

**CITY OF EASTHAMPTON PLANNING BOARD MINUTES**  
50 Payson Avenue, Easthampton, MA 01027



**Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, February 7, 2023**

**Planning Board Chair:** Jesse Belcher - Timme

**Planning Board Members:**

X	Jesse Belcher-Timme (Chair)	X	Harry Schumann (attended remotely)	X	James Zarvis
X	Daniel Hartman	X	Kenneth Iavecchia	X	Christopher Cockshaw

**Absent:** None

**Recording Clerk:** Eli Bloch

**City Planner:** Jeff Bagg

**Assistant Planner:** Eli Bloch

**Guests:** Frank Demarinis, Bryan Balicki, Don Abel, Keri Pyke (remote attendance), Luke Showalter, Felicity Hardee, Dan Dodge, Kevin Grindle, Jim Goodwin.

1. **Call to Order:** 6:00pm Chair Belcher-Timme

2. **Public Speak:** None

3. **Planning Board Minutes:** 12/20/2022, 01/03/23

Member Zarvis made a motion to approve the minutes for the January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, Member Hartmann seconded, and all voted in favor.

4. **ANR's**

1. **99 Clark Street – Leslay W. Harrington to combine land of undeveloped lot and residential lot.**

Larry Holmberg was present representing the applicant. He explained the ANR combined a residential lot with an empty lot for estate planning purposes. The Planning Department had no comment. Member Zarvis made a motion to approve the ANR, Member Cockshaw, seconded and all voted in favor.

2. **16 Lyman Street – Cheryl A. Thomas to alter lot lines to bring single-family residence into compliance with side-yard setbacks.**

Larry Holmberg was present representing the applicant. He explained the ANR moved lot lines to bring an existing house into conformity in regards to side setbacks. The Planning Department had no comment. Member Zarvis made a motion to approve the ANR, Member Iavecchia, seconded and all voted in favor.

5. **Public Hearings.**

1. **(Continued from 12/20/2022, 01/03/2023) Tasty Top Development, LLC-** seeking a Plan Approval under Section 7.4 (Smart Growth Overlay District) for two commercial pad sites, two mixed use buildings containing first floor commercial and 14 residential units each, a daycare &

gymnastics facility, contractor storage buildings, one retail/commercial building, and one building with 18 residential units with at least 25% of units Affordable, and, a Plan Approval under Section 8.3 (Multifamily Housing) for 9 buildings each with 18 residential units with at least 15% Affordable, and, a Special Permit under Section 8.32 (b) for multiple buildings. Project will be phased and includes all necessary waivers, all associated site work, roadways, parking areas, lighting and other infrastructure. The properties are located at 93, 95, 97 Northampton Street (Map 128, Lots 113, 114 & 112) and consist of a total of 33.1 acres and are split zoned Highway Business (HB) and Residential Suburban A (R-15).

Luke Shaw provided an overview of project developments since the last meeting:

- The applicant has replied to the Historic Commission, Pascommuck Conservation Trust and Bob Perrient.
- There is an updated traffic study with additional counts.
- The updated site plan includes more sidewalks, refuse containers, bike racks, two electric vehicle charges for each building, chain link fence around stormwater basins, revised phasing, stormwater changes, and a photometric plan.
- Some parking spaces had been removed and replaced with green space that could be turned into parking if needed. The applicant stated they would come back to the board in the future if the additional parking was needed.
- Two buildings were moved 15-20 feet further away from steep slopes.

Planner Bagg explained that there are two potential improvements for Route 10. One a surface improvement to improve bike and pedestrian safety on the street that is currently in the preliminary design phase. The other is an upgrade the water main on the street which undersized and needs to be upgraded before the project could go to phase 3.

Board Members Iavecchia and Cockshaw asked about the contractor storage units and trash pickup. The applicant explained that the storage units would be rented to small contractors and that there would be a small shop for resident use in the community center. They also explained that trash pickup would be done by one or two companies for the whole property.

Keri Pyke of Howard Stein and Hudson (HSH) gave an overview of the updated traffic study:

- Additional traffic counts were taken at three locations.
- The estimated number of trips for the Roots facilities was changed from ITE data to data taken from the Roots facility in Westfield.
- The cumulative morning and afternoon peak hour trips for each phase.
- The study found that timing of the signal at West street could be changed to mitigate traffic.
- Leaving the site without a signal after full build out was considered level of service "F" and with a signal could be considered a "B".

Member Hartmann asked about on site queuing and if the study looked at that. Keri Pyke stated that there would be enough storage on site to accommodate the queuing for cars leaving the site. Member Hartmann also asked about what peak was used to calculate peak hours, Keri Pyke stated that they used the peak of the road not the peak of the trip generator. Member Hartmann asked if Keri Pyke if she still

considered a signal to be necessary in phase 3. She stated that it is likely but it is the decision of MassDOT not the developer who decides.

Member Zarvis expressed concern that the traffic data seemed too optimistic and that he would like to see a peer review. All Planning Board members expressed support for a traffic study and the applicant agreed it was a good idea. The Board discussed the draft Request for Proposals (RFP) prepared by the Planning Department.

Chair Belcher-Timme opened public comment specifically for the issue of traffic peer review.

**Keith Cernak**

- Stated that his comment was not about the peer review. Chair Belcher-Timme asked him to wait until after the vote on peer review.

**Beth Goodman representing 102 Northampton LLC**

- Asked that the peer review look at the issue of turning safety out of Mountainview Street which she felt the applicant had been dismissive of. Chair Belcher-Timme pointed out a provision in the RFP that covered the driveway location in relation to existing land uses.

**Sam Nelson 25 Highland Avenue**

- Stated that he would like to see the Planning Board use the traffic study from the Stop and Shop project. The Board stated a new peer review was needed because it is a different time and a different use.

**Deborah August 21 Groveland Street**

- Stated that she would like to see streets from Groveland and West street be included in the traffic peer review. Chair Belcher-Timme stated that it is part of the scope.

**Kot Kasom**

- Representing 102 Northampton Street – Stated that he wants the peer review to look at traffic counts off of 102 Northampton street.

**Rick Cernak 100 Northampton Street**

- Spoke in favor of having a peer review.

Planner Bagg clarified two minor changes they had made to the RFP to include language related dynamic modeling for signal timing on Northampton street and if the applicant should be required to design a control system for signals on the corridor. Member Hartmann asked for the review to look at the quantity and layout of parking on the site and the effect on on-site circulation. The Board agreed to add that to the RFP. The applicant agreed to all changes.

Member Zarvis made a motion to proceed with the RFP, Member Hartmann seconded, all voted in favor.

Member Zarvis made a motion to authorize the Planning Department to execute the RFP agreement with written consent of the applicant, member Cockshaw seconded, all voted in favor.

## **Public Speak**

### **Keith Cernak, 7 Groveland/Silicon Valley**

- Stated that he is the largest abutter, and is against the project due to concerns about traffic.
- Stated that he would like to see the driveway moved to better align with Mountain view Street.

### **Leslie Cernak, 100 Northampton Street**

- Stated her opposition to the project due to concerns about traffic specifically reading excerpts from letters by Cernak Oil employees.
- Expressed concerns with the Traffic Impact Statement and proposed peer review.

### **Danielle Martineau, 89 Northampton Street (on Google Meet)**

- Spoke in favor of more affordable housing.
- Expressed support to include more pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in the design.

### **Amanda Kalanbach, 5 West Lake Street**

- Against the project for environmental concerns including farmland loss, and water quality.
- Would like to see more ecologically sensitive development like those proposed by Pascommuck Conservation Trust.

### **Geri Chambers, 17 Mockingbird Lane, Westfield**

- Spoke in favor of the project to add a Roots facility. She stated that she has kids who attend roots in Westfield and it is an excellent service and valuable part of the community.

### **Michael Garacen, 7 Farfield Avenue**

- Owner of Carbon Star systems.
- Stated that he would like to see the dam in the Manhan River used for electricity production and for the developer to commit to purchasing that electricity if it was generated.

### **Nora Colby, 42 Willow Brook Westfield**

- Speaking remotely, stated that she has a child who attends Roots and is in favor of building new Roots facilities.

### **Kaitlin Rooks, 189 College Highway (on Google Meet)**

- Spoke in favor of the project to add the Roots facilities and stated that childcare is very hard to find in the area.

### **Shira Simon, 10 West Street, 57 Northampton Street**

- In favor of the project, stating she would like to see Northampton Street propelled forward to flourish. Not as concerned about traffic.

### **Janna Tetralt, 52 Pomeroy Street**

- In favor of the project to increase affordable housing, and tax revenue.

### **Tom Brown, 2 Grove Street**

- A member of EDIC.
- In favor of the project specifically affordable housing. Stated that Easthampton has changed for the better and the development would add to that.

### **Sam Nelson, 25 Highland Street**

- Against the project due to concerns about traffic, and environmental concerns including the ongoing enforcement order by the Conservation Commission.
- Stated that only the front portion of the parcel should be developed, and there is overwhelming opposition to the project.

Chair Belcher-Timme suggested that the Board vote to continue the hearing until March 21<sup>st</sup>

Member Zarvis made a motion to continue the meeting on March 21<sup>st</sup>, Member Iavecchia seconded, all Board members voted in favor.

- 2. Center for Human Development-** seeking a Plan Approval under Section 12.9, and table 5-1 #36 for a medical/dental center, clinic, or laboratory in a renovated building with associated site improvements and parking. Site is located at the former Manchester's Hardware Store, 55-69 Union Street, (Map 53, Lot 1, & Map 52 lot 40) and consists of a total of 1.06 acres and is zoned Downtown Business (DB).

Jim Goodwin the President and CEO for the Center for Human Development (CHD) provided an overview of the organization and the application. He explained that there was a great need for youth mental health counseling in the area.

Kevin Grindle provided an overview of the site plan including:

- 25 spaces were required and 65 spaces will be provided. He explained that the number of spaces is based off of experience at existing CHD facilities.
- All but 6,900 sq ft. of building would be removed.
- There was about a 10% reduction in overall impervious surface.
- There is a retaining wall in the southwest of the parking lot.
- There is added landscaping and screening in the site plan.
- They are working with the City Engineer and researching if there are additional stormwater management measures they could take.
- The drive way to Chapman Street will be restricted to CHD staff with signage.
- Snow could be stored in the back landscaped areas, and there were open drive aisles.
- There will be building mounted sign that meets all City requirements.
- There is a fenced in and screened dumpster in the southeast, and there would be no noxious waste.
- The stormwater system ties into an existing catch basin.

Al-Nardi the Architect explained:

- The entrance to the building will be off of the parking lot not Union Street.
- They are planning to use timbers from the demolished barn.

- Staff would park far from the building and visitors near the entrance.

The Board discussed lighting. Kevin Grindle explained that there are light poles on three islands centered on the parking lot and they would be 15' high and there would be no direct light beyond the property line. Dan Dodge added that the only exterior light on the building would be at the entrance. The Board discussed adding a condition related to lighting, and Mr. Dodge added that a full photometric plan would be submitted as part of their building permit.

Member Hartman asked the applicant if the fence in the north of the property could be replaced with arborvitae for screening. Mr. Grindle explained that there was not enough horizontal room to add a hedge and the fence was consistent with the previous use of a building façade.

#### **Public Comment**

##### **Kevin Sahagian, 4 Chapman Avenue**

- Expressed disappointment that the applicant had not contacted him about this project. He expressed concern about the privacy lost by the demolition of the building and would like more than the 5' fence proposed. Planner Bagg added that the fence could be up to 8' according to zoning. The applicant was agreeable to an 8' solid fence to maintain privacy for Mr. Sahagian.

##### **Rachel Roberts, 10 Chapman Avenue**

- Concerned about loss of chain-link fence and replacement with arborvitae.
- Requested shorter hedge as to not shade out her garden. The applicant was amenable to having shorter screening.
- Concerned that signage would not prevent people from using the Chapman Street driveway.
- Also expressed concern about dust moving off of the property during construction, and said it had been blowing into her yard, and excessive lighting.

##### **Cynthia Korotev Kassel, 8 Chapman Avenue**

- Expressed concern about shared driveway which is also used for their tenants parking, and is very narrow and children live at the house. Asked that driveway be gated.
- Stated that previous owner had easement through shared driveway strictly for when Union Street was closed and that the easement specified use was for "time to time".
- Expressed concern about a mental health facility opening in the neighborhood and asked for more information about the potential impacts to abutters.

##### **Alex Kassel, 8 Chapman Avenue**

- Expressed concern about removal of gate and snow removal if gate is removed.
- Stated that the driveway was likely too narrow for emergency vehicle access.

Kevin Grindle stated that the project team did not intend to use the Chapman street access and that they are amenable to additional restrictions. Their concern is if the driveway is gated there is a concern that there could be an issue with obtaining a building permit due to public safety concerns.

Chair Belcher-Timme stated that he would like for the abutters and project team to discuss the outstanding issues and return for the next meeting with a revised plan set for the Planning Board to vote on.

Planner Bagg encouraged the applicant to speak with the Fire Department prior to the next meeting and to make necessary changes to the site plan to meet abutters requests.

Member Zarvis made a motion to continue the hearing on February 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM, Member Cockshaw seconded that motion and all voted in favor.

Member Cockshaw made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Member Hartmann Seconded, all voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:13 PM.

**6. Other Business:**

Next Meeting February 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM