



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Community Planning and Development Commission

Date: 2022-05-16

Time: 7:30 PM

Building: Town Hall

Location: Hybrid Meeting – Zoom and Select Board Meeting Room

Address: 16 Lowell Street

Session:

Purpose: Remote Meeting

Version:

Attendees: Members: Pamela Adrian, Chair; Nick Safina, Heather Clish, John Weston

Members - Not Present:

Catrina Meyer, Tony D'Arezzo - Associate

Others Present: Community Development Director Julie Mercier, Staff Planner Andrew MacNichol, Town Engineer Ryan Percival, Jeff Olinger, Jesse Schomer, Giovanni Fodera, Guy Manganiello, Kelly Delorey, Ted Moore, Bill Bergeron, Brad Latham, Shan Krishna

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Andrew MacNichol

Topics of Discussion:

MEETING HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM

Ms. Adrian called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM.

Public Hearing, Scenic Road Application

Walnut Street Milling and Repaving, Reading DPW

Ryan Percival, Town Engineer was present on behalf of the application.

Ms. Clish read the legal notice into the record.

Mr. Percival explained the project includes milling and paving a portion of Walnut Street, up until the first intersection with South Street.

Ms. Adrian asked how long the paving would take. Mr. Percival stated that milling takes a day or two, and then paving should take place shortly thereafter and take another day or two. He said it should take about 2 weeks maximum.

Mr. Safina noted that the intersection is difficult and that lots of school kids walk through the area. He asked for ample safety precautions to be in place. Mr. Percival said there will be Police Details in place throughout the project, with message boards out in advance notifying people of the upcoming construction work. He said there would be hand-delivered notification and a CodeRed message sent out.

Mr. Jon Barnes, 41 Pratt Street, member of the Historical Commission, noted that he has no issues with the application as it does not impact any aspects of the scenic road or views. He said his understanding is that there are no curbs on Walnut Street. Mr. Percival confirmed this, and noted that per the Scenic Road Regulations they cannot put in any granite curb or asphalt berm. He said they are replacing what is there exactly as it is. No additional width.



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Mr. Barnes noted that the Scenic Road Regulations require that the legal ad be sent to Historical Commission, Select Board and Conservation Commission. He asked that it be formally provided to the Historical Commission and not just sent to them via one member. He also noted that the legal ad should have provided more detail about what was proposed.

Ms. Jennifer Harden, 55 Walnut Street, thanked the Town for paving the street which desperately needs it. She asked for clarification of the section that will be paved. Mr. Percival said it will go from Hopkins to Curtis and potentially longer if they have enough funding. Ms. Harden asked when the rest would be paved. Mr. Percival said they will request to extend the work in the following fiscal year.

The Commission reviewed the Draft Decision.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the milling and paving of the Walnut Street Scenic Road. Mr. Safina seconded. The motion was approved 4-0-0.

Sign Permit Application, 607 Main Street Half & Half Café

No one was present on behalf of the application.

Mr. MacNichol explained that it is a request for an awning with a logo that exceeds by-right thresholds and requires a sign permit and Certificate of Appropriateness.

Ms. Adrian noted that the colors on the application clash. Ms. Clish said the sign looks okay to her and they should put a condition in the Certificate that colors match. Mr. Safina noted that the awnings are mostly the same on the building, and that if the intent is for them all to be the same color, then they should replace the entire span of awning across the building so all match. Mr. Safina said that they cannot force them to replace the existing awning.

Mr. Safina suggested that CPDC determine appropriateness and then let the applicant work out the details regarding the awning with staff. Ms. Clish suggested we assume they are replacing the awning, and that if they are not, then the Certificate would not be valid.

The Commission worked out wording of a finding that the awning will be replaced and that the colors will match.

Mr. MacNichol said he would get clarification on this, and also get more detail on the vinyl fabric material.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the business of Half and Half Café at 607 Main Street, as amended. Mr. Weston seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0-0.

Sign Permit Application, 484 Main Street The Village Chiropractor

Ms. Kelly Delorey was present on behalf of the application.

Ms. Delorey explained that she is applying for a vinyl awning which will replace the awning that is there currently for Classified Realty. Her awning will be black vinyl and will include her logo and phone number.

Mr. MacNichol noted that the logo exceeded minimum thresholds so a sign permit and Certificate of Appropriateness was required.



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Mr. Safina asked if the vinyl will be shiny or canvas. Ms. Delorey stated that she is not sure.

Ms. Delorey noted that the existing wall sign has been removed and she has no plan to add a new wall sign to replace it. She said there is no lighting proposed for her awning.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the business of Village Chiropractor at 484 Main Street. Mr. Weston seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0-0.

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

Jeff Olinger, Architect; Jesse Schomer, Attorney; Sam Gregorio, Traffic Engineer; and Guy Manganiello were present on behalf of the Application.

Ms. Ivria Fried of Miyares & Harrington (Town Counsel) was present.

Mr. Schomer noted that his team is prepared to review the Draft Decision with CPDC and to address a number of project metrics that were not clarified in the Decision. He recapped the discussion topics at the April 11th CPDC meeting, which included:

- reducing visual impact to rear & side abutters
- revised detail of garage wall
- discussion of transitional area
- questions and feedback from neighbors

Mr. Schomer commented that the abutters concerns were addressed in the plans previously submitted. He noted that his team was asked to take a look at the new 40R zoning recently approved by Town Meeting. He said that the zoning in effect at the time of application is the zoning that governs this project. He said the amended zoning would kill the project for a number of reasons - setbacks, density limits, etc. He said that this project was designed months in advance of when the project was proposed, so it is important that they go ahead with the project as designed.

Mr. Weston clarified that no additional information has been provided. Mr. Schomer confirmed and said they are comfortable with the plans as proposed and that they meet the standards for transitional areas.

Ms. Clish noted that CPDC had asked for additional shadow studies, and that the length of the wall abutting the residential home is greater than 80' in length which is not allowed in the Design Guidelines for transitional areas. The Guidelines call for a material break for light and views. Mr. Schomer said the building was designed with horizontal and vertical breaks, and that the garage wall would be designed as a green wall. Ms. Clish said she was thinking about the garage wall and noted that during the last discussion it was designed as a concrete wall not a green wall.

Mr. Olinger, project architect, stated that Ms. Clish was correct – it was a CMU or masonry wall, not a green wall. The green roof design was removed due to maintenance concerns from the abutters. He said the overall length of the wall is 84' which includes the bike parking and solar cell storage area within the garage. He said they could stop the wall short and use a different material at the bike parking area – at which point it would be 74' long and compliant. Ms. Clish asked for a break for light and views. Mr. Olinger said they will work with abutters in terms of transparency and treatment. He also offered to shorten the wall by removing portion for the utility/storage areas.



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Mr. Safina asked what would happen with the bike parking. Mr. Olinger said they could put in a transparent fence instead of a wall behind the bikes. Mr. Safina suggested that the code minimums should not become design maximums. Mr. Olinger said his preference is to make the wall something beautiful for the abutters to look at. Mr. Schomer said they are willing to accept conditions to break up the appearance of the wall, as long as CPDC members can tell them what they want. Mr. Weston expressed dismay that CPDC would design the building for them.

Mr. Schomer said that if there are additional plans needed to bring the hearing to a conclusion, they are willing to provide them.

Mr. Safina noted that the bottom garage wall is blank and has no features that speak to the features in the design above. He suggested trellises along the wall to let different plants grow in combination with a more interesting design such as decorative CMU and not just a massive wall of solid color. He asked if the wall would be coated metal. Mr. Olinger confirmed. Mr. Safina said that a copper roof requires a DEP permit for runoff.

Ms. Clish asked whether plants on a green wall would be contained on the 459 Main Street property, or whether they would encroach on the neighbor's property. Mr. Olinger noted that an issue with having a green wall at the property line is maintenance and access. Ms. Clish asked that all this be clarified so it's maintained over time.

Mr. Safina noted that it would need to be pulled back 3-4' for the property owner to have access to it. Mr. Olinger noted that the ground floor retail would be diminished if they pulled the wall back, which would be detrimental to the overall plan. He noted that the drive aisle width could be reduced instead of the retail, but it would require a waiver. A parking space may be lost as well.

Mr. Weston noted that there are other issues with the ground floor that should be wrapped into this discussion. He noted that he was on the Parking Advisory & Recommendations Committee (PARC) and that there was a lot of discussion of compact spaces and their size. He stated that his take from being on PARC and knowing the issues with the compact spaces in the other project garage, is that a 7'-6" wide compact space is not workable or something that he is interested in approving.

Mr. Weston went further, back to comments brought up at every meeting, noting concern with this location – which is unique and not comparable to anywhere else in Reading – because it is at the busiest intersection in Town and has no access from a side or back road. He said circulation has been discussed a lot and that the plan has improved and is starting to work, but that he is concerned with the number of parking spaces that are provided which is a factor of the density and number of units in the project. He said that this location does not offer potential for on-street parking for retail, and that the garage spaces allocated to retail (manager and ADA) are not really for customers. He said PARC concerns with customer parking are very applicable at this site because this is a tough intersection for vehicles and pedestrians alike. He said that even though they are officially providing enough parking, there isn't enough parking for guests/visitors or patrons of the retail spaces. He said he's not convinced the parking will work functionally for the density on the site.

Mr. Olinger said that the 12 units require 15 parking spaces, and they are providing 19 spaces. Mr. Weston noted that 3 of those are ADA. Mr. Olinger said the ADA spaces count towards the residential requirement and that one space could be lost so the compact spaces can be widened.



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Mr. Weston stated that there is still an issue. Mr. Schomer said the location is unique in terms of proximity to public transit, which is the point of the 40R district. He said that the target residents will not want to drive to stores or work and will not have as big of a parking demand.

Mr. Weston noted that the 40R District was located downtown because every property is proximate to transit, so this site is not special in that case, and the applicant does not get credit for that fact. He noted that it is in fact further away from transit than the other 40R redevelopment projects. He commented that no one on CPDC believes this project will generate a lot of traffic, it's the peak times of the traffic that will cause problems.

Mr. Safina asked how to increase parking and reduce the building footprint to bring it away from the abutter. He pondered if this site may be suited to a CityLift design, which would stack cars and reduce the building footprint. He asked where to fit commercial parking into this program. Mr. Weston noted the availability of commercial parking near the other 40R developments, and contrasted them to this project.

Mr. Safina noted that even if they could provide commercial parking on site, no patron would know before they go in whether the parking would be available in the garage – so in reality, it would not work. Mr. Safina noted the issue for him is that the retail size is minimal and the traffic problems are worse. He commented that he likes the building design, and that it was a missed opportunity for the Rise475 building not to have included this parcel.

Lieutenant Chris Jones of the Reading Police Department echoed Mr. Weston's comments about the lack of parking near this property. He noted that other redevelopment projects have more cars than allocated spaces, which has resulted in the businesses nearby asking to modify the on-street parking regulations near their stores to increase turnover. He commented that even with a loading zone, most of the delivery trucks will stop on Main Street. He said that the other projects have side streets they can use for deliveries, which would not be possible in this area. He opined that there are too many issues with this building.

Mr. Schomer noted that they previously offered to have the traffic study peer reviewed by Green International, who has done studies in the area. He said that adequacy of parking can be handled by a Parking Demand Management Plan, which can be a condition of approval. He stated that they are open to any kind of creative solutions.

Mr. Safina asked if the curb cut on Main Street would be subject to MassDOT approval. Ms. Mercier noted that it is on the portion of Main Street owned by the Town.

Mr. Bruce Johnson, 166 Washington Street, made a number of comments and asked the CPDC to consider this project in light of the zoning that was just passed at Town Meeting. Mr. Weston clarified that the CPDC is required to review the project under the current zoning not the recently approved zoning.

Mr. Schomer responded to each of Mr. Johnson's points, noting the housing crisis and MBTA zoning, as well as a number of previous points he made.

Mr. Safina asked how many affordable units are proposed. Mr. Schomer replied that no affordable units are proposed or required for a 40R project this size.

Mr. Johnson commented that the Rise475 property has come up as precedent, and noted that every floor of that building is significantly setback or stepped back from the property line. He noted that the developer promised to provide a shadow study at the last meeting.



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Mr. Schomer pointed out that the Johnsons have or are using their property for a business. Mr. Safina told the abutters not to respond.

Ms. Lisa Johnson, 166 Washington Street, reiterated some of her past comments about setbacks, noting that the developer is not treating them as residential. She said that her understanding is that her property can be treated as residential, and asked for Town Counsel to weigh in. Ms. Mercier noted that the zone boundary is actually what matters in this case, and that it is entirely on their lot, which means the project lot is adjacent to a Business B/40R lot. Ms. Clish noted that the zoning parameters refer to zone boundaries and that the Design Guidelines talk about transitional areas, which refer to single, 2-family and 3-family uses. Town Counsel confirmed what was said.

Ms. Johnson clarified what she heard, which is that the building wall can be up against their property line. She then read from the Design Guidelines, Section 6.

Stormwater and post-development runoff were discussed. Mr. Schomer noted that runoff spills unmanaged onto the Johnson's property now, and that the Applicant must control it all and go through the DEP for review of their proposal.

Ms. Johnson opined that a waiver for the drive aisle in an area that is already tight does not sound like a good idea. She noted that the CPDC asked for shadow studies showing her house. She asked about the plan for trash removal and whether it has moved from a prior location.

Ms. Johnson asked how the Construction Management Plan will work. Ms. Mercier replied that a pre-construction meeting is held with the Applicant, their future contractor and a variety of staff departments. The Plan will be reviewed to ensure standards are met and the development must comply with it during the duration of construction.

Mr. Weston noted that it is unfair for CPDC to continue discussing the project without any new information.

Mr. Bob Kaminer, 37 Warren Avenue, reiterated the concerns about traffic at that intersection. He said he loves all the redevelopment projects that have gone up and replaced old eyesore buildings.

Mr. Weston said he understands they have to look at this based on the zoning in place right now, because they submitted a Preliminary Subdivision Plan to freeze the zoning. He asked what other impacts the zoning freeze has regarding the way CPDC has to look at this. He asked whether CPDC has to approve the subdivision first, noting that there are statutory requirements associated with it.

Ms. Fried noted that she spoke with Mr. Schomer at length, saying that because 40R is so new and there are not many court cases, there is ambiguity about what zoning applies to this project. The submission of the Preliminary Subdivision Plan puts that to rest, and does not result in CPDC reviewing the 40R application any differently. She clarified that this is a common tactic used to freeze zoning.

Ms. Mercier asked Ms. Fried to clarify what has to happen with the Preliminary Subdivision Plan, noting that typically CPDC will have a hearing process and not just wait the 7 months for a Definitive Plan to be submitted. Ms. Fried said that she will review the Town's Subdivision Regulations but that a Preliminary Plan hearing is not a statutory requirement.



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She believes the zoning freeze remains in place whether a Definitive Plan is submitted or not.

Mr. Weston asked the Commission to clarify very specifically what is being requested of the applicant. Ms. Clish reiterated the request for a shadow study showing impacts to the east side – the Johnson's property.

Ms. Clish asked the applicant to clarify whether they will come back to the next hearing with additional information.

Mr. Schomer said they are looking to bring the project to a close, ideally at the next meeting. He noted that they are several weeks beyond the 120 period for a decision and that have not filed for a constructive approval.

Mr. Weston asked for the following:

- revised plan that reworks the compact parking spaces
- roof plan with details
- response and information requested by Town Engineer
- wall maintenance and design improvements
- shadow study showing impacts to residential abutter
- details on construction management
- traffic plan
 - how building interacts with residential property abutting
 - how does circulation work for retail

Mr. Weston said he is expecting a different plan that addresses these issues.

Ms. Clish asked if they are willing to continue the hearing. Mr. Schomer said they are, and they are hoping to work with the CPDC towards an approval.

Ms. Clish made a motion to continue the hearing for 40R Plan Review at 459 Main Street to Monday, June 13th at 8:30 PM. Mr. Safina seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0-0.

Ms. Mercier asked for new and revised information to be submitted by June 1st.

Minor Amendment to Approved PUD-R

Johnson Woods Development

Bill Bergeron, Ted Moore, and Attorney Brad Latham were present on behalf of the application.

Mr. Bergeron explained that they got a building permit for Building #1, which is in a different orientation than originally approved due to the location of the sewer line. They poured the foundation and started construction and were then issued a cease & desist order.

Mr. Weston asked about the cease and desist order. Ms. Mercier explained that the abutters asked about the change, and that when staff reviewed the plans again they realized that an error was made in signing off on the building permit.

Mr. Safina asked about the impact to neighbors. Mr. Bergeron stated that it meets the setbacks for the PUD-R. Mr. Safina noted that if it had come to CPDC in this configuration, meeting setbacks, they likely would not have rejected it.



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Mr. Brendan Gray, 28 Johnson Woods Drive, noted he is one of five trustees at Johnson Woods and that he was briefed by Ted Moore on the change, and that the Board of Trustees is fine with all of the proposed changes.

Ms. Lisa _____, 51 Enos Circle, noted that her neighbors have a building abutting their rear yards, and that they understand it was built closer to their property line than originally approved. She asked whether it moved closer to Enos Circle. Mr. Safina explained that the building was rotated so the corner is closer to the property line, but the building as a whole is not any closer than the closest setback approved, and that the building meets the minimum setbacks within the Johnson Woods PUD-R.

Mr. Latham pointed out that the building has rotated, and is about the same distance from the lot line as before, and that it still exceeds setbacks required for a single-family lot, and is also now further from Building 3 than before.

Mr. Safina asked about landscaping and the rear yard treatment. Mr. MacNichol noted that the PUD-R bylaw requires the 20' rear setback be landscaped. He showed a street view of a stand of trees that is not expected to be impacted.

Mr. Weston said, looking at this change holistically, that allowing for longer driveways allows for more car storage at Johnson Woods, which is a benefit considering all the prior concerns expressed about parking.

Ms. Joanne Fitzgerald asked why construction started before the change was approved. She noted that the drainage in the area is not very good, with water piling up in her backyard and feeding out into conservation land. Mr. Bergeron said that the drainage was all approved as part of the original PUD-R. He explained that no construction started without a valid building permit.

Mr. Bergeron explained the changes to Buildings 12A and 12B, which have foundations in place and an active building permit. He explained the distances from Green Meadow Drive and the end of Enos Circle.

Ms. Patty Dalton, 10 Green Meadow Drive, asked what this change does to the length of the driveways, noting that parking is a nightmare. Mr. Safina asked whether the driveway for Building 12A would result in the loss of an on-street visitor parking space. He said he has no objection to the change as long as street parking is not lost. Mr. Bergeron said they may lose one one-street space but can relocate it back between the two new driveways. Mr. Moore suggested they add it on the side of the property near Enos Circle.

Mr. Bergeron explained the changes to Building 29, which are the result of a transformer on the corner of Johnson Woods Drive and Kelch Road. The building was approved as a duplex and will stay that way. The Commission had no objections to this change.

Ms. Kelly Condon, Green Meadow Drive, asked if the parking space could be moved forward instead of backward, so it's not right across from her house. Mr. Moore clarified the locations and orientation of the space for her.

Ms. Lisa _____, owner of a unit right near Enos Circle, asked how parking spaces would fit on that stretch of road, especially since it is used as an emergency access. Mr. Moore clarified that the road would not be narrowed, but that they would create a bump out in the grassy area for the parking spaces.



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Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the Minor Amendment to the Johnson Woods PUD-R for Buildings 1, 12A, 12B and 29 as presented. Mr. Safina seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0-0.

Other Business

Form H, 103 Sanborn Lane Subdivision

Ms. Clish moved to endorse the Form H Covenant Agreement for the 3-Lot Subdivision at 103 Sanborn Lane. Mr. Weston seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0-0.

Open Space and Recreation Plan Update

Using a presentation prepared by Horsley Witten for the Conservation Commission, Ms. Clish gave a brief overview of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update: reasons for it include:

- State and Federal funding;
- Process for updating every 7 years, a process a working group just went through in Reading;
- Updating goals and objectives;
- Determine action items; etc.,

Ms. Clish noted that the Action Plan matrix with the roles, responsibilities, lead entity and timeframe still being finalized. She commented that the Conservation Committee, Recreation Committee and Trails Committee take the lead on many of the efforts.

CPDC recommended actions include: looking for connections on private lands; creation of pocket parks as part of redevelopment review; looking at 40R District open space requirements; updating Subdivision Regulations and other bylaws and land development standards and regulations to account for Low Impact Development and climate change adaptation.

Mr. Weston noted that all the goals and objectives are ambitious within a 7-year timeframe. He asked what keeps the various entities on task to accomplish these things. Ms. Mercier noted that the goals and objectives in the 2013 version were also ambitious and that a lot of work was done. She commented that a number of action items are tied to funding, and that having an active plan enables us to apply for funding for these projects. Ms. Clish noted that the working group included a number of staff members who were very deliberately involved in crafting the action items. Mr. Weston noted that it would be unfortunate to see a good plan sit on a shelf.

Ms. Clish commented that the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) can be used for parks and trails.

Ms. Clish moved to endorse the OSRP Update and Letter of Support. Mr. Weston seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0-0.

Annual Town Meeting 2022 Recap

Ms. Mercier provided a summary of floor amendments made to the 40R Bylaw at Annual Town Meeting April 2022. Changes include:

- Further setbacks for projects directly abutting single-, two- or three-family dwelling;
- Increased parking requirements for retail/restaurant uses and increased parking requirements for residential 2-bedroom units and greater;



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- Increased restrictions on compact car allotment;
- A requirement for a landscape plan to be submitted;
- Amendments to the local preference language for affordable unit lotteries;
- Language that affordable units be comparably designed to market-rate units;
- Language that implementation of green infrastructure is preferred; and
- Density limited to 50 units per acre.

Ms. Clish summarized the discussion on density held at Town Meeting. She commented that density and parking language was discussed on two separate nights.

Future Zoning Amendments for Consideration

Mr. Weston found that focus should be on the upcoming Housing Production Plan update which may lead to further zoning recommendations of need.

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Due to the late time in evening the Committee elected to review meeting minutes at a future meeting date.

Adjournment

Ms. Clish made a motion to adjourn at 11:25PM. Mr. Weston seconded and it was approved 4-0-0.

Documents Reviewed at the Meeting:

- CPDC Agenda 5/16/22
- CPDC Meeting Minutes of 11/1/21 and 12/6/21
- Scenic Road Application, Walnut Street re-paving
 - Legal Notice, 5/16/22
 - Draft Decision, dated 5/16/22
- Sign Permit Application, 607 Main Street
 - Sign Permit Application and Sign Renderings/Specifications, dated 4/12/22
 - Draft Certificate of Appropriateness, dated 5/16/22
- Sign Permit Application, 484 Main Street
 - Sign Permit Application and Sign Renderings/Specifications, dated 4/18/22
 - Proposed Logo and Text Dimensions, received 4/26/22
 - Draft Certificate of Appropriateness, dated 5/16/22
- 40R Plan Review, 459 Main Street
 - Planning Update Presentation, dated 4/5/22
- Minor Amendment to Approved PUD-R, Johnson Woods
 - Proposed Summary of Modifications
 - Building 1 Context Plan and Proposed Plot Plan
 - Building 12A-12B Proposed Plot Plan and Utility Plan
 - Building 12A-12B Proposed Parking Area
 - Building 29 Context Plan and Proposed Plot Plan
 - Site Development Key Plan
 - Draft Decision, dated 5/16/22
- 103 Sanborn Lane, Form H Endorsement
 - Form H – Covenant Agreement for 103 Sanborn Lane 3-Lot Definitive Subdivision
- OSRP Update 2022-23
 - Open Space and Recreation Plan Update Project Slides