

**COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL PERMITS  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2022, at 6:27 p.m.  
WOBURN CITY HALL  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Voting members present: Chairman Richard Gately, Councilor Joanne Campbell, Councilor Charles Viola, Councilor Lou DiMambro, and Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen  
Non-voting members present: President Michael Concannon, Councilor Jeffrey Dillon, and Councilor Joseph Demers. Absent: Councilor Robert Ferullo

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**Reading and approval of meeting minutes of May 23, 2022:** Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to approve the minutes of the previous meeting; in favor, 5-0.

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**U-Haul Co. of Massachusetts and Ohio, Inc. request for special permit pursuant to Section 7.3 and Site Plan Review under Section 12 of the 1985 City of Woburn Zoning Ordinance, as amended, to allow for: 1. a modification of Special Permits dated September 1, 2011 and July 9, 2015; 2. the alteration of the existing nonconforming use and structure under Section 7.3 to allow for a one story addition containing approximately 19,831 gross square feet of gross floor area for the storage of U-Boxes, an increase of U-Boxes from 816 to 1200, an increase in self-storage units from 802 to 1202; 3. Site Plan Review under Section 12 since there is an increase of gross floor area in excess of 5,000 square feet (19,831 square feet); and 4. the construction of the addition within the Flood Plain District under Section 9, at 31 Olympia Avenue:** Representing U-Haul were Attorney Joseph Tarby, Rubin Rudman, 600 Unicorn Park, Woburn, MA; Timothy Williams, Allen & Major Associates, 100 Commerce Way, Woburn, MA; and Jorge White, U-Haul Co., 31 Olympia Avenue, Woburn, MA. Attorney Tarby said he has three documents for distribution to the committee, as follows: 1.) Woburn U-Haul, 31 Olympia Ave site; 2.) An email dated Aug. 8, 2022, from Mr. White to Attorney Tarby and Matthew Pepin with the subject “31 Olympia Ave – U-Haul Proposed Addition,” and 3.) A plot plan dated Nov. 30, 1965. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Viola to accept the three aforementioned documents and make them part of the permanent record; approved, 5-0. Attorney Tarby said the email from Mr. White includes correspondence from Woburn Fire Dept. Lt. Joseph Foley, regarding an update on the U-Haul site. Attorney Tarby said the plot plan shows the access road from Olympia Avenue to what is now the U-Haul building. He said the third document is the summary of a site visit what was conducted on July 27, 2022. Attorney Tarby is seeking to modify a special permit issued in 2011 to build a single-story addition with 19,831-square-feet of gross floor area. He said U-Haul is also seeking to increase the number of U-Boxes from 816 to 1,200, and to increase the number of self-storage units from 802 to 1,202. He said there is also site plan review involved because the floor area is greater than 5,000 square feet, and the proposed addition is within the flood plain district. He said the existing facility is non-confirming because of the emplacement of the

loading dock, and because self-storage is no longer allowed under the zoning code. He said there was correspondence sent to the City Council on July 19, prior to the public hearing. He said there are comments from Conservation Administrator Theresa Murphy in an email to the Clerk of Committees indicating U-Haul's proposal falls under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission due to the proximity of wetlands. Attorney Tarby said U-Haul will be required to file a petition with the Conservation Commission but has not done so. He said the City Council made a request to City Engineer John Corey to address the mitigation component. He said there is an updated email from Engineer Corey dated August 4. He said the petitioner takes no exception to the comments in Engineer Corey's memo. He said the applicant has submitted a revised site plan. Mr. Williams said he will go over the modifications reflected in the updated site plan. He said four ramps were added to allow vehicles to drive into the building. He said loading docks were relocated. He said three parking spaces at the loading bays will be located at grade. He said two dumpsters were incorporated into the site plan. He said the lot will be re-stripped to create 103 parking spaces. He said the parking component is still non-conforming because 306 parking spaces are required. He said the premises otherwise meets the parameters of the Woburn Zoning Ordinance. He said the applicant will add signage to a two-way drive aisle. He said there will be an additional stop sign and a stop bar. He said the applicant will add portable speed bumps to help reduce speeding traffic in the parking lot. He said the addition will require an underground filtration system to be relocated. He said this will be subject to the wetlands protection act. He said three utilities will be brought in. He said there will be a new transformer, new telecommunications equipment, and a gas line from Normac Road. He said there will be three new light poles and 10 wall packs, designed so there will be no light spillage. He said there is a snow storage area, but if the snow gets to be too much, it will have to be hauled off-site. He said there is ample room for firefighting apparatus, including a ladder truck. He said this is the plan U-Haul put together. Chair Gately asked if any members of the committee have questions. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she has some questions about Engineer Corey's memo that she will withhold until later in the meeting. Councilor DiMambro asked if the new fire suppression system is still in the design stage. Mr. White said they are working with a vendor who has reached out to Lt. Foley. He said Lt. Foley asked U-Haul to submit plans from previous projects. Councilor DiMambro asked if there is enough water pressure to accommodate the fire suppression system. Mr. White said he does not know. Councilor Mercer-Bruen asked if that would be a question for Lt. Foley. Mr. White said U-Haul has communicated with Lt. Foley about compliance for their team members and first responders. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said if Lt. Foley determines there is not enough water pressure, that is something that is going to have to be addressed. Councilor DiMambro asked if a new line will be installed if there is not enough pressure. Mr. White said U-Haul will work with its vendor. Councilor Viola said he feels uncomfortable going forward at this juncture. He said he would like to see a stacked system for boxes. Mr. White said a stacked system will not work with U-Haul's forklift system. He said if there is a gap between each pod, the fire will go up, but if a stacking system is used, the fire will move horizontally. He said if there is a fire, the fire department will want it to go vertically. He said there are 183 sprinklers in a 10,000-square-foot building. Councilor Viola asked if the fire suppression system will involve the use of carbon dioxide, chemicals, or halon. Mr. White said he does not have an answer to that question. Councilor Viola said the sprinkler system won't be as effective with boxes on the bottom. Mr. White said if the boxes are spaces 6 inches apart, the sprinkler system shoots water down and will target the bottom of the boxes. He said it is a more effective means of fire suppression. Chair Gately asked if the fire suppression system is under

high pressure, and if there is a pump. Mr. White answered affirmatively. Chair Gately asked if the pump will be gas powered. He said that is important. He asked how high the boxes will be stacked. Mr. White said the boxes will be stacked 32 feet high. Chair Gately said that is a long way up. He said a pump will be necessary. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said it may be helpful to invite Lt. Foley to a subsequent committee meeting, so he can explain how he reached his conclusions. She said she cannot imagine Lt. Foley making any recommendations that may put any first responder at risk. She said she expects there will be another committee meeting for this petition. She said she does not think the City Council will vote one way or another next Tuesday. She said it may be more appropriate to ask Lt. Foley to come to the public hearing. She said may she can talk to Lt. Foley off-line. Councilor DiMambro asked where empty containers are stored. Mr. White said everything is stored inside. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said the City Council may remember she wanted clarification about mitigation. She said the most impacted intersection is at Olympia Avenue and Washington Street. She said that intersection does not have surveillance cameras. She said when the City Council approved a special permit in 2021 for the APNA supermarket on Washington Street, there was a condition for improvements at the intersection of Washington and Cedar streets. She said the council asked for two M-60 traffic controllers that were supposed to be completed prior to occupancy. She said she would like to send a communication to Engineer Corey. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Viola to send a communication to Engineer Corey as follows: Has condition #3 of a special permit issued in 2021 to APNA Bazar Inc., at 335 Washington Street been complied with? The condition reads as follows: "Petitioner must install two M60 Traffic controllers and one A1 Controller add on unit to improve operations at the intersections of Washington Street with Cedar Street and Washington Street and Salem Street. Work must be completed and fully tested and validated by the city engineer prior to occupancy permits, temporary or otherwise. Petitioner agrees to give the Building Commissioner 15-day notice;" Should the City Council opt to approve the U-Haul special permit, would it be prudent for the council impose a condition to that requires the applicant to install surveillance cameras at the traffic signal at the intersection of Olympia Avenue and Washington Street?; approved, 5-0. Councilor Mercer-Bruen received a letter from Cummings Properties. She said at first glance it looks like U-Haul is only going to say yes to one of Cummings' requests. Attorney Tarby said the memo from Cummings is somewhat misleading. He said there is a statement in the memo that U-Haul will be increasing by 50 percent, but the increase is only 32 percent. He said the memo refers to the access drive as Cummings' private driveway. He said to understand the history of the road, one has to look at the 1965 plan. He said there are three properties that have rights to the drive, one of which is U-Haul, and the other two are Cummings Properties and the Siegal Group at 35 Olympia Avenue. He said the deed indicates the property owners have the right to use the road. He said his client has an absolute right to use this access road., as does Mr. Siegal. He said this is being disputed by Cummings Properties. He said Cummings believes this is their private driveway. He said it is not, according to records at the Registry of Deeds. He said there was a site meeting on July 27 to talk about issues with Cummings Properties. He said other people have been using the access road to cut across U-Haul's property. He said he spoke to the parent company of Trio, the tenant at 39 Olympia Avenue, and advised them they have no right to drive through U-Haul's property and asked them to stop using it. He said he thinks the issues on the access road can be resolved with signage, which he said will require permission from the city. He said his client feels Cummings is better equipped to install signage on their property. He said Mr. White is working with GPS systems to direct traffic from the access road to Normac Road. He said his client has

the absolute right to use the access road, but U-Haul wants to be a good neighbor. He said his client is amenable to putting portable speed bumps to dissuade people from using the front driveway at U-Haul. He said U-Haul expects 50 percent of their customers will be going to the addition. He said the only suggested item his client is opposed to are the tire poppers. He said he does not think the Woburn Fire Dept. would be happy if the tires of a fire engine are blown. He said the installation of a gate is also problematic because gates malfunction. He said his client is in agreement about a 1-way route, and signage. He said only three properties rely on the access road, and there are things that his client is proposing to address the problems. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said that even though a committee meeting is not a public hearing, she would like to request the committee to accept input from the public, as she sees a representative from Cummings Properties in the audience. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Viola to suspend the rules to allow members of the audience to address the committee; approved, 5-0. Erica Wright, Operations Manager at Cummings Properties, said most of what Attorney Tarby said is accurate, but Cummings Properties still feels some sort of barrier or gate is required at the entrance to U-Haul. She said people just tend to ignore signage. She said Cummings Properties has a lot of clients at 25 Olympia Avenue who complain about traffic. She said Cummings Properties is trying to create a safer environment. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to return to the regular order of business; approved, 5-0.

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**Motion made** by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Viola to adjourn; in favor, 5-0. Chairman Gately adjourned the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

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Gordon Vincent  
Clerk of Committees