



**TOWN OF DURHAM**  
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**Town Planner's Project Review**  
**Wednesday, August 9, 2017**

VIII. **8 Strafford Avenue – Site Changes.** Alpha Phi Fraternity proposes to add 8 parking spaces and make several drainage and other minor site changes. Applicant- Alpha Phi International Fraternity National Housing Corporation. Engineer – Tobin Farwell. Map 2, Lot 8-10. Professional Office District.

- I recommend the board accept the application as complete, provide any appropriate comments to the applicant, schedule a site walk, and schedule a public hearing for August 23.

Please note the following:

- 1) **Project.** Alpha Phi fraternity proposes to add 8 parking spaces for parallel parking along the side of the entrance driveway on the southerly side of the property, to make drainage improvements, add a landscaping buffer next to the parallel parking spaces, and add 2 accessible parking spaces. See the photo of the site, tax map, and aerial photo at the end.
- 2) **Nonconforming elements.** This established site does not conform with several existing requirements, such as that for a bicycle rack. In reviewing proposed changes to an existing site, the Planning Board can require changes beyond what is requested provided those changes are reasonably related to the proposal and proportionate to the proposal (in accordance with nonconforming provisions of the Zoning Ordinance). For example, it is reasonable to require addition of a bicycle rack where none now exists.
- 3) **Technical Review Group.** The project was reviewed by the TRG on August 1. I will email the minutes in the next day or two. The staff also met on site earlier to review the proposal.
- 4) **Revised plans.** I have asked the applicant to provide revised plans to me by August 11, the Friday after the Planning Board meeting, so that they may be distributed to the TRG in time for final comments well in advance of August 23. See comments below.
- 5) **Access.** The existing paved driveway is narrow, 12-13 feet along the narrower section, as measured on the plans. The applicant noted at the TRG meeting he believes the width is 16 feet. The actual width should be clarified and marked on the plans and any possible strategies explored to widen this travelway. The parking spaces would be paved and extend the existing pavement. The Fire Department has reviewed the plans on a preliminary basis, noting that access will be tight, but we will need confirmation that the access will remain workable.

- 6) Landscaping buffer. A 5-foot wide landscaping buffer will be incorporated between the new parking spaces and the adjoining property, Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity. The parking section of the zoning ordinance allows parking in side setbacks (15 feet in the PO district) provided there is a 5-foot strip of landscaping and solid screening. I have asked the applicant to provide this landscaping information on revised plans.
- 7) Drainage. At the TRG meeting, April Talon requested that the 4 spaces toward the front of the property drain through the landscaped buffer rather than back toward the driveway and then to Strafford Avenue. The applicant designed it that way to avoid run off onto the abutting property but April stated it is better for the runoff to go through the buffer for filtration purposes. The rear 4 spaces will drain to the driveway and then back to the rain garden. Overall, the increase in post runoff onto the abutting property will be minimal according to the applicant. This revision should be shown on the plans.
- 8) Accessible spaces. The plan includes the addition of 2 accessible parking spaces at the rear, or at least the appropriate marking of those spaces. The regulations call for 2 accessible spaces if the total number of parking spaces exceeds 25.
- 9) Parking lot. The TRG discussed whether any change should be made to the rear parking area as a fair amount of maneuvering/backing up would be required for the accessible and a few other parking spaces. This should be discussed on August 9 with a revision shown on the plans by August 11 if possible. Otherwise, it could be looked at during the site walk with any change made after final action.
- 10) Parking count. The Zoning Ordinance requires 1 parking space per resident for fraternities (which is probably quite excessive in most circumstances). The site does not meet this standard but the additional parking spaces will bring it closer. The applicant stated: *According to town information there are 83 occupants at this residence. The occupants for the 2016-2017 school year were approximately 54 residents. There are currently 18 parking spaces and 2 handicap spaces on site. This additional parking will bring that up to 26 parking spaces and 2 handicap spaces.*
- 11) Bike rack. A bicycle rack should be installed with a location shown on the plans.
- 12) Snow storage. The applicant will need to plow snow for the 8 spaces toward the rear of the property and not onto the landscaping in the buffer. This should be marked on the plans.
- 13) Other issues. The work would probably be performed next summer since the students are returning soon. The existing dumpster is already screened. No new lighting is proposed. During the on-site meeting, Mike Lynch stated he did not think use of permeable pavement for the new spaces was practical. The applicant does not plan to alter the rear parking (repaving or grading).
- 14) Site walk. Though the project is fairly minor conducting a site walk would be useful.



**Lot 8-10**

