



Newbury Zoning Committee

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Town of Brookline

Massachusetts

NEWBURY ZONING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Room 111, Brookline Town Hall

February 5, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.

Committee Present: Nancy Heller, Paul Saner, Derrick Choi, Helen Charlupski, Neil Wishinsky, Kathy Spiegelman, Roger Lipson, Bernard Greene, Carlos Ridruejo, Steve Heikin, Georgia Johnson.

Staff Present: Alison Steinfeld, Victor Panak

Nancy Heller called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and introduced the members of the Committee.

Administrative Details

Nancy Heller introduced the members of the Committee.

Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert, attorney for the development team, introduced herself and the members of the development team and then summarized recent meetings and upcoming meetings.

Presentation by Welltower

Sargent Gardiner, an architect with Robert AM Stern, presented updated plans of the proposal. Mr. Gardiner focused on the building's massing, landscape buffers, and the preservation of mature trees. Mr. Gardiner showed several views of the building from surrounding streets and discussed sustainable elements of the project that would be incorporated in the site design, water treatment, building design, energy use, and transportation practices.

Katya Podzialdo (Verdant Landscape Architects), landscape architect for the development team, gave a presentation on the proposed landscaping and reviewed some of the changes made since the previous meeting. Ms. Podzialdo noted the reconfiguration of the driveway, relocation of the rose garden, and the use of permeable pavers. Ms. Podzialdo also showed some details of the Japanese garden and sustainable design elements (stormwater planters, etc...). She also reviewed the proposed screening along the southern property line and the tree easement plan along Fisher Avenue.

Helen Charlupski asked if there would be a fence along the southern property line. Ms. Gilbert confirmed that there would be a fence along the entire length of the southern property line.

Vinod Kalikiri (VHB), traffic engineer for the development team, presented the findings of the traffic report. Mr. Kalikiri emphasized the project's low traffic impact (requiring no mitigation), discussed the study process and key transportation characteristics, and briefly discussed traffic and delivery routes.

Mr. Kalikiri noted that the peak employee shifts for the project do not coincide with peak commute times of the area.

Ms. Gilbert summarized the project's community benefits, as follows:

- Partnering with the Senior Center
- Preservation of the Mitton House
- Tax revenue
- Opportunity for the Town to acquire the west side
- Inclusionary zoning (in the form of 18 units at 125 Holland Road or a substantial cash payment)
- Landscape buffers and the elimination of the Holland Road curb cut

Ms. Heller invited members of the public to make comments or ask questions.

A resident noted that the Waterstone at Wellesley receives approximately four 911 calls per week and therefore questioned Welltower's expectation that the project will not see more than one 911 call per week. Michael Schonbrun (Balfour), operator of the proposed facility, responded that the facility will have nurses on staff who can respond to most medical issues.

A resident asked how many residents are expected at the facility. Mr. Schonbrun responded that the estimate is roughly 170 residents.

A resident asked about surface parking, to which Mr. Gardiner responded that there would be surface parking (roughly 55 spaces).

A resident asked about how the proposed senior living facility would accommodate the increase in traffic and parking caused by special events and holidays. Mr. Schonbrun responded that increased traffic and parking is to be expected but that Balfour has some strategies to address the surge.

A resident asked what the subsidy would be for T passes for employees. Mr. Schonbrun said that they would probably be free. The same resident asked about walking paths around the campus. Mr. Gardiner said that they are not currently shown on the plans but that they will be provided.

A resident asked if speed bumps could be added to Fisher Avenue. Mr. Ridruejo noted that it was attempted in the past but that the traffic counts and/or speeds experienced along Fisher Avenue did not qualify for the installation of speed bumps.

A resident expressed concerns about the project being too large, having too many windows, being overpriced for prospective residents, and too noisy due to traffic.

Update by Town

Ms. Heller briefly reiterated the findings of Pam McKinney's analysis, noting the lack of any flexibility in the pro forma.

Steve Heikin summarized recent meetings of the Architectural Subcommittee, noting that the design of the project had improved significantly and that the zoning was currently being written.

Roger Blood provided an update on the Housing Advisory Board recommendation and provided a summary of the Holland Road affordable housing proposal.

The Committee discussed affordable housing more generally.

Ms. Heller briefly discussed the west side of the campus and explained that the Town was considering its purchase and its subsequent use for short and long term uses.

Melvin Kleckner provided a presentation on possible short-term uses – likely the Building Department’s use for offices and meeting space.

A resident asked who currently owns the west side. Mr. Kleckner responded that it was Welltower and the Town would have the opportunity to purchase the property if Welltower is able to proceed with redevelopment of the east side. The resident asked what would happen to the west side if the Town does not purchase it. Mr. Kleckner said that Welltower would likely sell it.

The Committee discussed a date and time for their next meeting which they set for February 26 at 7pm. They also discussed the next meeting of the Architectural Subcommittee, which they set for February 24 at 4:30pm.

Public Comment

A resident commented that the proposal seems incredibly rushed. Ms. Heller responded that Welltower currently owns it. If it is not developed by Welltower, they would likely sell it to a “Dover use” where the Town would have little control.

Executive Session

Ms. Heller moved that the Committee enter into executive session for the purpose of considering the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of the real property of the former Newbury College located at 110, 124, and 150 Fisher Avenue, and 146 Hyslop Road, Brookline, Massachusetts, declaring that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body. The Committee held a roll-call and voted unanimously to enter into executive session.

The meeting was adjourned.