Meeting of the Planning Board  
Thursday, December 10th, 2020

The 9th meeting of the Milton Planning Board for FY2021 was called to order at 7:03 p.m. via the Zoom virtual meeting software.

Present: Planning Board members April Anderson (Chair), Denise Swenson (Secretary), Kathleen O’Donnell and Richard Boehler; Town Planner Tim Czerwienski, Assistant Town Planner Allyson Quinn, Sr. Administrative Clerk Julia Getman. Member Cheryl Tougias joined the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

1. Administrative Items: Chair Anderson relayed the terms of the Open Meeting Law under the Governor’s order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law relating to the novel Coronavirus outbreak emergency. She noted that the meeting was being recorded and televised and provided directions on how to remotely join. Upcoming meetings were confirmed for January 14th and 28th. On a motion by Ms. Swenson, seconded by Ms. O’Donnell, the November 24th meeting minutes were approved by rollcall, 4/0/0.

2. Staff Update: Ms. Quinn reported that public hearings had been scheduled by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for the 40B developments proposed for 485 Blue Hills Pkwy, 582 Blue Hill Ave., 648 Canton Ave. and 4-24 Franklin St., and that Planning Consultant Judi Barrett had been commissioned to assist with the hearings. Ms. Quinn said she was developing a webinar with a member of the Affordable Housing Trust to help inform the public about the Housing Production Plan and affordable housing strategies. She mentioned that the Select Board (BOS) had approved an application for a new restaurant at 88 Wharf St. which would go before the Planning Board for a special permit amendment.

3. Citizen’s Speak: Bryan Furze of 630 Brush Hill Rd., a former Planning Board member, supported the Condominium Conversion bylaw and believed it would help deter the influx of 40B developments in Milton. He discussed the need for diverse and affordable housing options in Milton and believed the bylaw may help the town obtain a stay of execution on 40Bs. He noted that there were currently three historic homes at risk of 40B development and that applications for two other properties were proceeding.

4. Old Business: 245 Highland St./ Marine Way Grading Discussion
Engineer Jim Burke discussed adjustments to the site plan on lot four within the cluster development, including a lowered driveway, a shift in the positioning of the house farther from the lot line and a reduction in retaining walls. Tree protections on lot one were also proposed. On a motion by Ms. O’Donnell, seconded by Ms. Swenson, the Board voted by rollcall to accept the revisions, 4/0/0.

5. Public Hearing: Site Plan Approval, 584 Randolph Ave.
Attorney Marion McEltrick, representing applicants Paul and Andrew O’Connor, discussed plans for the conversion of a pre-existing, non-conforming two-family home built in 1818 on the 30,815 SF lot at the corner of Reedsdale Rd. and Randolph Ave. to a funeral home. She said the applicant was in the process of hiring a traffic engineer and encouraged feedback from the community. A use variance, setback variance for parking and a sign variance had been applied for. She said the plan includes the removal of a barn and rear wing, to be replaced with a new addition similar in size to the existing buildings. 20 parking spaces will be provided, with indoor capacity limited to 50 people or less. She believed it would be a low-impact use in a partially commercial area, and noted that the historic structure will be preserved. She said a peer engineer is working on storm water review, which will include 12,400 SF of impervious area with an extended, looped driveway and parking lot.
Project Engineer Terry McGovern of Stenbeck and Taylor, Inc. presented site plan renderings and discussed existing conditions, topography, access, utilities, drainage systems, grading, fencing and walls, traffic flow within the site, buffers and surrounding properties. Seven 10-foot dark sky compliant LED pole lights were to be installed. The landscaping plan, which includes two retention basins, a rain garden, parking island, pervious walkways and new plantings, was discussed.

Architect Patricia Fisher of Rockwood Design displayed architectural diagrams of the existing building and plans for its repurposing, as well as plans for the new two-story addition. She said the exterior will maintain a residential, historic appearance.

Ms. Anderson listed the conditions under the jurisdiction of the Planning Board for Site Plan Approvals, including protection of adjoining premises, convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site and on adjoining streets, adequacy of disposal of sewage, refuse and waste, adequacy of drainage for surface water and lighting, space for loading and deliveries, and adequacy of unit density and proximity of adjacent buildings. She said the storm water report required a review, and a traffic study would be forthcoming. It was noted that a use variance and parking setback variance would be requested of the ZBA.

Public Comment:

Dan Daly of 15 Quarry Lane believed a traffic mitigation plan was necessary, noting the danger that additional traffic would pose to neighborhood children. He stated that the Randolph Ave./Reedsdale Rd. intersection is extremely busy, traffic backs up during rush hour, exiting and entering the site would be dangerous, and overflow parking would infiltrate the neighborhood. He said 16 signatures of opposition had been gathered from members of the Quarry Lane Neighborhood.

Christian Leimkuehler of 72 Badger Circle expressed concerns about excessive traffic, overflow parking and pedestrian safety.

John Cronin of 77 Centre Lane supported the project. He said the current property has become run down and the proposal will maintain a residential appearance in an intersection that has become commercialized. He said the business would benefit Milton’s tax base without burdening schools and said an alternative business may cause worse traffic issues.

Cheryl Sibley of 578 Randolph Ave. believed the variance requests were not insignificant. She believed the site was suitable for residential use, and noted that the nearby commercial establishments are accessed by four-lane roadways. She said speeding and congestion on Randolph Ave. are well documented but believed a traffic study during the Covid pandemic would not be accurate. She noted that wakes are typically held from 4:00-8:00 pm, which coincides with rush hour, and displayed photos of backed up rush hour traffic. She believed the parking plan was insufficient and said the pedestrian signals at the intersection are inadequate and unsafe. She added that signage would bring commercial features to the area, there would be light pollution, and an alternative commercial use may provide better amenities.

Martha Susi of 580 Randolph Ave., a direct abutter, said the applicants had not contacted her. She did not believe the site was unsuitable for residential use, and that noise and traffic would be brought deeper into the community, as traffic is already excessive and funeral services would coincide with rush hour. She said the 4-foot fence planned for the perimeter would do nothing to shield the view or lights of the funeral home from her home. She shared concerns about noise, traffic and pollution from delivery vehicles and worried that the leaching systems will drain into adjacent basements. She mentioned the requested variances and believed the project would not be a benefit to the neighborhood.

Aileen Kenney of 17 Lodge St. read a petition signed by 50 members of the community citing issues with inadequate parking, insufficient setbacks, and excessive traffic.
Michael Kenney of 17 Lodge St. opposed the plans, citing traffic issues, the undersized lot, insufficient parking and setbacks, light pollution and an extremely busy intersection.

Deborah McSorley of 580 Randolph Ave. said it was not a commercial neighborhood, the hospice is considered a home-use, and believed the area should remain residential. She said a funeral home is a business that only benefits its owners, and that bright lights and traffic will change the nature of the neighborhood. She said there is no buffer, no privacy, tall street lights, car lights, fumes and noise, water runoff, an insufficient fence, and that there will be an influx of loitering people in the parking area. She expressed concerns about parking and emergency vehicle access. She said that church attendees often use her driveway as a turnaround, the intersection is not safe for pedestrians and that there is no guarantee parking for the funeral home would be allowed at the St. Elizabeth’s church. She believed placing a funeral home across the street from a hospice to be insensitive.

Julie Thermidor of 546 Randolph Ave. said that Lodge St. is used as a cut-through street where children play and that the community has been forced to create their own traffic signs. She said parking at St. Elizabeth’s is already at capacity and that a business would deter the communal essence of the neighborhood. She said the lighting plan was “appalling” and that having strangers coming into the area, directly connected to Rte. 93, will be unsafe for children. She believed the site should remain residential.

Stephanie Quinn of 386 Reedsdale Rd., a direct abutter, expressed concerns about the impact of the lighting, traffic, signage and storm water runoff.

Jane Driscoll of 399 Reedsdale Rd., a resident for over 50 years, said her family has lived in the area since the early 1900s and that traffic has always been an issue, including during the morning school commute. She believed a funeral home will make the Quarry Lane intersection more dangerous than it already is.

Haley Dutton of 40 Lodge St. expressed concerns about traffic and safety and mentioned that the site is zoned as residential. She worried about the amount of cut-through traffic Lodge St. will receive when traffic is backed up, and said that over 30 kids live and play on Lodge Street.

Maria Zeledon of 578 Randolph Ave. said she feared for the safety of the children living in the area, particularly on Lodge St., when traffic is backed up, and worried about overflow parking. She said the 4-foot fence will do nothing for privacy, said the funeral home will cause a “perfect storm” of traffic problems, and that fumes and bright lighting will spill into the neighborhood.

Bill Mahears, a resident of Reedsdale Rd., believed assumptions were being made about traffic problems and pedestrian safety. He said that the O’Connors are from the area, have compassion for the community, and are willing to work with neighbors. He said he hoped people would remain open minded and have faith that the O’Connors will do what is best for the community.

Chris Murphy of 10 Maitland St. discussed concerns about traffic and the safety of his children. He said the Planning Board should make the concerns of the neighborhood their primary focus, not the success of the business owners. He said the members of the community had invested a lot to live there and asked that the Board take their concerns very seriously.

Ms. Swenson asked about plans for overflow parking at St. Elizabeth’s and signalization improvements for the crosswalk. She expressed concerns about emergency vehicle access and insufficient buffers for abutters. She believed the lighting poles and car headlights will cause significant overspill and that the buffers is insufficient for the site. Ms. O’Donnell said she would like to see more of the original building preserved and Ms. Tougias suggested the applicants consider underground parking. A request for cross-section plans was made for a clearer understanding of how the regrading would alter the site. The Board believed the lighting fixtures were commercial in design and not appropriate for a residential area. Plans of the existing street lighting and snow management were requested and it was suggested that more trees

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be preserved. The Board planned to schedule a site walk after the ZBA hearing. Concerns about impervious areas, removal of trees and the adverse effects on abutters were discussed.

*Mr. Boehler left the meeting at approximately 9:00 p.m.*

Ms. McEttrick said she would inform the Board on the ZBA’s hearing schedule. She said she had discussed parking at St. Elizabeth’s with the church’s pastor but that no agreement had been made. She agreed that the lighting plan needed to be reexamined, discussed the requested setbacks, and said she will be working with a traffic engineer. She said the storm water plan is detailed and will be peer reviewed, and that runoff is not expected to be an issue.

Applicant Andrew O’Connor said that he has had many conversations with the direct abutters and takes concerns very seriously. He said he wished to be as transparent as possible, encouraged people to reach out to him at any time, and said that his priority is to be a good neighbor. He said that he was a lifelong resident of Milton and that the safety and wellbeing of the community is important to him. Scheduling a neighborhood meeting with the applicants was discussed.

On a motion by Ms. Tougias, seconded by Ms. Swenson, the hearing was continued to January 28th by rollcall, 4/0/0.

6. 2021 Zoning Discussion

Ms. Anderson stated that the Board had voted to advance the Accessory Dwelling Units, Earth Materials Removal and Deposit of Fill, and Condominium Conversion articles to the February town meeting. She said she had not yet presented the articles to the Warrant Committee because there were aspects of the Condo Conversion language still under consideration. The Board discussed presenting the articles in May, as adjustments continue to be made to the GIS map outlining eligible properties for condo conversion. The Board discussed need for more housing choices in town in light of the multiple 40B applications before the ZBA and agreed that momentum should not be lost on the condo conversion bylaw. Ms. Tougias said she planned to continue to test the bylaw and create 3-D diagrams. Ms. Quinn discussed how the webinar would help the public visualize the Housing Production Plan as the “roadmap” for achieving the 10% affordability goal in Milton. The Board agreed to continue working on the condo conversion bylaw and scheduled a public hearing for the three articles on January 14th.

7. On a motion by Ms. Swenson, seconded by Ms. O’Donnell, the meeting was adjourned by rollcall, 4/0/0, at 9:55 pm.

[Signature]
Denise Swenson, Secretary