

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 12, 2019 Meeting | 7:00 p.m.

Engineering Conference Room, Woburn City Hall, 10 Common Street, Woburn, MA

Chair Dave Edmonds called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and asked City Planner/Grant Writer Dan Orr to call the roll.

Mr. Kevin Donovan, Mr. Bob Doherty, Ms. Claudia Bolgen, Mr. Michael Ventresca, Ms. Carolyn Turner and Chair Dave Edmonds were present; Mr. Jim Callahan was absent.

Planning Director Tina Cassidy and City Planner/Grant Writer Dan Orr were also present and introduced themselves.

ALAN R. GERRISH DRIVE (88-92 PEARL ST) SUBDIVISION: REQUEST FOR ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL OF DRAINAGE & SEWER EASEMENT, COVENANT, HOA DECLARATION & BYLAWS, O&M PLAN, DUST CONTROL PLAN AND RODENT ABATEMENT SERVICES DOCUMENTS, AND ENDORSEMENT OF DEFINITIVE PLAN MYLARS / Cattle Crossing LLC

Edmonds recused himself for this matter and Donovan assumed the role of Chair pro tem in his absence.

Cassidy reviewed the status of the aforementioned legal documents submitted for this subdivision and explained that a finalized Mylar has also been submitted for the Board's endorsement. All materials have been reviewed and deemed acceptable by corresponding City staff as to required form and content.

Cassidy further stated that, with staff having verified the acceptability of the proposed legal documents and definitive plan Mylar, she would recommend Board acceptance and endorsement, respectively.

Motion to accept the proposed draft legal documents and to endorse the definitive plan Mylar for the Alan Gerrish Drive subdivision, as submitted, made by Doherty;
Seconded by Bolgen;
Motion carried, 5-0-0, with Edmonds recusing.

Edmonds returned to the meeting and re-assumed the role of Chair.

RUSSO ESTATES: UPDATE ON PROGRESS TOWARD HOUSE AND ROADWAY COMPLETION, EXPIRATION OF CONSTRUCTION COMPLETION DATE ON MARCH 11, 2019 / William Scire

Attorney Salvati, 10 Cedar Street, approached the Board on behalf of the developer to provide an overview of where the subdivision stands and to relay the request of the developer to extend the subdivision completion date until October 30, 2019.

Attorney Salvati further stated the developer has finished two houses and has begun installing the foundation of a third home. He explained that Mr. Scire is projecting that curbing installation will occur by the end of May, with the excavation of the remaining three (3) home foundations completed by the end of summer.

Ventresca asked if there had been any issues reported in recent weeks by neighbors and also referenced the Engineering Department comments. Cassidy responded that no correspondence has been received recently on behalf of or from abutting neighbors. In light of the of the Engineering Department comments, she would recommend that the Board extend the subdivision completion date to October 30, 2019, as requested, subject to the developer attending the June 25, 2019 meeting for an interim progress report.

Turner asked about a projected timeline of permitting for the final house lots in the context of a potential interim progress report as of June 25th. Attorney Salvati responded that the developer will very likely have the 5th house lot permitted but not constructed by that point, with the 6th and final lot in the permitting process.

Cassidy stated that her recommendation is to extend the subdivision completion date until October 30, 2019, subject to the developer attending the Board's June 25th meeting to provide an interim construction status report.

Motion to accept the Planning Director's recommendation, made by Doherty;
Seconded by Turner;
Motion carried, 6-0-0.

WORKSHOP DISCUSSION (POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO THE PLANNING BOARD'S RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR LAND SUBDIVISION)

Cassidy summarized where the Board last left discussion on this topic when initiated last year relative to the fire apparatus safety standards for various roadway cross-sections and grass strip maintenance. Her hope is that the Board will consider making modifications to the current cross-sections and types of roadways referenced within the Subdivision Rules and Regulations ("the Regulations") for the benefit of all City departments.

Edmonds stated that he recalls the Fire Department staff discussing the minimum pavement width (20-feet) for the Board's information. In his experience, it would appear that 24-feet would be sufficient for safe passage of vehicles. Cassidy added that the minimum standard does not prevent the board from adopting a higher minimum pavement width.

Bolgen stated that her read of last year's minutes is that the Fire staff indicated that they would both provide specific suggested edits to the Regulations and would take no objection to the potential adoption of a 24-foot pavement width as a cross-section safety standard, as it is above the legal minimum. Cassidy added that she would follow up with Fire staff to confirm once again all of their suggested modifications to the Regulations.

Bolgen further stated that the 24-foot pavement width seems to be a great place to start as a benchmark for the core of each cross-section.

Edmonds stated that it is worth considering that developers may be opposed to 24-foot pavement width due to potential reductions in buildable lots. Cassidy responded that the more critical measure in that regard is the right-of-way width.

Cassidy began to review the visual diagrams prepared for the Board's consideration. As an example, it would seem that establishing a baseline pavement width of 24-feet would be feasible and reasonable. In addition, the Board should consider eliminating a 20-foot pavement width option for short cul-de-sacs entirely. Considerations for right-of-way width also warrant further

discussion; depending on the circumstances, it may require a 50-foot right of way to include all potential elements in a cross-section.

Bolgen stated that the Board should consider planning for the few parcels of land that are left in Woburn to build out a subdivision, in which a 50-foot right-of-way width may have utility. However, she also recognizes the need to plan for 40-foot rights-of-way found on existing paper streets.

Member discussion ensued on the topic of the requirement for and space allocation to street trees.

Bolgen stated that she understands that there are broader aesthetic and environmental benefits to requiring street trees. However, their inclusion can require a lot of space within a cross-section at the expense of other features, such as sidewalks.

Cassidy further provided images of various roadways around the city as examples of shortcomings relative to narrow grass strips with street trees encroaching onto/damaging the sidewalk and a lack of adequate space for mailbox installation, impeding pedestrian movement. Members responded that these are outcomes that should be avoided.

Bolgen stated that it may make sense to plan for the limited parcels of land left in the for rights-of-way yet to be created. Cassidy responded that a development such as Shannon Farm (Bob Murray) would be a good model to follow, with a 50-foot right-of-way and 26-foot pavement width, but with street trees installed outside of the right-of-way (with an easement restriction preventing homeowner removal but also permitting City maintenance, where applicable).

Bolgen further questioned whether it is the City's responsibility to maintain the trees that are installed in subdivisions, given that this will have a long-term impact on budgeting priorities. Cassidy expressed that the City is already theoretically responsible for maintaining the trees located within grass strips.

Bolgen stated that it may be helpful to look at the vacant land in the city to formulate new roadway cross-sections around such parcels. Cassidy responded that staff can certainly look into identifying potential development parcels for the Board's information.

Edmonds added that there are more parcels that would be developed as subdivisions than one might expect due to the fact that there are a number of properties with private driveways that could be converted to public or private ways.

Bolgen stated that, if it seems that 50-foot rights-of-way do not seem very likely in the future, then Pearl Street and Flagg Street-type subdivision will likely be the models of development going forward, in which case the short cul-de-sac cross-section should be the Board's primary focus. Further, it may be that in this scenario that street trees are deemed by the Board as less of a priority.

Cassidy further stated that the Board must also give consideration to a few other road types, such as those for industrial-related subdivisions and through-streets, for which the roadway cross-sections must be developed.

Bolgen asked for clarification as to the right-of-way width that would be utilized for the short cul-de-sac and whether its width must be limited to 40-feet. Cassidy responded that she would confirm with the Engineering Department whether there are any exceptions. Edmonds added that it may be that grass strips are not prioritized by the Board for the short cul-de-sac type of roadway.

Board discussion segued to the topic of grass strip alternatives.

Cassidy reviewed the example of pervious pavement as potential alternative to grass strips to possibly incorporate into a roadway cross-section.

Multiple members questioned the use of the grass strips given their required maintenance by the Department of Public Works and the inconsistency of dedicated resident care.

Ventresca stated that the type of permitted trees to install within grass strips should be taken into consideration given their growth potential, with priority toward less sidewalk-intrusive tree types. Cassidy responded that a list of required tree types is certainly a facet that needs to be clarified in the Regulations.

Edmonds stated that the Board may condition the requirement for a grass strip on the number of units (i.e., triggered by a specific number). Ventresca alternatively suggested that the requirement could be conditioned upon the length of the proposed street.

Bolgen questioned the Board's priorities regarding the pavement/sidewalk width for a short cul-de-sac. Members responded that 24-foot pavement width (for safe passage of emergency vehicles) and sidewalk installation seem to be the Board's first and second priorities, respectively.

Members generally discussed the conditions under which sidewalks should be installed and how a requirement could potentially recognize existing conditions in a particular neighborhood (i.e., a subdivision must propose sidewalks on either one side of the street or both sides of a street, if such conditions are pre-existing). Bolgen added that the primary goal of the Board on this aspect should be to ensure adequate pedestrian connectivity, wherever possible.

Ventresca stated that one option for a short-cul-de-sac may be to incorporate continuous sidewalk that does not proceed where there are no houses (i.e., in the shape of a "question mark").

Edmonds stated that there should be considerations as to whether a new roadway cross-section is creating ADA violations. Cassidy responded that she will conduct further research on this point.

Bolgen stated that after the Board finalizes the pavement width and sidewalk coverage for the cul-de-sac, it would need to consider how to allot the remaining width area to planting strips. Cassidy responded that assuming 25-feet of pavement and curbing, there would be 15-feet remaining to allot to sidewalks and a potential planting/grass strip (within a 40-foot right-of-way). Ventresca added that the Board could consider adding one-sided street trees and one-sided sidewalks on alternate sides of the street for the short cul-de-sac cross-section.

Bolgen asked fellow members as to their preference for a planting strip for a short cul-de-sac. Edmonds responded that his preference would be to not incorporate a planting strip. Bolgen added that the lack of a planting strip would raise questions as to where street lighting would be installed and subsequently maintained by the City.

Turner stated that the precise location of street trees also raises consideration of overhead sidewalk clearance when such trees matures. Branches can often obstruct ease of pedestrian passage on sidewalks.

Bolgen stated that it might be helpful to receive the input of DPW and Engineering on the utility of pervious pavement and whether it may be preferable from their perspective as compared to installation/maintenance of grass. The Board also should not feel compelled to dedicate any cross-section width for a strip of any kind should it not be deemed as absolutely necessary.

Cassidy reviewed the points that came out of the conversation that would help to guide the Board's next conversation on this topic and on which she would conduct further background research, such as identifying parcels with subdivision potential, the feasibility of installing pervious surface in lieu of a grass strip, and ADA requirements for sidewalks (i.e., requirements for pavement width and connectivity).

Doherty stated that the Board could consider simply allowing homeowners to take on the responsibility of tree installation. Cassidy responded that the City might then be ceding control of the tree type and location in such a scenario. Turner added that homeowners could also be encouraged to add planters to an area of pervious pavement, should that be ultimately incorporated.

Cassidy stated that one other consideration of pervious pavement is that it does require periodic maintenance to ensure it is clear of dust/debris to ensure proper drainage.

Bolgen asked whether there are any other localities that incorporate pervious surface into their cross-section requirements. Cassidy responded that she would explore this question for the Board's information.

Ventresca stated that focusing on a few example areas targeted for subdivisions (via short cul-de-sac development) would be helpful as a guide. The example of Baker Way may also serve as a model for reserving space for future sidewalks in the event that installing them is deemed necessary in the future. Cassidy added that this may be a potential answer to future ADA-related accessibility concerns as well.

Bolgen stated that the Board seems to want to consider 24-feet of pavement at its first priority, with a second priority of focusing on sidewalks, and the third priority would be to consider how to incorporate, if appropriate, street trees and/or strips (of grass or pervious pavement).

Ventresca stated that the diameter of the cul-de-sac would also important to consider. Bolgen added that it seemed that the Fire Department was specifically concerned with accommodation of turning radii. Cassidy responded that staff can contact Fire staff on this point to ensure that their fire truck templates align with any modified roadway cross-section proposed by the Board.

Edmonds stated that he would appreciate information on the lifespan of the pervious pavement material so that the Board can take financial feasibility into consideration over the long term. Cassidy responded that she would conduct more research on this question.

Cassidy suggested that the Board continue this discussion on the Board's March 26th meeting, given that there appears to no other scheduled matters before the Board for that meeting and doing so would add continuity to the conversation. Members expressed agreement.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 26, 2019 Planning Board meeting

Bolgen asked about the status of the cease and desist that was ordered for the Pearl Street subdivision regarding the lack of acceptable Mylar. Cassidy responded that staff ultimately received an acceptable version of the Mylar within a few days of the order being issued and thus was able to lift the work restriction.

Bolgen noted for clarification that, during discussion of East Dexter Avenue and her reference to "hazardous" conditions, it was not intended to refer East Dexter Avenue specifically but a general reference to what the Board must be mindful about all subdivision construction scenarios generally. With that being clear, she would accept the minutes as drafted.

Bolgen asked about the status of the postal service questions that the Board intended to pose to the Mayor. Cassidy responded that she is still exploring this topic and will endeavor to provide further information to members at their next meeting. In addition, she will confirm what is referenced in the Post Office Manual (POM) as to which delivery/storage model is acceptable for future mail delivery.

Edmonds stated that he would recommend exploring what notification the Postal Service gave to the City on this matter, and when, for more insights. Cassidy responded that she would do so.

Motion to accept the February 26, 2019 meeting minutes, as drafted, made by Bolgen;
Seconded by Ventresca;
Motion carried, 5-0-1, with Donovan abstaining due to prior meeting absence.

PLANNING BOARD DIRECTOR UPDATE

Cassidy stated that another proposed amendment to the City's billboard ordinance is slated to be before the Board and City Council in April (rezoning request submitted by 10 Presidential Way Associates LLC). Otherwise, she is able to confirm that no zoning and/or subdivision matters are currently scheduled to go before the Board during its March 26th meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no further business, Bolgen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 pm;
Seconded by Doherty;
Motion carried, 6-0-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 pm.

Table of Documents Used and/or Referenced at Meeting

Planning Board Staff Report
Staff Report Attachments (88-92 Pearl Street/Alan R. Gerrish Drive Definitive Subdivision): (1) Draft HOA, Easement, Covenant, O&M Plan and Rodent Abatement Documents; and (2) Copy of Cease & Desist Letter
Staff Report Attachment (Russo Estates Definitive Subdivision): (1) Developer's extension request letter (to October 30, 2019); and (2) Engineering Department comments
Staff Report Attachments (Workshop Discussion: Amendments to the Subdivision Rules & Regulations: (1) February, April, and June 2018 meeting minutes; and (2) Right-of-way layout sketches for discussion
Draft Planning Board Meeting Minutes: February 26, 2019 meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Orr

Dan Orr
City Planner/Grant Writer