

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the January 09, 2024, Planning Board Meeting

Planning Board members present: Lori Clark, Nancy Arsenault, John Colonna-Romano, Margaret Costello, Karen Kelleher, Deb Woods (voting associate)

Lori Clark called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Review of Minutes

Karen Kelleher motioned to approve the minutes of November 28, 2023, as amended.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Karen Kelleher – **Yea**, Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**, Margaret Costello - **Yea**.

Karen Kelleher motioned to approve the minutes of December 5, 2023, as amended.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Karen Kelleher – **Yea**, Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**, Margaret Costello - **Yea**.

Karen Kelleher motioned to approve the minutes of December 12, 2023, as amended.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Karen Kelleher – **Yea**, Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**, Margaret Costello - **Yea**.

Review of Correspondence

Nancy Arsenault noted the memo to the Zoning Board of Appeals regarding The Residences at Stow Acres Comprehensive Permit. She said she recently toured rental housing in Lancaster, done by the same developer, and was pleased by the design. Members agreed to discuss the Comprehensive Permit at an upcoming meeting.

John Colonna-Romano referenced a previous discussion around exterior lighting and noted a product that attaches to a flagpole and illuminates a flag at night, based on solar power collected during the day. He questioned if this would adhere to the interpretation of the current lighting bylaw. The Board agreed to discuss further as part of the work plan review.

Special Permit and Site Plan Approval to allow the inclusion of artist spaces and gun manufacturer spaces, 501 Gleasondale Road (Gleasondale Mill)

Lori Clark opened the hearing. Valerie Oorthuys said the applicant requested the public hearing be continued from December 5th, until tonight's meeting in order to provide a site plan for review. In addition, without providing more information, the applicant's engineer had been in communication yesterday to request a continuance until January 23, 2024. She pointed out that the plan may not be subject to peer review, as no exterior changes are being suggested, however, it would only leave time for a quick review by the Board.

Members expressed concern for the readiness of the applicant for the date requested. They agreed to push out the public hearing until the first meeting in March. In addition, communication to the applicant would be made clearly stating that another continuance would not be granted. The Board would require that all information be submitted two weeks prior to the hearing and the Board would intend to hold the hearing and close it in order to make a decision based on the information before them. Alternatively, the applicant could choose to withdraw the application, and re-submit before the Board, at a time when the applicant is ready.

The Planning Director confirmed that no further communication about changing the application had been made by the applicant.

The Board discussed whether the site plan would need to be peer reviewed, agreeing that staff can determine if additional review is needed and make arrangements.

Members questioned whether artists have already located to the Mill. Valerie Oorthuys made a note to speak with the Building Commissioner.

John Colonna-Romano motioned to continue the Public Hearing for Special Permit and Site Plan Approval at 501 Gleasondale Road (Gleasondale Mill) to March 12, 2024, at 7:15PM, without testimony. Deb Woods seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Deb Woods— **Yea**, Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**, Margaret Costello – **Yea**

Request for Minor Modification for addition of protective netting, Wedgewood Pines Country Club

Present: Joe Pittorino of Wedgewood Pines Country Club

Lori Clark noted the additional information for review and welcomed Joe Pittorino. Joe Pittorino shared additional information about the proposed protective netting, stating the manufacturer of the netting is a company called “Fore Nets”.

The Board reviewed aerial imagery of Wedgewood Pines in order to understand precisely where the netting would be located and clarify the length of the perimeter of the netted area. Joe Pittorino verified the size of the perimeter, as roughly 950 feet, which would be in the shape of a horseshoe. Joe Pittorino said the purpose of the netting is for protection of golfers on the driving range, as well as on the portion of a hole below, separated by a stonewall. It would also shield walkers in the surrounding woods and a neighboring residential property from stray golf balls.

Board members noted a letter from the Conservation Department suggesting adherence to a wildlife protocol with regard to netting. Joe Pittorino said he could speak with the manufacturer.

The Chair asked members if the request is minor modification. Nancy Arsenault said given the fact that the netting would be hidden by woodlands, would not be bright in color, and the neighbor affected had already agreed to the change, she felt it was a minor modification. Karen Kelleher agreed that it didn’t appear to be a major change to the golf course, only an addition of safety features. She noted a concern for the visual impact on the neighbors, however. Joe Pittorino assured the Board the net would blend into the surroundings, with wooden poles and a black net that is hardly visible after 180 yards. He confirmed

there would be no lights and no further clearing. Margaret Costello said her concerns were about runoff and wildlife mitigation, but otherwise she did not have a problem with the net. John Colonna-Romano expressed an initial concern for giving the public an opportunity to comment, but subsequently said they had covered issues of concern and it could be declared a minor modification, provided that wildlife mitigation through the path could be conditioned. Deb Woods said she was in agreement with minor modification.

John Colonna-Romano motioned to decide that this request for the addition of protective netting at Wedgewood Pines be declared a minor modification.

Margaret Costello seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Karen Kelleher– **Yea**, Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**, Margaret Costello – **Yea**

John Colonna-Romano suggested that the owner provide Staff with an improved map of the area. Lori Clark thanked Joe Pittorino and noted that Staff would prepare a draft of the minor modification for the Board to deliberate at a future meeting.

Planning Board Updates

Lori Clark reported the Comprehensive Planning Committee held a meeting recently with the consultant to talk about the community engagement plan, which included a naming contest, a photo contest and a drop-in open house. She asked that members spread the word and encourage the public to attend this unique forum, with interactive activities.

8:15 PM Public Hearing - Modification of a Contractor's Yard Special Permit, Erosion Control Special Permit, and Earth Removal Special Permit and Site Plan Approval, 63-65 White Pond Road

*Present: Jonathan Bransfield, Bransfield Tree Company, 63 & 65 White Pond Road, Stow, MA
Chris Anderson, Hannigan Engineering*

Lori Clark opened the Public Hearing, noted it was a continuance and thanked the applicant for coming again before the Board. She explained the procedure for the hearing and confirmed the existence of two memos from Places, the first following the site walk back in September and the second, dated more recently on January 8th.

Chris Anderson shared his screen and noted the application had been continued in August to allow for a peer review by the Board's peer reviewer at Places Associates, Inc. Chris Anderson reviewed how the updated plan responds to Places Associates' comments, including the addition of holding tanks and protections of the septic systems, additional photometric information relative to the lighting around the site, as well as a landscape restoration plan for locations within the buffer zone at the request of the Conservation Commission. The applicant reevaluated the layout of the site relative to potential impacts of runoff and contamination. A series of carports were also created around the site to house mechanical equipment/vehicles. In addition, a few extra drainage improvements were made in order to capture runoff appropriately and direct it to an onsite infiltration system. He reported hearing from Places Associates, Inc. the day prior and noted that the request for clarification and/or documentation modifications could easily be made. He agreed to a comment from Places Associates, Inc. about a change to the bottom of the infiltration basin, from the application of pea stone to ¾ - 1" wash stone.

Jonathan Bransfield, noted the carports would be large spaces and covered, with pavement to accommodate anything that has oil/hydraulic fluids and/or palettes of ice melt, which need dry storage. He said details could be found in the pollution detention plan, which intends for zero environmental impact on the land. He acknowledged many comments were made about the landscaping plan, which he came up with himself. He stressed that he intended to work with the Conservation Commission through the process.

Planning Board comments

Nancy Arsenault asked about parking for employees and the materials that would be used to construct the carports. John Colonna-Romano noted a lack of landscaping was planned for around the building. The Applicant assured members that beautification of the property around the building would be part of his business aesthetic. Chris Anderson confirmed that because vehicles may physically enter the garage there is a code requirement for the existence of a drainage system and holding tanks, in case of snowmelt, rainwater wash off, or spills of any kind. The tanks would be emptied periodically, once filled and contents disposed of properly.

Deb Woods asked about the updated traffic review in the report. Chris Anderson said the study was based on the ITE Trip Generation Manual, which is the industry standard for determining trips that typically develop as part of day-to-day activity. A conference with a traffic engineer determined that the physical use of “contractor’s yard” is not typical, however, and the most applicable use is “specialty trade contractor”. This is based on the number of employees on the property, and is limited, due to the site’s drinking water well. The Engineer noted that there are several tenants on the property, but these trips are transient in nature, and are never consistent, so traffic generated by those uses is often difficult to capture. He addressed previous comments made regarding public safety, stating White Pond Road is a public way, with enforcement an ongoing responsibility for the Town, maintaining this project would not significantly contribute to this concern. Deb Woods confirmed that the trip generation being described was of a theoretical nature, as a traffic study on White Pond Road has not been performed.

Jonathan Bransfield said that though he had not made a formal request, he had already approached his neighbor, J. Melone & Sons, Inc, about shared use of the driveway (haul road), but without a positive outcome. Deb Woods replied that she would like to see an official statement from Melone on the matter. Returning to the subject of water, she ended her questioning by requesting that the Applicant provide more details about the property’s built-out and tenancy.

Margaret Costello mirrored previous concerns about traffic on White Pond Road and noted an interest in learning if Melone’s driveway could be used. Jonathan Bransfield confirmed tenant space is nearing maximum capacity at seven, and there were no plans for additional tenants at this time. In response, Margaret Costello expressed her concern that continued expansion of the property would negatively impact the neighborhood and the wildlife corridor with it. She noted the need for the Applicant to acknowledge importance of the neighborhood, the connectivity between the wildlife corridor and Lower Village and understand how added trucks in the area is concerning for not only the neighbors, but also pedestrians and bicyclists.

Jonathan Bransfield noted that commercial trucking has been a part of the location for decades. He described his personal experience, as a part of the neighborhood, and as a pedestrian on White Pond Road. He said a sidewalk is planned for the front of the property, as well as landscape improvements

around the building. He said there would be a need for trucks and other equipment on the road, as part of his business, but agreed to reach out more formally to his neighbor about use of the driveway. In addition, he answered a second round of questions from members, acknowledging the proposed continued use of the shipping containers on site for dry storage, general site cleanup that will happen as part of this Special Permit, and the leasing of space to tenants at will. Jonathan Bransfield noted there was no connection between a recent theft and any current tenant or employee, though he would consider a longer-term lease if the Planning Board has concerns. Jonathan Bransfield stated that continuing short-term leases is preferable to his business. Jonathan Bransfield confirmed that all stored vehicles on site would be parked within carports assigned to specific tenants.

Deb Woods asked that additional information is provided to the Board detailing the number of vehicle parking spaces within the carports and questioned the number of employees on the site at one time.

Members discussed the topic of traffic at length. The need to obtain more data was noted, in order to learn the total amount of traffic produced by each tenant on site, and how much will be added to White Pond Road. The number of vehicles that will be stored on the property is also of interest. Lori Clark stated the Board may feel more comfortable deliberating the impact of traffic, within the application, if they could get more a sense for what the tenants will be doing, what they will be storing, and when they will be entering/exiting the property. John Colonna-Romano noted that upon quick calculation it appears that vehicle storage may already be at capacity, given the numbers. Jonathan Bransfield said because of the high demand for the spaces, he would have good oversight and would be able to choose his tenants carefully.

Additional topics mentioned by Board members included whether the existing tax assessment for the property is current, carport storage volume and itemization, the potential for a vehicle restriction on the road, the request for an overdesign of the turning radius for trucks or a suggested righthand turn restriction for trucks at Route 117, if the design falls short. No immediate answers were provided.

Lori Clark confirmed details of the parking with the Engineer. She also asked him to estimate the percent increase in the number of trips generated for this application, compared to the original. Chris Anderson answered this is difficult to predict, given the difference in tenancy. Lori Clark reiterated that gaining an understanding of how much truck traffic will be added to White Pond Road is important to the Board. In addition, she encouraged the Applicant to educate tenants on the standard operating procedure and require it as part of leasing agreements. She said knowledge of what his tenants are storing is important, from a safety perspective and the Board needs to feel comfortable with how and what is monitored on the property. She noted this will be discussed as part of the deliberation process. John Colonna-Romano confirmed with the Applicant that the parking lot is only intended for use by tenants in the building. Deb Woods admitted that she is struggling with so many “unknowns” in the Applicant’s business plan and encouraged him to solidify the details.

Public Comments

Jenna Surwilo, 10 White Pond Road, expressed her concern that unauthorized clearing of the land has resulted in mitigation through structures that is turning it into an industrial yard. She did not agree with enlarging the entrance to accommodate big trucks entering/exiting. She also asked if the blue contractor’s fencing would become permanent and referenced the intent to have the Applicant formally reach out to Melone, about the use of his driveway.

Mary Mintz, 26 White Pond Road, encouraged the Board to consider during their deliberations the impact of traffic that this business is having on White Pond Road.

Mark Forgues, 9 White Pond Road, stated a traffic study on White Pond Road should be mandated. He stressed the need for more transparency with regard to the Applicant and the need for restriction.

Laura Corbin, 10 White Pond Road, said her main concern is the increase in traffic, as well as the type and weight of the vehicles on White Pond Road, which has become heavily used by pedestrians and bikes since the pandemic. She also did not want to see trucks idling on a public way and/or speeding.

Dorothy Granat, 11 White Pond Road, agreed with the need for a traffic study and expressed similar concerns for the more trucks on the road and noise in the neighborhood.

Jim Richmond, 42 White Pond Road, expressed his concerns for increased traffic and road surface deterioration.

Katie Fisher, 1 White Pond Road, asked if the road would need to be bonded. She said a traffic study is important, as traffic is a major concern, not only because of the volume, but also the size of the trucks. She asked about tenancy and how they will be monitored.

Planning Board comments

Nancy Arsenault stressed that several properties negatively impact White Pond Road with regard to trucks and equipment. She maintained that any traffic study done should be with consideration to the larger area, not just this Applicant. Several neighbors disagreed, however, and stated they feel it is within reason for the Board to request the Applicant to provide a traffic study to determine the impact his tenants will have on the road.

Deb Woods agreed with the requirement of a traffic study, so long as time of year is considered. She stressed that continued cleanup is needed and a truth in the numbers estimated. John Colonna-Romano said it would be useful to see existing traffic compared to what is expected to change with tenancy and property improvements. Lori Clark agreed it needs to provide (1) the number of trips allowed through the existing permit *versus* (2) a forecast of trips that would be allowed with the improvements and changes in tenancy. Chris Anderson clarified that more of a trip generation report is needed, based on employee counts and tenant uses on the property, rather than a full traffic study. He said he understood the concerns communicated by the Board up to this point, relative to traffic.

Lori Clark acknowledged several comments from members, who reiterated concerns already shared. She summarized next steps for the Applicant to provide a traffic forecast and related numbers as discussed, a confirmation of site cleanup, and finally, a reporting back of a more formal inquiry regarding the shared use of a private driveway.

John Colonna-Romano motioned to continue the Public Hearing for Modification of a Contractor's Yard Special Permit, Erosion Control Special Permit, and Earth Removal Special Permit and Site Plan Approval, 63-65 White Pond Road to March 12, 2024, at 7:45PM.

Margaret Costello seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Deb Woods— **Yea**, Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**, Margaret Costello – **Yea**

Planning Director's Report

Zoning Bylaw -a new addition of the zoning bylaw is already available online and can be printed by Staff and distributed to Members upon request. Four members expressed interest in obtaining a hard copy of the bylaw.

Planning Board Member Updates

John Colonna-Romano reported that the CPC has two applications. The first is the restoration of a portrait for the Randall Library, and the second is for additional funding requested from SMAHT for the Bird Meadow Lane development on Red Acre Road. He also stated that Green Advisory will be releasing a draft of a Climate Action Plan by the end of this month. He encouraged all members to read the draft when it is available and to provide comments.

Deb Woods asked about a leasing sign at 108-118 Great Road and at the gas station. It was noted that the signs usually remain until permits get finalized.

Adjournment

John Colonna-Romano motioned to adjourn.

Margaret Costello seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**, Karen Kelleher
Margaret Costello -**Yea**.

Respectfully Submitted,
Julie Windzio