

Minutes
Town of Waldoboro
Planning Board Meeting
September 11, 2019

Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by chairman Scott Simpson at 6:01 p.m. in the meeting room at the Municipal Building. Other members present were Barbara Boardman, Sara Hotchkiss, John Kosnow and Jim Russo. A quorum was present throughout. Planning and Development Director Max Johnstone was present. The audience included Bob Butler, Bruce Metrick, Jann Minzy, Ronald Phillips, Surran Pyne and Freeman Zausner. Reporter Alexander Violo from the Lincoln County News was present.

1. Minutes of July 10 and August 14, 2019

On motion of Boardman/Hotchkiss, Planning Board members voted 5 - 0 to approve the minutes of the July 10 Planning Board meeting as distributed. On motion of Boardman/Hotchkiss, they voted 4 - 0, Russo abstaining, to approve the minutes of the August 14 meeting as distributed.

2. Preapplication Review of Proposed Mixed-Use Development at Former A.D. Gray School, 56 School St. (Tax Map U4 Lots 63, 62 and Map U5 Lot 30)

Tim Wells of Portland presented plans for development of the former A.D. Gray school property (Lot 63) and two adjacent lots to the north into a multi-use residential condominium/hotel/office complex called Waldoboro Heights. Part of the A.D. Gray lot 63 west of Philbrook Lane might be developed into an outdoor amphitheatre and housing for Waldo Theatre actors and staff, to be called Meetinghouse Hill. The existing A.D. Gray building would be renovated and enlarged with an additional floor or floors, to provide 21 to 27 highly energy-efficient condominium units, with main entrances on the east side facing a courtyard. On-site parking for residents would be in a separate parking garage, perhaps with solar panels on the roof. To the east, in the area of the present tennis courts, would be two buildings including residential units, offices, and a boutique hotel, to be built as Phase 3. North of the buildings would be landscaped gardens. Wells would also hold development rights for 15 years to the four-acre Philbrook ball field (Tax Map U5 Lot 30) north of A.D. Gray, where future development might include a new ball field. All three lots are currently owned by the Town of Waldoboro.

The developer has been meeting with a small ad hoc group including Town Manager Julie Keizer, Select Board members Bob Butler and Jann Minzy, and local residents Bruce Metrick and Freeman Zausner.

Wells listed a number of potential benefits of the multi-use complex to Waldoboro. These include bringing more people of all ages to town, making the town more attractive to new businesses, rebranding and revitalizing downtown Waldoboro, providing affordable housing for employees of new and existing businesses, and improving housing stability for retirees and people on fixed incomes. There is a shortage of housing in midcoast Maine, with few rental options. People often have to travel 50 miles to get to work. Wells estimates that his development will increase Waldoboro's annual tax revenue by \$95,000 to \$300,000.

In order to be approved, Wells's project will need variances for building height, setbacks, and density. If he increases the height of the A.D. Gray building by two floors, this is a 23' height

increase. He will want to decrease the minimum 25' setback from the road to 10', and the side yard setback to 5'. He said that he will not build any closer to the road than the existing building, which predates local zoning standards and is non-conforming. He will request a decrease in the minimum square footage per dwelling unit from 5,000 s.f., to 500 s.f. Not all the dwelling units will be this small, but some of them will be. The former school building will be managed by a condominium association.

Wells plans to construct a sidewalk along Philbrook Lane. He will build a walking trail to connect to the existing trail, and a trail to the Waldoboro Library.

Planning Board members had questions.

*Where will the residents of the A.D. Gray building park, until the parking garage is built?

They might park on Philbrook Lane, which perhaps could be signposted as permit parking only, restricted to residents of the property, for the part of the street frontage owned by the development.

*What will you do with the existing tennis courts? The Town got a Federal grant to build them. Ted Wooster wants to see the tennis courts preserved. A sewer line now crosses the courts. (No answer is recorded.)

*What is the current height of the A.D. Gray building?

34' plus parapets. Phase 1 of construction calls for 21 units if three-story, or 27 units if four-story. A 2½-story house across the street is 32' - 34' high. The planned height addition to A.D. Gray will not cast a shadow on nearby buildings. The gym at A.D. Gray is 9' below grade. Waldoboro has other four-story buildings.

*What increase in local traffic is anticipated?

That will depend on the age mix of residents, and their employment. Wells lives next to an 88-unit apartment building, and the street is not busy. He has not noticed any increase in traffic. If there are 21 - 27 units in the school building in Phase 1, that might mean 20 - 50 cars. Simpson suggested discussing traffic further after discussing Phase 2 and Phase 3 of development.

*Simpson asked for clarity on the limits of estimated traffic. Are there numbers for the past use of A.D. Gray as a school: numbers of buses per day, number of private cars? What impact can we expect for the local neighborhood? Minzy said she lives in the neighborhood. When A.D. Gray was open as a school, there was a lot of traffic at certain times of day: at the start of classes, and again when school let out.

*Krasnow asked when neighbors will know the scope of the project, if it is planned in three phases. Some neighbors know now. Ted Wooster knows. The theatre/staff housing on the west side of Philbrook Lane will be used mainly in summer, although Wells hopes to get foundations to sponsor artists to live in the theatre/staff housing year-round. He is not trying to make money off the theatre/staff housing.

*What if you find asbestos or mold in the A.D. Gray building? Krasnow is a respiratory therapist. He knows that some people are very sensitive to mold.

The Town paid to have asbestos removed from the building. Most of the mold is in the basement. It can be eradicated or encapsulated. The roof used to leak, and insulation got moldy. All existing insulation will be removed.

*How will the remodeled school fit into the neighborhood, if the main entrances face east onto the courtyard?

The apartments will have big windows facing west onto Philbrook Lane. The building will not turn its back on the street.

*Simpson asked for an artist's rendering of what the buildings and site will look like. Wells said this might cost \$50,000, a big investment financially, that he is reluctant to undertake if he can avoid it.

*Hotchkiss asked about the “glass house” shown on the north side of the building area labeled “Phase 2” (p. 3 of the proposed subdivision plan given out at tonight’s meeting). Wells said that is a solarium where people can sit and look out at the landscaped gardens, especially in winter.

Johnstone said that the Land Use Ordinance requires two parking spaces per unit. Wells said that for offices, one parking space may be used by a number of different vehicles in a day. Simpson suggested requiring one parking space per unit, with the occupants responsible for finding a second parking space if they have a second vehicle. Butler said the developer would have to meet the Planning Board’s standards. Krasnow said that the development will be more attractive to investors if Wells can get the desired variances. Johnstone said parking requirements for a subdivision are more strict than for a business or a public facility like a library, per State regulations.

Boardman asked if the proposed Waldoboro Heights development will be the most dense area in town. How does its proposed density compare with that of the Sproul Block? Simpson agreed that it would be helpful for Wells to provide a figure for density of the Sproul Block. [The Sproul Block apartment building sits on a 0.5 acre parcel at the corner of Main St. and Rt. 220 in the Downtown Business District.]

Simpson said the Planning Board will need a better visualization of what the development will look like when complete, in order to figure out what variances will need to be requested and approved. Boardman asked Wells about his time frame. He said the design work needs to be done. He plans one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units in the school building. Legal work must be done first. Banks require pre-sales before they will lend money, and he cannot do pre-sales until he has the required permits. The state of the economy will affect timing. He guesses at a time frame of 24 months from now. His initial application will be for Phase 1, conversion of the A.D. Gray building to apartments, and perhaps increasing the building height to four stories.

Discussion of the proposed project ended at 7:10 p.m. Members of the audience left the meeting.

3. Next Meetings: Wednesday, October 9, 6:00 p.m., regular Planning Board meeting, if held (no agenda items known at this time); Wednesday, October 16, 6:00 p.m., Subdivision Workshop.

Johnstone will notify Planning Board members in advance, if the October 9 meeting is cancelled.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan S. R. Alexander

Action Items

Simpson: If you don’t have time to review the minutes, please forward them to another PB member for review before you leave. Have a great trip!

Johnstone: Notify Planning Board members if Oct. 9 Planning Board meeting is cancelled.

Wells: Provide density figure for Sproul Block apartment building (total square footage/total occupancy, or square feet per occupant)