930 2186 2082

The virtual forum is also live streaming on the Town of Dedham’s Planning & Zoning Facebook page. Furthermore, the meeting is broadcast live Dedham TV. Visit **dedhamtv.com** to watch online or find your local TV channels.”

The Chairman then went on to explain the procedures being conducted for a virtual meeting, and he introduced the Planning Board and took a roll call vote of the members present. It was noted that Attorney Podolski and Mr. O’Brien were on vacation with their families. Three members did constitute a quorum of the Planning Board.

75, 110 – 120 and 125 Stergis Way

Applicant: Nordblom Company

Project Address: 75, 110-120, and 125 Stergis Way

Zoning District: HB – Highway Business

Public Hearing for Definitive Subdivision Plan Approval by the Nordblom Company (Stergis Lots, 3, 4, and 5 Owner LLC). The Applicant is proposing a subdivision of three existing properties into four separate properties, along with reconfiguring the existing cul-de-sac on Stergis Way. The Subject Properties are located at 75, 110-120, and 125 Stergis Way, Map 393, Lots 3, 4 and 5 and are located within a Highway Business (HB) Zoning District. Continued from 4/8/2020 and proposed to be continued to 8/12/20.

The public Hearing had been continued from April 8, 2020. Jeremy Rosenberger, the Planning Director, stated that the applicant had asked for additional time to address comments from the peer reviewer and the Town of Dedham’s engineer. The applicant requested a continuance to August 12, 2020. The Chairman asked if there were any questions from the Board. There were none. The Chairman asked if there were any questions from any member of the public, and there were none.

Jessica Porter made a motion to continue the hearing until August 12, 2020. The motion was seconded by Jim McGrail. The Chairman then took a roll call vote:

Jessica Porter – yes

Jim McGrail – yes

John Bethoney – yes

The motion passed unanimously, 3-0.

Old Business/New Business

MBTA

The Planning Board had received a letter from Eric Shire of the MBTA in response to their letter asking for additional information on the bus shelter slated for the areas of Richards Street and Washington Street. The Chairman had asked Mr. Rosenberger to share that letter with the Board Members, and this had been done prior to the meeting. Mr. McGrail stated that the letter indicated there would not be a shelter, benches, or any land taking in the stated area, and in fact the MBTA had wished to increase safety through crosswalks, and additional handicap measures. He considered all of these efforts to be a positive outcome. He suggested that the Planning Director send a thank you letter to the MBTA representative for addressing the Planning Board's inquires. The Chairman and Mr. McGrail asked that the Town of Dedham Engineer and Director of the DPW weigh in on the project and indicate if they concur that the project is innocuous. Ms. Porter wished to clarify that the neighbors were not opposed to a bus stop in that location, as there was a bus stop already close by. The neighbors and the board had previously had concerns about the bus stop being moved, and a possible shelter being erected, which could have caused safety issues. This was no longer a concern, as the MBTA representative had cleared up the issue.

Passive Recreation

Mr. Bethoney wished to address the passive recreation for the town. Mr. McGrail stated " ...as you noted, there's been a lot of conversation from the Planning Board over the years on this particular topic, and there's been a lot accomplished, quite honestly. And I

think it's things that too often in we tend to focus on the negative as opposed to the positive and all the good things that have been accomplished and certainly there have been many. But in this particular instance, what I wanted to talk about a little bit, we had this election that was just held. And kudos to the people in the Town of Dedham, for coming out in what appears to be record numbers. And with all this going on with the pandemic, great job by Paul Munchbach and his team to make the process as seamless as it was. And as a result, it gave an opportunity for so many people in the town to weigh in on the Rail Trail question, and there was support on both sides of the issue and people were passionate about where they were coming from. And this particular instance the people that were opposed to the rail trail along its present proposed location had more votes, not by a lot, but they did, and elections have consequences. My feeling on this particular issue is, when I talk to people throughout the town, is that people that were opposed to this particular rail trail that was on the ballot explained that they're not opposed to bike trails, and walking paths and things of the sort, that they'd like to see those things as part of the town landscape. They think they do add to property values and quality of life in the community. I think in the best interest of the town, the rail trail in its current location has become a very divisive and dividing topic in this community. It's really time to bring people back together. And I think that the Planning Board now has a role that can help in that process. I think we have locations along Route One, and Providence Highway from the West Roxbury line to the Marine Rotary that are a perfect opportunity to create walking paths, and bike paths that tie into the Charles River, would get rid of a lot of pavement that exists in that road and there's no neighbors there. There are commercial tenants, but there are no property owners. It shouldn't be controversial. And you could tie Dedham Square into Millennium Park down in West Roxbury. And along the river there's so many great opportunities there. Look at Wigwam Pond. I know the Planning Board has talked about that at length for many years, to try and create recreational opportunities for the people in town. It's a beautiful asset, and we really should be tying in. I know that Representatives Paul McMurry and State Senator Michael Rush have received \$150,000 for the Providence Highway Corridor and they've received \$50,000 for the Wigwam Pond area. We should be looking at bringing the opponents of the rail trail and the advocates of the rail trail together to work with both parties and see if we can't come up with a plan that works

for the whole town of Dedham that unites people and creates great opportunities and added amenities to both Wigwam Pond and Providence Highway between the Marine Rotary and the West Roxbury line. I just think that's a home run. And I would love for this board to have a united front on expressing that to see if we can be a catalyst to help bring people together and accomplish great things with those two projects. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.”

John Bethoney replied that he did have a lengthy discussion with Representative Paul McMurty about the Route One Corridor Study. They discussed collaborating with the Planning Board for upgrades and opportunities for walking trails, connections to the Charles River, and Millennium Park. Representative McMurtry and Mr. Rush were in favor of working with the Planning Board and the Town of Dedham on these matters.

Jessica Porter wished to reiterate that the Planning Board would not have this effort be limited to proponents and opponents of the Rail Trail but she would like to see the Board reach out to both of those groups and put the community at large to work on this. The Planning Board historically had been really active in finding opportunities when developments are occurring to do these kinds of plans. She stated it had also been in the Master Plan. The Master Plan had a goal of really increasing connectivity and creating a network of trails and paths. She felt that in the times of the pandemic people really appreciated walking and biking more, and also appreciated significantly less traffic. So anytime we can provide connections that allow people to get someplace by walking or biking as opposed to with a car, she felt it helped the whole community.

Chairman Bethoney fully supported a letter on behalf of the Board that collaborated on this matter and showed a unified front.

Town Meeting Articles

The Chairman wished to address the Town Meeting scheduled for August 10th. The Planning Board had a total of six articles to be heard. As a result of the Covid pandemic and the Governor’s orders the Town Manager, the Assistant Town Manager, and the Town

Moderator had requested that the articles be postponed to the November Town Meeting in an effort to keep the meeting as short as possible.

There was a short discussion about deferring the articles, and therefore the Public Hearings leading up to the Zoning Articles.

Ms. Porter made a motion to defer all Zoning Articles to the November Town Meeting.

The motion was seconded by Mr. McGrail, and a roll call vote was taken.

Jessica Porter – yes

Jim McGrail – yes

John Bethoney – yes

The motion passed unanimously, 3-0. The Chairman also made note that he had spoken with Mr. Podolski and Mr. O'Brien about this issue previously and they both agreed to defer the articles as well.

Ms. Porter made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. McGrail and a roll call vote was taken.

Jessica Porter – yes

Jim McGrail – yes

John Bethoney – yes

The motion passed unanimously, 3-0 and the meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.