

TOWN OF AUBURN, MASSACHUSETTS
AUBURN PLANNING BOARD
Minutes of the Meeting
Auburn Town Hall Select Board Meeting Room | April 25, 2023 – 7:00 PM

Members Present: Chair John Regan, Vice Chair Todd Kirrane, Member Ron Brooks, and Member Sierra Smarra

Members Absent: Member Dwarakesh Nallan

Also Present: Town Planner Dr. Adam Menard and Staff Assistant Danielle Chamberland Roberts

Mr. Regan called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and provided hybrid participation instructions for meeting attendees and access information to interested viewers. The Town cable staff was present, and the meeting was recorded and televised. No other attendee was recording the meeting.

I. ANR:

a. 89 Prospect Street

Mr. Walter Frick, Jr., of 89 Prospect Street was present and was also representing his daughter who lives at 89 Prospect Street.

Mr. Regan asked if Mr. Frick was conveying the small lot behind his daughter’s lot (Parcel A) to his lot and Mr. Frick replied in the affirmative. There were no further questions from the Board.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Regan called for a motion to approve the request at 7:03 PM. Mr. Brooks made the motion, it was seconded by Mr. Kirrane.

Ms. Smarra	Mr. Nallan	Mr. Brooks	Mr. Kirrane	Mr. Regan
Aye	Absent	Aye	Aye	Aye

Motion passed 4-0.

II. Public Hearings:

a. Applicant S&K Development, LLC requesting a Special Permit under section 5.3.2 of the Auburn Zoning Bylaw for a hammerhead lot at 375 Oxford Street N, Auburn, MA 01501, Map 40 Parcel 97. (Cont. from 4/11/23)

Mr. Regan read a letter that the Board had received on April 18, 2023 from James P. Smith of Tauper Land Survey, Inc. on behalf of the owners/applicant S&K Development, LLC requesting to withdraw the application for Special Permit with prejudice. They also requested that any unused portions of the application/review fees be returned to the owner/applicants.

Dr. Menard said that he had already contacted the applicants to say that there are no fees to return.

Mr. Kirrane made a motion to close the hearing at 7:08 PM, it was seconded by Mr. Brooks.

Roll call vote:

Ms. Smarra	Mr. Nallan	Mr. Brooks	Mr. Kirrane	Mr. Regan
Aye	Absent	Aye	Aye	Aye

Motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Regan called for a motion to accept the withdrawal with prejudice at 7:08 PM. Mr. Kirrane made the motion and asked that returning of fees be at the discretion of staff, it was seconded by Ms. Smarra.

Roll call vote:

Ms. Smarra	Mr. Nallan	Mr. Brooks	Mr. Kirrane	Mr. Regan
Aye	Absent	Aye	Aye	Aye

Motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Brooks asked Dr. Menard for confirmation that withdrawing with prejudice means that the applicant will have to start over and Dr. Menard replied in the affirmative.

b. Applicant Kimley - Horn and Associates requesting Site Plan Approval under section 3.2.6.1 of the Auburn Zoning Bylaw for a self-storage facility at 319 Washington Street, Auburn, MA 01501, Map 42 Parcel 31. (Cont. from 4/11/23)

As no one was present to represent the applicant, at 7:09 PM Mr. Regan called for motion to continue the public hearing to the May 9, 2023 Planning Board meeting. Mr. Kirrane made the motion, it was seconded by Ms. Smarra.

Roll call vote:

Ms. Smarra	Mr. Nallan	Mr. Brooks	Mr. Kirrane	Mr. Regan
Aye	Absent	Aye	Aye	Aye

Motion passed 4-0.

c. Applicant Eastland Partners Inc. requesting Site Plan Approval under section 3.2.6.0 of the Auburn Zoning Bylaw for a warehouse/distribution facility at 190 Washington Street, Lot 1, Auburn, MA 01501, Map 34 Parcel 4. (Cont. from 4/11/23)

Mr. Steve O’Connell of Turning Point Engineering on behalf of the applicant presented revised plans in response to comments from Graves Engineering and Town of Auburn Departments. Earlier today he received a letter from Graves Engineering stating that all of their comments have been addressed in the revised plan. There are a few outstanding items which could be required at the discretion of the Board, which Mr. O’Connell will delineate in his presentation.

He began by outlining all of the revisions that have been made, including a request from the Fire Department to move the water access and sprinkler room, add hydrants, and allowed for backup space for Fire vehicles and apparatus. The DPW/Sewer Department also made comments about sewer slopes and sewer connections, and the applicants requested a waiver from the minimum slope requirement of 2%, they are currently at 1% on the private site but this is more than acceptable by industry standards.

Another comment from the Auburn Water District asked that a 3-way valve be installed from where the water comes off of the main and forms a loop so that the supply can be isolated as needed. Mr. Regan asked about a valve on the other end of the loop and Mr. O’Connell replied in the affirmative. Mr. Regan also asked about a valve on Washington Street, and Mr. O’Connell said that the Auburn Water Department only required a single valve there, and that it had already been installed as part of the subdivision.

The final comment that the applicants received was from the Building Department about providing dumpsters, so the revised plans include two locations for them. Mr. Regan asked if the dumpsters will be screened, and Mr. O’Connell replied in the affirmative. He continued to say that even though he wasn’t present at the last Planning Board meeting he understood that there was some discussion about Ross Express’s operating hours. Mr. O’Connell spoke with the President of Ross Express about his operating hours and the President was taken aback upon hearing the criticism, saying that there was only one instance where 2 or 3 trucks exited the location on a Saturday due to a snowstorm.

Ms. Doreen Goodrich of 5 Lower Windbrook Drive noted her concerns about allowing the building to move forward without road improvements, saying she is unaware of when MassDOT will complete them. She is concerned about traffic, saying it took her about 8 minutes to pull out of her driveway this morning at 8:45 AM because there were nonstop trucks blocking her. She would like more information about the nature of business at the proposed site. Ms. Goodrich also said she appreciates Mr. O’Connell’s comment about Ross Express only violating their stated operating hours one time. She looked back at the meeting minutes and Ross Express is supposed to stop work at 6:00 AM, not noon. She continued to say that she is not interested in making a “he said/she said” accusation, but she lives there and personally saw it. On multiple Saturdays and perhaps two Sundays Ms. Goodrich asserted that Ross Express violated their stated operating hours, and she did not stand before the Board and exaggerate the scope of the problem or the number of times it has happened. She would never lie to the Board because she is concerned about a project.

Mr. Regan asked Ms. Goodrich which direction she was travelling, and indicated that it was not Ross Express trucks that were holding up her commute this morning. She agreed, clarifying that it was nonstop trucks from multiple companies, but that it included at least nine Ross Express trucks. She encouraged the Board to get more information from MassDOT about proposed turning lanes and physically go to the location and observe the problems before taking a vote. Mr. Regan said that he is adamant about reviewing everything before taking a vote.

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Mr. Regan asked Mr. O’Connell when MassDOT would approve the proposed road improvements, and Mr. O’Connell said that MassDOT is reviewing the 75/100 percent plans, and there is a 90-day review timeline. A bond has been furnished to MassDOT at their request, and they stipulated that work must start by Spring 2024.

Mr. Regan said that with the current traffic coming from Ross Express and additional potential traffic from the current proposal he doesn’t see how the Board can safely allow it to move forward. There would be too much traffic coming out of a single road. Mr. O’Connell reminded the Board that it already approved a subdivision with much higher traffic volume proposed. Mr. Regan agreed, but said that the approval was granted with the caveat was that the MassDOT road improvements are made.

Mr. O’Connell said that most of the trucks at Ross Express are loaded at night and leave within a one-hour period in the morning, but in the afternoon and evenings they return throughout a three-hour period. Mr. Regan said that it was hard for him to fathom 40 trucks all leaving in one hour, and that the traffic proposal that was approved was over the course of a day. Mr. O’Connell said that there was a peak hour projection included in the traffic study, and that he would furnish it to the Board at Mr. Regan’s request. He continued to say that this proposed project began about two years ago, but MassDOT did already approve a temporary widening. The permanent widening construction work will likely take close to a year once it’s approved in the next 90 to 120 days. It will include a “buffered bike lane” westbound which is comprised of a three-foot buffer, a five-foot bike lane, a five-foot sidewalk, and then a new guardrail. It was similar eastbound, minus the sidewalk. This requirement is a part of MassDOT’s “Complete Streets” program. Both Mr. O’Connell and Mr. Regan agreed that adding a bike lane with no access seems foolish, but Mr. O’Connell said that the program aim was to build bike lanes in pieces, eventually connecting.

Mr. Kirrane asked about the proposed timeline of the building construction, and Mr. Chris Horne of Eastland Partners replied “14-16 months.” Mr. Kirrane continued to ask if the applicants assume that the building will be occupied before the MassDOT roadway work is finished, and Mr. O’Connell replied that it should closely coincide. Mr. Kirrane stated that although he supports the project, he echoed Ms. Goodrich’s concerns that if both Ross Express and the proposed location are operating before the roadwork is finished there will be serious consequences. He asked Dr. Menard if the Board could condition the Certificate of Occupancy on completion of the roadway work, and Dr. Menard replied that he didn’t know, but he would check with Town Council before the next meeting. Mr. Kirrane said his intention was to allow the applicant to continue going forward, but he shared Ms. Goodrich’s concerns and wants to make sure the roadway is safe. Mr. O’Connell replied that the Auburn Building Department required MassDOT to issue the permit modification that allowed the temporary widening to occur before they gave a Certificate of Occupancy to Ross Express, so it’s a reasonable request.

Ms. Goodrich repeated her request that the Planning Board members visit the site in person. She also said that the striping is confusing on the current temporary widening. Ms. Goodrich asked if all of the roads involved in the proposal would remain private roads, and Mr. O’Connell replied in the affirmative. Mr. Regan said that the answer to that question was made very clear at the beginning when the subdivision was proposed. Ms. Goodrich continued to ask about the timeline of the easement for National Grid, and Mr. O’Connell replied that it was all secured.

Mr. Regan asked if any Board members had any other questions, and Mr. Brooks said that he shared the sentiments that Mr. Kirrane had expressed. Mr. Regan asked if when the permanent widening is finished there would be signage indicating “right turn only” and Mr. O’Connell answered that there would be extensive signage as the result of a road safety audit from the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process, including speed flashback signs, speed limit signs, restriping, and timing improvements at the traffic light on Millbury Street. Mr. Regan asked for clarification that there would be no breakdown lane going eastbound, and Mr. O’Connell replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Regan called for a motion at 7:41 PM to continue the hearing to the next meeting on May 9, 2023. Ms. Smarra made the motion, it was seconded by Mr. Kirrane

Roll call vote:

Ms. Smarra	Mr. Nallan	Mr. Brooks	Mr. Kirrane	Mr. Regan
Aye	Absent	Aye	Aye	Aye

Motion passed 4-0.

- d. **Applicant Robert Lemansky for G. L. McKinstry Trust, for a Definitive Subdivision Plan for a two lot single family home development with site improvements on property located at Claire Drive and Linda Avenue, Auburn, MA 01501** (Cont. from 4/11/2023)

As no one was present to represent the applicant, at 7:42 PM Mr. Regan called for motion to continue the public hearing to the May 9, 2023 Planning Board meeting. Ms. Smarra made the motion, it was seconded by Mr. Brooks.

Roll call vote:

Ms. Smarra	Mr. Nallan	Mr. Brooks	Mr. Kirrane	Mr. Regan
Aye	Absent	Aye	Aye	Aye

Motion passed 4-0.

III. Other Business:

- a. **Discussion:** None
- b. **Modification:** None
- c. **Decisions:** **824 Southbridge Street** was signed by all present Board members
- d. **Minutes:** **4/11/2023**

The Minutes from the April 11, 2023 meeting were not yet available so approval was tabled to the May 9, 2023 meeting.

- e. **New Business Unforeseen by the Chair:** None
- f. **Member/Town Planner Update: Housing Production Plan**
 - i. Mr. Regan noted that the Board is still looking for an Alternate Member and might also need a Full-Time Member if Mr. Kirrane is elected to the Board of Selectmen.
 - ii. Dr. Menard noted that there is a Housing Production Plan survey that is out now and available digitally and in hard copy at the Town Hall; he encourages all to take the survey.

g. Adjournment / Next Meeting: 5/9/2023

Mr. Regan called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:43PM. Mr. Brooks made the motion, it was seconded by Ms. Smarra.

Roll call vote:

Ms. Smarra	Mr. Nallan	Mr. Brooks	Mr. Kirrane	Mr. Regan
Aye	Absent	Aye	Aye	Aye

Motion passed 4-0.

Next meeting will be May 9, 2023 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Danielle Chamberland Roberts, Staff Assistant to the Town Manager

To access video playback of the Planning Board meetings, please visit www.auburnguide.com and click the YouTube icon on the homepage to go directly to ACTVAuburn’s page.

Planning Board Packet Documents:

- 89 Prospect Street
 - ANR Application
 - Site Plan
- Mass Ten Enterprises LLC at 824 Southbridge Street
 - Certificate of Action: Special Permit Decision
- S&K Development, LLC at 375 Oxford Street North
 - Abutter Letter
 - Withdraw Request
- Planning Board Agenda
 - April 25, 2023