

**TOWN OF EXETER
PLANNING BOARD
NOWAK ROOM
JANUARY 23, 2025
APPROVED MINUTES
7:00 PM**

I. PRELIMINARIES:

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT BY ROLL CALL: Chair Langdon Plumer, Vice-Chair Aaron Brown, Clerk, John Grueter, Gwen English, Jennifer Martel, Nancy Belanger Select Board Representative and Alternate Mary Kennedy

STAFF PRESENT: Town Planner Dave Sharples

II. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Plumer called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and introduced the members.

III. OLD BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – *Tabled*

January 9, 2025

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Continued public hearing on the application of Green & Company for site plan review and Wetlands Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a proposed Mixed-Use Neighborhood Development (MUND) project consisting of a townhouse development (off Haven Lane) with thirty-two (32) three-bedroom units, a four-story mixed-use building on Portsmouth Avenue having 4,418 S.F. commercial use on the first floor and thirty-six (36) one-bedroom units above, and one separate duplex structure with three-bedroom units on Haven Lane, along with associated site improvements. The subject property is located at 76 Portsmouth Avenue
C-2, Highway Commercial zoning district
Tax Map Parcel #65-118
PB Case #24-8.

Chair Plumer indicated that the applicant has requested a continuance.

Mr. Grueter continued Planning Board Case #24-8 to the February 27, 2025 Planning Board meeting at 7:00 PM at the Nowak Room. Ms. Belanger seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

2. Continued public hearing on the application of RiverWoods Company at Exeter for site plan review and Wetland CUP application for the demolition of the existing administrative building and the proposed construction of the new supportive living health center along with associated site improvement on the property located at 5 White Oak Drive.

R-1, Low Density Residential zoning district

Tax Map Parcel #97-23

PB Case #24-16.

Chair Plumer read out loud the Public Hearing Notice.

Town Planner Dave Sharples noted that the applicant had appeared on November 21, 2024 and December 19, 2024 and there was a site walk on December 12, 2024. The applicant is seeking approval of a site plan and Wetlands Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application for the demolition of the existing administrative building and proposed new supportive living health center along with associated site improvement on the property. At the December 19th meeting the Board has for additional information: revised landscaping plan, density calculations (allowed number of units, number of units built & number of surplus remaining), a Master Plan narrative and plan of construction sequence, contractor parking and laydown areas for construction. The applicant submitted revised plans and supporting documents dated January 15, 2025 which will be reviewed by town staff and the town's third party engineer Underwood Engineering (UEI).

Attorney Sharon Somers noted that Justine Vogel the CEO of Riverwoods was present as well as Eric Saari, Robbie Woodburn, and Tom Severino of Severino Construction.

Eric Saari of Altus Engineering noted minor changes to the plans. He noted there was a lot of lighting that would be off at 10 PM and some dimming to 30% for safety in the parking lot. A motion sensor is being considered. Mr. Saari noted that DES made wetland comments and AoT had minor comments. They are working with DOT on their comments.

Robbie Woodburn discussed screening of the proposed building. She noted additional evergreen trees would be added and displayed slides of Kingston Road and Route 111, she showed existing 67 Kingston Road's house where parking will be. She showed the current White Oak Drive and noted the utility pole will be gone. She showed vegetation at street level and the intersection of Pickpocket Road which is most impacted by the new site. She noted the types of trees and shrubs proposed, many of which are native species, to screen the corner of the building, the top left, across from Mr. Murray's house, the parking and screening for the building. She noted the wet field proposed challenges and proposed red maples and disease resistant elms. She showed the view across Ms. Hooten's field and of Riverwoods Drive to White Oak in the winter. She showed the architectural rendering of the entry and portico, and two-story atrium, proposed.

Tom Severino of Severino Trucking Co. reviewed the four stages of construction to get the site ready for the building, parking and lay down areas on the east side of White Oak Drive and in front of the administration building. He noted that during phase 2 the parking lot would be used for construction parking and during construction of the underground parking and garage excavation, frost walls they

would use that as a lay down parking area. In phase 3 they would use the new parking lot and the laydown area would be on White Oak Drive. During phase 4 there would be temporary parking on gravel.

Vice-Chair Brown noted the evergreens along Route 111 shown as 20.'

Chair Plumer noted the kiosk area by the guard house, that the town asked the park to be available to residents.

Ms. English asked if anyone talked to Ruth Hotten about screening. Ms. Woodburn apologized for not remembering. Attorney Somers noted that the engineer had conversations with her early on and she preferred to have discussions at these meetings.

Ms. English questioned if the viburnums would tolerate snow plowing.

Bob Prior of Pickpocket Road read a letter and asked if conditions of approval could include no construction traffic or parking of Timber Lane. He noted the vehicles come in early. He asked for no parking on Pickpocket and other public roads. He noted that in 2011 the administration building was moved, and the park was put in for recreation, but a pickleball court is not a vegetated buffer and the idea is to screen the property. He would like to see the pickleball court moved. He questioned how long Riverwoods would have to be responsive to renew and maintain the screening and who would monitor it.

Mr. Prior stated that he felt these buildings in the R-1 low density zoning, should have ZBA review. He reviewed the history of special exceptions for every stage except this one and referenced the Zoning Board of Adjustment's conditions of approval including a maximum of 15 employees, a maximum footprint of 5,500 SF and maximum area of 6,800 SF with 21 parking spaces. Now there are 100 employees, a 50,000 SF footprint and 170,000 SF building with 131 parking spaces in the R-1 zone without ZBA approval. The applicant applied for a variance to eliminated beds and for the off-site skilled nursing care and both were denied in January of 2023. He stated that moving forward in a piece meal basis doesn't work. He asked what the plans were for the homes they purchased on Kingston Road and Pickpocket Road. He asked if the administration offices were going to be moved to one of those.

Mr. Prior reviewed the history of the lot line adjustment merging two parcels on Kingston Road. He indicated the Board could not approve a plan that did not conform to the zoning ordinance without ZBA approval and requested a continuance until the discrepancy was resolved.

Ms. English noted she was baffled as well and questioned if the ball got dropped. She noted it was not a permitted use, the parcels were all separate at one time but that doesn't mean they can continue to keep expanding if it is not permitted and hoped someone would look at it.

Attorney Somers indicated they received a court order only yesterday and they sought the relief they were told was needed which did not include a special exception. The merger of the Grinnell property appeal by Mr. Prior was dismissed. She noted they asked the administrative decision to be codified.

There was an appeal to Superior Court as of yesterday. The Town of Exeter and Riverwoods filed a request that it be dismissed yesterday and this is now a settled matter, litigated to a conclusion and cannot be reopened.

Attorney Somers noted that they were busy with the Durham project and there was not a lot of opportunity right now to develop additional property.

Mr. Sharples noted that the zoning ordinance is under the purview of the building inspector, and he has the final say and had a reason why the special exception was not required.

Vice-Chair Brown noted in the March 5, 2024 letter Mr. Eastman indicated no special exception was required and if the buildings went above 35' would need a variance for height and if not the building is permitted as a matter of right which seems consistent with what Mr. Sharples recalled and Attorney Somers testified.

Barbara Freeman of 6 Sandstone Way agreed with Mr. Prior that there must have been a slip up and the Board should have sent it back if a special exception is required to expand an enormous building in the R-1 zone, an urban building in the R-1 zone. She opined that Riverwoods needs to scale down this building and while she did not oppose the separate health care facility the building is out of scale. Ms. Freeman noted the importance of not isolating the residents and keeping them in the community.

Mr. Prior indicated the ZBA only denied the height and setback application and his appeal was dismissed because the time expired. He requested the ZBA weigh in.

Bob Cully noted he and his wife, Anne lived at Boulders and the building doesn't belong in the residential character of the neighborhood. He noted he was disappointed in the impact on the residents who believed they had lifetime contracts. He noted there was a significant increase in employees, traffic and the conversion of health units to individual living units should be part of the approval. A fresh review should be had. He noted that residents would be subjected to living in a construction zone for the next six years and many won't live to the end of the project and not focused on abutters with a significant investment in their homes.

Susan Desjardins of Holland Way noted she was the Chair of the Riverwoods CCRC. She noted that they had a duty of care. She noted they received several letters from concerned residents and discussed and responded. She noted the goals of the 2016 analysis which indicated a lack of memory care, she noted the difficulty finding staff post-COVID, the transportation plan and assisted living units near their spouse. She noted their goal was to do better.

John Maull of 21 Colonial Way, off Kingston Road, indicated the building was outside of the footprint and not appropriate on the rural, scenic road. He felt that there is an expansion in the guise of building a health care facility. He estimated 75 units at \$700,000/unit and 115 new residences at \$5,000 per month, a big financial component, at the cost of the neighborhood. He stated that the building was oversized. He noted the ZBA should have ruled on the appropriateness. One of their approval conditions was to have onsite care.

Susan ____ questioned how often people visit, if anyone has really studied that. She reviewed some of her visits to other residents and health care on a regular basis.

Steve of Kingston Road asked to see the view from Grant's driveway. He opined that the trees were 40-50 years old and going to die, that you could see right through them. He stated that it would take 13.5 years for western cedars to grown 35.' He noted that he was not in favor of the Pickleball Court and it could be located someplace else, screening should be 40' tall and would like to see Balsam Fir and Black Spruce on 111.

Ann ____, a resident of Riverwoods since 2021 served on the Strategic Planning Committee and is Vice-Chair of the Resident Council. She noted a healthcare center if vital to continuing care and hiring post-COVID. She stated there were changes in Medicare. She supported the center being built.

Mr. Grueter noted this was the first time Medicare was mentioned and asked if there were any effect. Ms. Vogel indicated there is no bearing on what Riverwoods is trying to do and the number of beds has shrunk and memory care is by private pay.

Lisa, who lives off Pickpocket Road, requested the Board preserve and defend the character of their neighborhood.

Eric Saari explained drainage in the areas of Ms. Hooten's property and Grant's yard. He noted the bioretention pond and treatment of runoff. He stated that the town engineer reviewed the plan and comments were addressed.

Ruth Hooten expressed concerns with the wetland and pond and hill above her. She said the stream fed to the Exeter River and she didn't see how they would put trees there. She was concerned about the new trees blocking her view when she enters route 111.

Glen (and Matthew) noted he lives in a family neighborhood and his property was his biggest investment. He expressed concerns with lighting, lengthy construction, and tractors who he provided a video of going down the road at 6 AM and are very loud. Chair Plumer noted they could not say if they were related to this project. He noted the building is too big and a significant change from what is there now. He expressed concerns with traffic from 75 more units, the enjoyment of his property and devaluation of a lot of abutting properties.

Ms. Woodburn noted trees will be planted 30' back from the end of the road and not be in site view. There is a swale there and trees are not being planted on her land and are appropriate for the location.

Chair Plumer stated that four letters were received, from: Nancy Fleming on 12/23, two from Barbara Freeman of 6 Sandstone Lane and from David and Ann Cully of 4 Timber Lane.

The hearing was closed to public comment at 9:13 PM.

Ms. Belanger noted questions were not answered about the length of construction and when planting is happening and construction vehicles. Ms. Woodburn noted that plantings are usually done last and while it is not her call, some could be planted sooner in some areas. Mr. Saari indicated White Oak Drive will remain open, and they are not forcing anyone to go any other way than they are going now. Hours of construction will be from 7 AM to 5 PM.

Ms. Belanger asked about police details on 111. Mr. Saari indicated they would only be used for off-site improvements.

Ms. English reviewed calculations on the maximum number of units, 141 surplus units, 75 units spread across campus and the new facility. Mr. Saari indicated no plans for a complete build out. Ms. English noted that when she questioned their master plan, she was asking for what the newly purchased properties on Pickpocket Road and 111 would be used for. Ms. Vogel noted there were no plans to use them for offices or other units. The plan is to rent space off site.

Vice-Chair Brown appreciated the landscape presentation and screening. He asked why the Pickleball Court was still there and if there were other places to put that or if it were required to be there. Ms. Woodburn indicated it was part of the initial planning process, and they looked for another good place and couldn't find one. It is an asset to the residents and Exeter residents. Mr. Grueter questioned whether residents would want that noise next to the new facility. He agreed it seemed strange to keep the Pickleball Court and it would look better and make a lot of people happy to keep the noise down. Mr. Kennedy agreed with the court being eliminated but many residents use it.

Ms. Martel agreed the landscaping presentation was excellent, and that planting doesn't need to be 35' tall to screen a building. She asked that the packet include a detailed plan set.

Ms. English expressed concerns with traffic and pedestrian use to the health care center. Attorney Somers referenced the robust shuttle service.

Mr. Sharples noted that the application was accepted November 21, 2024 and they had 65 days to act on it per state law. He noted the applicant can agree to an extension. Attorney Somers agreed to the extension with public comment closed. She noted the maintenance of plant materials, not to use or divert traffic or parking to Timber Lane or Pickpocket could be a condition they could accommodate with parking on site.

Vice-Chair Brown motioned to continue the application to the February 13, 2025 Planning Board meeting at 7:00 PM at the Nowak Room. Mr. Grueter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

3. The application of StoneArch Development for site plan review of a proposal for the redevelopment of the property located at 112 Front Street. The proposal includes the demolition of the existing buildings and new construction of seventeen (17) townhouse style condominium units and associated site improvements.

C-1, Central Area Commercial zoning district

Tax Map Parcel #73-14

PB Case #24-17.

Chair Plumer read out loud the Public Hearing Notice and asked if the case was ready to be heard. Mr. Sharples indicated the case was ready for review purposes.

Ms. English motioned to open Planning Board Case #24-17. Ms. Belanger seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Sharples indicated the application was for a multi-family site plan review application for the redevelopment of 112 Front Street. The existing structure would be demolished and there would be 17 townhouse condominium units and associated site improvements in the C-1 zone. Plans and supporting documents dated December 10th were submitted. There was a Technical Review Committee meeting on January 9th and UEI comments on January 10th. He noted that density calculations were submitted with plans yesterday that he hasn't had a chance to look at yet. Demolition permit was applied for in September and the Heritage Commission met on September 17th and recommended to not demolish but they are advisory only. There are two waivers being requested.

Christian Smith of Beals Associates noted John O'Neil and Sam Makarkur were present. He posted plans showing the previous home and barn and existing driveway. He noted there will be a waiver for grading within 5' of property line. He noted Gove did the test pits, drainage and soil tests. The parcel is on town water, sewer and gas. There will be pervious walkways and stormwater infiltration ponds going to groundwater. Four buildings are proposed, two with four units, one with three and one with five. He noted there will be screening. He displayed architectural renderings depicting Front Street and the proposed driveway.

Mr. O'Neil noted there will be two car garages in the back of the buildings, which are 24'x40' wood sided, just under 35.' There will be fences, screening and landscaping. Decks are enclosed 9'x12.' There will be screening with fence for the abutter near the driveway.

Mr. Smith noted lighting will be motion sensor. Foot candles are zero at the property line. There is private trash collection, no dumpsters.

Ms. English asked about snow storage and Mr. Smith referenced the parking plan.

Lisa expressed concerns about the impact of 17 families on the footprint, sewer, traffic, and other resources in town. She questioned the C-1 schedule of dimensional requirements.

Charlie French of 9 Gill Street asked about zoning in the C-1 for 17 units and screening. He asked about the retention ponds and mosquitoes, the impacts of runoff and salt. He was glad to hear about fencing and asked about traffic and commercial setbacks. He noted it was already difficult to turn left when the tech school gets out.

Mrs. French of 9 Gill Street expressed concerns with mature plantings in her yard.

Randy Daley the cemetery supervisor asked if construction noise could be stopped during funerals which take about half an hour. Mr. O'Neil said to contact him and he would make sure they were quiet during a funeral. He asked if the fence on the cemetery side could be constructed early.

Mr. Smith noted the project would take approximately one year and he will have the traffic engineers come to the next meeting. He noted the ponds are not detention ponds, they are infiltration ponds and water would not remain after 72 hours.

Mr. Smith noted there would be a waiver requested for reducing the 24' wide drive aisle. He noted DPW is part of TRC and felt the capacity of the sewer and water was enough to serve the property.

Bill Campbell of 7 Riverwoods Drive was concerned with the large development in the surrounding neighborhood with 35-50 new people. Merrill House was 25' high and this will be 35' and on 1.8 acres with no space for recreation.

Jim of 5 Gill Street noted the committee that recommended against tearing down the house and questioned the purpose of their public hearings.

Vice-Chair Brown recommended a site walk be scheduled. The Board agreed on February 6, 2025 at 8 AM and to meet at 112 Front Street.

Vice-Chair Brown motioned to continue the application to the February 13, 2025 Planning Board meeting at 7 PM at the Nowak Room. Ms. Belanger seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

- Master Plan Discussion
- Field Modifications
- Bond and/or Letter of Credit Reductions and Release

VII. TOWN PLANNER'S ITEMS

VIII. CHAIRPERSON'S ITEMS

IX. PB REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT ON "OTHER COMMITTEE ACTIVITY"

X. ADJOURN

Ms. Belanger motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 PM. Ms. English seconded the motion. A vote was taken and passed unanimously.

344 Respectfully submitted.
345 Daniel Hoijer,
346 Recording Secretary (Via Exeter TV)