

Walpole Planning Board Minutes
Tuesday, May 11, 2021
Town Hall
7 pm

Roll Call: Present: Board members Chair Jeff Miller, Vice-Chair Dennis Marcom, Clerk Jason Perron, Jeff Harrington, Joanna Andros, Bill Carmody, Select Board Representative Steve Dalessio and Alternate Trevor MacLachlan.

Recording: Secretary Marilou Blaine. **This meeting is being recorded. These minutes are unapproved and will be reviewed at the June 2021 meeting for corrections, additions and/or omissions.**

Meeting coming to order: Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Minutes: Mr. Dalessio reminded the Board that they voted to approve Trevor MacLachlan as an alternate at the April meeting. It was omitted from the meeting minutes. Mr. Marcom and Ms. Andros made a couple of corrections: for example, building to build, every to very, Bernardo to DiBernardo, ease to easy. Eliminate the word “for” on page 7 and “at that meeting” on page 6. Mr. Marcom made a motion to approve the amended minutes. Mr. Perron seconded the motion and the motion carried.

New Business: Site plan for property at Map 24, Lot 13, 5 Maplewood Circle Road, Commercial District. Request for a public hearing

Laura and Doug Palmer plan to purchase the former RN Johnson building at the corner of Maplewood Circle and Main Street, now owned by Wellstone Associates LLC, and across from CPA Robert Kimball’s office. The Palmers plan to use the southern portion of the building for storage and the northern section for Mr. Palmer’s current business, Power Sports, now located on the corner of Upper Walpole Road and Ames Plaza Road. Power Sports is a 90 percent mail-order business with 10 percent retail. Mr. Perron made a motion to hold a public hearing for a site plan for the Palmers in June. Mr. Marcom seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Dunkin’ Site Plan: Tax Map 12, Lot 56, Commercial District. Phase 1 proposal includes building a 2,280 square-foot Dunkin’ drive-thru and an attached 3,800 square-foot retail space and future expansion of a 4,729 square-foot retail space. At the meeting were Jim Clifford representing the applicant, NGP Management LLC of Reading, MA and agents Jason Hill and Bob Duval of TFMoran Inc. of Bedford, NH.

Mr. Clifford introduced the project last month and he introduced the agents for the project who were going to present the plan. Mr. Hill is the project manager and he was at the meeting to discuss the site plan – layout, driveway, movement of cars on the property, water, drainage, stormwater runoff and building. He has been working with Frank Linnenbringer of NHDOT Unit 4 in Swanzey as well as Mark Houghton. Mr. Houghton manages Walpole’s water and sewer departments. Mr. Hill said his job is to create the most efficient use of the land for the two-phase project – the retail space presented at the meeting as well as the contiguous piece of property at the south end of the property.

He said the driveway placement was based on meetings with NHDOT and the decision on where to place the driveway on Route 12 depended on what was happening between the Upper Walpole Road and the entrance to the North Meadow Plaza intersections. The area shown on the plat was determined to be the most appropriate place for a driveway on Route 12. Its access is across from the driveway access to Diamond Pizza. Mr. Hill said the placement minimizes difficulties for cars making

a left-hand turn and is the best for sight distance looking from both left and right. After determining where to put the driveway, the planners determined where the building would be located and the parking spaces. There was also a proposal for a second access off Upper Walpole Road, Hill said. The lanes are arranged so there would be no cut-through traffic. Upper Walpole Road would have an entrance and an exit. The lane pattern is a drive-thru lane as well as a by-pass lane and it is long enough so that there would never be any backup out onto the road. The coffee drive-thru has stacking spaces for 13 vehicles. Regarding parking, one space is dedicated for truck unloading as well as a parking space opposite the pick-up window for a semi to park. In the initial phase there will be 40 to 48 spaces with a future option along Route 12 for another 17 parking spaces if the additional retail space is constructed.

The site is level, it is a field, Hill said. Some drainage test pits were dug to see how to handle the water and infiltration. The soil is good for drainage purposes, he said. In back of the Dunkin' portion of the building, there is a green space designed to actually be an infiltration basin. You will see plants and shrubs so it will be an attractive feature rather than just a pond that's holding water. Two shallow infiltration basins are there that will capture runoff from the parking lot and it discharges the runoff into the ground. There is not a lot of runoff from the meadow, Hill said.

Both driveways are under the state of New Hampshire's jurisdiction. Mr. Hill is also pursuing an Alteration of Terrain application from the Department of Environmental Services. That is for stormwater and site grading. Both the driveway and AoT are state applications.

Mr. Hill is also coordinating with Mark Houghton on water and sewer. They are currently looking at a water line that crosses through the center of the property that goes to the Hubbard research facility on Upper Walpole Rd. They are proposing to relocate a small section of the line around the building and plan to provide an easement to the town to cover the whole water line. The existing sewer line crosses the Shaw property going west. Mr. Hill said it's a pretty deep line, about 10 feet, and they are planning on a gravity sewer connection along their Route 12 property line, which they have agreed to have as a public sewer.

Hill described the landscape package details as an attractive array of four-season interest in a variety of species of plants so something should be in bloom or have berries on it throughout the year.

Route 12 is a divided highway with two 12-foot lanes and an 11-foot paved shoulder. The Dunkin' plan is to extend the left-turning lane that ends at Pinnacle Lane. It will be widened at the area across from the Dunkin' and Diamond Pizza driveways and extended 500 feet toward the south. The lane will eventually taper off. It will benefit any left-turning traffic moving along that section of roadway, Mr. Hill said.

Traffic Study

Mr. Bob Duval, also an employee of the project agent TFMoran, talked about traffic.

The traffic study comes from a general study of a combination of coffee shops and retail shops. The study shows a total number of pass-by trips during the day: 97 trips in peak pm hour and 178 in peak Saturday hour. In general, you figure about half that many would stop at Dunkin'. According to the Traffic Report time periods for analysis was:

Weekday am roadway peak hour 7-9 am

Weekday pm roadway peak hour 2-6

Weekend Saturday midday peak hour 11 am – 1 pm.

New trip numbers (that is cars that usually wouldn't be there) show 100 trips in the peak am hour, 59 in the peak pm hour and 90 trips in the peak Saturday hour. The information comes from a study in a

standard engineers' handbook guide for estimating trips. That book is titled "Trip Generation Manual," Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) 10th Edition. Duval said the information is very accurate based on calculating the square footage of a store and general traffic. Mr. Duval said they have discussed the numbers and information with DOT and DOT seemed satisfied that these are the numbers that should be used.

Someone asked how does one compare the numbers of trips at the Dunkin' site at the gas station with their expectations at the new place. Generally, when a Dunkin' is a co-store, meaning it shares space with another business that's the dominant business, numbers at the co-store will be lower than a stand-alone store or a Dunkin being the anchor store among smaller retail stores. Duval said the numbers for this project were counted in the last quarter of 2020 and there was another survey of cars a couple of weeks ago in April. The numbers were adjusted upward of 9 percent to account for the seasonal variations to reflect peak month volume. This seasonal adjustment is based on the 2019 monthly adjustment factors for NHDOT Group 4 Highways. Also, 12.8 percent was added for Covid suppression for a total of more than 20 percent. Mr. Duval believes traffic is getting stronger and will get up to regular numbers soon.

Mr. Dalessio asked if DOT would allow another curb cut on this property on Route 12 beyond the one already shown on the plat. Mr. Hill said that in its initial discussion DOT would allow two curb cuts on Route 12 for this property. But, Duval said there are no plans to have two driveways. Even if there were not a solar array and another commercial building were constructed, they would not add another driveway. The design of the current driveway allows for an easy and natural turn to the left, Mr. Duval said. Mr. Dalessio asked about fire. Mr. Hill said the lanes were designed for a large fire truck if need be.

The future capacity for daily traffic is 10,000 to 12,000 trips but that leaves room for quite a growth of traffic in the area, Duval continued. Standard analysis results are favorable. The starting year is expected to be 2022 and ten years out there should be very little change at each of the four intersections that were studied. The intersections were Pinnacle Lane, Upper Walpole Road, North Meadow Plaza and Dunkin'/Diamond Pizza. In the study the biggest change is a six second delay at the plaza. One car queue in Saturday conditions was a 32-second delay in the left-turning traffic at the pizza place. Upper Walpole Road had a 50-second delay on a Saturday for left-turning traffic onto Route 12. Upper Walpole might go up 3.4 seconds in future years.

Mr. Duval said from start to finish it takes about three months for approval to DOT. Mr. Marcom asked how was the Board to make a decision if Dunkin' didn't have approval from DOT. Mr. Duval said that DOT might write a letter that would make it comfortable for the Planning Board to make a decision. This is a very favorable traffic report. It easily accommodates traffic and with the mitigation of widening and lengthen – while the additional 500 feet doesn't necessarily cut down on time - it makes it safer for drivers making a left turn and benefits the drivers in back of them.

Mr. Miller asked how does a100 more trips impact North Meadow Plaza? Mr. Duval said he thought it have minimal impact, with maybe an additional 10-second wait.

Mr. Marcom asked about the process. Mr. Duval said first you look at the number of driveways and then look at the highway design, which is highly technical, and the land use code as well as the interactions of different uses on sites. In the Dunkin' case it was looking at the four intersections. Then you look at the traffic reports and prepare a package that gets submitted to DOT. First DOT verifies the trip calculations, looks at the distribution of where everybody is going, how good the drivers are, how many cars are just passing by. DOT reports back to us in three or four weeks and they might give us some suggestions or feedback. We adjust the numbers; then they approve. Then the highway

department gets involved and looks at the lane analysis. The report goes to all the different departments in the highway department and they return a report.

So DOT hasn't vetted the traffic design yet? Mr. Marcom asked. Mr. Duval suggested that their company might get a letter from DOT generally agreeing on the plan and the company could work out the smaller details. The numbers are so favorable, there is no controversy over the land use. Our company has done hundreds of studies like this, Mr. Duval said.

Ms. Andros asked if there was outdoor seating planned. Mr. Clifford said that in reality at a drive-thru, outside seating rarely gets used. But if it's something you want, it's something we could do.

Mr. Marcom asked how close are we to capacity, that 10,000 to 12,000 trips a day. Mr. Duval suggested it may be 2032 before capacity is reached.

Mr. Dalessio asked what the back-up plan would be. Mr. Duval said once you build you have to wait until the next guy come along. It's very difficult to do any more. That's why it's so methodical and detailed.

Ms. Andros asked if there was going to be solar on the roof of the building. Mr. Clifford said it wasn't planned. The roof is a small area and there are a lots of things, like the AC, that are roof-mounted.

Mr. Dalessio asked about propane tanks. Mr. Hill said the design is on the utility maps, C-4 or C-5. The propane is underground.

Ms. Andros asked if Mr. Clifford had clients lined up to rent the retail spaces. Mr. Clifford said they were talking to a real estate firm in Keene, but that firm hasn't committed. He suggested it would typically be a small office or business such as a hair salon.

Mr. Marcom asked about the building plans saying that the roof lines don't match. Also, there's the design. Most buildings don't have a flat roof yet 40 percent of your roof is flat. If you look at Pinnacleview, the pizza place, the Savings Bank all are without flat roof. Shaw's and Walgreen's are different. He referenced Walpole site plan guideline regarding the designs of the buildings.

At the end of the site plan regulation booklet the buildings have a New England look or theme. The presented plans were pretty generic.

Mr. Marcom also wondered about the width of the building. The Board is here to approve phase one, but the Board doesn't have any idea what the rest of the building is going to look like. Mr. Clifford said the rest of the building would be a continuation of and look the same as phase one.

Mr. Marcom wondered about the future phase of that building, if when added, would it be cut through at the flat gable, unless you were putting on an additional roof. Mr. Clifford said, "We can beef up the drawing," Mr. Miller asked about siding. The answer was clapboard. Mr. Dalessio asked if there would be a sprinkler and a monitor to the fire department. Mr. Hill said a proposed hydrant is on the property. Mr. Dalessio suggested he speak to Mark Houghton of the Walpole Fire Department to discuss it. Ms. Andros asked about lighting and hours of operation. Lighting is dark sky, 20-foot poles, down-lit, on a timer so lights go off at closing time. Mr. Clifford wasn't exactly sure of hours of operation but thought it may be 5 am to 10 pm.

Mr. Clifford said they would be back next month and the group would also bring up the solar array. Mr. Miller said the Board had a lot to think about. He closed the public hearing. Mr. Perron wondered why close it now. Mr. Miller said they had 90 days before making a decision.

Marietta Burdick wanted to know how they know how many parking spaces were needed. Mr. Hill said he has experience if you estimate the demand. The planning factor is 1 to 4 or 5 per thousand square feet per retail space, Hill said. You also have to figure on the number of employees. You don't want to overbuild parking because of the cost and environmental factors.

Ms. Mary Anza of 88 Upper Walpole Road explained her property has a stake in the middle of the lawn. She acknowledged there was a right of way on her property but the stakes is about 10 feet away. It has the letters NHDOT on the stake. She wanted to know if it had anything to do with this project. Mr. Hill said it was not their stake meaning having to do with the site plan proposal. She asked about widening the Upper Walpole road. Mr. Hill said he had talked to civil engineer Frank Linnenbringer, contact person for this area's NHDOT (NHDOT 4 in Swanzey) and he said there were no plans to widen Upper Walpole Road. He asked if she was an abutter. She is not. Mr. Hill suggested that since she was concerned about the NHDOT stake that she google NHDOT 4 for a telephone number and than call and ask them about the stake. Someone else suggested calling the Walpole highway department and someone else suggested just taking the stake out of the ground.

Future Planning Board Business

Mr. Miller said he had talked to Lisa Murphy about the sections of the Master Plan that had already been updated (Implementation Plan, Population and Transportation) and that there should be a public hearing on accepting these sections soon.

There was also discussions on the solar project. He said that the Board should be looking at what is happening regarding solar projects, looking for model zoning regulation and addressing the taxation situation. Ms. Andros said when she vote on this article she thought the warrant addressing no taxes meant that it was for residential solar but unfortunately the way it was written it included commercial solar installations. In June there may be a workshop on solar.

Mr. Marcom suggested getting someone to help with putting documents on the display screen – maybe a high student that is proficient in this kind of technical equipment.

Mr. Perron made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Harrington seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilou Blaine
WPB Secretary

cc: WPB, ZBA, Town Offices.

Posted: Inside Town Hall, on bulletin board outside post office, The Walpolean, www.walpolenh.us

Next meeting: Tuesday, June 8, 2021.