

SOMERSWORTH SITE REVIEW TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
September 4, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Bobinsky, Keith Hoyle - Temp Chair, Paul Robidas, Timothy McLin, Scott McGlynn and Tim Metivier
MEMBERS ABSENT: Shanna Saunders
STAFF PRESENT: Paul Crouser III

The meeting was called to order at 10:36 am.

1) Approval of the minutes:

Hoyle MOTIONED to accept the August 15, 2019 minutes.
Robidas SECONDED the motion.
The MOTION CARRIES by a vote. All vote in favor with the exception of McLin, who abstains.

2) OLD BUSINESS

- A) Any old business that may come before the Committee.
a. No old business discussed.

3) NEW BUSINESS

- A) Somedowntown LLC, is seeking site plan approval to add a second floor and convert the existing building into a mixed-use structure with 3 residential apartments on property located at 8 Government Way, in the Business (B) District, Assessor's map 11 Lot 209, SITE#09-2019

Applicant Statement: Ryan Greenhalgh from Groen Construction attended the meeting to represent David Baker of Somedowntown LLC. Greenhalgh stated that the design had been modified to increase the overall green space on the property and to eliminate excessive pavement. Greenhalgh also stated that Groen Construction had several items in place to address the drainage issue.

Greenhalgh stated that he wants to keep three on-street parking spots available while also increasing green space. Greenhalgh stated that he wanted to focus on the aesthetics of the frontage and keep the parking mostly remote, i.e., relying on public street parking. Greenhalgh added sidewalk curbing will be replaced with granite and they will provide a tip-down that will accommodate the crosswalk, and brighten up the building as a whole.

Greenhalgh stated that he the new plan amendments include screening on the upper level to mask the visuals of the HVAC system.

Police Department: McLin questioned Greenhalgh on what his plan was to mitigate public street parking issues in the winter when snow accumulates, or when storms hit the area. McLin added that several nearby private property owners have side businesses in the winter wherein they allow for parking during inclement weather, and to reach out to those residents who have winter parking to offer.

Water Division: McGlynn says to keep in mind the excavation moratorium when hooking up water lines, and to be sure to arrange fire, water services with him.

Public Works Department: Bobinsky stated that he appreciates the redesign, and commented on how he likes the increased green space and other aesthetic elements of the new design. Bobinsky expressed concerns regarding the removal of off-street parking and questioned how deliveries would be made, and how the coming and going of traffic would be affected. Greenhalgh stated that he does not anticipate frequent deliveries, nor does he expect frequent traffic to the site, due to the inherent nature of an office-type space, as opposed to other commercial sites with more substantial traffic flow, such as restaurants. Greenhalgh stated that after removing the driveways on the site and installing sidewalks and curbing, that three additional public street parking spots could be created, and this would help to alleviate parking and traffic issues on-site.

Bobinsky referred to drawing 3, regarding porous concrete, and would like to see details about the material specifications and details about how the material would be installed. Greenhalgh stated it would depend on the subsoils, as to how the porous concrete would be installed. Greenhalgh then stated that porous concrete requires far less maintenance than porous pavement, which was an earlier consideration. Bobinsky confirmed with Greenhalgh that new granite curbing will go in on John Parsons and Government Way. Bobinsky also requested additional details regarding the type of granite curbing to be used as well as details on compaction.

Bobinsky then addressed the park benches in the front of the site and suggested that Greenhalgh attempt to keep the benches consistent with the other benches that are used around town, and that the City has a vendor it frequently uses, who could be referred to Greenhalgh. Bobinsky again states that this is solely a recommendation to keep the bench specifications the same. Greenhalgh states he will contact Bobinsky regarding the benches.

Bobinsky questioned Greenhalgh on the “Stop Sign to be Removed” shown on the plans, and wanted to clarify with Greenhalgh that the stop sign will need to stay. Greenhalgh stated that the “Stop Sign to be Removed” was a typo, and that the note on the plans should read “Stop Sign to be Removed and Replaced.”

Fire Department: No comments made.

Building Inspector:

Metivier stated that the building will be required to be sprinkled. Metivier also stated that technically, a dumpster is required, although Greenhalgh can pursue an alternative means of garbage collection, such as multiple smaller garbage receptacles or a pay-per-bag system. Metivier mentioned that he appreciates the bike rack, as well as the gas service line, being included on the plans. Metivier stated that snow storage was a requirement and that it was not listed on the site plan. Greenhalgh stated that the snow storage would be directly adjacent to the walkway on the Government Way side.

Metivier questioned if vehicles would be allowed to cross the new sidewalk. Greenhalgh replied that no, they would not. Metivier then asked if all snow removal would be done by hand or by snow blower, to which Greenhalgh replied yes. Metivier also pointed out the lack of New England-style architecture in the proposed building's plans, and stated that New England-style architectural features are found in most building, commercial and residential, in Somersworth.

Metivier acknowledged that the screening of the HVAC would need to be included in the flat roof plan. Metivier questioned if electrical connections would need to be routed underground. Greenhalgh

stated that he does not know. Metivier stated that the electrical hookup needs to be included on the plan and it currently is not.

Metivier asked about the stop sign that will remain, and why it needs to remain. Greenhalgh stated that the stop sign was necessary for traffic on John Parsons.

Metivier encouraged Greenhalgh to address off-site storm parking, as that issue would likely be a concern of the Planning Board later on.

Planning Board Rep: Robidas stated that his comments are an attempt to raise issues that would likely be of concern to the Planning Board. He states that the Planning Board likes pitched roof designs that are in keeping with New England-style architecture. Robidas states that Planning Board might criticize Greenhalgh's current design, stating that it might be too commercial in appearance vs. a soft, New England-style design. Robidas suggests that Greenhalgh address the aesthetic of the building's frontage, and that while he is pleased with the exterior and landscaping designs, that Greenhalgh should consider amending the design of the building to something more in keeping with the New England-style architecture that residents and the Planning Board would like to see.

Greenhalgh stated that their design was likely final, but that he anticipates bringing in architectural styling that is in keeping with the rest of the downtown. Greenhalgh stated that he understood the stance of Robidas, and that he understood that the appearance was a matter of subjectivity.

Robidas revived the parking issue, by stating that previous projects in Somersworth have also claimed that public street parking would be the main parking option of the project, and that public parking would fulfill necessary parking needs, noting that historically, relying on public street parking has not worked and has caused significant problems for the City, due to lack of parking.

Robidas would like the green space to remain green and stated that he would like to see some sort of irrigation plan. Robidas also stated that he would like to see one or two lighting features in the same style as the rest of the downtown, i.e., black metal column supports with warm lighting. Robidas encouraged cohesiveness with the rest of the downtown with respect to lighting and green space.

Greenhalgh stated that the cost of the lighting is a concern, and further stated that an investment in exterior lighting would not result in any sort of increase in rent income for the property owner. He states that in the future, as rental prices and the downtown economy continues to grow, that it would be a stronger consideration. Greenhalgh again stated that the upfront cost of the fixtures, as well as the utility hook-up would be a major financial concern.

Robidas stated that the lighting was not a requirement, but that Planning Board members will likely focus on the appearance of the building and the landscaping as a whole. Robidas again expressed concerns regarding the lack of private parking, and the strain that would have on surrounding businesses/parking areas.

Robidas asked McLin if residents move their cars into the Somersworth Plaza in the winter, and who is entitled to park at the plaza. McLin stated that the Plaza Terrace Apartments are the only residents who have an agreement in place with the City to allow them to park in the Somersworth Plaza full-time.

Greenhalgh emphasized that the City's parking ordinance only required that there ample parking within 500 ft of the structure, and that their plan of on-street public parking had satisfied that requirement.

McLin stated that people are likely to park in spaces that are most convenient, and that this project relying on public parking could create an issue for plaza business owners parking-wise. Robidas stated that the new bank project at 1 John Parsons will also require parking, which could create future issues for that property owner.

Bobinsky added that Greenhalgh should come up with some sort of bullet list for tenants to follow, wherein there are detailed procedures in place for contingency parking, for reasons such as weather.

Hoyle suggested that Greenhalgh meet with Shanna Saunders to address the parking issue.

Bobinsky addressed the proposed tree box filters and asked if they will be implemented in the final plan. Greenhalgh stated concerns about the upfront cost of tree box filters and the maintenance cost of them as well. Greenhalgh stated that the site is made of 100 percent impervious surface at present time, and that the entire lot, with the exception of sidewalks, would be converted to pervious surfaces according to their plan, and that their design would suffice in terms of drainage of the site.

Greenhalgh referred to sheet 4/6 citing information regarding drainage medium which would be placed beneath the pervious surface which will route water into the storm drain.

Motion: Bobinsky MOTIONS to bring this matter before the Planning Board. Robidas SECONDS. The motion CARRIES by a 6-0 vote.

Public Comments: Dale Smith-Kenyon appeared before the Committee. She asked Greenhalgh who would maintain the porous concrete on the site. Greenhalgh stated that the property owner would be responsible for maintenance and repairs, and again cites that porous concrete requires less maintenance than porous pavement.

Smith-Kenyon states that the lot is home to two specific non-native types of vegetation, one being Honey Locust, and the other being a specific type of birch tree which is only native to areas meeting or exceeding 3,000 ft. in elevation. She states that she would like to see native plant species on the lot.

C) Any other new business that may come before the Committee.

No other business.

Motion: Robidas MOTIONED to adjourn the meeting. Hoyle SECONDS the motion. The motion CARRIED at 11:23 by a 6-0 vote.

Respectively submitted:

Paul Crouser III
Site Review Technical Committee