

Walpole Planning Board Minutes
Tuesday, June 8, 2021
Town Hall
7 pm

Roll Call: Present: Board members Chair Jeff Miller, Vice-Chair Dennis Marcom, Clerk Jason Perron, Jeff Harrington, Joanna Andros, Bill Carmody, Select Board Representative Steve Dalessio and Alternate Trevor MacLachlan. A full board was present so an alternate was not needed to fill in.

Recording: Secretary Marilou Blaine. **This meeting is being recorded. These minutes are unapproved and will be reviewed at the July 2021 meeting for corrections, additions and/or omissions.**

Meeting coming to order: Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Minutes: Mr. Marcom made two corrections. He questioned the square footage numbers for the Dunkin' phase one project. The numbers are 2280 square feet for the Dunkin' property and 3,800 square feet of retail space and 4,729 square feet as a future option. On the bottom of page 2, the number of new trip numbers should be 100 trips in the peak am hours, 200 in the peak pm hours and 177 trips in the peak Saturday hours. Mr. Perron made a motion to accept the amended minutes, Mr. Harrison seconded the motion and he motion carried.

Old Business: Public Hearing for a site plan for property at Map 24, Lot 13, 308 Main Street, Commercial District.

Laura and Doug Palmer are purchasing the former RN Johnson building at the corner of Maplewood Circle and Main Street, now owned by Wellstone Associates LLC, and across from CPA Robert Kimball's office. If the proposal is approved, the Palmers plan to use the southern portion of the building for storage, the middle of the building would be a warehouse for products sold for their Power Sports business. The northern section would be for retail space for the business with two small offices. Power Sports is currently located on the corner of Upper Walpole Road and Ames Plaza Road. Power Sports is a 90 percent mail-order business with 10 percent retail. It sells motorcycle and ATV parts, clothing and equipment. Mrs. Palmer showed a picture of the property and surrounding areas on the large screen in the Town Hall. She said the couple has also already purchased the double wide mobile home on the adjoining property on Maplewood Circle.

Mrs. Palmer explained that at the south end is the driveway and there would be parking behind the building on the east side for employees and customers. That driveway would be widened and paved. There is a right of way now to the house that's in the meadow to the east. That will remain as is. On the north end, the anticipated entrance to the retail section, there will be a walkway/step up to an entrance that will come from parking on the east of the building. The entrance is anticipated to be a stone wall created from Allan blocks or other comparable product.. All three overhead doors will be replaced and siding is to be repaired. The goal is, Mrs. Palmer said, to have the north entrance look like an old barn.

On the west end the roof is to be replaced with new metal. On the east end, the main roof is also to be repaired with new metal. All sliding doors will be framed out and closed with the exception that one will be converted to an overhead loading dock door. Grass will be added along the east side of the driveway. There will be 8 to 10 parking spaces. Traffic will be pretty negligible, Mr Palmer said, and lighting will all be dark-sky lights and be minimal. A butter Robert Kimball asked about changes to the west side. Mr. Palmer said that there may be one or two windows. There being no further questions

from the audience, Mr. Miller closed the public hearing.

Mr. Perron made a motion to accept the site plan as presented contingent on dark-sky lighting. Mr. Harrington seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

New Business: Stormalong Cider/Alyson's Orchard, owner Shannon Edgar, architect Randall Walter.

Mr. Edgar said he is considering buying the Alyson Orchard property on Wentworth Road and Route 12. He has been making hard cider commercially since 2014 and now the product is available in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. He's looking for a place to call home. His plan is to keep Alyson's as it already is. There will still be pick-you-own apples at the orchard and all the wedding and event functions they are currently doing there. He just wants to add his hard cider into the mix and have a place where people can enjoy what he's doing, he said. At some point, maybe in 2022 or 2023, he'd like to have a production building on site. It would probably be a 15,000 to 20,000 square-foot facility. Alyson's grows several heirloom variety apples that he already uses in the hard cider now and would plan to plant more different heirloom variety apples that are hard to find and costly. Alyson's would continue to operate as it's been running, but transition to adding cider in 2022. They would need time and need to do studies on architectural plans etc. and want to adhere to guidelines here in town. They already use apples from several growers in Lebanon and have one production facility in Shelburne, VT and a bigger one in Leominster.

Mr. Walter said there are three parcels for sale. The main one is the orchard with an entrance off of the north-south corridor on Route 12 and a secondary entrance on Wentworth Road, a country road. There's a wooded northern section and southern section on South Wentworth, which is pastoral. Each section has a different character and there are no plans to change the area.

The first question from the audience was would Alyson's still be open to the public. Mr. Edgar said definitely, that's the case. We going to have retail, but would also like to educate people about cider and apples. He'd like people to come and enjoy the apples and the orchard.

Mr. Walter said that right now the people at Alyson's don't get a chance to talk to their customers now but with a business such as Stormalong there would be plenty of conversations with the customers. There is no intention of giving up weddings and events. Mr. Edgar says he has a 12-year-old boy and 9-year-old girl and wants to keep the place family-friendly.

An audience member asked about the business structure. Mr. Edgar said its' a single entity LLC. Then someone added that he was super delighted "to have you guys here." There was applause and the audience seemed receptive to Mr. Edgar proposal for a hard cider facility.

Someone else asked how he was going to move his product in and out. He assumed he would use Route 12 as opposed to Wentworth Road, as it's a country road. If he was using Route 12, what kind of changes would you make? He asked. Mr. Edgar said he would pave the road and that there would be one or maybe two deliveries a day. A woman in the audience said that tractor trailers are already going up to that property. Another questions from a gentleman in the audience was what are you going to do with the other two parcels. Mr. Edgar said he can't see pulling it out current use. He also said that the two houses that are already on the property are being used for lodging for the weddings and that won't change. He doesn't foresee any changes.

Who is Shannon Edgar. Mr. Edgar said he was in music for 20 years, went to college in Boston, moved to the West Coast and moved back 2012 and started Stormalong in 2014. He and his wife bought a 120-acre farm with an apple orchard in Nadick. MA. He began making small batches of hard

cider and the batches kept getting bigger and bigger. Originally he thought maybe they would have a small farm-type business, but sales started to improve, people liked our product and one minute we're making cider for us and our friend's consumption and then we ended up using a building in Leominster, MA that was perfect for our business. So he said the company is on a pretty good footing right now and Stormalong is a very stable business.

Mr. Miller thanked Mr. Edgar and Mr. Walter for their introduction to the business and hoped to see them back in the future for a site plan review.

New Business: Site Plan. Installation of solar array. Tax Map 12, Lot 56, Route 12, Commercial District. Request for a public hearing. Short presentation, Ned Reynolds and Steve Dzubak of Revision Energy.

Mr. Steve Dzubak said Revision Energy has been in business 17 years and has five offices, one of which is in New Hampshire. Revision was the contractor for the Chamberlain Machine array behind its building on Huntington Lane in Walpole. The company installs both commercial and residential solar energy and partners with Bensonwood on some residential plans. The plans for this solar array are for a 1 mega watt installation on five acres at the above site. There will be 400 panels and it will be feeding power into the proposed Dunkin' site and retail stores on the rest of the property. The proposed development will have no access from either Route 12 or Upper Walpole, but will be from the other part of the NGP Management property. So there will no traffic and no noise as solar panels are silent, Mr. Dzubak said. The property will be fully screened with a 7-foot high black chain-link fencing on the perimeter of the fencing and with two types of plantings – forsythia and a green shrub. Those are the basics, Mr. Dzubak said and then asked for questions.

The first question for an audience member was "what's the benefit for Walpole for this solar array?" Answer from Mr. Dzubak, "It's a new power source and clean energy is one benefit."

Mr. Eric Merklein suggested that another plant replace the forsythia since during the winter when the plant has no foliage, the panels would be seen through the fencing. And, he said, it should be a security fence, so somebody can't get in there. Mr. Dzubak said the fence is 7 feet high, gated and locked. He'll also look into replacing the forsythia.

Talk about what does the town of Walpole get from the solar array came up again? Mr. Dalessio asked why can't you set up a net metering system and give the credits to the Town of Walpole.

Mr. Clifford said this solar project really started because of the Dunkin' project and the original thought was that we would do a much bigger commercial development here. But the initial feedback from the town was that they didn't want to see that. It was in keeping with the character of Walpole. That's why the company decided on the solar array. Defining a green use doesn't create any traffic. The landscaping will make it look nice and it is a clean way of power generation. This is very expensive for NGP Management and New Hampshire is one of the worst states for developing solar power. But to give power away, it would be just like if we opened Dunkin' Donuts doors and gave everybody free food.

Mr. Dalessio said the power would go to the Dunkin' site and whatever businesses are there and whatever is left could come back to the town of Walpole to offset the enormous tax loss. Just about 10 to 12 percent of the power is being used on the site and the rest is going back to the grid. Mr. Clifford said the company can't invest a million dollars to pay your electric bill. I wish we could.

Mr. Perron said he hadn't heard anyone saying they didn't want development on that land. Mr. Clifford said that before he presented his plan to the Board he had initial conversations from people in the town and that's what he was told.

Mr. Kimball said there is an ordinance in town that limits development to a 40,000 square-foot commercial building. This is more than 40,000 square feet. Mr. Miller said that refers to an actual building.

Bob Anderson said he understood that 10 to 15 percent of the power created will be used on site. In the original warrant article on solar energy, it was written to allow tax property relief with solar, both residential and commercial, when consumed on site. In order to be eligible for tax relief all the power generated on site is intended to be used on the site. So he said to Mr. Clifford, you do not qualify for tax relief.

Mr. Dalessio asked about the required 30 percent green space on the site. Mr. Hill said there are two things that make this an approved site. The angle of the design of the panels and the fact that it is going directly into the ground. No gravel is being used. These do not qualify as impervious, Mr. Hill said. The NH Department of Environmental Services rates the impervious quality of solar installations. The installation NGP Management is proposing has a rating of 20 to 40. DES rates an impervious surface to be 98 to 100 percent. Mr. Dalessio added that there needs to be a stormwater plan to go along with the plan. Mr. Hill said he was aware of the need for a stormwater plan.

Ned Reynolds asked Mr. Hill to put another picture of another solar array, the former Brunswick air station, on the screen. It showed a solar installation and snow. It was a photo of a former airplane runway. This way that panel is installed is with a single pile into the ground. No excavation, no concrete, the entire surface is soil. Also, Mr. Reynolds continued, in order to get a permit, the company is required by NH DES to plant a pollinator grass seed mix after the installation is done. Everything becomes green and it's up to the owner on how often the area should be mowed. Mr. Reynolds said he has seen installations with grass three or four feet high. One site had a traveling goat to do the "mowing." Revision Energy has an environmental mission, Reynolds said. At this point someone suggested that a farmer could use the grass. That person said he had seen it done in Rhode Island. Mr. Clifford said he wasn't sure he wanted farm animals on the property.

At this juncture in the meeting, Mr. Miller reminded everyone that this meeting was just a preliminary meeting. Mr. Perron made a motion to hold a public hearing for the solar array next month. Mr. Marcom seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Mr. Reynolds addressed exporting the energy. He said you get more energy during the day than at night and more energy in summer than winter. The array will produce nine times more energy (kilowatts) all year long than needed. That is just if there were a Dunkin'. It will be more if additional retail space is utilized. The energy goes to a local grid and whenever there is demand, that is how the energy will be used right away. Whatever extra energy is left it is exported and the owner of the property gets credits. You in town will be buying that extra energy from Liberty Utilities. The electricity is going to go immediately on the grid and be used and the fact is that it is going to be used here. The benefit to you is that the energy is coming to you from nearby, which means that Liberty Utilities doesn't have to enlarge the size of its transformers and distribution system and it won't need to pass that cost onto your bill. The energy will be immediate and doesn't have to come from a distance. The town will have a clean, quiet power plant in the middle of town and reduce the demand on the power grid.

Dunkin' Site Plan: Tax Map 12, Lot 56, Commercial District. Public Hearing continued from last month. Phase 1 proposal includes building a 2,280 square-foot Dunkin' drive-thru and an attached

3,800 square-foot retail space and future expansion of a 4,729 square-foot retail space with associated parking and drive-thru lanes. At the meeting were Jim Clifford representing the applicant, NGP Management LLC of Reading, MA and agents Jason Hill and architect Seven Born of TFMoran Inc. of Bedford, NH.

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Recently, the Board has received a letter from someone living across from the Dunkin' project concerning accidents at the corner of Route 12 and Upper Walpole. The writer was from Catherine Davignon who lives on Huntington Lane. The Board sent a copy of the letter to NH Department of Transportation and asked them to comment on the letter. See attached letter and comment from NH DOT. Mr. Dalessio asked Mr. Clifford about the letter.

Mr. Clifford said the NHDOT requested some additional information from Dunkin', which Dunkin' gave them, but when we asked for accident data from DOT they said they couldn't provide it because of privacy concerns. He said the company has spent two or three weeks trying to get that data but because of that attitude from NHDOT we haven't been able to get information yet.

Mr. Perron wanted to see the Dunkin' phase, both parts. Mr. Clifford said that they may want to simplify everything and it may be easier to build the whole thing at once.

Mr. Hill said that the goal tonight was to finish up on addressing any concerns expressed before with exception of the DOT question, to which they will get an answer. The site is currently served by public sewer and water systems. He and the town's consultant, Mark Houghton of the Department of Water and Sewer and also with the same person who is fire chief. They reviewed both water and sewer. A letter is being issued today on Mr. Houghton's conclusion, he said.

There are changes to sewer line along the highway and a portion will be that will be a public service so people across the street can tie into that. We own the water line around the property and asked for an easement so it can be protected. So we're agreeable for a 20-foot easement around the relocated Hubbard Brook water main. There's a manhole at the Saving Bank of Walpole and Dunkin' is proposing a new line in the right of way a gravity line that will be extended south across the driveway and tie into a manhole above that point. That will benefit the public because they'll have future tie-in points.

A small portion of the water line cutting across the property is being relocated. Dunkin' will convey an easement to the water department so they can actually tie in if needed. They are adding a couple of hydrants providing fire service. There will be a sprinkler system in the buildings and that allows the fire department to tie into it with hoses and manually pump water into the buildings. There will also be a Knox box to be coordinated with a fire department connection. Finished concrete around the perimeter of the building and curbing are planned. Landscaping was modified so tree planting will be revised from maple and oaks to Bradford pear trees. We're seeking have a waiver to relocate a tree to the parking area because the tree will obscure signage on the building.

Architect Steven Born address the updated architectural drawings responding to comments about wanting a more colonial style. He said a more interesting roof line, siding, trim and aluminum doors framing were added. There is an asphalt shingle roof. Dunkin' is going to a standard color with the rest of it a complementary color. It was mentioned that the town didn't want to see the roof equipment, so a parapet roof was added and it drops into a type of well in the center of the roof where the equipment will be. The 6-foot gable is both in the back and front.

Ms. Andros asked about the white and green spaces on the landscaped portion of the property. Mr. Hill said the green space are seeded grass areas. There is a section at the Upper Walpole Road area that

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is owned by DOT and that will be field condition. The dark green is the stormwater rainwater basin that will have vegetation. There is ditch between the highway and the site.

Mr. Eric Merklein said he spoke about month or so ago with Mr. Clifford and was assured that the architectural proposal would be tasteful. Instead Mr. Merklein said it has a typical strip mall look and is rather cookie cutter. He did not see it as tasteful.

Mr. Clifford said he was surprised and would like to see specifically what people want. Commercially one can only do so much but in my mind it has a definite colonial look.

Catherine Davignon lives near the intersection of Route 12 and Route 123. She asked the audience to picture Route 12 in 1973. There was nothing there but fields and chicken houses. She has lived there 43 years. Ms. Davignon recreated a series of accidents that occurred at that corner and she asked the audience to imagine her life there and the sight of the faces in those accidents. She has a number of scenarios that began with "Have you ever:"

been a high school student 50 years ago, who had almost "been taken out by a car waiting for the bus."

seen that same student watching a series of accident and choosing to make eagle scout project a desire to get a traffic light at that intersection and being refused because of signage and a light would actually make things worse.

been sitting in your chair and heard a loud crash and gone outside to see people looking frightened, confused and injured.

been awakened and learned that one of the cars belonged to your neighbor who was horrified after discovering it was her son.

heard that bump and thinking please dear God, don't let it be one from mine.

Ms. Davignon is worried about an increase in traffic and an increase in accidents.

She told about crossing the road from the Shaw 's exit. First you look south, then you look north, and across the street to the Rite Aide. By the time you're finished looking there's a car coming. The audience applauded her presentation.

Mr. Miller said the Board still has the an issue with DOT and the Board really thinks that safety is paramount. There is no reason, he said, that you can't connect to Shaw's without going on a public road. The Board has more time. The time line is 90 days. "We're not ready here. We'd like more info from DOT. Safety is a concern." Mr. Perron said he would also like to hear more from DOT.

He asked the secretary to put this on the agenda for next month. And he said he needed more feedback on the architectural elevations. The Board isn't ready to make a decision.

Mr. Perron made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Marcom seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilou Blaine
WPB Secretary

Posted: Inside the Town Hall, on the bulletin board out post office, on The Walpolean.
cc: WPB, ZBA, SB, Town Offices, www.walpolenh.us