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Town Planner's Project Review
Wednesday, July 12, 2017

- VII. **Public Hearing - Riverwoods CCRC – Conversion of Barn to Market Center.**
Site plan and conditional use, related to the Riverwoods CCRC to convert the existing barn and a portion of the existing house on the adjacent lot to a marketing center, reconfigure parking, and make other site changes. Conditional use for utilities, pavement, and minor structures in wetland buffer. Applicant - The RiverWoods Group, c/o Justine Vogel, CEO. Property owner – Land Options LLC. Engineer – Jeff Clifford, Altus Engineering. Architect - Alyssa Murphy, Manypenny Murphy Architecture. Attorney – Sharon Cuddy Somers, DT&C. Map 11, Lot 8-0. Office Research District.
- I recommend that the board discuss the project, hold the public hearing, and continue the review to July 26. I will have a draft Notice of Decision prepared for July 26.

Please note the following:

Process

Updated drawings. Updated drawings, a memo from the design engineer, and lighting information are included in the packet.

Final action. The applicant was hoping for final action at the July 12 Planning Board meeting but revised plans were submitted on Thursday and some time is needed for staff review and signoffs. I do not see any significant concerns and will have a draft notice of decision (NOD) for the Planning Board's consideration at the July 26 meeting.

Timeframe. The applicant hopes to start construction in August and be open this fall.

Acceptance. The application was accepted as complete on June 14.

Site walk. The Planning Board held a site walk of the marketing center on June 14. Minutes are posted on the website.

Technical Review Group. The TRG reviewed the project on June 20. Minutes are posted on the website.

Project

Application. This is a companion application to the main site plan review on the adjacent lots to create the continuing care retirement community. The lot is already developed with an office, a barn, and a paved parking area.

Lease. Riverwoods is leasing around 1,200 square feet in the house and the barn for 5 years to serve as a marketing center. They don't believe they would need the site after that. The law firm will remain in the house.

Zoning Ordinance

Variance. The applicant needs a variance for the walkway and ramp to be constructed between the two buildings because there is a 100 foot front setback from Route 108 in the Office Research district. Their application is on the ZBA agenda for July 11.

Zoning compliance. The application is in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance except for the variance item referred to above.

Marketing center. An office is permitted by right on this property.

Conditional use. The applicant will need a conditional use for the activity that will occur within the wetland buffer. I will recommend approval in the draft NOD. The applicant submitted a detailed application and addressed the 8 general and 4 specific criteria. The Conservation Commission recommends approval per this email from Rob Sullivan, chair: *"...The Conservation Commission discussed the plan, setbacks, proposed changes, permitted uses, current conditions and the criteria for approval for a CUP.*

The Commission recommends approval of the Conditional Use Permit to the Planning Board..."

Traffic and Parking

Waiver. The applicant submitted a request for a waiver for the width of the drive aisle. I will recommend approval given the constraints of the site. In addition to the comments included in the request the applicant provided this email, which also speaks to the proposed one-way pattern:

The limited existing pavement width and angled parking is driving ... the one-way traffic configuration. On the plan resubmission, we will be adding signage for the one-way traffic flow.

The angled spaces allow the parking configuration to remain within the footprint of the existing pavement, thereby avoiding additional pavement (structure) within the 75' wetland buffer and 100' front yard setback from Rt 108. Also, one-way traffic flow with angled parking has a safety advantage over 2-way aisles (especially when backing out of a parking space).

To Audrey's point about someone missing the turn by the red house and trying to access via Stone Quarry Drive; the driveway at Stone Quarry Drive would likely be used to turn around,
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and yes they would then need to proceed to Rt 108 and turn into the site by the red house. I weighed this possible scenario when looking at a number of different parking layouts, but all other layouts became awkward and/or confusing, in particular with how the ADA space and 8' wide aisle would be configured.

If the missed turn situation is found to be more than occasional after the facility opens, the flow of traffic and actual parking spaces utilization could be reassessed and some striping changes made if necessary, but this would likely result in the loss of some spaces.

One way pattern. A one way pattern is proposed on site with the entrance from Route 108. There was a consensus at the TRG meeting that flow in this direction was better than entering from Stone Quarry Drive.

NHDOT comments. We should receive comments from NHDOT about the existing access point on Route 108. This can be provided after approval.

Parking. The number of parking spaces provided meets the requirements.

Accessible parking space. The space was relocated from the prior drawing pursuant to a discussion with the TRG.

Bicycle rack. The revised plans show a bicycle rack. Given that this is an existing site the small outside rack seems appropriate. I will include a condition in the draft NOD that the rack include at least 2 inverted U-style (recommended rack style) or comparable components.

Utilities and services

Electric lines. The existing electric lines on site leading to both buildings are above ground and the applicant proposes to retain above ground lines. The Site Plan Regulations state: *17.4.3When an existing site is redeveloped, and there are existing above ground utilities serving that site, those utilities shall be removed and relocated underground, unless the Planning Board determines such relocation to be impracticable or cost prohibitive given the scale of the proposed redevelopment.* I think the existing situation meets this standard and will recommend this be incorporated into the draft NOD. The applicant will likely upgrade these above-ground lines as needed.

Snow storage. Snow storage areas are shown on the updated drawings.

Trash. We will need to clarify how trash is handled. There is an existing dumpster and fence around it. The applicant discussed with the TRG possibly using barrels instead.

Recycling. Mike Lynch discussed recycling with the applicant at the TRG meeting. Public Works will pick up recycling for free. The applicant will need to coordinate with Mr. Lynch and possibly the Integrated Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Energy checklist. The applicant and architect met with Audrey Cline, Steve Weglarz of the Energy Committee, Mary Ellen Humphrey, and me to discuss energy and sustainability issues. The completed checklist is included in the packet. I will include a standard condition in the draft Notice of Decision that the applicant meet with Audrey prior to issuance of a building permit to review the checklist again and incorporate any appropriate mutually-acceptable items into the building plans. The checklist applies only to the barn structure.

Public Safety

Fire issues. Neither building on site is sprinkled and the applicant is not planning to sprinkle the buildings. We will obtain a signoff from the department.

Police issues. The police chief said that sight distance is good and there are no significant police concerns.

Site Design Issues

Landscaping. There are several existing crabapple trees in front of the parking area. It would be desirable to add shrubs to buffer the site but there is no room on the subject lot so they would need to be placed in the NHDOT right of way. For existing sites like this, landscaping is handled at the reasonable discretion of the Planning Board.

Stormwater management. The applicant said they have discussed stormwater management with April Talon and that she did not have concern. She will send me her signoff shortly.

Lighting. The applicant is installing one new light pole. A cut sheet was provided. It needs to be confirmed that the fixture is dark sky compliant and the pole height is needed. This can be a precedent condition.

Signage. The applicant proposes to remove the existing freestanding sign and add 2 new freestanding signs and one on the barn structure. The applicant will submit a sign master plan (required for multi-tenant developments), presumably including signage for the existing law firm as well, to the Planning Board for approval. It can be submitted at any meeting (no public hearing is involved).

House. The applicant stated that there may be some improvements to the exterior of the house in the future but not are proposed now as part of this application.

Barn design

The Town does not have review authority for architectural design in the Office Research District but the applicant was willing to meet with Town staff to discuss the design and gave a presentation to the Heritage Commission on July 6 as part of the commission's public hearing on the proposed design. The Heritage Commission may give nonbinding comments to the Planning Board and applicant on projects outside of the Historic District, at its option. The Planning Board may provide nonbinding comments on architectural design to the applicant, at its option.

After the meeting with staff, the applicant submitted revised designs; these were presented to the Heritage Commission. *The original and revised drawings are shown on the website* under Planning Board – Current Information and Applications – Site Plan for 56 Dover Road – Heritage Commission Application under Web Links (at the bottom of the page). The current updated renderings dated July 6 are shown first. The earlier renderings are shown as elevation plans of the barn.

Comments from a number of citizens are also shown under this link. After its public hearing, the Heritage Commission asked that I convey its comments to the Planning Board. The commission made no formal recommendation but wished to draw the Planning Board's and applicant's attention to the public comments shown on the website (There were no verbal comments at the actual public hearing) and to the Town Planner's suggestion to remove the vertical panels between windows on the west elevation and to incorporate square or smaller windows on the upper floor on the west elevation.

According to the applicant, the top of the large glass area on the north and south elevations will be reduced in height (due to construction constraints) the equivalent of about 10 clapboards. The barn will retain wood clapboard, either the existing or new that will be very close to the existing wood clapboard in width and profile. This color was selected by the applicant because it is the brand color for Riverwoods Durham.

We are pleased that this important structure will be retained, renovated, and placed into a new productive use. I do think that the updated design is attractive and compelling (with some reservations) but there are certainly various strong opinions – as stated in the comments from citizens – about how closely the proposed design should follow that of the existing barn or traditional barns in terms of color, window treatment, decorative details, and appurtenant elements (like the frame around the entrance and the railing).

I will include in my draft NOD, language to the effect that the exterior of the barn will be renovated as shown in the most recent drawings (with clarifications about the height of the large window elements and the clapboard siding) but that the applicant may change any element of the design at their sole option provided they alert the Town Planner first who would forward the information to the Heritage Commission. This would at least give individuals the opportunity to provide nonbinding comments to the applicant on any changes if desired.