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**Town Planner's Project Review**  
**April 15, 2020**

- VIII. **Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity Site Plan**. 18 Garrison Avenue (formerly UNH's Elizabeth DeMeritt House). Site plan and conditional use application to establish fraternity, expand building, and further develop the site including additional parking. Richmond Property Group, owner. Bruce Scamman, Emanuel Engineering. Isaac Schlosser, Krittenbrink Architecture. Map 2, Lot 12-12. Central Business District.
- I recommend the board accept the application as complete, schedule a site walk, and schedule the public hearing for April 29.

Please note the following:

- 1) **Background**. This is 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. 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 44 residents.

**Process**

- 2) **Acceptance**. The application can be accepted as complete. There is some additional information that is needed but these are for secondary matters (like a drawing showing construction staging).
- 3) **Site walk**. It would be useful to schedule a site walk. We will take all precautions and maintain proper physical separation of course.
- 4) **Schedule**. A preliminary design review was conducted earlier. This formal application incorporates some changes and includes significantly more information.
- 5) **Technical Review Group**. The application was presented to the TRG on April 7. Detailed notes of the meeting were sent to the board. We received a memo from the Police Chief during the design review phase. He said he has no concerns with the formal application.
- 6) **Conditional uses**. The application will require conditional uses for: a) a fraternity; b) for building height (a height over 30 feet is allowed by conditional use) of ~34.5 feet; c) 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). The applicant

addressed the eight general criteria and four specific criteria for the Wetland Conservation Overlay District. He is meeting with the Conservation Commission on April 27 for the conditional uses within the WCOD.

- 7) Waivers. The applicant has requested the following waivers: a) for the foundation planting strip; b) for a portion of the parking to be forward of the building; c) for fewer than the required number of parking spaces; and d) for trees along the road.
- 8) Variances. The applicant received two variances: to add parking within the 75 foot wetland buffer and to place parking in the front court.
- 9) Timeframe. The applicant would like to have students move in the fall of 2021. They expect 10-15 months of construction so their schedule is tight especially if construction slows down due to the coronavirus.

### **Traffic and Parking**

- 10) Parking Impact Fee. By my calculations the applicant will owe \$9,512 as a parking impact fee payable to the Town prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy. The site plan regulations require 1 parking space for each resident or 44 spaces for 44 planned residents. The parking lot will have 32 spaces so there is a shortfall of 12 spaces. The addition encompasses 52.85% (slightly less than that) of the total square footage of the building (not including the basement) and the fee is \$1,500 per space not provided. Thus:  $52.85\%$  (slightly less)  $\times 12 \times \$1,500 = \$9,512$ .
- 11) Traffic impact. I don't think a traffic study is needed. The parking lot is increasing from 22 to 32 spaces. This should not burden Garrison Avenue nor the nearby intersections, especially with the off-peak occasional use by a fraternity.
- 12) Circulation and parking. The applicant could reduce the width of the drive aisle from 24 to 22 feet to pull the parking lot in a little from the wetland buffer. Should they make that change? If so a waiver would be needed. The nine compact parking spaces should be identified on site with appropriate signage.
- 13) Porous pavement. The entire parking lot is proposed to be porous pavement. The design engineer has a lot of experience with this material. Dr. Robert Roseen, an expert in porous pavement, will be enlisted to oversee the installation of the porous pavement. This should be made a condition. A sign will need to be installed on the property about maintenance of porous pavement. A maintenance schedule will need to be set up.
- 14) Garrison Avenue. There will be a new crosswalk across Garrison Avenue and some changes in the parking spaces since the entrance to the parking lot is moving. The applicant will be responsible for doing this work. The design engineer should coordinate with Public Works on these items and the exact design of Garrison Avenue with sloped granite curbing, drainage, the narrow planting strip, and relocation of the sidewalk.
- 15) Stop sign. Can the sign be lower than 7 feet high? The applicant will check.

- 16) Bike storage. We will need more information about bike storage, whether inside, outside, or covered including a detail of the storage structures (an inverted U-shape is acceptable)
- 17) Sidewalks. We will clarify what material will be used. Concrete is preferred.

### **Utilities and Management**

- 18) Utilities. Some of the existing sewer line will be removed and two new sewer lines to the existing manhole will be installed.
- 19) Electric. The applicant will remove the existing line crossing Garrison Avenue. Everything will go off a new pole to be placed in front of the building. It will go underground from there. The design engineer will look into whether a transformer will be needed. If so it should be carefully sited and screened.
- 20) Management plan. We request a copy of the management plan for the fraternity if there is one. Police Chief Kurz is not particularly concerned though because UNH oversees fraternities effectively.
- 21) Recycling. The applicant should meet with Public Works and a representative of the IWMAC, if available to develop a recycling plan.
- 22) Construction management. A sheet showing the construction schedule, locations for materials, and staging should be submitted. I don't think limiting hours for this project is needed. If any blasting is needed the applicant will need to follow Town protocol.
- 23) Stormwater Management Plan. Town Engineer April Talon will review the plan.
- 24) Snow storage. Snow storage is shown on the plans in the wetland buffer. Is there a concern with this plan? Is there a way to mitigate the impact of snow, which can contain adverse materials, being piled near the wetland?
- 25) Dumpster. The dumpster is shown. What is the preferred screening? Vinyl, wood, chain link with slats?

### **General Site Design**

- 26) Landscaping. Add some low evergreen shrubs (up to a height of 3-1/2 feet) at the entrance to the parking lot to buffer the view of the lot from Garrison Avenue while accommodating necessary sight lines. Sloped curbing or another method will need to be incorporated to protect three elm trees to be planted (now shown only adjacent to one elm tree).
- 27) Lighting. I will review the cut sheets to make sure the lights are dark sky compliant.
- 28) Retaining wall. Top and bottom elevations for the retaining wall are shown for spot grades along the wall on sheet C3. The highest end toward the street is about five feet. The material will be a standard neutral gray or beige. The applicant should submit a physical sample or a photo showing the material and color.

- 29) Invasive plants. If there are an invasive plants on the lot we should discuss with the applicant removing them. I will ask Ellen Snyder if she can visit the site to check for invasives.
- 30) Cultural Resources. I am not aware of any cultural resources on the property.
- 31) Signage. The applicant proposes having the fraternity letters in the gable of the addition. I think that is appropriate. They should submit a design for the small freestanding sign when ready.
- 32) Wildflowers. Planting of wildflowers or another appropriate materials in the lawn area within the wetland buffer was discussed. The applicant said he would look into this.
- 33) Miscellaneous items. Are bollards needed behind the dumpster? A part of the sewer easement just ends. Is that actually how the easement is described? The building meets the required habitable floor area for a fraternity (150 square feet per occupant). 70% of the gross floor area of the building exceeds 6,600 square feet. Would a steel backing for the timber guard rail be appropriate?
- 34) Minor changes. A number of things should be changed later as a precedent condition with submission of the final drawings: a) show the 25 foot SPOD buffer along Pettee Brook (This does not affect the project as the buffer is all located within the wetland); b) design for fence over retaining wall; c) make sure order of plans corresponds to legend on front page.

### **Building**

- 35) Architecture. The site is subject to the Town's Architectural Regulations. I think the plan for the addition looks good and meets the requirements with a few small adjustments. Assuming it is acceptable to the board I will offer several minor changes to the architect as a precedent condition (e.g. narrower canopy over the entrance, slightly wider corner boards, etc.). Is the addition proposed to be all white? What colors are proposed for the shutters? An off white trim would be appropriate.
- 36) Building. As part of the formal review it will be determined whether an elevator and sprinklers will be needed.
- 37) Energy checklist. I will arrange for a meeting with the architect/applicant with the Code Administrator and a representative of the Energy Committee. The architect is completing the checklist.
- 38) Accessibility. Code Administrator Audrey Cline pointed out an issue with accessibility into different parts of the building. The design engineer said he would speak with the architects about this. Also, they should check to see if there is a way to remove the rather unsightly ramp in front of the building.
- 39) Vinyl siding. It would be great to remove the vinyl siding on the existing building if there are wood clapboards underneath and they are in good condition. I asked the applicant to look into this. The new clapboards should match the existing in the width of the reveal.