

**PLANNING BOARD**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**JULY 9, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.**

*115 Pleasant Street, Hubbard Conference Room 203, Gardner, MA*

**Members present:** Robert J. Bettez, Sr. /*Vice-Chairman*, Laura Casker, Mark Schafron, Robert Swartz, Steve Cormier /*Members*, and Trevor Beauregard/*Director-City Planner*.

**Members absent:** *None.*

**Also present:** Chris Coughlin-*Engineering*, Eric Bernardin-*Fuss & O'Neill*, Kristian Whitsett-Jones-*Whitsett Architects*, and Christine Fucile-*DCDP*, and Steven Rockwood-*Gardner Resident*.

ANNOUNCEMENT - Any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a meeting, or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to reasonable requirements of the Chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. Any person intending to make such recording shall notify the Chair forthwith. All Documents referenced or used during the meeting must be submitted in duplicate to the Director of Community Development & Planning pursuant to the Open Meeting and Public Records Law. All documents shall become part of the official record of the meeting.

***Mr. Bettez called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.***

**1. MINUTES**

✓ Vote to approve Regular Meeting Minutes of June 18, 2019.

***Motion to accept and approve Planning Board regular meeting minutes as presented.***

***L. Casker/M. Schafron.***

***Vote - All in favor***

**2. PUBLIC MEETINGS CONTINUATION & OLD BUSINESS**

**2.1** *MasRed Solar, LLC*

**2.2** *Gardner Energy, LLC*

**2.3** *Redzico, LLC*

**2.4** *Imperial Blue Systems, LLC*

**2.5** *Princeton Repower, LLC*

Mr. Bettez commented no action on the Cedar Hills project. T. Beauregard said he has not received anything yet.

L. Casker asked if there were any results from the DPU, and noted there was supposed to be an answer yesterday. Also, thought they went before the Conservation Commission last night.

T. Beauregard replied he did not receive anything, and also believes they will be before the Conservation Commission at their next meeting.

### **3. OLD BUSINESS**

#### **3.1 Wilder Brook Subdivision:**

T. Beauregard stated he has no update at this time.

#### **3.2 Cedar Hills Solar Definitive Plans:**

- o *Definitive Plans*
- o *Conditional Release of Covenant*

Mr. Bettez noted this is still a continuation as mentioned previously.

#### **3.3 Downtown Urban Renewal Zoning Amendment:**

T. Beauregard brought attention to the chart provided and noted the “Allowed Use” column based on the current zoning. In addition, entered in the “Allowed Use” column is many NP’s - Not Permitted Uses within the zones they are actually in, and with the changes that are proposed, most of the NP’s will be changed to permitted uses, with the exception of one. The exception is the auto body shop on Pine Street. L. Casker asked if the auto body shop is grandfathered as a current use. T. Beauregard replied yes, even if ownership changes. If it was vacant for more than two years, then it would not be grandfathered.

T. Beauregard explained this is being done in order to clean up the Rear Main Street Corridor.

T. Beauregard pointed out on the map the current zoning in the Downtown Urban Renewal area, and commented part is Industrial 1 and Industrial 2. In addition, many of the lots are split-zoned, and some are Commercial 1. T. Beauregard pointed out the area down to Willow Street which is proposed to change to Commercial 1. Everything south of Willow will become Commercial 2.

T. Beauregard pointed out on the map three residences on Pine Street that are zoned Industrial and will change to General Residential 3. In addition, there are 15 lots that uses not permitted within the current zones.

L. Casker mentioned Pine Street residences which are listed 40B (low income), and wondered if this was prior to this zoning when designated 40B. T. Beauregard replied this was approved back in the 80’s as Heywood Wakefield redevelopment.

M. Schafron asked what intersection GR3 was in the center of the zoning map, and T. Beauregard responded Pine Street where the auto body shop is which will become Commercial 1.

T. Beauregard commented a lot of the properties are split-zoned, therefore, it makes sense with regard to redevelopment purposes.

T. Beauregard pointed out on the bottom of the zoning map on Mechanic Street that is currently zoned Industrial 2. There is a medical office building, and a house that is also used as an office at this time, owned by the same owner which is zoned Industrial 2, which would make sense to change to Commercial 2.

Currently it is a permitted use within Industrial 2, however, would remain permitted use also in Commercial 2.

L. Casker commented she is surprised notification is put in the newspaper, but do not have to notify anyone who is affected by this zoning change. T. Beauregard replied the zoning act states the Planning Board has the authority to initiate a zoning amendment request.

R. Swartz asked if this change affects the building that have residents. T. Beauregard responded they are becoming conforming uses, whereas currently they are non-conforming uses within those zones, therefore, will not be impacted.

T. Beauregard stated he knows this is a lot, but the process would be, if the Planning Board is amenable, to recommend to the City Council the amendment, and afterwards a joint public hearing will need to be held that is publicized.

L. Casker asked if the parcel on the other side of Route 2 (Mechanic Street) should also be included as Commercial 2 in the recommendation, or go with the proposal that the committee recommended.

T. Beauregard agreed this should be in the recommendation since it will never be industrial again, as well as added to the proposed zoning chart.

R. Swartz was in agreement also, and suggested a motion to recommend this.

***Motion to recommend the proposed zoning map amendments in the Downtown Urban Renewal Area as presented, to include the parcels that are on the opposite (south) side of Route 2 (Mechanic Street) as Commercial 2, to the City Council***

***L. Casker/R. Swartz.***

***Vote – All in***

***favor.***

#### **4. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **4.1 New School Project Presentation:**

Mr. Swartz spoke as a member of the school building committee, along with a power point presentation detailing the schematic design and project schedule.

Mr. Swartz said at one time this was originally going to be the Waterford Street School Project, and then expanded from there.

Mr. Swartz named the “School Building Committee” members including Mayor Mark Hawke as the Chair, and are currently in the 2019 phase with the project already submitted to the MSBA. In addition, the MSBA is going to address the schematic design project in August which will hopefully be accepted at this time to go on to the next phase.

Mr. Swartz noted the MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority) process is the state authority that administers and funds a program for grants for Massachusetts school projects, as well as mandate a multi-step rigorous study and approval process. In addition, MSBA will reimburse all eligible costs. The City of Gardner is authorized 80% of eligible costs, and site costs over 8% of construction costs will be owned by the City of Gardner.

Mr. Swartz displayed pictures of Waterford Street School and Elm Street School showing the need for a new school. Furthermore, both schools are aged, outdated electrical and plumbing systems, do not meet current educational needs, and are below standard according to MSBA.

A feasibility study was performed to explore options for possible sites.

There were guiding principles which included school as community resource, 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning, learning communities, healthy & sustainable school, and outdoor/nature connections.

L. Casker asked what the green boxes on the display meant. Mr. Whitsett-Jones responded it is a planning diagram resulting from discussions the teachers were interested in “clustering” age groups together resulting in 3 schools within a school to include first grade, second grade, third grade, and fourth grade. Some schools desired “pods” to mix first, second and third grades. Gardner preferred each grade level by floor all the grades were in close proximity of each other. Mr. Swartz pointed out a picture which illustrates bringing nature into the schools.

Mr. Swartz continued with Site Options, and explained the three possible sites which are Waterford Street, Elm Street, and Middle/High School Site (Pearl Street).

Mr. Swartz said some people were questioning the sites, and explained the committee extensively reviewed the potential sites. The Waterford Street school area is filled with swampy water, Elm Street did have a proposal from the architects to build an addition and rehabilitate the school, but there is a horrific traffic issue currently, therefore, to add pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and grades one, would only add to the traffic issue. Also, looked at was Pearl Street Middle/High School site, but the piece of property looked at was too small for the size of the building footprint. Next there was thought to change the grade configurations primarily Pre-K and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade, as well as exploring six options, and ended up with Pre-K-Grade 4 with 925 students.

Mr. Swartz explained the advantages of Pre-K at Pearl Street. Supports district long-term plan, one 21<sup>st</sup> century building for all PK-4 students uniting all elementary administrators and specialists all in one building, and connects to the Middle/High School campus. Furthermore, the school is being built in the woods which does not require any leveling, as well as nature surrounding the school, supplying a natural setting for learning, and provides more spaces for community use. In addition, relieves traffic and congestion from existing neighborhoods. The Police Chief is aware of the current traffic situation, and has been monitoring the traffic and stopping people on Pearl Street.

Mr. Swartz noted there will be a connecting road to the high school. Mr. Schafron asked what the advantage is for this connection. Mr. Swartz responded it gives another alternative to enter/exit.

L. Casker questioned if the traffic pattern eventually ends up on Pearl Street. Mr. Swartz replied yes, but the schools are set at different times.

Mr. Swartz pointed out the pictures of the area where the proposed school will be which shows the property, including the access way from Pearl Street. Furthermore, the school will be built on the highest point on that land which is 95 feet above Pearl Street.

In addition, an extensive traffic study was completed. The recommendations are to enforce posted speed limit on Pearl Street, establish a 20 mph School Zone on Pearl Street, include a right-turn only bay for those exiting the school site onto Pearl Street, and include a left-turn only lane on the eastbound Pearl Street approach. Additionally, there will be an extended sidewalk along the whole length of the access way on Pearl Street.

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*Eric Bernardin of Fuss & O'Neill spoke next regarding civil engineering and traffic engineering for the project.*

Mr. Bernardin explained the new roadway will come out and connect from Pearl Street out to the middle and high school, kind of in between the two of them. There is a 10 foot multi use path

that will be built alongside the road intended for bicycling and pedestrian pathways for students, neighbors, etc..

Mr. Bernardin pointed out on the schematic design site plan the bus drop off queueing (for 8 buses), as well as the passenger drop off vehicles. Mr. Bettez asked how the passenger drop off vehicles will get out if the buses are in the way. Mr. Bernardin showed where they will be allowed to exit, and also the first bay for Pre-K. Mr. Bernardin also noted there is a total of 230 parking spaces on the site for teachers, and visitors. In addition, there will be a loading dock, and to the east will be the play areas in the back of the building. Also, there is a fire lane with full access around the perimeter of the building.

The roadway coming up will start on Pearl Street, and there will be a left hand turn lane coming in both ways, with one eastbound on Pearl Street to get to the school, and two lanes exiting. Also, going up the two-lane driveway, there will be a small infiltration basin down at the bottom for stormwater on the site, as well as a small detention pond. There is quite a bit of retaining wall, and will be doing some analysis to try to minimize cost a little. Also noted, will be crossing the wetlands, plus will need to reduce the top of the site down about 20 feet, as well as needing to make up some grade. L. Casker asked what the difference in grade from Pearl Street to the pad that the building will go on. Mr. Bernardin replied 70 foot difference.

S. Cormier inquired what the distance in back of the easterly side of the building where the play areas and access road going around toward Pearl Street. Mr. Bernardin responded, from the main part of the site to Pearl Street is about 1300 feet, and the back of the building near the play areas is about 1600 to 1700 feet.

L. Casker questioned if there is enough access between the buildings for emergency vehicles. Mr. Bernardin pointed to the site and said there is about 250-300 feet from driveway to the setback. Mr. Bernardin explained there will be fire hydrants, the mechanical engineer has completed flow tests, the building will be fully sprinklered, and there will be a fire alarm system.

M. Schafron stated he does not understand the topography of the area and wondered if it is an elevated area with wetlands around it. Mr. Bernardin said there are wetlands surrounding the site, and they positioned all the development within the allowable buffers, as well as, not encroaching the buffers and regulated areas according to the City by-laws and wetlands protection act, with the exception of the two roadways that will cross over the wetlands.

L. Casker inquired about the wetlands and if they are part of a brook that flows through. S. Bernardin said there is a perennial stream, as well as three culverts. Furthermore, there are stream crossing standards required. S. Bernardin noted there are underground infiltration systems.

S. Bernardin pointed out the site access roadway which is 28 feet wide including a guardrail. Also pointed out the landscaping. There will also be a play area built into the hillside with natural features such as hemlock logs, as well as a lot of native plantings to help minimize water use and more adaptable to this type of environment. L. Casker asked if there will be any outside seating, or picnic tables. S. Bernardin pointed out on the site plan illustrating outdoor classrooms, play areas, and play fields. There will be some rain gardens also. Mr. Bettez asked if there is any concern with the younger children wandering off into the wetlands. Mr. Bernardin

responded there are plans for fencing in the play areas on the east side of the school, a safety fence on the roadway, and a guardrail along the roadway.

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*Kristian Whitsett-Jones of Whitsett Architects spoke about the building floor plan, and pointed out on the site plan the following:*

Three main entrances, with the bus drop off being the principle entry.

Administration right front in center of the building with a security vestibule system to enter the building.

Making sure the community use portion of building to be as accessible as possible for the general community.

Students with disabilities spaces.

Nurses suite.

Music classroom.

Shipping/Receiving and custodial with direct access across the hallway from the kitchen.

A Pre-K wing with five dedicated Pre-K classrooms, with two classrooms for disabilities.

To the north will be the first grade “cluster” to group three classrooms together, which generally is nine (9) classrooms per grade. This was suggested by the teachers.

A teacher planning area.

Tutorial spaces.

Media center.

Group bathrooms for the students, for the cafeteria and gym, and for the Pre-K bathrooms there is a bathroom per classroom for the students, and four (4) teacher bathrooms. Bathrooms are accessible.

Three (3) floors.

Mr. Whitsett-Jones said the approximate project cost is \$89.6 million, the approximate MSBA reimbursement is \$50 million, and the approximate City costs to be \$40 million. There is a 10% contingency for the estimates. Approximate construction cost \$71 million. Mr. Whitsett-Jones noted the MSBA is currently evaluating the costs, and hoping the MSBA board will vote by the end of August and should have a better idea of the exact MSBA reimbursement amount. Furthermore, looking for local approval in November, 2019. Currently in the design and development phase until March, 2020. Anticipating bid in late August with construction starting in early November, 2020. Furthermore, anticipate school opening in fall of 2022.

L. Casker asked how the construction will impact the high school. Mr. Whitsett-Jones thought very little since the construction site is isolated from the high school, and do not share Catherine Street at all, so it seems ideal to construct.

T. Beauregard questioned if they will be incorporating any sustainable design features into the designs. Mr. Whitsett-Jones responded they are looking at everything from site stormwater, and light pollution on the site. In addition, will be using non-toxic materials, day lighting, and wrapping insulation around the entire building.

Mr. Bettez inquired if there have been any cost studies on what it would cost to install solar or windmills. Mr. Whitsett-Jones replied the state does not reimburse for these, however, they are looking in “solar” ready roofing if solar panels need to be installed.

L. Casker asked what kind of roof. Mr. Whitsett-Jones responded it will be a “flattish” roof for the main building, and both the north and south wings will be slanted, metal roof. The flat roof will be tapered with internal roof drains. The north and south wings will have gutters and snow guards.

T. Beauregard questioned what type of heat. Mr. Whitsett-Jones said gas heat, baseboard, and hot water. Also, hoping to do radiant floor heating for the classrooms in the Pre-K classrooms. Mr. Whitsett-Jones further explained the cooling will be displacement ventilation which the clean air comes into the classroom low and is a little bit cooler, then rises and taken out from the ceiling level which is much better for not spreading germs. The displacement air is dehumidified, but not cooled. In addition, planning for at least one classroom per grade level to be fully air-conditioned since some students have specific medical needs. L. Casker how the displacement ventilation functions for the second and third floors. Mr. Whitsett-Jones replied it will be zoned.

M. Schafron looked to Mr. Swartz and asked what will happen to the Waterford Street and Elm Street schools. Mr. Swartz replied the Waterford Street School is being looked at by the Boys & Girls Club, and part of the school will have to be demolished. Elm Street School will be used by the central office, as well as the Gault Academy.

S. Cormier asked if there are elevators. Mr. Whitsett-Jones said there will be two elevators in the central corridor for staff, and will be used by kitchen staff which provides breakfast to every classroom, every morning.

L. Casker questioned if the special needs students are only on the first level. Mr. Whitsett-Jones said they are throughout. L. Casker expressed her concern, from a medical emergency point of view, about getting help to these students if needed.

S. Cormier praised the School Building Committee, and noted they have put a lot of work into this project, but still have a long way to go, and thankful for the presentation.

Mr. Whitsett-Jones asked if the Planning Board was aware of this project, and if the City is aware also. It was discussed it has been heard of. L. Casker thought it should be put on the City’s website. Mr. Swartz said it is on the school website, and three, possibly four public presentations have already been provided, and will continue on.

The Planning Board thanked Mr. Bernardin and Mr. Whitsett-Jones for their excellent presentation.

#### **4.2 Election of Officers:**

T. Beauregard commented he thought it would be helpful for the Board Members to speak among themselves of their interest, or no interest, and to motion to elect Chairman and Vice Chairman.

Mr. Swartz expressed his interest in being the Chairman.

Mr. Bettez said he is not interested.

Ms. Casker and Mr. Cormier are also not interested.

Mr. Schafron commented he works in Boston, and there is a chance he may miss a meeting, but is interested, and willing to serve.

L. Casker and S. Cormier commented that if the Chairman cannot make a meeting, the Vice Chairman can step in to conduct the meeting.

T. Beauregard noted he speaks with the Chairman on the phone to review agenda items prior to the regular meeting.

L. Casker directed to Mr. Bettez if he is still interested in remaining Vice-Chairman, and he replied yes.

*Motion to table until next meeting to have time to think about it, and to vote at next meeting.*

*L. Casker/R. Swartz.*

*Vote – All in favor.*

<b>5. ANNOUNCEMENT~~NEWS~~ARTICLES~~EVENTS:</b>
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**5.1 Next Planning Board meeting:** August 13, 2019 at 7 p.m.

**5.2 Gift for Outgoing Chairman**

T. Beauregard thought it would be nice to present the past Chairman with a gift thanking him for his 40 years of service on the Planning Board. A copy of choices were presented to the Planning Board members.

L. Casker and R. Swartz pointed out one of the choices, and the members agreed. Another option was chosen if the first choice, for some reason, is not available.

C. Fucile will get pricing.

**Adjournment**

*Motion to adjourn.*

*L. Casker/R. Swartz.*

*Vote -All in favor.*

**The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.**

All documents referenced or used during the meeting are part of the official record and are available in The Department of Community Development and Planning pursuant to the Open Meeting and Public Records Law.