

PLANNING BOARD

John R. Bethoney, Chair
Michael A. Podolski, Esq., Vice Chair
James E. O'Brien IV, Clerk
Jessica L. Porter
James McGrail, Esq.
Andrew Pepoli, Associate

Planning Director
Jeremy Rosenberger



Dedham Town Hall
450 Washington Street
Dedham, MA 02026
Phone 781-751-9240

Administrative Assistant
Jennifer Doherty

Assistant Town Planner
Michelle Tinger

**TOWN OF DEDHAM
450 WASHINGTON STREET
DEDHAM, MA**

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD MEETING
VIRTUAL
SEPTEMBER 8, 2021, 6:00 P.M.**

BOARD MEMBERS:

John R. Bethoney	Chair
Michael A. Podolski, Esq.	Vice-Chair
James E. O'Brien IV	Member
Jessica L. Porter	Member
Jim McGrail, Esq.	Member
Andrew Pepoli	Associate Member

PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF:

Jeremy Rosenberger	Planning Director
Jennifer Doherty	Administrative Assistant
Michelle Tinger	Assistant Town Planner

GUESTS:

Steve Findlen	Senior Project Manager, McMahon and Associates
John Sisson	Economic Development Officer, Town of Dedham

SREG MANAGEMENT LLC REPRESENTATIVES:

Kevin Hampe	Attorney, representing Saletin Real Estate Group
Cris Crecelius	Principal, Saletin Real Estate Group
Jeff Saletin	Principal, Saletin Real Estate Group
Brandon Carr	Project Engineer, Sr. Project Manager, DiPrete Eng.
Rolf Biggers	Project Architect, BMA Architectural Group

OLD GROVE PARTNERS, LLC & WIGHT POND I AND II LLC REPRESENTATIVES:

Peter A. Zhaka	Attorney, representing the Applicant
----------------	--------------------------------------

DEDHAM POLO AND COUNTRY CLUB REPRESENTATIVES:

Peter A. Zhaka	Attorney representing the Applicant
Ryan Kenney	General Manager, Dedham Polo and Country Club
John Dubois	Vice President, Dedham Polo and Country Club
Robert Penchel	Building Committee Chair
Robert Olsen	Architect, Robert Olsen and Associates
Fred Keylor	Civil Engineer, HW Moore Associates
Steven Deglaski	Owner's Representative

Minutes prepared by Angela Fracassi of Minutes Solutions Inc. from a video recording.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Bethoney called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and explained the meeting procedures and protocol to the public.

2. CONTINUATION OF A PUBLIC HEARING

95 Eastern Avenue - Saletin Real Estate Group (SREG) Management LLC

Mr. Rosenberger summarized the events of the last public meeting regarding the application.

Mr. Hampe stated that the Applicant was granted variances for height and floor ratio from the Zoning Board of Appeals. He stated that the hotel is intended primarily for business travelers and is not intended for transitional housing nor long-term stays, as the rooms would not have kitchens.

Mr. Saletin stated that both Marriott and Hilton were interested in the site, however, a decision cannot be made until the regulatory process is complete. He explained that the SREG will own and run the hotel, regardless of which franchise it chooses. The hotel would not have a bar or restaurant, would contain 120 rooms, and would be located close to Dedham Square so that guests could eat locally. The Chair opened the floor to questions from the Board.

Mr. Podolski inquired if microwaves and refrigerators will be included in the room.

Mr. Saletin stated that the brand standards for Hilton and Marriott require both to be included in the rooms.

Mr. Podolski inquired if the Applicant would state in the Certificate of Action that long-term stays would not be permitted.

Mr. Saletin agreed to cap the amount of time a guest can stay and suggested a limit of 30 days.

Mr. Podolski inquired which amenities would be offered.

Mr. Saletin stated there would not be a pool, but there would be a gym, and breakfast will be offered. There will not be any other meals served, besides snacks, such as cookies and beverages.

Mr. Podolski inquired about repairing and maintaining "Lechmere Road", which is privately owned by SREG and leads to the hotel.

Mr. Saletin stated that the SREG would maintain the road, and perform repairs as needed.

Mr. Podolski inquired if SREG will include in the Certificate of Action that road repairs would be conducted on “Lechmere Road” during the construction process.

Mr. Saletin answered that would not be possible because the road will be continuously repaired on an as-needed basis.

Mr. Podolski inquired if all floors will have the same number of rooms.

Mr. Biggers explained that the lower floors will have fewer rooms.

Mr. Podolski inquired about the choice to build a six-story building rather than five.

Mr. Biggers explained that the site required a taller building rather than a wider building due to soil conditions. Had site conditions been different, the building may have been designed to be five stories, with a larger square footage per floor. He added that hotels tend to have lower ceiling heights than apartments, so six stories of hotel was typically just as tall as a five-story apartment building.

Mr. O’Brien requested clarification on the site conditions that require a six-story building.

Mr. Carr explained that the soil conditions require deep foundations that essentially must meet bedrock. Expanding upward rather than outward reduces costs significantly and expanding the foundation further outward would be prohibitively expensive. Additionally, the first floor must be elevated above the flood plain, which also impacts foundation costs.

Chairman Bethoney inquired about the average grade.

Mr. Carr responded that the average grade around the hotel was 89.5 feet and the top of the elevator penthouse was 151 feet, so the height is approximately 61 feet from grade, and presented a diagram showing the various heights of the building.

Chairman Bethoney inquired if Mr. Findlen’s peer review had the same findings regarding the soil.

Mr. Findlen clarified that soil conditions are outside of the peer reviewer’s scope, and anything underground is reviewed by the Conservation Commission.

Ms. Porter inquired about the noise emitted from the exhaust fans on the roof.

Mr. Biggers answered that they will not create significant noise.

Ms. Porter advised the Applicant’s to repair “Lechmere Road” and make it safer for pedestrians.

Mr. Saletin responded that they would have to discuss it with the abutter’s Pearl Group who have an easement on the road.

Chairman Bethoney suggested that the Applicant would need to work with Pearl Group, otherwise, they may need to renegotiate the easement contract.

Chairman Bethoney noted that the Board previously suggested infrastructure improvements to the intersection leading to Dedham Square, and to improve pedestrian safety in this area.

Mr. Saletin responded that the hotel would offer a first-class shuttle operating to-and-from Dedham Square, and the team will continue looking at ways to improve pedestrian safety.

Chairman Bethoney inquired about the benefits to the community.

Mr. Saletin responded that a hotel would grow the neighborhood, would spur revitalization, would improve an area that has been an eyesore for some time, and would address the issues with “Lechmere Road”, and create construction and hospitality jobs.

Mr. Sisson presented an overview of his report regarding the economic effects of the hotel. He stated that existing hotels that serve the area generate significant revenue for the town of Dedham. The greater the commercial tax base in the town of Dedham, the better it is for the homeowners, as the commercial tax rate is nearly double the residential rate. Hotels are taxed at a different rate than other commercial properties and tend to be taxed as much, if not more, than other commercial properties.

Over a 10-year period, it was estimated that the hotel would generate approximately \$4 million in tax revenue for the town and would contribute to the Robin Reyes Fund. It would also create new jobs, with an estimated annual hotel payroll of \$800,000. Due to the proximity to retail, food, and entertainment, increased spending in the surrounding area is expected. In comparison, the property as-is would generate \$400,000 in taxes over a 10-year period. He presented statistics regarding incident reports for each hotel that serve Dedham.

Chairman Bethoney opened the floor to questions from the Board.

Chair Bethoney noted that Mr. Sisson expressed his support for the hotel to the Zoning Board of Appeals and inquired if that statement of support was made prior to or after the completion of his report and inquired if Mr. Sisson had ever spoken for or against another proposed development in front of a regulatory body in the past.

Mr. Sisson responded that he made the statement after the bulk of the research had been completed, but prior to releasing the final draft of the report. He reiterated that his belief that the hotel would be a worthwhile investment for the town of Dedham. He stated that he had spoken for and against proposed development in the past, and the benefits of this property significantly outweigh the expense to the town.

Chairman Bethoney opened the floor to questions from the public.

Steven Greenbaum representing Pearl Realty Group stated that that Pearl Realty is in favor of the hotel project, and thanked Mr. Saletin for insisting that "Lechmere Road" is privately owned. He stated that Pearl Realty is not responsible for contributing to the maintenance or repairs of the road.

Chairman Bethoney directed Mr. Greenbaum to speak directly to the Applicant regarding the terms of their agreement.

Robert O'Connell, Jersey Street, stated his support of the project; however, 68 feet is out of character for Dedham, and should not be permitted.

Sarah Smeagle, 150 Monroe Street, stated that she is concerned about the height of the building and the precedent it may set.

There were no further questions or comments from the public.

Mr. Saletin stated that the hotel would contribute to the local Robin Reyes Fund, whereas other commercial businesses would not. Also, the hotel will favor Dedham residents for jobs and for contract and construction services.

Chairman Bethoney thanked Mr. Saletin and stated that these items will be discussed in the conditions phase.

Chairman Bethoney inquired the height of each floor, and how many rooms would be eliminated should the hotel be built with five stories instead of six.

Mr. Biggers explained that each floor is approximately 9 feet and losing one floor would eliminate approximately 25 rooms. A business hotel under 100 rooms is generally not profitable. He added that the building itself is actually 60 feet, and the additional eight feet is for additional rooftop appurtenances.

Mr. Saletin added that if the hotel cannot be six stories, the proposed development will likely not move forward.

Mr. Biggers added that there are trees surrounding the building that are taller than the building itself, and the Applicant took Mr. Sinese's suggestions into account and added reflective glass to the upper floors of the building which will also mitigate the taller height.

Mr. Pepoli inquired why 100 rooms are necessary.

Mr. Biggers explained that the proposed hotel is a business class hotel and not leisure. It will not generate revenue from a bar or restaurant, therefore over 100 rooms are required to be sufficiently profitable.

The Board agreed to consider supporting the project and its proposed height, provided the Applicant can commit to repairing "Lechmere Road", improving the pedestrian crossing on Route 1 leading to Dedham Square, provide the Planning Board with the report regarding the soil conditions, and can present the original and most recent renderings of the building at the next hearing.

On a motion made by Mr. McGrail, seconded by Ms. Porter, it was resolved to continue the public hearing regarding 95 Eastern Avenue on October 13, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. A roll call vote was conducted. Motion carried unanimously.

**3. DETERMINATION OF APPROVAL NOT REQUIRED
146, 188, and 216 Lowder Street and 125 Stoney Lea Road – Old Grove Partners, LLC & Wight Pond I & II, LLC**

And Approval not Required (ANR) was before the Board. Jeremy Rosenberger recommended the Board's endorsement of the proposal on 146, 188, and 216 Lowder Street, and 125 Stoney Lea Road. Mr. McGrail inquired if the Applicant needed any further approvals from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Mr. Zhaka explained that the Applicant will be before the ZBA in late October 2021 for approval of a retaining wall.

On a motion made by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Ms. Porter, it was resolved to endorse the ANR on 146, 188, and 216 Lowder Street and 125 Stoney Lea Road, as presented. A roll call vote was conducted. Motion carried unanimously.

**4. SCOPING SESSION
120, 124 and 293 Country Club Road – Dedham Country and Polo Club**

Mr. Zhaka stated that the Applicant proposed improvements to the facility and the intention of the renovations is not to expand club membership.

Mr. Olsen presented the existing conditions and outlined the three parts of the project: renovation of the clubhouse, replacement of the paddle building, and constructing a golf learning area. The proposal contained 11,000 square feet of new construction.

Mr. Keylor added that reconfiguration of the walkways would also be added, additional seating areas, and that all walkways and buildings would be fully accessible. He noted that the Applicant

would also need to present to the Conservation Commission regarding the storm drainage system and parking lot.

Mr. Zhaka requested that the Planning Board waive the need for peer review, a waiver for traffic and access report, landscaping plan, and polar diagram since no changes will be made to the landscaping and lighting, or the number of cars entering and exiting the site.

Chairman Bethoney opened the floor to questions from the Board.

Ms. Porter advised that in future meetings she would be asking questions regarding sustainability and energy use.

Chairman Bethoney asked Mr. Findlen if his firm had performed a peer review of the property in 2015.

Mr. Findlen confirmed that his firm performed a peer review in 2015 and no waivers were required at that time. All issues identified in the peer review were resolved by the Applicant.

Mr. Podolski inquired if expanding the kitchen area would attract more non-members to the site for special events.

Mr. Kenney stated that the clubhouse hosts very few special events that attract non-members. The club has averaged fewer than one wedding per year. The seating capacity will not be increased. When there is a wedding on-site, typically it is during the evening hours when the golf course is not available. Additionally, the club requires that any wedding establish ride-share to and from the local hotels.

On a motion made by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Mr. McGrail, it was resolved to waive the traffic and access review requirement, the landscape review requirement, the polar diagram requirement, and the site plan review requirement. A roll call vote was conducted. Motion carried unanimously.

5. FALL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES

The Board reviewed and discussed the Draft Affordable Housing Trust bylaws and Short-Term Rentals Zoning Amendment for the Fall 2021 Town Meeting. Mr. Rosenberger provided the Board with the necessary documents that included the changes discussed in previous meetings. Additionally, he presented a proposed zoning amendment regarding the short-term rental of private swimming pools. The Chair noted that the proposed zoning amendments do not require a motion for approval because they have not yet held a public hearing. The Board had no objections nor suggested edits to the zoning amendments.

Mr. Rosenberger noted that a public hearing regarding the zoning amendments will be held on October 13, 2021. The Chair asked that all Board members be prepared to vote on October 13, 2021.

On a motion made by Mr. Podolski, seconded by Ms. Porter, it was resolved to approve the Affordable Housing Trust Bylaws as presented. A roll call vote was conducted. Motion carried unanimously.

6. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

On a motion made by Mr. McGrail, seconded by Ms. Porter, it was resolved to defer the approval of the meeting minutes to a future meeting. A roll call vote was conducted. Motion carried unanimously.

7. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

Amazon Hearing: Mr. Rosenberger confirmed that public notice was given to members of the public by mail and e-mail in advance of the meeting with Amazon on September 22, 2021.

Appointment to Active Transportation Working Group:

On a motion made by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Ms. Porter, it was resolved to appoint Mr. McGrail to the Active Transportation Working Group. A roll call vote was conducted. Motion carried unanimously.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Planning Board was scheduled for September 22, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

9. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. McGrail, seconded by Ms. Porter, it was resolved to adjourn the meeting at 9:57 p.m. A roll call vote was conducted. Motion carried unanimously.

DISCLAIMER

The above minutes should be used as a summary of the motions passed and issues discussed at the meeting of the Planning Board. This document shall not be considered a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.