

West Concord Advisory Committee
a subcommittee of the Planning Board
July 1st, 2020

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, the West Concord Advisory Committee (WCAC) held a virtual online public meeting at 7:00 p.m. via <https://zoom.us>.

Members present:

Tim Alexander, Chair
Peter DeRosa, Clerk
Amy Kaiser
Susan Mlodozeniec
Geoff Walton

Additional staff/committees represented:

Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning and Land Management
Matt Johnson, Planning Board

The meeting was called to order at 7pm by T. Alexander.

1. Recommendation to the Planning Board, re: Special Permit and Site Plan Review application of Chase Bank, 1134 Main St. The application can be viewed online at <https://concordma.gov/1439/ZBA-Current-Meeting-Documents>

The project was represented by:

Joseph Tomaino, Property Owner
Alan Roscoe, Chase Bank Civil Engineering Lead
Kaitlynn Flynn, Chase Bank Architectural Lead

The committee received a presentation on the proposal to remove the existing structure and construct a new building on the site. In addition to showing architectural drawings (see link in agenda item above), they spent a significant amount of time explaining how the form and siting was highly influenced by newly established 100-year flood plain maps that significantly restricted the options. This led to the siting very close to Main st (highest part of the property) as well as careful control to avoid additional impervious surfaces (it will be slightly less and provide additional groundwater storage area). It will be using existing water and sewer hookups.

The project has already been engaged with the Natural Resource Committee and is on the agenda of the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals in the next week.

The design is colonial contemporary with multi-pane windows and has been tailored to fit with surrounding architecture, including choice of building materials.

In response to a question about demolition vs. reuse, Mr. Tomaino explained that the original building was a concrete block service station which was converted for use by the previous bank and that it is in need of rebuilding and not reusable.

In response to questions about Sustainability Committee comments on energy plans (e.g. electric infrastructure vs. gas), the project engineer said that there are no plans for advanced energy certifications, but they will certainly do what they can to make it green.

In response to questions on the orientation of the building (i.e. front door) towards Baker Ave instead of Main St., the flood plain requirements were again pointed to as the biggest influence on the orientation.

Public Questions/Comments:

Mary Hartman (16 Concord Greene, member Finance Committee, speaking as an individual) asked whether existing utility reuse impeded energy efficiency. The project engineer answered that “reuse” referred to sewer, water and drainage, so not an energy issue. She followed with asking how efficient energy would be (certifications, etc.), he responded that the project is going to follow applicable codes and requirements, is not going for specific advanced certifications, but will do what they can.

The specific timeline for follow up meetings was clarified:

Planning Board – July 7th

ZBA – July 9th

NRC – July 22nd

Summary comments from the committee included reiterating the interest in sustainable building design and attention to the façade on Main St (preference would be to have it front Main, but constraints are understood). It was noted that the elimination of the existing front parking/driveway “dead zone” was going to be a benefit for walkability.

The committee resolved for T. Alexander to write a letter with feedback for the Planning Board and Zoning Board of appeals. Key points are to include:

- Continued attention to sustainability/energy planning (not many opportunities for brand new commercial buildings in this area).
- Continued attention to pedestrian/multi-modal transportation and walkability. Due to its prominent siting on Main St. and at the entrance to the village area and cultural district, we would appreciate continued effort to make the Main St. façade and approaches as inviting as possible.

2. Parks & Rec Update - Gerow Land Update - Ryan Kane

Ryan Kane gave a presentation on the history and current status of the Gerow property development (Warner’s Pond). He reviewed initial plans from Aug 2018 and the revised plans from Nov 2018. Differences included not going as deep into the property leaving more

woodlands untouched. He reviewed how the original idea for swimming had been previously eliminated due to the unexpected White Pond land acquisition as well as expensive quotes for additional dredging required.

More recent updates included scaling back the idea of an enclosed event barn to a covered pavilion due to cost estimates. Also that composting toilet concepts had reverted to septic instead.

The project is split into 2 phases for purposes of bidding and executing. Phase 1, "Park Development," is targeted for landscaping contractors and includes general park layout, parking and landscaping/plantings while Phase 2 is targeted for building contractors and includes the restroom and pavilion structures. The budgets are as follows:

Phase 1 (Park Development) - \$1.4M

Phase 2 (Building Development) - \$500K

Phase 1 will be funded with existing allocated funds and includes a consolidation of funds originally targeted for White Pond since that development is currently on hold.

Phase 2 has been proposed as CPC 2021 funding and will be voted on at Town Meeting 2020 ([Article 44 item F](#)).

It was noted that this topic is on the agenda for the Natural Resource Commission on July 22nd and that there will be another public input hearing, most likely in the fall.

Questions from the committee:

In response to questions about the path surfaces, Mr. Kane answered that they would be mostly paved (main circuits) with some crushed stone (minor spurs).

In response to questions about parking, Mr. Kane answered that there are 47 spots including both lots and that this is comparable to capacity at Rideout. Additionally, all parking is planned for Phase 1 development.

In response to questions about a previous concept for a playground onsite, Mr. Kane answered that it is not in the current budgeted plan, but there is still space for it in the future.

In response to questions about tree removal, Mr. Kane answered that the planned open grassy area is largely where house was and there have been site walks and specific attention paid to tree selection and preservation.

In response to questions about the outlook timeline, Mr. Kane answered that pending input at Town Meeting, they hope to start in fall 2020 with most construction completing during spring 2021 with an opening by fall of 2021.

Mary Hartman (16 Concord Green, member Finance Committee, speaking as an individual) commented that she appreciates that the new plan doesn't develop as deeply into the site. She also asked for clarification on the money (included in descriptions above). Ms. Hartman concluded by voicing concerns for spending this amount of money in light of recent events, especially noting the strain COVID is putting on school budgets.

T. Alexander asked again about parking and mentioned the idea of phased parking planning. Some questioned the need for a similar capacity to Rideout given there are no sports fields.

M. Johnson added to the parking conversation reinforcing that we would prefer not to be targeting/encouraging auto usage vs. other transport modes.

M. Johnson also asked about the extent of the planned trails even with the scale-back and wondered if it was still overdevelopment. Mr. Kane did explain that the purpose of some of the trails is to connect with existing trail networks on the far side of the property.

M. Johnson also seconded concerns from Ms. Hartman about whether this was the right time for a large recreational development project, but also noted that reallocating funds at this point may be a challenge.

Jeff Collins (55 Highland St) commented that he saw lots of good things with the latest plan, but would like to see development compacted even more to the east (Commonwealth entrance side of site) to reduce disturbances to the natural landscape in the west (deeper part of site).

Mr. Kane expressed appreciation for all the comments and said that he would be bringing the feedback back to those working the project to see what they can incorporate as design iterations continue.

3. - Liaison Reports including COVID-19 related impacts to West Concord

M. Johnson gave an update from the Planning Board:

- Mill Run - recommended for approval - 14 units - 2 affordable - will include trail network. All electric. High sustainability. Size range, compact. Open space was tight. Trees.
- 1440 PRD was turned down. Now being proposed as 22 unit conventional subdivision.
- PB - working on goals for 2021. WC guidelines and zoning changes could be included.
- Neighborhood conservation districts may be of interest to WCAC.

S. Mlodozieniec asked about previous zoning discussion about parking requirements. M. Rasmussen referenced previous parking studies and noted that the most significant complaint is from village business owners that they don't have parking for employees and that there are very few town-owned off street parking spots. She explained that parking behind the Five&Ten and Debra's was arranged by Maynard Forbes (Five & Ten owner) via a special permit years ago. She also mentioned that current COVID circumstances have caused a pause to reexamine how we allocate parking for needs.

There was a related question on wayfinding (including parking indicators) and M. Rasmussen answered that proposals are ongoing.

Appreciated was expressed for new art installed on BFRT and M. Rasmussen explained that there will be 10-12 locations installed in July and that Nancy Lippe with Umbrella Arts had coordinated.

M. Rasmussen gave an update on the BFRT schedule noting that the Phase 2B Culvert/bridge work should be complete by winter 2021 or spring 2022.

S. Mlodozieniec gave an update from the West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee noting that Porchfest is probably postponed to spring 2021 due to COVID. Also noted that there are plans to try to locate the new tile mural being worked by Village Art Room to be located on the 7-11 building.

M. Rasmussen briefed the committee on ongoing work on small business grants with other towns looking to shore up these hard-hit local businesses. Another grant focuses on shared streets and open spaces for popup dining. 2 locations on street are being considered, at the 99 restaurant and at 13B Commonwealth. Would like to make those spots available in August.

The committee noted that it needs to approve March minutes at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting is planned for August 5th, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,
Peter DeRosa