



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Community Planning and Development Commission

Date: 2022-03-14

Time: 7:30 PM

Building:

Location: Remote Meeting - Zoom

Address:

Session:

Purpose: Remote Meeting

Version:

Attendees: Members: Pamela Adrian, Chair; Nick Safina,
Heather Clish, John Weston, Catrina Meyer, Tony D'Arezzo - Associate

Members - Not Present:

Others Present: Community Development Director Julie Mercier, Staff Planner Andrew MacNichol, Brad Latham, Jamie Gerrity, Jeff Olinger, Patrick McCarty, Bruce and Lisa Johnson, Nancy Twomey, Barbara ____, Carlo Bacci, Bryan Vasser, Samuel Gregorio, Guy Manganiello, Guiseppe Fodera, Jeremy Donovan, Ilene Bornstein, Gregg Johnson, Kevin Vendt, Peter Maguire, Sarah Brukilacchio, Valerie ____, William Crowley, David Talbot, Kara Sennott, Chris Sennott

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Andrew MacNichol

Topics of Discussion:

MEETING HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM

Ms. Adrian called the meeting to order at 7:31 PM.

Approval Not Required Plan 12 and 16 Sunnyside Avenue

Kathleen Desmond, attorney, was present on behalf of the application. Ms. Desmond explained the proposed lot line adjustment and land conveyance at 12 and 16 Sunnyside Avenue, noting that both properties are within the S-15 zoning district and that neither property currently has the requisite frontage. Frontage is not proposed to change with the lot line adjustment.

Ms. Adrian asked about wetlands. Mr. MacNichol noted that the Conservation Agent confirmed there are no wetlands on the property.

Ms. Clish made a motion to endorse the ANR Plan for 12 and 16 Sunnyside Avenue. Mr. Safina seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0-0.

Sign Permit Application, 175 Haven Street The Style Lounge

Christopher and Kara Sennott were present on behalf of the application. Mr. Safina recused himself from the discussion.

Mr. Sennott explained that the proposal for a new awning at 175 Haven Street includes enlarged lettering and logo lettering that is greater than the 4" allowed without approval in the sign bylaw. Mr. Sennott noted that they will also reupholster the awning frame.

Ms. Adrian complimented the proposal.



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Mr. D'Arezzo asked about the height of the letters in the logo, noting that the entire awning will count towards sign area if the letters are above 4" in height. Ms. Sennott said that the goal is to make their business name visible. Mr. D'Arezzo said they are allowed 2 square feet of sign per linear foot of storefront/building length. He suggested they bring the bottom letters in closer to the logo to reduce the total sign area.

Mr. D'Arezzo asked if light will shine through the awning. Mr. Sennott said the awning fabric is Sunbrella blackout.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness, amended such that the entire sign area does not exceed 2 square feet per linear foot of business frontage. Mr. Weston seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0-1.

Continued Public Hearing, 40R Plan Review 459 Main Street, GC Fodera Contracting, Inc.

Attorney Jesse Schomer, Architect Jeffrey Olinger, Traffic Engineer Sam Gregorio, and Owners/Developers Guy Manganiello and Guiseppe Fodera were present on behalf of the application.

Mr. Schomer introduced the project. He explained the revised garage layout, which now would allow one-way traffic flow to enter on Main St and exit on Washington St, includes designated commercial parking spaces, and a designated area for App Ride pickup/drop-off.

Mr. Olinger went through the plan as well. He noted that 200 SF of retail space was removed which allows for a wider sidewalk area on both Main Street and Washington Street. The retail is now almost 1,500 SF.

Mr. Gregorio went through a trip generation chart, comparing the proposed mixed-use to other known retail uses, noting that multi-family residential does not generate a lot of traffic, especially if people work remotely, telecommute or walk to the train station. He said at the worst time of day, the residential components would generate 1 car every 6 minutes, with any queuing occurring inside the garage. Mr. Safina asked if the data is to suggest that such retail uses can be accommodated on the site. Mr. Gregorio replied in the negative.

Ms. Clish inquired about the type of retail they envision. Mr. Schomer replied that it is yet to be determined but the Applicant is open to retail or office uses. Ms. Clish opined that planning uses ahead of time is needed for this location.

Mr. Weston commented that the traffic issues discussed at the prior meeting were not about trip generation per se, but were mostly focused on the safety of turning movements in a heavily congested area. He opined that the commercial comparisons provided are mostly false equivalencies because many of them (i.e. convenience store, fast food restaurant, etc.) would provide on-site parking for patrons that would be relatively easy to get into and out of. He asked for further clarification on the garage plan.

Mr. Olinger noted that the striped area adjacent to the retail space is a loading area, and that a 24' wide drive aisle is available for cars to pull into, drive through, and then queue in the garage before pulling out. Mr. Weston clarified that someone pulling out would have to block the sidewalk to see and make the turn. Mr. Olinger said the 24' wide curb cuts will allow for better sight lines, and noted that the viewshed was widened on Main Street as well.

Mr. Weston noted that the compact spaces measuring 7'-6" are very narrow and may not be allowed. Mr. Olinger said they can be 8' wide if needed.



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Mr. Schomer offered some suggestions for a Traffic/ Transportation Demand Management Plan that could be worked out with staff. A plan could include details on signage, condo docs with a fee schedule for violations, enforcement mechanisms, on-site car sharing (could be building sponsored), EV charging, etc.

Mr. Schomer mentioned neighborhood concerns with the visual impact of the building, noting that the Rise475 building does not carry the building façade ornamentation around to the sides and rear. He offered that this building will do that, taking into consideration the rear wall, which could be clad in residential stone veneer, or decorated with a community-sponsored mural.

Ms. Clish mentioned that the abutting property, which is split-zoned, wouldn't be able to develop up to the property line. She expressed concern that the abutters would have to live with a 13' high wall right up against the property line, when they could not do the same. She suggested treating the development as if it were directly abutting the S-15 zoning district.

Mr. Olinger responded by saying he understands the idea and noted there is already a 7' fence on the property line. He said that if only a portion of the parking were uncovered, they would be unleashing a series of other environmental issues on the site such as snow management, stormwater, vehicle emissions, etc. He reminded all that the parking will be covered with a green roof.

Ms. Clish opined that the wall should be suitable to residents.

Ms. Adrian asked about traffic flow and how it will work with the gas station directly across the street. Mr. Gregorio noted that the proposal is no different from other proposals in an urbanized area, and reiterated that the project will not result in much traffic.

Ms. Meyer asked about the gate and how it will work with garage spaces dedicated to retail. Mr. Schomer said the gate on Washington Street will only be for exiting vehicles. Ms. Meyer suggested they design the spaces to be EV ready. Mr. Schomer said they will definitely do so. Mr. Olinger noted that 4 car charging stations were provided and a 4" conduit were run throughout the garage at the Ace Flats development. Similar will be done on this development. Mr. D'Arezzo asked how the electricity usage for EV spaces is paid for at Ace Flats. Mr. Olinger replied that he was not sure but can look into it.

Mr. Weston asked whether the developer will definitely provide shared parking, or will just explore the feasibility of it. Mr. Schomer said they are willing to have it be a condition of approval and agreed to a local car share service but not necessarily Zip Car.

Ms. Clish asked about potential impacts to the natural light for abutters in the Rise475 building. Mr. Olinger noted that the proposed building is set 3.5' off the lot line, and the Rise building is also set off the property line, so there will be some space between. He noted that Rise residents should get light at the beginning and end of day. He commented that windows have been removed from their building along the Rise side, so that people will not be looking into their units or balconies.

Ms. Clish asked for clarification on how much space there would be between buildings. Mr. Olinger said about 10' in some cases at upper floors.

Mr. Schomer stated that the density waiver is the only waiver requested for the project, at 51 units per acre. He noted that they looked into financial feasibility of providing an



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affordable unit, using HAC's return on total cost (ROTC) calculation for 40B economics. Mr. Schomer went through the analysis for 1 affordable and 11 market rate units, noting that the ROTC would render the project uneconomic at just over 1% profitability.

Mr. D'Arezzo said that whether or not a project is uneconomic is not a factor for 40R. Mr. Schomer agreed. Mr. D'Arezzo said the project needs to be economically viable or they need to pay less for the property. Mr. D'Arezzo said that waivers are not "routine" and noted that the CPDC is coming up with new guidelines to justify waivers. He asked if Mr. Schomer has looked into if/how the guidelines will apply to the waivers requested. Mr. Schomer brought up the MBTA Communities Guidance, noting that Reading will need to provide just under 2,000 units within ½ mile of the train. Mr. D'Arezzo clarified that Reading does not have to provide them, just zone for them.

Mr. D'Arezzo questioned how they are calculating gross floor area, noting that the ground floor alone should be closer to 10,000 SF, and should include the parking area. He asked the Applicant to reevaluate their FAR calculation.

Bruce and Lisa Johnson, direct project abutters, spoke well of the property owner and said their focus is their own home – maintaining the value and protecting themselves during construction. He noted that most of their windows face toward the development. He referenced Rise475, which is adjacent to their backyard. He said that it allows for more sky and sunlight to their yard than the proposed project. He described the setbacks at Rise475. Mr. Johnson noted that his driveway will be right up against their wall.

Mr. Olinger said he is willing to work with them on the design of the wall, so it can be aesthetically pleasing. He explained that there is 15' of separation between the property line and garage exit on Washington Street. He noted the comments about having a softer impact at the property line, and said that was their original intent. He continued that they are carrying the mansard roof around the building to help with articulation and integration into the residential scale of the neighborhood.

Mr. Safina suggested that the wall could step down a few feet at 9' in height, which would allow room for some plantings. Mr. Olinger agreed to look into it and re-expressed his interest in designing a beautiful wall for the neighbors.

Mr. Johnson said that a wall will need to be maintained, and clarified that his concern is that the wall goes the full height out to the sidewalk, which will make pulling out of his driveway harder. Mr. Olinger said it could potentially be lowered at the corner, to allow for the transformer. Mr. Johnson asked what the noise impact of the transformer would be. Mr. Olinger replied that there is one older unit in the area today.

Mr. Safina suggested doing something at the southeast corner. He questioned whether a transformer is needed for this project, since it is no longer needed for the Chronicle building. Mr. Olinger said they will have bike storage and PV battery storage in the garage, in that area, so the wall will have variable height.

Ms. Johnson noted that their fence does not go all the way to the sidewalk, and asked if they would still need to continue the wall to the sidewalk. Mr. Olinger said they can look at options for what can be done there. Ms. Johnson asked whether residents pulling out of the garage would have a hard time. Mr. Olinger said the wide exit will help, and noted that the entire garage may be unenclosed if FAR can't be met. Mr. Safina asked why the transformer can't be moved out of the corner. Mr. Olinger offered to look into such.



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Ms. Johnson noted that an entire light cycle can go by and the only cars that move are the ones at the before the proposed drive exit. She asked how circulation in the garage will contribute to the problem at the intersection and whether left turns out of the garage will be prohibited. Mr. Olinger said they are open to any traffic regulations at this point.

Mr. Gregorio clarified that most of the parking is for residential units and some is for employees of the retail.

Ms. Johnson described her daily lived experience with the Washington/Main intersection, and commented that it's hard for her to see how the project will work given how busy and congested the intersection is.

Mr. Weston commented that there will be a lot more discussion of this project at future meetings, and asked Ms. Johnson if she could summarize her concerns and then provide her notes to staff for discussion at the next meeting.

Ms. Johnson asked if shadows end up looking like the shadow studies provided. Mr. Olinger said there are no "shade hours" specified in the bylaw, so the analysis can be subjective, but that her property is not likely to catch much shadow. He offered to provide a more comprehensive shadow study but opined that the building will not have a negative impact in terms of shade.

Ms. Clish made a motion to continue the public hearing for 40R Plan Review at 459 Main Street to April 11th at 9:00PM. Mr. Weston seconded the motion and it was approved 5-0-0.

Sign Permit Application **643 Main Street, William Raveis**

Bryan Vasser was present on behalf of the application. He described the sign, noting that the size was modified to fit within the existing sign band. The background will be blue with white painted aluminum letters.

The Board had no new comments as the application was previously discussed.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the sign permit application for a business at 643 Main Street. Mr. Weston seconded the motion and it was approved 5-0-0.

Sign Permit Application **643 Main Street, Lafayette Marker**

Peter Maguire, long time Reading resident, Everett & Virginia Blodgett, Virginia Adams, and Jon Barnes were present on behalf of the application.

Mr. Maguire gave an overview of the process and project, noting the proposed location in the garden at the Latham Law property, which the Latham's fully support. He noted that the marker has been ordered and is being manufactured. It should be arriving in 10 weeks or so, and there will be a ceremony when it is installed. He noted that the Pomeroy Foundation is paying for the whole project. He mentioned the 1' x 1' granite marker that is existing within the sidewalk which says that Lafayette visited the tavern on the site.

Ms. Adams chimed in that the markers in the sidewalk were put in as part of the redevelopment plan and that there are about 10 in total.



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Ms. Mercier asked the CPDC for guidance on the process, noting that such a sign does not fit neatly into the Sign Bylaw anywhere. Mr. D'Arezzo suggested it could be allowed under Sign Bylaw Section 8.3b noting that it could be "required by the Government". Mr. Safina asked why CPDC even needs to weigh in on it.

Ms. Mercier suggested CPDC grant her an exemption to issue an Administrative Approval for a historical marker. Ms. Clish and Ms. Adrian agreed with that approach. Ms. Adams expressed support for the idea. Mr. Blodgett did as well, and opined that the sign should be on the right side of the property not the left. Mr. Latham agreed with the idea.

Ms. Clish made a motion to allow Planning staff to provide an Administrative Approval for a historical marker at 643 Main Street. Ms. Meyer seconded the motion, and it was approved 5-0-0.

Continued Public Hearing, 40R Plan Review 6-16 Chute Street, Plimsoll Company

Attorney Brad Latham, Architect Jeffrey Olinger and Owner Jamie Gerrity were present on behalf of the application.

Mr. Latham noted that this is 7th hearing for this project, and that the applicant has tried hard to respond to the CPDC's comments. He opined that the building is quite beautiful, and pointed out a number of proposed design features. He commented that the project provides for outdoor seating.

Mr. Olinger noted that the project is able to accommodate 8 affordable units and 21 market rate units for a total of 29 units. He explained that they re-did some calculations and can prove they no longer need the height waiver. He also mentioned they cleaned up the columns and have the appropriate drive aisle width throughout the garage. He went through the presentation from the February 28th meeting.

Mr. Weston asked to see the view from the train station, and commented that the building looks a bit naked and a bit flat on that side. He pointed out that residents will put up window treatments, which will add variety. Mr. Safina added that the rendering does not include all the shadow lines of the sills, frames, bays, cornice, etc., which does make the image look flat.

Ms. Clish asked about the brown paneling material. Mr. Olinger said it will be terra cotta or something earthy with a natural range. He said 3-5 tones of beige will be visible, and the balconies will be trimmed out with a bronze-like material. He said the building itself will look like coarse masonry.

Ms. Adrian asked to see the view from the Chute Street side. She asked about the living wall. Mr. Olinger showed the renderings.

Mr. Weston asked to see the garage plan and for dimensions. Regular spaces will be 8'-6" x 17'-4"; compact spaces will be 8' x 17'-4" with a 16' drive aisle. The garage will be designed to be EV ready.

Ms. Clish asked whether the commercial space will be fit-out for a restaurant. Mr. Olinger said they design it in if they know of a restaurant tenant; if they don't know of a restaurant tenant, they design a route for a future restaurant vent. He noted that a grease trap can be designed differently depending on restaurant demand. He said that a retail floor space can be left as gravel until a tenant is selected, that way the new tenant can install drainage without having to chip up an existing slab.



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Mr. Talbot noted that a regular outlet for each space is fine for EV charging. Heavy duty circuits are not needed for every day use. He asked how the project would be different if the new 40R changes were in effect. Ms. Mercier said she has not done an analysis.

Mr. Talbot asked Mr. Gerrity if he still thinks his project complies with the proposed bylaw revisions. Mr. Gerrity said he is still reviewing the language. Mr. D'Arezzo noted that the density exceeds the 65 unit per acre cap. He commented that there may be enough open space, and that there are extra parking spaces. Mr. Talbot said it would be useful for Town Meeting to know how the existing projects would be different.

Ken Nielson, Grant Street, noted that he has several questions. He asked where the children in affordable units will play as he felt there is a lack of open space. He noted that there will be meters on the outside of the building. He reiterated his noise complaint, noting that he can hear the band playing at RMHS, the train idling, trucks on Route 93, and the competition at the rifle range in Woburn.

Ms. Mercier and Mr. MacNichol listed all the parks and playgrounds within ½ mile of downtown.

Ms. Brukilacchio asked about the view on High Street, and the spirit of blending the old and the new. She asked if the one rectangular window on the 2nd floor could be two windows like the old house next to it. Mr. Olinger said he can work on the design transition.

Ms. Clish made a motion to close the public hearing for 40R Plan Review at 6-16 Chute Street. Ms. Adrian seconded the motion and it was approved 5-0-0.

Mr. MacNichol went through the Draft Decision with the Commission, noting a few items highlighted to show changes from last time. The Commission made a few edits and clarifications to the language in the Decision.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the density waiver for 6-16 Chute Street. Mr. D'Arezzo seconded the motion and it was approved 4-1-0.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the off-street loading waiver for 6-16 Chute Street. Mr. Safina seconded the motion and it was approved 5-0-0.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the parking dimensions waiver for 6-16 Chute Street. Mr. Weston seconded the motion and it was approved 5-0-0.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the drive aisle waiver for 6-16 Chute Street. Mr. Weston seconded the motion and it was approved 5-0-0.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the 40R Plan Review for 6-16 Chute Street. Mr. D'Arezzo seconded the motion and it was approved 5-0-0.

Other Business

VOTE on Article 15 for Annual Town Meeting 2022 – 40R Bylaw Amendments

Ms. Clish made a motion to recommend Article 15 to Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Weston seconded the motion and it was approved 5-0-0.



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Article 15 Draft Presentation, Annual Town Meeting 2022

Ms. Mercier ran through the draft presentation of Article 15 for Annual Town Meeting. The Commission provided feedback on additional items to include and highlight.

Ms. Mercier mentioned the suggestion for a Q&A Session for Town Meeting members on the proposed zoning, and said she would like to do it the first hour of the April 11th meeting. The Commission was not in favor of hosting a separate Q&A session for Town Meeting members and suggested a pre-recorded presentation, with no debate or Q&A, which could be prepared by staff and sent to Town Meeting members in advance of Town Meeting.

MBTA Communities Guidance

Ms. Mercier gave an update on her analysis of the Downtown Smart Growth District, A-40 District, and Business A District, in terms of compliance with the MBTA Communities Guidance and mandate for zoning up to 1,990 multi-family units within ½ mile of the train. She noted that between 520-1,220 more units will need to be zoned outside of the DSGD, which is not easy given current dimensional requirements in A-40 and Business A that make implementing multi-family not a practical reality. Ms. Mercier noted that some changes to zoning, like reducing the minimum lot size requirement, could open the door for more units in A-40 and Business A. Ms. Mercier quantified the known grants Reading has received under the grant programs specified, and noted that the Town may want to apply for additional such grants in the near future.

Mr. Weston commented that if Reading cannot figure it out, with all the density we have right near the train, then the proposed language is broken. He encouraged Ms. Mercier to continue with the analysis, which should demonstrate to DHCD just how hard this will be for other communities. Mr. Safina opined that Reading should not compromise design quality for quantity. Ms. Clish commented that she has yet to see a clear reason why we need to qualify for the specified grant programs. Ms. Adrian agreed that a few grants here and there, which require a lot of staff time to apply for and manage, would not be worth changing the character of downtown. Mr. D'Arezzo offered to provide his analysis of the S-15 parcels within ½ mile of the train, noting that it would be possible to get over 400 units.

Adjournment

Ms. Clish made a motion to adjourn at 12:03 AM. Mr. Weston seconded and it was approved 5-0-0.

Documents Reviewed at the Meeting:

- CPDC Agenda 3/14/22
- Approval Not Required (ANR) Plan Endorsement, 12 and 16 Sunnyside Ave
 - Form A, dated 3/3/22
 - ANR Plan of Land, dated 3/2/22
- Sign Permit Application, 175 Haven Street
 - Sign Rendering and Specifications, received 3/7/22
 - Draft Certificate of Appropriateness, dated 3/14/22
- 40R Plan Review, 459 Main Street
 - Summary of Changes, dated 3/7/22
 - Technical Memo, provided by TEC, dated 3/7/22
 - Architectural Plan Set, dated 3/7/22
 - Draft Decision, dated 3/14/22
- Sign Permit Application, 643 Main Street
 - Sign Renderings and Specifications, received 3/7/22;
 - Draft Certificate of Appropriateness, dated 3/14/22
- Lafayette Historical Marker, 643 Main Street
 - Lafayette Trails Group, Sign and Site info
- 40R Plan Review, 6-16 Chute Street
 - Summary of Changes, dated 3/7/22



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- Architectural Plan Set, dated 3/7/22
- Draft Decision, dated 3/14/22
- Article 15, Draft Presentation for 2022 Annual Town Meeting