

**TOWN OF EXETER
PLANNING BOARD
NOWAK ROOM
10 FRONT STREET
MARCH 13, 2025
DRAFT 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.

46

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.

49

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 site on Bonny Drive and Greenhill at Clover Street. He
75 noted issues with queuing beyond intersections of Portsmouth Avenue. He referenced the lack of stop
76 signs on Bonny 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 site lines when
78 on Bonny Drive at Haven Lane. He referenced Bonny Drive at Greenhill Road, Clover Street at Bonny
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

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

88

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

92

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

107

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

110

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

115

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

117

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

121

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

125

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

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

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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 Bonny 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 Bonny 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 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

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

176

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

181

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

185

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

190 C-1, Central Area Commercial zoning district

191 Tax Map Parcel #73-14

192 PB Case #24-17.

193

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

195

196 Chair Plumer read out loud the Public Hearing Notice.

197

198 Mr. Sharples noted that the applicant appeared before the Board at the January 23, 2025 meeting to
199 present their plans for the redevelopment of the property. Public comment was opened, and a site walk
200 was held on February 6, 2025. The applicant submitted plans and supporting documents dated Feb. 19,
201 2025 and appeared at the February 27, 2025 meeting to address concerns raised during the site walk
202 and of UEI dated February 20, 2025. Revised plans and supporting documents were submitted on
203 March 5, 2025. The applicant is requesting two waivers. The previous waiver for grading within 5' is no
204 longer necessary as the entranceway has moved 5.5' off the easterly property line.

205

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

210

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

213

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

216

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

221
222 Dale Atkins expressed concerns with the size of the buildings compared to surrounding homes and
223 opined that there should be ten units at most.

224
225 Bill Campbell of 7 Riverwoods Drive asked why 17 units be jammed into this lot and expressed concerns
226 with height, density and character. He asked if the Board could recommend renditions from Gill Street.

227
228 Randy Daley the Cemetery Custodian asked about the fence. Mr. O'Neil noted the Cemetery owns the
229 existing 6' chain link fence and that will be surrounded by landscaping. Mr. Sharples noted the cemetery
230 fence continues to Linden Street. Mr. Daley expressed concerns with sound during construction or a
231 funeral. Ms. Martel noted there is not a lot of screening and recommended doubling it up with larger
232 species.

233
234 Mr. Grueter asked if there was a well for irrigation and Mr. O'Neil indicated yes.

235
236 Sarah Nelson of 8 Gill Street expressed concerns with density and referenced Article 1, Section 1.2
237 purposes of the zoning ordinance to lessen congestion in the street and to prevent overcrowding of land
238 and undue concentration of population and Article 10 – Growth Management, aesthetics and scenic
239 beauty and greenspace and with the driveway and number of homes. She asked about snow storage
240 and snow melt into neighbor's yards and if removal is part of the equation.

241
242 Rory Morissette of 12 and 14 Parker expressed concerns with density of plantings on the Parker Street
243 side and additional runoff.

244
245 Chair Plumer noted that he would like to see reduction. The project is very dense and not compatible,
246 the height is noticeable and will be interested to see the renderings. Mr. O'Neil noted the developer has
247 the right to utilize yield. Mr. Sharples reviewed the yield in the zone, which is 3500 SF of lot area per
248 dwelling unit removing the driveway. 69,349 SF minus the 9,687 SF of driveway. 59,661 SF/3500 is
249 17.05 units. Mr. Smith noted a ¼ acre parcel with a duplex at 11 Gill Street.

250
251 David Harrington stated that he sent a letter and expressed concerns with density being overwhelming
252 for neighbors and would like something to block headlights.

253
254 Jim Kneeland of Gill Street expressed concerns with density and character of the neighborhood and the
255 master plan. Ms. Belanger noted the Board has to go by the zoning ordinance.

256
257 Mr. Campbell noted if the lots on Gill Street were compared to the quarter acre units they would get six.
258 Ms. Smith noted he referenced a duplex not a single-family home.

259

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

266
267 Sam Makarkur noted the buildings could be 50' high. The use is allowed with no zoning relief and they
268 have been through Technical Review Committee (TRC), architect, landscaping, fencing and modifications
269 to break up the buildings. The property height abuts multi-family residences and 111-113 Front Street is
270 multi-family across the street with a modern parking garage. This is not a historic district, but they
271 worked with the Heritage Commission. There is a lot of multi-family on Front Street. Keeping the front
272 of the Merrill Building was not feasible. The developer has gone above and beyond with no legal
273 obligation to do so.

274
275 Chair Plumer asked about snow removal and Mr. Smith noted if full. There is no additional runoff
276 leaving to abutting property.

277
278 Jim Davis of 115 Front Street asked about maintenance of the porous pavement. Mr. Smith noted the
279 Homeowner's Association or Management Company. A plow with rubberized blade would be used. He
280 referenced the grassed area and that there would be no snow on Front Street. Mr. Sharples noted the
281 conditions of approval would address stormwater manual and inspection requirements annually. UEI
282 does third party inspections and bmps (best management practices) have to be met during construction.

283
284 Mr. Kennedy asked about the parking area not being considered part of the driveway and Mr. Sharples
285 explained how the ordinance reads.

286
287 (unidentified) asked about apartments or transient housing and Mr. Sharples noted the type of
288 ownership doesn't change anything whether individual or homeowners, with regard to maintenance
289 and submission requirements.

290
291 Ms. Martel reviewed the lighting plan and requested more information on the plan.

292
293 David H. asked about several motion lights all going off at once if an animal walks past. Mr. Brown
294 noted the lighting on the plan won't go off the property.

295
296 Ms. Martel recommended changes to plantings in the snow storage area.

297
298 Ms. Martel asked about curbs and trash removal. Mr. O'Neil noted no curbs and private trash removal.

299
300 Ms. Martel requested the diseased tree be replaced with a significant specimen tree with a big mulch
301 area.

302

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

306

307 **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

308

309 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

310

311 February 27, 2025

312

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

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317 **V. OTHER BUSINESS**

318

319 • Master Plan Discussion

320

321 • Field Modifications

322

323 • Bond and/or Letter of Credit Reductions and Release

324

325 **VI. TOWN PLANNER'S ITEMS**

326 **VII. CHAIRPERSON'S ITEMS**

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

328 **IX. ADJOURN**

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

331 Respectfully submitted.

332 Daniel Hoijer,

333 Recording Secretary (Via Exeter TV)