

**TOWN OF BELMONT
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
MEETING MINUTES
April 5, 2021**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: October 7, 2021
TIME: 3:04 PM

Present: Nick Iannuzzi, Chair; James Zarkadas, Vice Chair; Andrew Kelley; Teresa MacNutt; Casey Williams; William Fick; Elliot Daniels

Staff: Ara Yogurtian, Assistant Director, Community Development

1. CALL TO ORDER AT 7:00 PM

Mr. Iannuzzi called the meeting to order and introduced the Zoning Board of Appeals members. He noted that every meeting that is the first meeting of the month will be devoted to the Chapter 40B topic. This meeting would be devoted to parking, traffic, and stormwater if there was enough time. He noted the order of the meeting and explained the video conference process.

2. CONTINUED CASES:

- a. CASE NO. 20-26 – ONE SPECIAL PERMIT
55 Trapelo Road (SRC) – Alexander Athanasiou

MOTION to continue until further notice was made by Mr. Iannuzzi and seconded by Ms. Williams. Motion passed.

Roll call: unanimous

[The Board discussed and agreed to hold the next Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting to be held on April 19, 2021. Cases 21-08, 21-09, 21-10, 20-37, 21-02, 21-05 to be continued at the April 19, 2021 meeting. The next ZBA meetings were agreed to be held on May 6, May 17, June 7 and June 21.]

- b. CASE NO. 21-01 – COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT
91 Beatrice Circle (SRA) – 91 Beatrice Circle, LLC, Stephen A. Tamposi, Manager

Mr. Iannuzzi noted that he cancelled the site visit because there was not enough parking for everyone to go all at the same time safely. Mr. Lyons and Mr. Yogurtian agreed that it would not work as there were safety and health issues. It could not be

done as a group, but it could be done on an individual basis before May 15, 2021. Mr. Nelson asked the abutters to send their concerns in writing if there was anything that they would like to Board to see on the site.

Mr. Yogurtian noted that the building corners were staked on the property.

Michael Santos, Traffic Engineer, BSC Group, peer reviewer for the Town of Belmont, noted that the plan review included parking, traffic circulation, design of the driveway and any mitigation that was proposed. The review was to confirm that the study conforms to industry standards and typical traffic engineer practices as well as state and town standards. They reviewed the site plan to ensure that appropriate vehicle access, site circulation and site distances were provided. They looked at the study's methodology, data collection efforts, safety evaluation (crash history), trip generation calculations (number of vehicles travelling to and from the site daily and during peak hours), site distance at the driveway, traffic operations at the site driveway, site access, parking and circulation. He reviewed each of the components and the peer review comments.

He noted that the data collection was fine. He felt that the adjustment factors were a little bit low and this was included in the letter.

Crash evaluation over past three years was standard and there were no issues. He recommended that they look over a five-year period rather than just three years.

Nest he reviewed the site distance evaluation, they felt that the speeds were higher than 38 MPH. They noticed 40-50 miles per hours when they checked a handful of cars. This forms the basis of the necessary site distance that was needed for the driveway. He noted that the site distance that they measured was approximately 435 feet.. Based on the 38 miles per hour their calculations were 320 feet for site distance. BSC Group asked the Applicant to calculate the necessary site distance based on a 45 mile and hour speed.

They looked at site driveway operation at its intersection with frontage road, there were no issues.

They looked at site access and circulation and site distance were an issue for access to the site. Vehicle turning movements going into, exiting and maneuvering around the site was a tight fit but it worked based on the diagrams. Mr. Santos noted that the Fire Dept. should sign off on this.

He noted that the cross walk to connection to pedestrian bridge needed to be upgraded. They were proposing to move it ten feet to the west of the driveway could fit where it was located now on the plans. BSC Group had an issue of the relocation of the crosswalk. A wheelchair ramp must fit in and adjustments should be made to make this work.

BCS Group agreed with the rapid flashing beacon in advance of the crosswalk to give drivers more notice of the crosswalk. BSC Group also recommended shifting the driveway in order to keep the crosswalk in its current location.

BSC Group recommended that vegetation at the driveway must be low-lying within the site distance triangle and in accordance with Town's maximum height requirements.

Mr. Santos noted that typically they project out to 5 – 7 years and what is missing in this research was project traffic growth. They asked the applicant to verify that there were no other projects in the area that would have any impact in the future in the next 5-7 years.

Mr. Santos summarized the main issues as the speed that was measured was low, concerns about location at the crosswalk and the site distance at the site driveway. They had not heard anything back from the applicant and they are still in the review process.

Mr. Santos noted that 12 additional units in this neighborhood would not create the need for any major changes or improvements to the surrounding transportation network. He noted that the proposed number of parking spaces was probably low.

Mr. Santos' main points were the speeds that were measured, they are probably higher than that. The concern about the location of the crosswalk and the site distance at the driveway.

Mr. DeStefano, Belmont Fire Chief, noted that he had met with the neighbors. He was in the process of drafting a position letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals. He noted the issues that will be included in the letter were: accessibility, vertical clearance, suppression systems, construction, and landscaping as well as recommendations for water supply and hazardous storage.

Bob Michaud, MDM Transportation Consultants, Profession Licensed Engineer, applicant's transportation peer reviewer, reviewed the highlights of the responses that they intend to respond to. Mr. Michaud presented a PowerPoint slide and reviewed the pandemic adjustment and seven-year projected traffic volumes. He reviewed sight line profiles and traffic speed information as well as parking and the pedestrian crossing.

He noted that the baseline traffic volumes were subject to pandemic adjustment and the volumes were adjusted up by 61 percent based on MASSDOT count date before and during the pandemic so that they had a reliable basis to make that adjustment. He reviewed weekday morning and evening peak hour conditions and the seven-year projections of growth. He noted that there was a letter grade rating system and this was a level service A.

The site distance determination (based on 85th percentile travel speed) was 390 feet in the near lane and 435 feet on the outer lane. The available stopping distance exceeds these values. The intersection site distance (ISD) was measured at 415 feet for the near lane and 440 feet for the far lane and met or exceeded the ideal standard.

He noted that they were aware of the By-law requirement to provide an appropriate clearing from ten feet behind the sidewalk from a parked position looking left up the hill. The requirement would be maintained in accordance with the By-Law requirement.

Next, he reviewed parking, this site will provide 20 parking spaces at 1.66 parking space per unit. This was consistent with ITE recommendations for peak parking demand rates on a per unit basis. Tenant would be guaranteed only one parking space per unit including eight spots to use for reservation or first come first serve basis.

The pedestrian crosswalk alignment must be elevated and enhanced and made ADA compliant for ramp sloping rate. They recommend shifting the crosswalk ten feet to the west and including signs and flashing beacons. The MBTA bus stop could be relocated. The narrowing of the frontage road would be only a couple of feet from each side and would allow for thirteen-foot travel lanes and curb bump outs could reduce the length of pedestrian travel way.

Mr. Iannuzzi asked if an ADA compliant elevator could be considered.

Mr. Michaud presented a google map of the pedestrian crossing and described the current conditions. He noted the challenge to make it ADA compliant was that they needed a sloped ramp and it was probably not feasible without changing the location of the crosswalk. He walked the Board through the design proposal for the crosswalk and how they could achieve a slope ramp.

Mr. Yogurtian suggested a raised table as an option. Mr. Michaud noted that this was considered but the raised table worked better for a lower speed and lower volume. This design would not be feasible in this context.

Mr. Michaud reviewed all the design options as they were considered for the crosswalk. He discussed the different possible solutions and explained why these other options were not feasible. He reviewed the process for the determination of number of trips. He also reviewed the speed data and the process for having the speed limits changed.

Mr. Iannuzzi noted that the big problem was the crosswalk and the ADA compliance. He asked for comments from the Board members. Many of the Board members made

similar comments regarding the safety of the crossing. Other Board member concerns were as follows:

- The fence that was recommended to direct and funnel people would not work if there were people with strollers and people in wheelchairs.
- As far as fencing on the side of the residents, there should be a fence or barrier on that end.
- There was not enough parking if there were parties or events. Visitors were going to look for parking on Arlmont Street (or one of the side streets) as that was the most direct route. There will be an increase in foot traffic across the bridge from Arlington for guests who park in that area.
- These units will attract families because of the 4 bedroom per unit and there will not be enough parking.

Mr. Michaud noted that his research demonstrated that this conceptual design vastly improved the crossing, it made it more visible, it met all of the safety base criteria and it was ADA accessible. He further reviewed many of the details of the proposed crossing to attempt to address the safety concerns of the Board members.

David Black, Traffic Engineer for Mr. Hill, noted that he wanted to talk about the crosswalk and the parking ratio. He noted that the speeds in the previous presentations seemed low. Mr. Hill's speed survey from January 2021 shows 47 MPH on the near lane and 52 MPH on the far lane. There are significant speeds on this stretch of roadway. The site distance needed to satisfy for the highest speeds and both lanes needed to be looked at individually. The site distances go up to 550 feet and 600 feet from the intersection site distance. Mr. Black would like to see the raw data for Mr. Michaud's speed study to figure out why they are getting different results.

Next, he covered the parking issues. He thinks that this type of parking would work fine if there were alternative parking areas where you could park on the street, but that was not the case in this neighborhood. He felt that the parking ratio was on the low side. Parking ratio guidelines are usually based on number of residential units but not number of bedrooms per units.

Next, he discussed his opinion on the proposed crosswalk and noted that it absolutely needs to stay directly connected and in alignment to the bridge. He added that must be convenient to be safe. The crosswalk should be anchored by the bridge.

Nest, Attorney Schomer reviewed the auto turn analysis for the Belmont Fire Departments larger turning apparatus and Mr. Michaud will send the plans to the Fire Chief.

Mr. Nelson noted that the Board members could give the Applicant more direction as to what they are looking for.

Attorney Schomer, representing the applicant, noted that he could work through many of these issues with the peer reviewers.

Attorney Hill, representing the abutters, pointed out the January 2021 speed study was done over a 48-hour period and done using speed tubes that automatically collect speed data. He noted that he felt that the speed studies done by MDM were not accurate. The site distance needed to satisfy for the highest speeds. He questioned where the handicap ramp was going to go. He noted that many of these changes would need to be worked out with MBTA.

Mr. Iannuzzi opened the meeting up for public comment:

Frank Heller, noted that the ADA compliant on one side of the bridge has not meaning if it is not also on the other side of the bridge. He noted that there were many concerns about truck access and there has not been anything heard by peer review.

Mr. Craig, lived on 43 Beatrice Circle, he noted that the higher speed level speed studies were accurate, it is dangerous. Next, most families have two cars and this would be too many people on too small of a space of road.

Chris Alexander, Beatrice Circle, noted that she was concerned about the safety of the school bus, lack of sidewalks and ice on the sidewalks. Where would the bus stop be located. Two cars per family would be necessary for families to get the kids to activities.

Don Hafner, Rutledge Road, suggested that the Board and Mr. Santos could take a look at the BSC town wide traffic survey from April 2019 as it included data on the number of trips and speed on the frontage road.

Mr. Santos noted that he did look at this data and it did not really apply to this segment of the frontage road. He said he would go back and take another look at the speed data, but that it combines the frontage road and Route 2.

Camile Sayegh, 26 Beatrice Circle, mentioned that he uses the bus and the chokepoint of the barrier was likely correct. He also pointed out that he must walk on the street in the winter and he was concerned about how to access the pedestrian crossway without access to the sidewalk. He is concerned with the increased traffic and it could be dangerous for his children.

Darlene Chisolm, noted that she was concerned about the discrepancy in the speed numbers in the two studies and the BSC should conduct an independent assessment on the numbers.

Kathy Cohane, Town Meeting Member, Precinct 2, Rutledge Road, noted that this area has been one of the areas of concern in terms of traffic for the town. The TAC conducted studies in this area because this area is a cut through and it has increased the volume considerably. She asked the Board to review the two MassWorks proposals submitted by the Town and the traffic assessment that was referred to by Mr. Hafner.

Mr. Iannuzzi asked to have all the speed data shared amongst the reviewers.

Mr. Iannuzzi asked Attorney Schomer to look at the parking issues, crosswalk issues and to follow up with the Belmont fire chief. He noted that all the peer reviewers need to get together and work through all these issues.

The next Chapter 40B meeting will be on May 6, 2021 and stormwater management would be discussed at that time.

Attorney Schomer noted that building corners would be flagged and the layout of the access driveway as well. He asked to be informed ahead of time if a Board member decides to visit the site.

3. Adjourn 9:45 PM