

**TOWN OF EXETER
PLANNING BOARD
NOWAK ROOM
10 FRONT STREET
MARCH 13, 2025
APPROVED MINUTES
7:00 PM**

I. PRELIMINARIES:

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT BY ROLL CALL: Chair Langdon Plumer, Vice-Chair Aaron Brown, John Grueter, Clerk, Jen Martel, Nancy Belanger Select Board Representative, and Alternate Marty 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. 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, in the C-2, Highway Commercial zoning district, Tax Map Parcel #65-118. PB Case #24-8.

Chair Plumer read the Public Hearing Notice out loud.

Mr. Sharples reviewed that the application was proposed to the Board on December 19th and numerous comments and concerns were raised by the Board and abutters. A site walk was held on January 9, 2025 and the applicant was scheduled to return to the Board at their January 23, 2025 meeting. The applicant appeared at the Conservation Commission's January 14, 2025 meeting and requested a continuance to reassess the project design and the Commission's concerns. The applicant appeared at the Commission's February 11, 2025 meeting to present their redesigned plans and the Commission voted that they had no objection to the wetland Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application with two conditions of approval. Mr. Sharples referenced a memo from the Commission dated February 12, 2025.

Mr. Sharples noted that the applicant submitted revised plans and supporting documents dated February 14, 2025 to the Planning Board. There was another Technical Review Committee meeting on February 27, 2025. Plan changes were submitted but revised plans are yet to be submitted. The TRC

43 issued another comment letter on March 5, 2025 and Underwood Engineers (UEI) provided comments
44 in their March 4 letter. There are two waivers being requested as outlined in the waiver request letter
45 from Jones & Beach dated January 13, 2025.

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47 Mr. Sharples noted that Jason Plourde, the town's third-party review traffic engineer, will be available
48 via Zoom for discussions concerning the traffic memo.

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50 Alternate, Marty Kennedy, recused himself from this application and left the meeting table to sit with
51 the public as he did traffic consulting work for the Town.

52
53 Paige Libbey of Jones & Beach Engineers, Inc. indicated that at the last meeting the Board had concerns
54 with traffic which will be addressed tonight. She noted that the applicant made changes to break up
55 two of the buildings into four units and three units. Any buildings with four or more units had horizontal
56 jogs added to break up the façade. She noted changes to parking for buildings 2, 3 and 11 with the road
57 widened for a better turn radius from garages without backing into the travel lane. She provided a
58 handout showing the proposed changes. She noted changes to architectural elevations for buildings 8, 1
59 and 11 which will have the height decreased from 35' to 30.' She noted the applicant is working on
60 addressing the comments from the most recent UEI letter.

61
62 Ms. Libbey noted that their traffic engineer had conversations with the town's 3rd party review engineer,
63 Jason, and with town staff, and heard from abutters about existing issues and felt it would be more
64 beneficial to make a contribution to address those issues rather than do a traffic study which would tell
65 us what we already know.

66
67 Jason Plourde of VHB appeared remotely. He noted he reviewed Dr. Kim's memo and per trip
68 generation which were in accordance with the Inst. of Traffic Engineers and NH Department of
69 Transportation standards and had no issues with that. Mr. Plourde noted that while the 50-100 vehicles
70 per hour will generally have no significant impact, given existing issues the addition of one more car
71 would be considered exacerbation of the existing issues. He therefore noted that while the
72 development is not exceeding recommendations, the location of the development has existing issues.
73 He referenced Portsmouth Avenue, Alumni drive, Green Hill Road with traffic signals outdated and not
74 talking to each other. He referenced the limited sight on Bonnie Drive and Greenhill at Clover Street.
75 He noted issues with queuing beyond intersections of Portsmouth Avenue. He referenced the lack of
76 stop signs on Bonnie Drive or Haven Lane and recommended the Select Board and Department of Public
77 Works be contacted. He referenced the Manual of Traffic Control Engineers and limited sight lines when
78 on Bonnie Drive at Haven Lane. He referenced Bonnie Drive at Greenhill Road, Clover Street at Bonnie
79 Drive having offset angles. He noted that if signals functioned properly vehicle queues may be resolved.
80 Issues on Portsmouth Avenue are known, and he indicated he would be in favor of contribution of funds
81 by the applicant rather than additional traffic study and review. Side street safety should be looked at
82 as well.

83
84 Vice-Chair Brown asked if impact after development would be better than currently. Mr. Plourde noted
85 that it is not the volume, but the location. The intersection is already operating with deficiency. This

development does not trigger the threshold but existing conditions on Portsmouth Avenue and safety on Haven Lane and Bonnie Drive are adding to the existing problem.

Ms. Belanger asked about phase two being 4-10 years away. Mr. Plourde noted there could be more than one development during that time period and would be hard to predict. Ms. Belanger noted the purview of the Board is in the here and now.

Ms. Martel asked how the contribution would work and expressed concerns that a contribution doesn't guarantee improvement anytime in the near future. Mr. Sharples noted that exaction by the Planning Board is imposed on the developer outside of the Select Board for improvements. In this case to fix issues similar to Continental Drive. The funds would be held in escrow until the project is done. Portsmouth Avenue is already in the town's capital improvement plan (CIP). The signals could potentially be done, if funds were found. As part of Rockingham Planning Commission's Complete Street study traffic will be looked at. Ms. Martel asked what year and Mr. Sharples indicated 2029 but stop signs are in the Select Board's purview along with the police department and DPW. The Planning Board could recommend that DPW weighs in. Ms. Martel noted that the problem is exacerbated. Mr. Brown questioned if any development should not be allowed until the lights are resolved? He questioned the cost for the repair. Mr. Plourde recommended having the contractor open the signal cabinets and look at the equipment to allow them to be able to talk to each other. Mr. Sharples will look into this. He noted that a specific purpose for the exaction funds would be attached like with Riverwoods for example – "for public safety use."

(unidentified) stated the number of cars is tripling in the neighborhood. Mr. Brown noted the impact may be significant to the abutters.

(unidentified) indicated 50-100 cars is the general rule of thumb for increase but if already deficient that threshold is thrown out the window and noted narrow roads. Mr. Plourde indicated he looked at the aerial widths and Bonnie and Haven are built to town standards and exceed site plan review and subdivision regulations minimum 24.'

Mr. Francheski expressed concerns with traffic jams after the second phase of construction.

Mr. Plourde noted synchronizing the signals will keep the entrance functional. Three or four movements affected, Alumni Drive and Greenhill Road would be stuck as well. If updated and synchronized volumes along the corridor would progress and not be stuck between two signals.

(unidentified) asked if there would be another traffic study to make sure its working. Mr. Plourde noted that the town would be conducting traffic analysis, so a separate study is not recommended specific to this project. Mr. Brown noted it is in the master plan to have further direction for Portsmouth Avenue.

Susan Taylor noted she is a bus driver, and the problem persists from High Street to downtown.

Ms. Belanger noted that correct timing could get traffic moving and possibly stop people from cutting through Jady Hill.

Cathy Boudreau indicated when there is a parking ban people have to park somewhere and noted there are children playing.

Ms. Belanger questioned whether the Board could approve something so far out and expressed concerns with the underutilized parking lot of the existing business and making sure with the pedestrian bridge that parking there is only for their business.

Christina Tindle noted the development is permitted because of MUND (Mixed Use Neighborhood Development) but the commercial part of the project is disconnected in phase 2. Mr. Brown noted there is an existing commercial use there now.

Noel of 11 Bonnie Drive indicated she is an abutter and would like a fence and questioned how wetlands become commercial property. She asked who is liable for water issues. Mr. Sharples noted the property has been zoned commercial as long as he has been here. Ms. Libbey noted they are dealing with buffers and setbacks. Chair Plumer noted they have to have a stormwater management plan, 90% of the projects in Exeter have wetlands and the Conservation Commission reviewed the application thoroughly and the Board listens to their recommendations.

Ryan O'Brien expressed concerns with phasing and the walkway to Portsmouth Avenue.

Michael Hauck and Danielle Frank requested overlay renderings on Haven Lane with our homes in the foreground, on Bonnie Drive and Portsmouth Ave with the Federated business and townhomes, the completed project. She asked about construction hours and the neighborhood having to deal with that for two years and requested the Select Board limit construction hours. Mr. Sharples noted the change would need to be town-wide for the Select Board but he could talk to the developer and see what their plans are.

Lisa Medlock of 11 Haven Drive asked about the effects of two years of construction on their homes. Mr. Brown noted there are pre-blasting surveys to protect against damage, but Mr. Green noted blasting is doubtful.

Steve Taylor expressed concerns with the entrances and fire truck loop. Ms. Libbey indicated the truck turning plans are in the plan set and the fire department weighed in, that the extra entrance is needed. Ms. Belanger asked if it could be gated and Ms. Libbey noted if gated there is nowhere to pull up, back up or turn around accessible to everyday and would need to be two-way, not one way. Mrs. Taylor agreed with turning concerns. Mr. Sharples explained the process and noted Jason from the Fire Department provides the dimensions and creates a template which is reviewed by the fire department.

Ms. Martel asked about considering a landscaped island in front of building 1 and 11.

Mr. Sharples asked the Board their feelings on exaction versus a traffic analysis and Ms. Martel, Chair Plumer agreed the analysis was not needed. Mr. Brown noted the exaction made sense and would like to see the problem resolved if the Town Planner could make some calls. He noted the traffic study is

not going to provide anything additional. Ms. Belanger agreed and will raise the issue of stop signs at the Select Board meeting.

The Board discussed the parameters for the visual rendering including views from Portsmouth Avenue, the neighborhood from the inside and outside in. Ms. Libbey will bring renderings to the next meeting but won't have them a week before. Vice-Chair Brown indicated the scale could be shown of the existing homes.

Vice-Chair Brown motioned to table Planning Board Case #24-8 to the March 27, 2025 Planning Board meeting at 7 PM in the Nowak Room. Ms. Belanger seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 5-0-0.

3. The continued 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.

Mr. Kennedy returned to the meeting table and Chair Plumer activated the alternates.

Chair Plumer read out loud the Public Hearing Notice.

Mr. Sharples noted that the applicant appeared before the Board at the January 23, 2025 meeting to present their plans for the redevelopment of the property. Public comment was opened, and a site walk was held on February 6, 2025. The applicant submitted plans and supporting documents dated Feb. 19, 2025 and appeared at the February 27, 2025 meeting to address concerns raised during the site walk and of UEI dated February 20, 2025. Revised plans and supporting documents were submitted on March 5, 2025. The applicant is requesting two waivers. The previous waiver for grading within 5' is no longer necessary as the entranceway has moved 5.5' off the easterly property line.

Christian Smith of Beals Assoc. presented the changes to the plans and noted all units have two parking spaces in front of the garages. He noted they looked at staggering the buildings, but it was messy. He added architectural changes to the exterior of the buildings, bay windows, dormers and gables. The proposed landscaping plan was provided and final UEI comments addressed.

Chair Plumer asked if moving the driveway would affect the front of the building. Mr. Smith indicated the building position will not change as 1' was removed from each end.

Chair Plumer asked about fencing and Ms. Smith showed the plantings and fences. Mr. Brown noted there were breaks to preserve tree roots. He requested the fence details be added to the plans.

Ms. Martel questioned sheets a1a and a1b and the hip roof. She noted the buildings seem backward with the garages facing each other. Mr. O'Neil noted the function of the two car garages and the purview of the Board with respect to architecture. Mr. Smith noted the front would be pleasing to abutters.

Dale Atkins expressed concerns with the size of the buildings compared to surrounding homes and opined that there should be ten units at most.

Bill Campbell of 7 Riverwoods Drive asked why 17 units be jammed into this lot and expressed concerns with height, density and character. He asked if the Board could recommend renderings from Gill Street.

Randy Daley the Cemetery Custodian asked about the fence. Mr. O'Neil noted the Cemetery owns the existing 6' chain link fence and that will be surrounded by landscaping. Mr. Sharples noted the cemetery fence continues to Linden Street. Mr. Daley expressed concerns with sound during construction or a funeral. Ms. Martel noted there is not a lot of screening and recommended doubling it up with larger species.

Mr. Grueter asked if there was a well for irrigation and Mr. O'Neil indicated yes.

Sarah Nelson of 8 Gill Street expressed concerns with density and referenced Article 1, Section 1.2 purposes of the zoning ordinance to lessen congestion in the street and to prevent overcrowding of land and undue concentration of population and Article 10 – Growth Management, aesthetics and scenic beauty and greenspace and with the driveway and number of homes. She asked about snow storage and snow melt into neighbor's yards and if removal is part of the equation.

Rory Morissette of 12 and 14 Parker expressed concerns with density of plantings on the Parker Street side and additional runoff.

Chair Plumer noted that he would like to see reduction. The project is very dense and not compatible, the height is noticeable and will be interested to see the renderings. Mr. O'Neil noted the developer has the right to utilize yield. Mr. Sharples reviewed the yield in the zone, which is 3500 SF of lot area per dwelling unit removing the driveway. 69,349 SF minus the 9,687 SF of driveway. 59,661 SF/3500 is 17.05 units. Mr. Smith noted a ¼ acre parcel with a duplex at 11 Gill Street.

David Harrington stated that he sent a letter and expressed concerns with density being overwhelming for neighbors and would like something to block headlights.

Jim Kneeland of Gill Street expressed concerns with density and character of the neighborhood and the master plan. Ms. Belanger noted the Board has to go by the zoning ordinance.

Mr. Campbell noted if the lots on Gill Street were compared to the quarter acre units they would get six. Ms. Smith noted he referenced a duplex not a single-family home.

Jeff of 111 Front Street expressed concerns with density and guest parking. Mr. Smith noted there is parking behind garage doors, two 9'x9' spaces, four total. He stated that he doesn't think the parcel should be zoned commercial. Mr. Sharples noted the official zoning map has shown the parcel as commercial for 40 years. It was bifurcated before the vote and the town relies on the map created after which no one appealed. Mr. Smith noted it was very plain, commercial bifurcations were zoned commercial after the vote.

Sam Makarkur noted the buildings could be 50' high. The use is allowed with no zoning relief and they have been through Technical Review Committee (TRC), architect, landscaping, fencing and modifications to break up the buildings. The property height abuts multi-family residences and 111-113 Front Street is multi-family across the street with a modern parking garage. This is not a historic district, but they worked with the Heritage Commission. There is a lot of multi-family on Front Street. Keeping the front of the Merrill Building was not feasible. The developer has gone above and beyond with no legal obligation to do so.

Chair Plumer asked about snow removal and Mr. Smith noted if full. There is no additional runoff leaving to abutting property.

Jim Davis of 115 Front Street asked about maintenance of the porous pavement. Mr. Smith noted the Homeowner's Association or Management Company. A plow with rubberized blade would be used. He referenced the grassed area and that there would be no snow on Front Street. Mr. Sharples noted the conditions of approval would address stormwater manual and inspection requirements annually. UEI does third party inspections and bmps (best management practices) have to be met during construction.

Mr. Kennedy asked about the parking area not being considered part of the driveway and Mr. Sharples explained how the ordinance reads.

(unidentified) asked about apartments or transient housing and Mr. Sharples noted the type of ownership doesn't change anything whether individual or homeowners, with regard to maintenance and submission requirements.

Ms. Martel reviewed the lighting plan and requested more information on the plan.

David H. asked about several motion lights all going off at once if an animal walks past. Mr. Brown noted the lighting on the plan won't go off the property.

Ms. Martel recommended changes to plantings in the snow storage area.

Ms. Martel asked about curbs and trash removal. Mr. O'Neil noted no curbs and private trash removal.

Ms. Martel requested the diseased tree be replaced with a significant specimen tree with a big mulch area.

Vice-Chair Brown motioned to table Planning Board Case #24-17 to the March 27, 2025 meeting of the Planning Board at the Nowak Room at 7 PM. Ms. Belanger seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 6-0-0.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 27, 2025

Ms. Belanger motioned to table approval of the February 27, 2025 meeting minutes. Mr. Grueter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 6-0-0.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

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

VI. TOWN PLANNER'S ITEMS

VII. CHAIRPERSON'S ITEMS

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

IX. ADJOURN

Mr. Grueter motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:39 PM. Mr. Belanger seconded the motion. A vote was taken and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted.

Daniel Hoijer,
Recording Secretary (Via Exeter TV)