

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Minutes, May 28, 2003

Members present: Joseph Barrell, Deborah Emello, Karl Haglund, and James Heigham. Andrew McClurg was absent.

Also present: Tim Higgins, Senior Planner, Jeffrey Wheeler, Planner Coordinator

7:00 p.m.: There being a quorum, Chairman Joe Barrell called the meeting to order.

7:05 p.m.: Informal Discussion on 58-70 Concord Avenue

Elie Jammal, applicant, gave a status update on this project. He stated that the site plan and building and parking layouts are the same as previously shown to the Planning Board. He mentioned that he has met with neighbors and made them aware that the proposed use is a Walgreens. While Walgreens typically wants a building of 13,000 to 16,000 square feet, this building will be 9,800 square feet +/- . He has received a denial letter for this project and will be applying for a Special Permit to enlarge a nonconforming structure, and Site Plan Review for an addition greater than 1,000 square feet in a commercial district. His traffic engineer also suggested that a traffic signal be installed at the intersection of Bright Road and Concord Avenue, which Mr. Jammal has agreed to fund. Mr. Jammal stated that he will continue to have discussions with the neighborhood and look for ideas/changes prior to submittal. With respect to contamination of the site, Mr. Jammal's consultants have been monitoring the site and it meets all state levels. Mr. Barrell requested a full environmental report.

7:15 p.m. Public Hearing on the Belmont Uplands Zoning Amendment to Allow Multi-Family Residential Development

James Heigham read the notice.

Jim Ward, attorney for O'Neill Properties, explained what his client is seeking – to amend Section 6B to allow multi-family use. He reviewed the proposed changes to Zoning By-Law. Mr. Ward stated that O'Neill is proposing to construct 4 buildings (1 for seniors that will be age restricted and on a separate lot) and that the affordable units will be spread throughout the buildings.

Stephen Corridan stated that their goal is to have Town Meeting in the Fall act on the proposed amendments. He stated that O'Neill will work with everyone over the summer to resolve any issues. He reviewed the site plan for 188 high-end 1 and 2 bedroom condos, with each building containing 47 units. The buildings will be 5 stories - 1 story for parking and 4 for residential above. He committed O'Neill to work with the Town to determine an appropriate affordable component. His preliminary offer was for 10% (19 units). He stated that the impacts of the multi-family building are substantially less than the office building and reviewed these differences. For example, with respect to traffic,

O'Neill's traffic engineer projects a 30% - 40% reduction in traffic compared to the proposed office building.

Mr. Corridan added that he met with Dr. Holland who stated that the Winn Brook School has sufficient capacity to accommodate the projected number of kids, which O'Neill's consultants projected at 90 kids over a 5 year period.

Brian Sullivan from Rizzo Associates discussed storm water impacts. He stated that because the building will have a slightly smaller footprint than the office, the impacts to the flood plain should be less. Similarly, there will be no direct impacts to the buffer zones.

Questions from the Planning Board:

James Heigham asked about sewerage plans. Mr. Corridan responded that they would be the same as for the office building - they will go through the Town of Belmont. Joe Barrell asked what happened with connecting to the City of Cambridge system. Mr. Corridan stated that the project would be required to go before the Cambridge Conservation Commission but this appears to be a dead end.

Deborah Emello inquired about the market for these units. Mr. Corridan answered that O'Neill expects to serve young professionals, first time buyers or empty nesters – they are marketing a life style since it is more urban and close to public transportation.

Joe Barrell asked if the Board of Assessor's has reviewed the fiscal impact of this project. Mr. Corridan stated that he believed John Connery spoke to the Assessors but will confirm this. Mr. Barrell further asked about the Planning Board foreclosing on the office building option if the Board agreed on the multi-family use. Mr. Corridan stated that he wants to keep this option open in case something happens with the economy. Mr. Barrell inquired about how many units will be owner occupied. Jim Ward stated that Fannie Mae sets the limits on the total number of units that could be rental. Mr. Barrell stated that if the Town wants to set a restriction on the number of rental units, it should consider this sooner rather than later.

Questions from the Audience:

1. Sue Bass, Concord Avenue, stated that O'Neill should not be allowed to do either multi-family or R&D. She suggested that the Town pick the use that is good for the Town and go forward with that use. She also expressed concern about putting the sewer line through Belmont and suggested that O'Neill apply to the Cambridge Conservation Committee for approval. On a follow-up question, Brian Sullivan stated that the surface detention basins are spread throughout the site and are grass swales.

2. Mark D'Andrea, Waverly Street, expressed concern over the use of the property as residential and for the Silver Maple forest.

3. Walter McLaughlin, Hill Road, stated his objections to the proposed rezoning. He does not agree with residential use of this property and expressed doubt over the fiscal impacts of the proposed development, especially with respect to the numbers of school

aged children. He does not believe that the zoning should allow both uses and felt that the recently adopted Inclusionary Zoning By-Law should apply to this project.

4. Arthur Heron, Oxford Circle, Chair of Belmont's Housing Trust, expressed concern about the administration of the affordable units.

5. Darrell King, Long Avenue, stated that he believed that FEMA was conducting a new flood plain study and questioned what would happen if there were significant changes in the flood plain. Brian Sullivan agreed that there was general disagreement about what the flood plan elevation is. He stated that the only accepted elevation is 8.2'. He added that a change of 6"-8", which is huge when taking into account the entire flood plain, will not affect this project because of the height of the uplands. This is not a flat lot as it has significant elevation changes, with a high point of 23' compared to a building elevation of 20'. Mr. Higgins stated that he will have the Town's consultant on storm water look into this further.

6. Ellen Maas, Cambridge, Friends of Alewife Reservation, asked that the Town to continue examining the use of the property and hoped that something could be done to preserve it.

7. Martha Moore, Waverly Street, suggested that the Town clarify what it wants to see at this property and wondered how to go about answering this question.

8. Monte Allen, inquired about the status of working with other communities. Tim Higgins said that Cambridge has been very difficult to work with. There have been a couple of meetings but Cambridge has shown no interest.

9. Jennifer Page, Stanley Road, further questioned why O'Neill Properties is proposing these zoning amendments. Stephen G. Corridan answered that they had focused too long on the office building. The reality of the previous rezoning was that O'Neill was arguing against General Residence Zoning and when comparing that to research and development, R & D looked better. He further added that multi-family seems to satisfy the concerns that many people expressed during the discussions on the R & D building. Many people have approached O'Neill about residential development at his site and it seemed reasonable to ask the Town for this rezoning.

There being no more public comments, the public hearing was continued to June 24, 2003, at 7:10 p.m.

9:10 p.m. General Business

- Minutes from May 13, 2003 were approved.
- 270 Trapelo Road – the Board had a brief discussion on the decision.

- Discussion on Andrew McClurg's continued participation in the public hearing. Both Mr. Heigham and Ms. Emello agreed to provide a brief on this issue for the Board.

9:15 p.m. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.