



TOWN OF DURHAM
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Town Planner's Project Review
Wednesday, February 12, 2020

XIII. **Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity Site Plan**. 18 Garrison Avenue (formerly UNH's Elizabeth DeMeritt House). Preliminary design review application for site plan and conditional use to establish fraternity, expand building, and further develop the site including additional parking. Richmond Property Group, owner. Bruce Scammen, Emanuel Engineering. Isaac Schlosser and Shawn Lorg, Krittenbrink Architecture. Map 2, Lot 12-12. Central Business District.

➤ I recommend that the board discuss the project, schedule a site walk, and schedule a public hearing for March 11.

Please note the following:

- 1) **Proposal**. The fraternity acquired the old Elizabeth DeMeritt House from UNH. The ATO fraternity was located at 66 Main Street years ago but was closed down by UNH. They later sold that property to Unh and acquired this one with the intention of re-establishing the fraternity here. A fraternity is allowed in the Central Business District by conditional use. The plan is to retain the existing building, add a significant addition on the southerly side, and redevelop the parking lot. ATO has a non-house chapter on campus now. The fraternity expects to have 34-40 residents.
- 2) **Design review**. This is a preliminary design review application. These typically involve two meetings – an initial presentation and then a public hearing – plus a site walk. The applicant will then submit a formal application later. The application meets the submittal requirements under section 1.2.6 of the Site Plan Regulations. **Technical Review Group**. The applicant met with the TRG. I will send notes of the meeting.
- 3) **Conditional uses**. The application will require conditional uses for a fraternity and to place the building addition, utilities, driveways, retaining wall and other structures within the 75 foot wetland buffer. The building is allowed by conditional use which allows nonresidential buildings (A fraternity is an institutional use).
- 4) **Variances**. The applicant will need two variances: to add parking within the 75 foot wetland buffer and to place parking in the front court. I believe they will submit an application for the March 10 ZBA meeting. I recommend the public hearing be scheduled for March 11 in order to receive the results of that meeting and because the engineer will not be available on February 26.
- 5) **Environmental constraints**. The lot is in the wetland, shoreland, and flood overlay districts. The proposal involves construction of the parking lot within the 75 foot wetland buffer for which a conditional use (for the driveway and drive aisles) and variance (for the parking spaces) are needed. A retaining wall is shown with porous pavement behind it on the parking lot. There will be a lot of fill placed behind the wall.

According to the applicant and the existing conditions plan the drainage now runs straight into the wetlands and Pettee Brook.

- 6) Parking. The plans show the existing parking lot containing 22 spaces. The proposal shows 15 spaces in sketch #1 and 30 in sketch #2, their preferred option. The applicant said provision of significant parking is essential to doing the project. Depending on the number of occupants a parking impact fee (\$1,500 per space) may be required. The regulations require 1 parking space per resident.
- 7) Front court. The zoning ordinance and the site plan regulations require that parking lots be no further forward than the front façade of the building. At a minimum the parking lot should be pushed back from Garrison Avenue to allow for suitable planting/walls to visually buffer the lot.
- 8) Utilities. The applicant will work with Public Works about the water and sewer lines. Some issues were raised at the TRG meeting.
- 9) Electric. Existing above ground electric will need to be placed underground along with all new electric lines.
- 10) Architecture. The site is subject to the Town's Architectural Regulations. We will work with the applicant and their architect as the project moves forward. The proposal now shows the addition following the design of the existing house. Some differentiation between the original and proposed structure is appropriate. Some devices should be used to decrease the sense of mass of the addition. The entrance porch is overscaled.
- 11) Building. As part of the formal review it will be determined whether an elevator and sprinklers will be needed.
- 12) Building height. The maximum height in the zone is 30 feet and 50 feet by conditional use. It appears that will be needed for the addition.
- 13) Site Plan Regulations. Many issues will be addressed as part of the formal application: landscaping, lighting, solid waste, snow storage, bike storage, construction management, stormwater management, management of the fraternity, etc.
- 14) Traffic study. Will a traffic study be needed?

Lot 12-12. Pettee Brook is the southwesterly boundary:

