

**Sturbridge Planning Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 28, 2023
Center Office Building/Virtual**

Present:

Dane LaBonte
Sue Waters
Charlie Blanchard
Wally Hersee
Brad Goodwin
Jeff Adams
Jean Bubon, Town Planner

Absent:

Michael Chisholm
Jeneé Lacy, Administrative Assistant

Also Present:

Arthur Breault, Cornerstone Bank
Michael Frisbie, Noble Energy
Jared Hite, Solli Engineering
Kevin Solli, Solli Engineering
Colleen Byrne, Solli Engineering
Mark Fancy, 20 Podunk Rd.
Melissa Baker, 150 Arnold Rd.
Terry Baker, 150 Arnold Rd.
Paul McCarthy, 175 Charlton Rd.
Annette Roberts, 88 Wallace Rd.
Sean Parnell, 174 Charlton Rd.
Theresa Saletnik, 226 Charlton Rd.
Steven Saletnik, 226 Charlton Rd.
Steven Thompson, 212 Charlton Rd.
Jim Bernardino, 2 Hillside Drive
Michael Chiverton, Drake Petro



C. Blanchard called the meeting to order at 6:30pm and read the agenda.

Approval of Minutes

March 14, 2023

Motion: To approve the minutes of March 14, 2023 as written.

By: D. LaBonte

2nd: S. Waters

Vote: 4-0-1 (J. Adams Abstained, B. Goodwin absent for vote)

Town Planner Update

J. Bubon discussed the following:

- Update on Pre-construction meeting with Interstate Towing – 698 Main Street on Wednesday March 15th, lot is almost all cleared, project is moving along quickly.
- Reminder of the Conflict of Interest training for Board Members.

The Board discussed the Conflict of Interest training.

B. Goodwin arrived 6:33pm

Public Hearing – Modification of Site Plan – Noble Energy Real Estate Holdings, LLC – 195-201 Charlton Road

S. Waters read the public hearing notice at that was posted in the Southbridge Evening News.

J. Bubon stated that in June of 2021 the Planning Board had issued Site Plan Approval to Noble Energy for the construction of an 8,437 sq.ft. Travel Plaza. The applicants traffic engineer at that time had recommended a signalized intersection be installed at the driveway and Route 20 which peer review agreed with. The permits were approved with those conditions in place. Since that time the applicant has been working with MassDOT but MassDOT is not inclined to approve the signalized intersection and instead are requesting that the applicant review and install a roundabout. Because those conditions were in the original approval, the permit now needs to be modified to delete those conditions specifically related to the installation of the signalized in favor of a condition that says subject to MassDOT approval.

K. Solli of Solli Engineering, introduced himself and stated that Jared Hite would be presenting to the Board.

J. Hite presented the site plan of the project and discussed the background regarding what work has been done and the process with MassDOT and the request for a roundabout. He presented a site plan with their roundabout concept. J. Hite stated that they have requested that the State allow the gas station portion of the property be able to open before the construction of the roundabout which would include stock control main site driveway as an interim period.

C. Blanchard asked the Board if they had any questions.

J. Adams asked what the timeframe will be from the time that Noble opens to the time that the roundabout will be started and completed. K. Solli stated that the Noble Travel Plaza is pretty much constructed and that the length of time to fully design and go through the construction process for the roundabout could take 12 to 18 months.

C. Blanchard asked if the plan presented is the roundabout concept that is being considered. K. Solli stated that it was, that they have been in the review process with MassDOT for an extensive period of time and they have gone through a number of iterations of the plan and gave a breakdown on the details of the current plan.

D. LaBonte asked if there is any separation between the pedestrian and bike activity in the two lanes of Route 20 in this concept. K. Solli stated that there was and discussed the plan.

C. Blanchard asked if the State has provided any feedback regarding this plan and is this there preference. K. Solli stated that it was and discussed the DOT process they have gone through.

D. LaBonte asked if this plan included Hall Road in any way. K. Solli stated that it wasn't and explained the process they went through and the traffic volume studies to get to this concept. D. LaBonte discussed turning into and out of Hall Road and K. Solli discussed that the State has future studies planned for the Route 20 Corridor. D. LaBonte asked about an extension of the pedestrian access across the exit only driveway during the interim conditions, would that be accommodated on the final roundabout plan. K. Solli stated that it would. D. LaBonte asked about the number of vehicles that could pass through making left of right turns and stacking cue length. K. Solli stated like most driveways they expect there will be some stacking of vehicles onto the property, which they have sufficient room to accommodate. D. LaBonte and K. Solli discussed the exiting of the property and management options. D. LaBonte asked if the travel speeds posted are appropriate for the proposed intersection. K. Solli stated that they have been working with the state on the geometric modifications of the lanes and the speeds have been taken into consideration with the proposal. D. LaBonte asked if the applicant knew what the speed inside the roundabout would be. J. Hite stated that the design speed for the roundabout is supposed to be 25 to 30 mph. D. LaBonte discussed concerns he had regarding the design and turning within the roundabout.

S. Waters asked what part of the right of way was owned by the State and if the State would be taking more of the right of way. K. Solli discussed what part of the right of way is controlled by the State and what will be affected by the proposed changes.

J. Adams asked if there was any traffic data reviewed during the design process in regards to the Amazon warehouse being built in Charlton. K. Solli stated that they did include the Amazon warehouse as a traffic generator in their traffic data.

C. Blanchard asked if anyone from the public had any questions or concerns.

P. McCarthy, 175 Charlton Road, stated that he has concerns in regards to holiday and summer traffic and doesn't see the roundabout helping the issues that Route 20 is having.

C. Blanchard stated that the Town has been trying to work with DOT for years in regards to the issues that Route 20 is having, but should approve the idea that this new intersection will serve the needs of that section of Route 20.

M. Fancy, 20 Podunk Road, stated that he doesn't think only one roundabout being put in at this time will help the traffic that will be coming from the warehouses being built in Charlton and will cause more issues.

C. Blanchard asked if the State was going to build the roundabout or if the State expected

the applicant to build it. J. Bubon stated that the State expected Noble to pay for and build the roundabout and that she had applied for a Massworks Grant to offset the cost of the signalized intersection. In October of 2022 the Town received \$250,000 for design but in that time the State had decided that it wouldn't approve a signalized intersection there and wanted a roundabout and suggested the Town contact the State and get the Grant changed to be able to fund the design of the roundabout, which is what has been done. The anticipated cost right now is probably over 4.5 million, Mr. Frisbie has pledged 1.5 million and the State has suggested the Town apply for more grant funds to fund this project, if the funding can't be pulled together we are at risk of losing the EV Discovery Center. J. Bubon also stated, in regards to public concerns, that this plan is only one part of the plans for Route 20.

J. Bubon discussed that the purpose of the current meeting is to modify the previously approved permit to allow for a roundabout instead of a signalized intersection so that the Noble Station can move forward. It is essentially up to the State was kind of intersection is approved at that area.

M. Baker, owner of office buildings across from Noble, stated that she thinks that Noble is a beautiful project and will bring a lot to the community, asked if the engineer could explain the second exit coming out of the Noble property with the interim conditions. K. Solli stated that it would be an exit only driveway and that someone exiting could turn either left or right out. It was discussed the dangers of a left hand turn out of the property and the pros and cons for both right only turning and both left and right turning.

D. LaBonte asked if all future applicant for Route 20 can expect to pay 5 million dollars for access? J. Bubon stated that the numbers are still rough right now because the project is not fully designed but she does expect all new applicants for Route 20 will be going through the same process. She stated she is currently working with an applicant who is going in across from Cracker Barrel and the applicant has been dealing with MassDOT for 5 or 6 months trying to figure out access and discussed the Charlton projects and traffic mitigation.

Motion: To close public hearing.

By: D. LaBonte

2nd: S. Waters

Vote: All in Favor (6-0)

J. Bubon stated that she would recommend the Board vote to delete Conditions 3 and 8 on the original approval, renumber as appropriate and insert a new condition #8 that states: All access to and from Route 20 and all traffic mitigation, measures and pedestrian improvements on Route 20 shall be subject to approval by MassDOT. The applicant shall provide the final design plan an access permit to the Board for its records.

D. LaBonte asked if he could make a modification to acknowledge that the roundabout plan is going to be revised to include the sidewalk and also to acknowledge that all access is subject to DOT approval, mimic the language of former number 7 to include "construction of a sidewalk subject to MassDOT approval".

Motion: To approve the requested modification with conditions.

By: D. LaBonte

2nd: J. Adams

Vote: All in Favor (6-0)

Continuance of Waiver of Site Plan – Drake Petroleum (XtraMart) – 215 Charlton Road

J. Bubon stated that the current XtraMart location is proposing some modifications, they will be becoming Alltown, the Fire Department and Health Department have had some concerns with the lack of storage inside of the building so they've suggested a storage shed be installed if possible. The proposal has not yet gone to Conservation but it is within the 50' no new structure zone, but Becky is not sure if a waiver would be granted, if anything changes with the plan, the applicant will need to come back to the Planning Board for modification.

M. Chiverton presented a plan of the property and discussed the placement of the proposed 10x20 storage shed.

S. Waters asked why the applicant would need to file with Conservation. J. Bubon discussed that it would fall within the 50' no new structure zone but Becky was unsure if the commission might be able to waiver the requirement because it was in a developed area. J. Bubon recommended that the Board approve the Waiver of Site Plan to allow the proposed shed and if the location changes based on Conservation Commission approval, that new plans be provided to the Planning Board for its records. She stated that she wouldn't recommend that the applicant have to refile as long as the shed meets all the setback requirements.

Motion: To approve the Waiver of Site Plan for Drake Petroleum Company, Inc. to allow the installation of a shed on the premises at 215 Charlton Road as proposed with the conditions.

By: S. Water

2nd: J. Adams

Vote: All in Favor (6-0)

Continuation of Public Hearing – Proposed Zoning Amendments – Flood Plain District

J. Bubon stated that there are some minor changes that need to be made to the Floodplain Bylaw and maps, these changes must be adopted at Town Meeting for the Town to continue in the FEMA program. J. Bubon gave a summary of the changes:

- Page 3 - § 300-3.4 C. – updated the date to reflect the new effective date of the maps and study
- Page 4. – Delete D as this language is now duplicative of G. 14. Also renumbered as appropriate after this deletion.

- Page 6 – F (3) (6) – Replaced language with updated language from the State Model Bylaw as recommended by DCR
- Page 7 – 11. Delete 120.G201 after 780 CMR (no longer needed) and 12. Replaced language with updated language for the State Model Bylaw as recommended by DCR
- Page 8 – Changed agency information by deleting addresses and updating the Title of the DCR Floodplain Coordinator. These changes were recommended because their offices will soon be moving.

Motion: To close the Public Hearing.

By: J. Adams

2nd: D. LaBonte

Vote: All in Favor (6-0)

Motion: To support adoption of the proposed changes to Section 300-3.4 Floodplain District as printed and to forward the proposed bylaw amendments and map to the Town Administrator for inclusion on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

By: S. Waters

2nd: D. LaBonte

Vote: All in Favor (6-0)

Town Planner Update Cont.

J. Bubon wanted to let the Board know that Michael Chisholm has decided not to seek reappointment when his term is up in June so there's an ad posted now for a new member, if anyone knows of someone who might have an interest, please have them apply. Michael will stay on until June, the only hearing process that the Board will still have ongoing is Blueberry Hill Estates, if they haven't concluded with Conservation by the May meeting she may recommend that the Planning Board vote while there are still enough members to vote.

Old/New Business

The Board discussed how much time is going into finding money for the Noble roundabout and that adjustments should be made on the State level. J. Bubon discussed what is happening on Route 20 on a State level.

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn meeting.

By: D. LaBonte

2nd: S. Waters

Vote: All in Favor (5-0)

Meeting adjourned at 7:45PM.

Minutes prepared by: Jeneé Lacy