Minutes of the Planning Board Meeting of September 14, 2021

Pursuant to a notice and agenda filed with the Town Clerk, the Planning Board met at 7:00 p.m. on September 14, 2021 virtually via https://zoom.us. The meeting was recorded and will be available on the Minuteman Media Network.

At 7:00 p.m. Mr. Flint opened the meeting and asked for a roll call of the Board members. Present were Ms. Miller, Mr. Bosdet, Mr. Boardman, Ms. Orvedal, Ms. McEneaney, and Mr. Flint. Ms. Ferguson was absent.

Public Hearing, Formula Business Special Permit, 1150 Main Street

Application of Eastern Insurance Group, LLC by John T. White, Esq. for a Formula Business Special Permit under Sections 3.3 and 11.6 of the Zoning Bylaw for a retail insurance agency at 1150 Main Street, Units 2(B) and 3 (Parcels 3790-2-2 and 3790-2-3).

Attorney John White was present for the Applicant.

Chairman Flint opened the public hearing.

Mr. White presented the application. The Applicant is seeking a Special Permit to allow the establishment of a new formula business, Eastern Insurance, in the West Concord Business District. The business will occupy the same 1,360 s.f. space as the existing insurance company with the same staffing levels of 7 employees and hours of operation. The business has 24 locations primarily in Massachusetts and a recognizable brand image, color scheme, and signage. He explained that the only change would be to the sign on the door of the business. He said that he presented the application at a recent West Concord Advisory Committee (WCAC) meeting and that the Committee is in support of the application.

The Board considered the Planner’s Report dated 9/2/21 and the West Concord Advisory Committee letter of support dated 9/1/21.

Mr. Flint asked for public comment and there was none and he closed the public hearing.

Mr. Flint moved that the Board grant to Eastern Insurance Group, LLC a Formula Business Special Permit under Sections 3.3 and 11.6 of the Zoning Bylaw for a retail insurance agency at 1150 Main Street, Units 2(B) and 3 (Parcels 3790-2-2 and 3790-2-3) subject to the conditions contained in the Planner’s Report. Mr. Bosdet seconded. All voted in favor. The roll call vote was Ms. Miller, yes; Ms. Orvedal, yes; Mr. Bosdet, yes; Ms. McEneaney, yes; and Mr. Flint, yes.

Minutes

The Board decided to postpone the review of the 7/12/21 Executive Session draft minutes until 9/28/21.
The Board reviewed and amended the 8/24/21 draft minutes. Mr. Flint moved that the Board approve the minutes as amended. Ms. Miller seconded. The roll call vote was Ms. Miller, yes; Ms. Orvedal, yes; Mr. Bosdet, abstain; Mr. Boardman, yes; Ms. McEneaney, yes; and Mr. Flint, yes.

**Select Board Envision Concord Focus Meeting – Planning Board Action Items Update**

The Board has received a letter from the Select Board regarding the Focus Meeting to be held on Monday, November 15th to review the progress of various boards and committees on the Action Items in the Envision Concord Plan. The Board reviewed and updated the Envision Concord Action Items chart that identifies what items the Board has completed, is currently working on, and future items per their annual goals.

Ms. Miller asked for clarification on whether the Board would go forward with considering Neighborhood Conservation Districts and, if it is decided to go forward, whether the Board would be the lead or whether it would be taken up by the Historic Districts Commission (HDC) or Historical Commission (HC). Ms. McEneaney thought that the Board should continue to look at the possibility of Neighborhood Conservation Districts.

After further discussion, the Board directed the Town Planner Hughes to update the chart so that it can be reviewed further at the 9/28/21 meeting. She reminded Board members to tell her if they plan to attend the Select Board meeting since a meeting posting is required if a quorum of Planning Board members will be present.

**Recommendation to the Zoning Board of Appeals, Planned Residential Development, 365 Commonwealth Avenue**

Application of Concord Housing Authority for a Special Permit and Site Plan Review under Sections 10, 11.6 and 11.8 of the Zoning Bylaw for a 2-unit Planned Residential Development at 365 Commonwealth Avenue (Parcel #2156).

Rick Eifler, Chair of the Concord Housing Authority Board, was present for the Applicant.

Mr. Eifler presented the application and an updated site plan progress print plans dated 9/13/21. The Concord Housing Authority is proposing to build a new two-story 1,072 s.f. 2-bedroom dwelling with a 536 s.f. walk-out basement. The proposed dwelling will be located adjacent to an existing two-story 1,684 s.f. 3-bedroom dwelling with an 842 s.f. walk-out basement. The project includes the construction of a new walkway from the existing public sidewalk to the front door and an 18-foot-wide driveway off Commonwealth Ave. that will allow for the parking of two cars. There is an existing paved driveway that was used to access the adjacent Gerow Land, which is now owned by the Town, that will be removed. The plans show a downspout to a small infiltration trench at the rear of the proposed dwelling. The Applicant is proposing the new dwelling be served by Town water, sewer and electric.

The Board asked to see the planting plan presented to the Natural Resources Commission. The Board questioned how the proposed rear elevation of the home and the backyard area would look from Warner’s Pond. Mr. Flint asked if there are proposed plantings for the area in the back of the home to soften the visual impact from Warner’s Pond. After discussion, it was recommended that the Applicant add a few trees near Warner’s Pond to screen the rear elevation so that the new dwelling does not detract from the ecological and visual qualities from Warner’s Pond and the Gerow Recreation area.

Mr. Eifler explained that the project includes the removal of invasive species on site, but that additional plantings were not feasible at this time due to budget constraints. Town Planner Hughes suggested that she could coordinate with the Applicant and use funds from the Town’s Tree Preservation Mitigation Fund to plant a few trees on the property to address this concern. She stated that she will get input for the Natural Resources Director on the appropriate tree selections.

Ms. Miller asked about the proposed utilities to service the dwelling. Mr. Eifler explained that the house is proposed to be all electric. She asked about the possibility of solar panel installations on the house. Mr. Eifler explained that there is not much opportunity for that due to the proposed orientation of the house.

Mr. Boardman asked about the closeness between the proposed new home and existing homes on Commonwealth Avenue. Ms. Hughes presented on the screen an aerial view of Commonwealth Avenue to show the existing homes on Commonwealth Ave. and various distances between homes and how many of the homes have two paved driveway between them with no landscaping.

Mr. Bosdet asked about the proposed parking spaces and wondered if the proposed parking spaces could be tandem. Mr. Eifler explained that the existing grade of the property would not allow tandem spaces.

Mr. Flint pointed out that that Applicant needs to submit a cut sheet to show dark-sky compliant lighting. Town Planner Hughes suggested that the Board’s recommendation letter could include a condition that all fixtures be dark-sky compliant.

Town Planner Hughes pointed out that that the CPW Engineering Division commented about the proposed infiltration trench abutting the foundation. Mr. Eifler explained that what is propose is a 1-foot gravel bed at the base of the downspout, not an infiltration trench. Ms. Hughes stated that she would have CPW Engineering Division review the revised plans presented that evening.

Select Board member and liaison to the Planning Board, Linda Escobedo, commented on the challenges for the CHA to develop this land for affordable housing. Mr. Flint acknowledged that
an important component of the Gerow land purchase included a provision for development of affordable housing.

Mr. Flint asked for public comment.

Pamela Dritt, 13 Concord Greene, Unit #4 felt that the Board should require as a condition that the proposed dwelling have all electric utilities so that contractors know this is not an option.

Susan Młodozeniec, 392 Border Road, and a member of the West Concord Advisory Committee, said that WCAC was in full support of the application.

Sue Felshin, 19 Sunnyside Lane, spoke in favor of the application, commenting that a less toxic house supports economic justice for low-income inhabitants of the dwelling.

The Board expects to receive a comment letter from the CPW Engineering Division regarding their review of the revised plans dated 9/13/21 and directed the Town Planner to draft a recommendation letter to the Zoning Board for the 9/28/21 meeting.

**Thoreau Depot Redevelopment Vision, Design Guidelines, and Potential Zoning Discussion**

MAPC has updated the Vision Statement, Design Guidelines and developed an FAQ sheet about the project. Town Planner Hughes distributed a first rough draft of the potential TBD Bylaw amendments for the Board to discuss and consider. If there is a consensus reached on putting forth Zoning Bylaw amendments at the 2022 Annual Town Meeting, a final public forum on the Vision Statement, Design Guidelines and zoning will be held.

The Board discussed the various sections of the draft zoning, the height limits for Sudbury Road compared to Thoreau Street, the parking requirements and the existing commuter rail parking spaces at the Crosby’s lot. Town Planner Hughes offered to reach out to MAPC to see if they knew how other communities handled redevelopment and commuter parking.

Mr. Flint asked for public comment. The Board was in receipt of an email received 8/10/21 from resident, Sven Weber.

Carol Savoy, 61 Belknap Street, liked keeping a height limit in the Thoreau area. She expressed concerns that the potential loss of the commuter parking lot would exacerbate existing parking problems in the Thoreau Depot area and negatively impact the residents in that area. Ms. Savoy opined that parking is a significant issue and really needs to be addressed.

Chairman Flint acknowledged the Board’s receipt of Ms. Savoy’s letter today.

Pamela Dritt, 13 Concord Greene, Unit 4, asked if discretionary incentives could be created to encourage sustainability components and affordable housing in mixed use commercial developments.

Discussion of this topic will resume at the 10/12/21 Planning Board meeting.
Planning Board Liaison/Town Planner Updates

Town Planner Hughes reported that a Community Preservation Act Application was submitted for the Assabet River Pedestrian Bridge project. Mr. Flint reported that the CPA application deadline is soon.

General Public Comment

Carol Savoy, 61 Belknap Street, expressed concerns about impact to the neighborhood if TBD Zoning Bylaws are passed. She said that the neighborhood has not been adequately made aware of the potential changes.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Documents presented which are on file in the Planning Division Office at 141 Keyes Road, Concord, MA:

- Town Planner’s agenda memorandum dated 9/9/21
- Planner’s Report dated 9/2/21 for 1150 Main Street application
- West Concord Advisory Committee letter of support dated 9/1/21 for 1150 Main Street application
- Planner’s Report dated 9/9/21 for 365 Commonwealth Avenue application
- West Concord Advisory Committee letter of support dated 9/8/21 for 365 Commonwealth Avenue
- Summary of Proposed Updates to Thoreau Depot Business District Zoning

Respectfully submitted,

Kate McEneaney, Clerk

Minutes approved on: 10/12/21