

**TOWN OF EXETER
PLANNING BOARD
NOWAK ROOM
10 FRONT STREET
FEBRUARY 27, 2025
APPROVED MINUTES
7:00 PM**

I. PRELIMINARIES:

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT BY ROLL CALL: Chair Langdon Plumer, Clerk, John Grueter, Gwen English, Nancy Belanger Select Board Representative, Alternate Marty Kennedy and Alternate Dean Hubbard

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. The application of Willey Creek Company for site plan review, lot line adjustment and Wetlands and Shoreland conditional use permits for the proposed relocation of Building D of the Ray Farm Condominium development and associated site improvements off of Ray Farmstead Road. The subject properties are located in the C-3, Epping Road Highway Commercial zoning district and are identified as Tax Map Parcel #47-8 and #47-8.1. PB Case #22-3.

Chair Plumer announced that the Board has received a letter from the applicant requesting a continuance.

Ms. English motioned to approve the request of Willey Creek Company, Planning Board Case #22-3 for a continuance to the April 24, 2025 Planning Board meeting at 7 PM in the Nowak Room at Exeter Town Offices. Mr. Grueter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 4-0-0.

Chair Plumer advised the two remaining applicants and the abutters that the Board would hear each of their applications for one and a half hours, until 8:30 PM for the application of Green & Company and until 10 PM for Stonearch Dev.

2. 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 application with two conditions of approval. Mr. Sharples referenced a memo from the Commission dated February 12, 2025. The applicant submitted revised plans and supporting documents dated February 14, 2025 to the Planning Board. Staff is in process of reviewing the redesigned plans and documents. There was another Technical Review Committee meeting this morning with a host of comments. Plans will be revised and resubmitted. The TRC will issue another comment letter and Underwood Engineers (UEI) gave approval this morning issuing their third comment letter.

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

Attorney John Bosum of DTC Lawyers presented the application on behalf of Green & Company. He indicated the application was for site plan review and wetlands conditional use permit in the mixed-use neighborhood development or MUND. He noted the traffic engineer was present as well as Jenna Green and John O'Neil.

Attorney Bosum reviewed the project changes that elapsed, reducing the number of units to 36 one-bedrooms in the first phase after hearing concerns from abutters concerning traffic and building height and from the site walk. He noted the Conservation Commission on February 11 had no objection to the conditional use permit after reviewing the revised plans which are before the Board this evening. He noted that while the proposal could be a large hotel or car dealership and generate more traffic. The design proposed a nice transition of townhomes on Haven to taller structures on Portsmouth Avenue. He reviewed the density of the rear of the parcel as one unit for 7,200 SF compared to Jady Hill with one unit for 8,000 SF and noted MUND has no density requirement.

Paige Libbey of Jones & Beach Engineers, Inc. indicated that the second access to Haven was added and looped. A building was moved across the road out of the wetland buffer. Parking will be across the street for three buildings to reduce buffer impact. There will be green space behind the mail house for recreational purposes. There will be pedestrian access to Portsmouth Avenue. There are two crossings requiring state wetlands approval and drainage and utilities. She noted the section of porous pavement, filtration drip edges for treatment of roof runoff and the landscaping plan with 8' fence on the property line of adjacent abutters with buffered plantings. She noted two waivers are requested one for

87 driveway radius for the right of way not wide enough which meets Haven which is wider; and one
88 waiver for grading within five feet of the property line. She discussed restoration after construction.
89

90 Ms. Libbey reviewed the traffic memo submitted in January which was reviewed by VHB and that the
91 engineer indicated the number of trips per hour proposed met the minimum number of trips and felt a
92 traffic study would not tell them more than they know now, and the expense could be put toward
93 intersection improvements where there are already issues at Alumni and Green Hill Road. The applicant
94 would contribute to the DPW road improvement and lights could be better coordinated. Ms. Libbey
95 indicated that in phase two there will be a reduction in some cases or so slight that a traffic study is not
96 warranted. Kim, the traffic engineer, reviewed the number of trips per peak hour in the morning on a
97 weekday and on Saturday and noted no notable or significant impact or different flow or impact on
98 safety. He referenced the numbers in table one to one car per six minutes one way and going the other.
99 All turn left, a low volume with some going down Bonnie Drive, starting on Haven and splitting out.

100
101 Mr. Grueter asked who had the stop sign – at the end of Bonnie Drive. Ms. Belanger asked if the second
102 loop could be gated since it is for emergency. Ms. Libbey will reach out to the fire department. Ms.
103 Belanger indicated she would be concerned with that waiver.

104
105 Ms. English asked about stormwater and Unit 6 at Building 2 which was no longer there. Ms. Libbey
106 explained the building was pulled closer to the roadway to reduce buffer impact. Space was lost for the
107 fifth unit and swapped.

108
109 Ms. English asked about parking and Ms. Libbey noted there was excess parking, more than required
110 and some had spaces in front of the garage.

111
112 Ms. English asked about building 4 being close to a ditch that floods and whether that was moved or
113 reduced. Ms. Libbey indicated there was originally another unit but shifted back and pulled away. She
114 indicated pedestrian access was added, drainage connection and the large culvert runs parallel to the
115 stream.

116
117 Chair Plumer asked if the culvert was upgraded as discussed. Ms. Libbey indicated there was a blocked
118 culvert on the adjacent Thirsty Moose property and they have contacted the owner to get the culvert
119 upgraded.

120
121 Mr. Grueter asked about trash removal and Chair Plumer noted it would be stored in the garage until
122 picked up.

123
124 Mr. Grueter asked about the retaining wall and Ms. Libbey confirmed it would be part of phase 1.
125

126 Ms. English asked the rationale of not having the roadway access on Portsmouth Avenue and Ms. Libbey
127 explained there were concerns about traffic cutting through the Jady Hill neighborhood to downtown.
128

129 Ms. English asked about height reduction of the buildings as the plans say 40.’ Ms. Libbey indicated the
130 plans will be revised to show 35.’

Ms. English asked if there were architectural drawings of the town homes and Ms. Libbey indicated no. Ms. English and Mr. Grueter noted those would be nice to see.

Chair Plumer noted that a pocket neighborhood was being created and compared the aesthetics of building 3 to a New Jersey motel. He asked if that could be more in character with the neighborhood and if building 1 could be staggered to give the town homes some personality. He questioned if a unit could be taken out of building 3 so that there is more elbow room and if there could be more green space.

Ms. English stated that there are buildings in the 75' setback a couple of units almost entirely, some half. She stated that it was too much, at capacity. She questioned if a couple of units could be eliminated, and the height adjusted with unit 1 and 34 that are closer to Haven so they would have a lower profile. She noted there are no two story homes on Bonnie Drive. Chair Plumer noted the same for Building 6. Ms. English indicated she was not in favor of that much infringement on the setbacks. Only one parking space is required per unit.

Ms. Libbey indicated the buffer was discussed at length with the Conservation Commission and Gove Environmental discussed the function and values of the eastern wetland. Impervious surface was reduced by 70%. Those wetlands were determined to have very limited function and value. Ms. English noted she appreciated the changes but did not agree that the buffers serve no purpose.

Ms. Belanger asked about the pedestrian bridge and the leased building on Portsmouth Avenue's parking lot. Ms. Libbey indicated that the portion of the property was leased and there will not be public parking there. Mr. Green indicated that Federated Auto leases the space and their parking lot was the biggest issue with the adjacent Thirsty Moose restaurant, and they don't want anyone using their parking lot for other than their own business and are on top of enforcing that.

Mr. Grueter asked about the 10% requirement of MUND for affordable housing. Mr. Sharples indicated note 6 shows 4 units in phase one and four units in phase two, proportionally for each phase and in total.

Chair Plumer announced there had been letters received from the Thomases at 28 Haven Lane, email from the Boudreau and Gaudette at 11 Bonnie Drive, from Michael Hauck and Danielle Frank at 3 Haven, Daniel Halleren at 32 Haven, Rachel Gross at 9, Joan Hayes and a detailed letter from Ryan O'Brien at 20 Haven with comments the Board has heard before. He asked that the public comment be limited to new concerns and not repeat what the Board has heard already, in the interest of time.

Craig Boudreau of 11 Bonnie Drive showed his house and asked why the proposed fence could not continue. Ms. Libbey indicated the tree line would remain. Mr. Boudreau indicated concerns people will park in front of his home and cut through because there is no fence. Chair Plumer noted it is private property. Mr. Boudreau indicated people cut through all the time and noted the number of places where fence is being put and asked for the same.

(inaudible) showed a photo of the lot buffer taken out and expressed concerns with noise and the lost view.

Ryan O'Brien read a letter on behalf of Inga Newcomb of 14 Haven Lane that she doesn't want to live on a busy road and wants to keep the green buffer and single building above the residences with no access. She wanted access to be on Portsmouth Avenue.

Mr. O'Brien expressed concerns with density, the homes being built in a depression, water, long-term problems and wanted to know who will be liable and responsible when the sewer backs up. He noted concerns with MUND conditions, using MUND to create a disconnected neighborhood and the delay of phase 2 with the commercial phase done years later. He expressed generally concerns with the MUND component itself allowing bigger and closer direct conflict in opposition to the intent of the master plan which promotes protection of light and air and would like to see the ordinance changed. He discussed the shadow cast on buildings by the higher buildings and would like mature trees to remain to break up the line of buildings so abutters don't see clear through to Portsmouth Ave.

Diane of 5 Bonnie Drive expressed concerns with traffic and deliveries.

Michael Hauck expressed concerns with buffers and screening and noise and light pollution. Ms. Frank expressed concerns with fencing, shrubs and wanting 4" caliper trees to the height of the building included in the condo documents for maintenance. She noted two petitions were handed in from 9 abutting owners and 70 residents of the Jady Hill community concerning noise during construction for so many hours and with property values, traffic, loss of forest and reduced quality of life.

Chair Plumer asked about construction times and Mr. Sharples indicated that is set by the Select Board, Chapter 7 and the Planning Board has no authority to restrict construction times and all properties must be treated equally.

Mr. Francheski of 36 Haven Lane expressed concerns with stormwater in heavy rain, water damage and the road pitching to his house. He commented that if the road is extended the stormwater will no longer go to the ravine.

Christine Tindle of 12 Bonnie Drive expressed concerns with traffic and no stop sign on Haven the blind turn and four way stop. She requested stop signs at both ends of Bonnie Drive and will take concerns for the speed limit and speed bumps to the Select Board.

Mr. Sharples indicated at this point the application is on day 70 and an extension needs to be agreed to by the applicant.

Ms. Belanger discussed having a traffic study and expressed concerns about if the Federated Auto business lease was transferred. Mr. Sharples noted a traffic study would not address parking. She felt the huge, underutilized parking lot could affect Portsmouth Avenue and have more impact on Jady Hill which the Board is being asked to approve ten years from now and how MUND could be approved in phase two is not happening.

Chair Plumer agreed he had concerns with approving something not being built for ten years. Ms. English agreed and questioned what happens if there is a MUND with no commercial. Ms. Libbey indicated there is commercial use there now. Mr. Sharples recommended living within the regulations and not thinking hypothetically and agreed there is commercial use there now.

Michael Green addressed the traffic memo and low volume and while he agreed intersections need stop signs and turning lights this was discussed at TRC and the Board has not yet seen those comments. There are existing issues not caused by this development. He noted he originally had two 50' buildings and is now at 34 units doing 10% affordable and he keeps hearing take away, take away but there is a limit. The units have been decreased significantly from 80 to 34 with significantly less impact to traffic and people.

Mr. Sharples noted that this morning the traffic engineer called VHB (the 3rd party review) and spoke to Jason Plourde and agreed the analysis is not warranted, beyond existing problems and spending \$25,000 on a study would be better invested solving issues that exist today. Ms. Belanger indicated she was surprised TRC had no concern with that many units and it seems low. Mr. Sharples explained the IT standards are based on average trips. Ms. Belanger questioned if Jason would be available for the next meeting. Mr. Sharples will reach out to him.

Ms. Belanger motioned to table Planning Board Case #24-8 to the March 13, 2025 Planning Board meeting at 7 PM in the Nowak Room. Ms. English seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 4-0-0.

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.

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 and the applicant indicated they were developing a landscaping plan prior to the Feb. 13, 2025 meeting which was not completed so an extension was requested to allow them time to address issues raised during the site walk and the UEI comments. The applicant submitted plans and supporting documents dated Feb. 19, 2025. Staff is still reviewing materials. The applicant is requesting three waivers. Numerous letters and emails were received and were provided to the Board.

Christian Smith of Beals Assoc. presented the application. He reviewed changes to the plans and noted all units have two parking spaces in front of the garages. There is less impervious pavement. He reviewed the stormwater catch basin and engineer request from the town for an 8" pipe. He reviewed drainage calculations. He referenced the landscape design plan and showed the plan with a vinyl fence, existing mature trees and two stormwater ponds, pervious pavement and walkway.

Chair Plumer asked about stormwater from the buildings and Mr. Smith explained the layer of pervious pavement.

Ms. Belanger asked about fencing at the cemetery and Mr. Sharples indicated the cemetery had a 6' fence on their side.

Ms. English asked about the two colors of the fence, gray and white. Mr. Sharples explained that the abutter of lot 106 preferred that color.

Chair Plumer asked if the driveway close to the property line could be moved further from the property line. Ms. English and Ms. Belanger agreed. Mr. Kennedy questioned if they would still need the waiver. Mr. Smith indicated there would still be grading within 5.' Mr. Kennedy asked if the distance could be shown on the plan. Mr. Grueter asked if sidewalks could reach both ends of the parking lot. Mr. Smith indicated the landscape designer wanted to save a couple of trees and add more plantings.

Ms. English asked about the entry and Mr. Smith indicated from the garage most often.

Chair Plumer asked if the town homes could be individualized, staggered to give it a neighborhood feel and get away from the hotel look. Mr. Smith indicated the only difficulty would be with the front building. Mr. Grueter asked if a unit could be removed and building two and three turned to face each other to have a bigger grass area. He noted the side of the building might be better to look at than the garage. Mr. Sharples indicated it may violate the setbacks.

Chair Plumer opened the hearing to questions and comments from the public at 9:21 PM.

Jim of 5 Gill Street expressed concerns with the history of the neighborhood, design, density, traffic and character of the neighborhood. He opposed the three waivers and asked to keep the driveway away from his property.

Charlie French of 9 Gill Street expressed concerns with the scale of the project and density with the surrounding neighborhood and character, with screening and noted flipping the buildings would put the road closer with less screening.

Jeff of 111 Front Street expressed concerns with there being any waivers and with the scale, with parking and density and history of the lot. He recommended taking away 4-5 units. He expressed concerns with zoning and how this parcel became commercially zoned. He reviewed the history of the zoning, and research by the Planning Office. He noted there was a warrant article approved in 1988 to make properties with multiple zoning into one zone and there is no information on how this became

commercial, the tax card says R-2, there is no legal decision. He questioned whether the town homes would be condominiums or apartments. He expressed concerns with parking.

Ms. Belanger indicated there was commercial use, an art gallery, a grocery store, some residential use, some commercial. Ms. English noted the town planner at the time lives across from the library and he could be asked.

David H. of 114 Front Street expressed concerns with the size of the project and asked if it could be shrunk to fit in with the neighborhood. He expressed concerns with density and fire hazards and asked if the fire department signed off on it. He expressed concerns with headlights into his home 20' away and the character of the neighborhood with a towering 35' building. He expressed concerns with traffic and would like a traffic analysis. He indicated Front Street is a nightmare and snow blocks the view now.

Bill Campbell of 7 Riverwoods Drive asked if there were a workforce component – no. He referenced a Seacoast article which stated the project would fit in nicely with the stately homes there. He noted the master plan intent to have density be reasonable and 17 units on 1.6 acres not being in character of the town.

Dana of 9 Gill Street expressed concerns with conversations and promises made by the developer at the site walk not being kept, with regard to the 6' cedar fence she was promised.

Rory Morissette of 12 & 14 Parker expressed concerns with the size of the project, traffic, snow piles, pipes, heavy rain water, pooling, grading, density and stated that he also understood there would be a cedar fence. He noted school was close by. He stated there were never any commercial businesses there when he was growing up.

(unidentified) stated that he did talk about fencing and would need to remove trees. He indicated he worked with all abutters, and referenced the Academy buildings which have a similar federal design. He noted he worked with Julie Gilman at the Heritage Committee. Mr. Grueter disagreed and noted the Committee only talked about saving the existing historical Merrill House.

S. Nelson of Gill Street expressed concerns with density, traffic and the proximity of the driveway.

Mr. Sharples explained the difference between a traffic memo and a traffic analysis which does actual traffic counts and concludes what if any improvements could be made.

Adele Robertson of 106 Front Street expressed concerns with church, on Sunday and the time of year factored in to when school is open.

Marie Carr of 4 Cross Road indicated she is not an abutter, but that Nancy Merrill wrote the book on Exeter. She expressed concerns with density and questioned if the home in front could be preserved and a larger home built in back.

Mr. Sharples recommended the Board providing the applicant a feel on the three waivers before continuing the hearing to the next available date.

Mr. Smith addressed pavement width of 22' and the bulk of impervious, grading within 5,' and the conventional pavement use the first 150' with catch basin and pipe. He referenced the support media beneath including filtration and stone which is designed to support vehicle traffic and was reviewed by the TRC and fire department.

Mr. Kennedy questioned the wavier for 5' and the proximity of the driveway and property line. Ms. Belanger agreed. Mr. Sharples explained there are instances when there is a low volume, of little or no impact when the town engineer will allow the connection to drainage and Mr. Smith feels it is fair because of the town engineer recommending the conventional pavement at the drive entrance/exit. Mr. Grueter agreed the measurements should be double-checked and provided.

Ms. Belanger motioned to table Planning Board Case #24-17 to the March 13, 2025 meeting of the Planning Board at the Nowak Room at 7 PM. Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 6-0-0.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 13, 2025

Ms. Belanger, Mr. Kennedy, and Ms. English recommended edits.

Ms. Belanger motioned to approve the February 13, 2025 meeting minutes, as amended. Ms. English 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"

391 Ms. Belanger reported that the Select Board is looking at the parking situation at Pickpocket Road.

392 **IX. ADJOURN**

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

395 Respectfully submitted.

396 Daniel Hoijer,
397 Recording Secretary (Via Exeter TV)