

**NORTHFIELD PLANNING BOARD
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2023
SITE PLAN REVIEW
HYBRID MEETING: TOWN HALL AND VIA ZOOM
~~DRAFT~~ MEETING MINUTES**

Members Present: Chair Stephen Seredynski (SS), Joe Graveline (JG), Meg Riordan (MR), Homer Stavely (HS), Tammy Pelletier (TP)

Members Absent: none

Members of the Press: none

Others in Attendance: Wendy M. Levy (Board Clerk), John Hall, Floyd "Skip" Dunnell, Sarah Kerns, Virginia Hastings, Howard Hastings, Bernie Porada, Andrea Llamas, Joanne McGee, Mark Fortier, John MacMillan, Bee Jacques, Bill Murray, Laura Kay

Please note, because of Zoom's participation structure, attendance may be incomplete.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair SS called the meeting to order at 4:05pm.

MR shared a document showing the Planning Board's agenda for this meeting.

SS announced this meeting is a site plan review of the proposed Emergency Services Building on Main Street to ensure the zoning bylaws match the project. This is not a permitting process, and there will be no financial-related discussion today, said SS.

SS reviewed the participation guidelines for this meeting. He reminded attendees to announce their name and address to introduce themselves at the beginning of their statement.

II. ESTABLISH A QUORUM

SS announced a quorum has been met.

III. PROPOSED PROJECT PRESENTATION

Bill Murray, Director of Planning & Landscape Architecture at PLACES Associates, Inc., gave his presentation on the proposed EMS building project. He shared a document of the Site Plan. Highlights included:

- His role and credentials.
- A review of the project's site, including the fuel tanks, generator, building, yard, parking areas, garage, and sallyport.
- The process: the Zoning Board of Appeals requires an offset variance, and why the project needs it as per the town's bylaws and geographic concerns, and communications with the Building Inspector.
- Details on the property's grade, surface, and substrate.
- An explanation of the carport, which is a bid alternate (meaning: it may or may not be included)

in the final project, and the town may reject or accept it). The carport will allow for parking for four police cruisers.

- Some sections of the proposed building and grounds will be open to the public, and others will not be. They will be clearly marked.
- The application to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MASS-DOT) for a double curb-cut is underway; it is needed because the site is on a state highway.
- An update on the water testing and sewer easement related to the project.
- For the site's electrical needs, a new pole will be installed across the street with a drop-pole on site. This structure will also provide a structure for the cable and telephone lines.
- The site will be fully landscaped.
- The Conservation Commission is aware of the project, but they have not applied to them yet.
- Mr. Murray will email the Planning Board members a color copy of the Site Plan.

IV. QUESTIONS FROM PLANNING BOARD

SS asked about the traffic flow during the construction phase. Mr. Murray responded: It will follow MASS-DOT rules, so no obstruction except for the initial load-in.

Mr. Murray reviewed details on the trees and erosion controls for the project.

Mr. Murray noted the site will be fenced in during construction. There will be two construction entrances where the driveways will go, and this will allow for circular travel into and out of the complex. Placing the construction driveway where the final driveway will go will help compact the soil for paving the driveway.

Mr. Murray held up a 300-page binder filled with project specifications. The binder includes detailed rules about erosion and wetlands which are included in the contracts with all contractors. An on-site project manager will oversee the rules and ensure they are followed.

SS asked about including the police in traffic control for construction. Mr. Murray responded: He has been in contact with Police Chief John Hall about this. Mr. Hall confirmed this.

Mr. Murray said the town has been assessing the need for all emergency management services and their associated facilities since 2012. Part of this process has been trying to find a site for the facility. Mr. Murray noted he specializes in public facilities. It is crucial for an EMS facility to have a central location so the services can best reach people across the entire town. He noted the town has done extreme due-diligence in the site selection. He gave some history of the process, and how and why the Snow site was chosen.

Mr. Murray noted the project documents go into detail on the design aspects, and that the Rural Design model is appropriate for the town. The site is in a lightly-wooded area with many invasive species, which can get somewhat eradicated from the site work. The path behind the site, the wetlands, and the river will not be disturbed. That said, the building can be expanded later, if needed.

SS reminded attendees that the Planning Board has had time to review this project vis-a-vis Rural Design.

JG asked for details on the parameters of Rural Design. SS reminded JG that they are included in the town's zoning bylaws.

Mr. Murray said the plan includes drainage details.

A discussion ensued on the erosion control plans during construction. Highlights included:

- SS acknowledged the public has expressed concerns about erosion.
- Details from Mr. Murray on the plans:
 - Only water can get into the wetlands.
 - The silt fence prevents any silt, debris, or people from crossing the silt fence.
 - The Conservation Commission, and PLACES Associates will examine the silt fence.
 - The construction contractors have to regularly inspect and monitor the silt fence.

HS asked how the wetlands will be protected once construction is over. Mr. Murray responded with the following details:

- There will be gutters all around the building to collect the rain.
- Underground recharge chambers around the building will send the clean runoff into the ground.
- An explanation of how these chambers, and the catch basins, work to filter out oils, silt, and other debris before sending the filtered water into the soil.
- The soil conditions were analyzed as part of the Operations & Maintenance Plan.
- This is a low-tech system by design, because it is obvious when it fails, which is not so with high-tech systems.
- The drainage basins slow down the water's return to the brook, as per state and federal standards.

HS asked how protected the building will be during periods of thaw, melt, or storms. Mr. Murray responded: Very. The building is 12 feet higher than the FEMA flood map's 100-year flood level.

JG asked about a nearby cellar hole. Mr. Murray responded: There are two, but no remnant stones or foundations were found in either cellar hole.

JG asked about the source of the fill that will be used for the parking area. Mr. Murray responded: Some will be from excavation and some will be from moving the fill around. Structural fill will be brought in to put beneath the building, as per strict engineer dictate. He added the building is a slab on grade foundation with no basement. Some of the entire site will lie on an area with no steep slope; where there is steep slope, the land will be reinforced by stone.

A discussion ensued on the sewer system. Mr. Murray pointed out the sewer specifications are very detailed and take up 9 pages of the proposal.

JG asked why this proposal is going before the Conservation Commission but not the Massachusetts Historical Society. Mr. Murray responded: The Massachusetts Historical Commission does not require their review of the site plan, but the architect will go before the Commission. JG disagreed, and noted other permits may trigger a Massachusetts Historical Commission review. A discussion ensued on the historical commission process.

JG asked how the Planning Board can support this proposal without knowing the historical commission's decision. Mr. Murray responded: There is nothing about this project that triggers a review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

JG asked if this meeting is a public hearing, and how will the Planning Board express its concerns. SS

responded: No, this is not a public hearing; this is a site plan review. The Planning Board is obligated to follow the zoning bylaws in its proceedings and decisions. The Planning Board is conducting no public hearing for this project.

JG asked about the fill that will be under the propane tanks. Mr. Murray responded: The planners looked at the fill that is already there.

JG asked where the dirt that is removed from the site will go. Mr. Murray responded: It will be moved to different parts of the site to create berms and other landscape details. The topsoil will be stripped, filtered, and then spread on the site.

MR asked about the number of accessible parking spaces in the proposal. Mr. Murray responded: There will be two; one for staff, and the other for the public. Both are van-accessible spaces on level ground connected to the building by an accessible route.

SS asked about exterior lighting. Mr. Murray shared and reviewed a document, the proposal's lighting plan, which he had previously submitted to the Planning Board. He noted this plan had been drafted by the lighting engineer. His review included what kind of lights would be used and where, regulations covering lighting at public safety facilities, that these lights shine downward to minimize light pollution, that critical areas will be well-lit, and the plan will not affect the neighbors.

SS asked about the lighting plan's affect on the south abutters. Mr. Murray responded: Trees and hedges will block the light.

MR asked if the lighting will be controlled by sensors and timers, and determined by the police and fire chiefs. Mr. Murray responded: Yes.

A discussion ensued on details of the motion sensors in different locations. Mr. Dunnell reviewed which motion sensors will trigger which lights, when they will activate, how they will activate, and for how long. He noted these settings can be adjusted as needed. They are all energy-efficient LED bulbs.

HS asked if these LED bulbs were the "warmer" type. Mr. Murray responded: Yes, in most areas, but some bulbs need to be brighter, but these brighter lights are lower than the abutter's property, and they are screened.

A discussion ensued on the cupola bid-alternate. John McMillan, the architect, explained that while the cupola looks nice, it is expensive so it may not make the final plans. He pointed out the cupola is part of the building's HVAC system. Mr. Dunnell noted the cupola was in response to extensive public comment asking for this building to match other buildings in town.

Mr. Murray acknowledged the Energy Committee and Building Committee are all aware of future energy needs. While this project is not currently LEED, it is equipped to upgrade to all-electric, including the ability to charge electric police cruisers and put solar panels on the roof.

HS asked why the project is using propane. Mr. McMillan responded: It is not possible to currently totally electrify the building because it is a big load, and public safety buildings need a larger generator, which needs stored fuel: this is diesel, which requires less fuel than propane. While the building is adaptable to full electrification, including the propane is the best that can be done within this budget. Mr. Murray explained that propane generators are very difficult to get right now. He noted that many

boards and agencies reviewed the design of this building, and that review included information on which generator to use.

Mr. McMillan reviewed the proposed building's signage. He shared and reviewed a document showing the architectural renderings of the building's exterior, its signage, and its lighting. Highlights included:

- The main sign on the front of the building is lit all night.
- The lighting design prevents light pollution going into the sky.
- The front entrance will be lit at night.
- The front entrance will include an exterior phone that connects to dispatch. Mr. Dunnell noted the building will not be staffed all night, but the on-site exterior phone will connect a caller to dispatch.

TP and SS asked about surveillance of the building's exterior. Mr. Murray and Mr. Dunnell responded: Yes, cameras will surveil the parking lot and building's entrance.

A discussion ensued on the materials to be used on the façade, and that a great deal of public input was collected on this. The consensus was to include arches on the front of the building to match the library.

SS asked if Planning Board members had further questions for the architect. They did not.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Bee Jacques, Chair of the Historical Commission, noted the site is in a historical area, so the commission recommends an archaeologist conduct a survey there. She said they also recommend filing a project notification form with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and for the Planning Board to thus please attach conditions.

JG announced he has histories of the area if the other Planning Board members want to read them.

SS responded: This is not a hearing for the Planning Board to sign a permit, so they cannot attach conditions. The request is noted in the minutes.

Sarah Kerns of Highland Ave. asked what the propane is used for. Mr. Murray responded: For heating.

Virginia Hastings of North Lane asked if solar panels or mini-splits can be added to the plans. Mr. McMillan responded: The roof is reinforced on the south side for future solar panels, but solar panels are expensive, and the town is not eligible to receive tax credits for their installation. Additionally, most of the roof is not south-facing. Regarding mini-splits, the project does include heat pumps, but they are not ideal for cold temperatures; fossil-fuel back-up is still needed for heat.

JG asked about the process for drying the fire department's hoses. Mr. Dunnell responded: There is a motorized and vented hose-drying system.

Laura Kay of E. Northfield Road asked for the addition of a hedge between the site and Mill Brook (which lies behind the site) to block light. Mr. Murray responded: There is no need; the light will not reach that far.

VI. CLOSURE OF PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

SS announced the public comment period had closed.

JG distributed his historical research documents of the area to the other Planning Board members.

Virginia and Howard Hastings distributed their letter to the Planning Board regarding the Pierson Road campground. SS reminded them this meeting is not about the campground, and they are welcome to submit letters to the Planning Board at any time.

VII. PLANNING BOARD DELIBERATIONS

MR shared a document: Site Plan review standards.

JG asked if the Planning Board would assess the project, out-loud, using each of the 13 standards. MR responded: No; we will only deliberate using those standards about which we have questions.

JG referred to standard #10, and said there is a request given for a Notice of Intent to the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

HS said he liked the attention the architects gave to Rural Design. MR and TP agreed.

MOTION BY HS TO APPROVE THE SITE PLAN REVIEW AS PRESENTED. TP SECONDED.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

HS YEA

TP YEA

JG YEA

MR YEA

SS YEA

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Murray reported the project's planners will go before the Zoning Board of Appeals for a variance for the front's offset. He asked the Planning Board to confirm this is a reasonable request in the form of a letter of support. SS responded: Yes, we will do that. Mr. Murray noted this variance to allow the front of the building to lie closer to the road is to help protect the topography and wetlands.

A discussion ensued on the proposed building's meeting room.

MOTION BY HS THAT THE PLANNING BOARD SUPPORTS THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPROVING THE FRONT-OFFSET VARIANCE. SS SECONDED.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

HS YEA

TP YEA

JG YEA

MR YEA

SS YEA

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

VIII. ADJOURN

MOTION BY JG TO ADJOURN. HR SECONDED.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

**HS YEA
TP YEA
JG YEA
MR YEA
SS YEA**

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45pm.

Documents presented at this meeting:

- The meeting agenda.
- Site Plan for the proposed Public Safety / EMS Building on Main Street.
- Site Plan Review standards.
- A letter from Joe Graveline, dated March 20, 2023, about the Site Plan Review.
- A letter from Virginia and Howard Hastings, dated March 21, 2023, about the campground on Pierson Road.
- The Site Plan's lighting plan.
- Architectural renderings of the proposed building's exterior, including lighting and signage.

Respectfully submitted by Wendy M. Levy from minutes taken by Wendy M. Levy.

This represents my understanding of the above dated meeting. If you have any changes, please submit them in accordance with Planning Board policy.

4/12/2023 Approved
D. Ali - Chair