

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: June 9, 2021 PLACE: Virtual Meeting TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting

PRESENT: Jeff Brown, Chairman; Jason Cohen; Janet Buck; Payson Whitney
Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Board; Steve Magoon, Director of DCD&P; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner; Larry Field, Senior Planner

REGULAR MEETING

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Janet Buck motioned to approve Minutes of May 12, 2021 Planning Board meeting.

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In favor

CASES PENDING

- **165 Grove Street; Buckingham, Browne & Nichols School – Site Plan Review**

Janet Buck, it would be prudent to continue this case. A petition was submitted to the Town Council on May 17, 2021, verification of signatures has taken a very long time. Second public meeting is being requested, residents have not received many answers at the first community meeting. The Planning Board has received many comments prior to this hearing regarding this petition.

Steve Magoon, Amy Kwesell of KP Law will have the answers tonight. A petition was submitted to the Town Council regarding artificial turf proposed for this site, it is not pertinent to the case tonight, it is not Planning Board issue. The opportunity for community meetings is at the beginning of the process, it is not appropriate to require second meeting tonight. The Planning Board will make a motion tonight, discussion regarding the turf can take place in the office.

Janet Buck, I have never seen this volume of comments from the community. It should not be before the Board until all options are exercised. This case should not be before the Board tonight.

Gideon Schreiber, this is a public hearing not a question-and-answer session.

Amy Kwesell, Atty KP Law, this is an educational use, protection for educational uses is provided under the Dover amendment. Zoning Ordinance cannot restrict land uses on public facility. We are dealing with Site Plan Review, open space, height of structures, parking, etc. We cannot regulate them any other way.

Steve Magoon, the artificial turf is not before the Planning Board, it is not their jurisdiction under Section 9.03. Materials have nothing to do with this application.

Payson Whitney, what are we allowed to regulate?

Amy Kwesell, the Board can regulate landscape, buildings to environment, height of structures, open space, screening of equipment, setbacks, open space, design, etc. Not under the Board jurisdiction: surface water drainage, utility service, environmental sustainability, circulation.

Jennifer Price, Director BBN, we have 1,040 students, 28 are from Watertown. One of 4 receives financial assistance. We provide \$5,000 scholarship for Watertown summer camp. We have 3 campuses, 2 are in Cambridge. We have purchased 6 acre parking lot from MT Auburn hospital that will provide opportunity for our programs. We also have 10-year lease from MtAuburn cemetery to

build 2 fields and a field house. We care about health and safety of our students. Vaccination is provided on site for Watertown students.

Dr. Tara Gohlmann, CFO, photos from 1940 show that the site was farmed, later mostly industrial and commercial use, recycling & auto junk yard. The site is now used for parking for 380 vehicles and recycling for Mt Auburn cemetery.

William York, Atty, BBN is a nonprofit educational corporation, school's athletic uses are allowed under the Dover amendment.

Meg Buczynski, engineer with Activitas, the vehicular access will be from Grove Street, new curb cut will be provided. A bus pull up area for school buses is proposed, as well as bike parking with access by crosswalk. There will be emergency access for emergency vehicles only. New sidewalks along Grove Street with a connection from Fillippello Park. Coolidge Hill Road pedestrian access will be provided. This is a 2-phase project, building will be constructed in Phase II. The structure will have 13,000 s.f. footprint, 2 levels, gathering areas, coach offices and gymnasium. We are proposing gathering area for students before they come on the field. A 4' high chain-link fence will be built around the field, other areas will have 20' high netting, which will separate the field from the spectators. Small storage area with a 6' chain link fence. The large field will have approx. 300 seats. Green space next to the building will be used for gathering. Athletic lighting at the site, similar to Fillipello Park, 70' to 90' high that will point down and not cause glare. The property is located in I-3 district, 55' height is allowed, we are below that. 32' at the Coolidge Hill, 46' at the other side. All the requirements have been met. Open space is 83.5%, previously 43%. Impervious surface will be reduced to 20%, 60 parking spaces are required, we will provide 72 and 26 spots for bikes. We are proposing brand new wall and reinforce the existing wall.

Jason Cohen, how do we determine what is front, side and back?

Gideon Schreiber, we have reviewed the design and determined where the front façade of the building was. The Zoning Enforcement officer stated that Grove Street can be front side. There will be entrance at the Coolidge Hill Road, that will work as main entrance. Second access will be from the parking lot.

Janet Buck, all access will be from Grove Street, students will arrive from the school in buses. Will the building be open to the public? I see the building as access to the site.

Gideon Schreiber, the building does not have frontage on Grove Street. BBN staff suggested that the Planning staff will review the design.

Jeff Brown, the Board would like to see the building design.

Payson Whitney, we are governed by what the ZO said, open space as required by the Zoning Ordinance. Condition 11c of the staff report talks about sidewalks and safe path bicycles, condition 15a states that in no instance buses should be parked on public roads.

Meg Buczynski, we park buses at the Vets, it is our site also. The 20' fence will be used on the inside.

Janet Buck, this is a Chapter 40A case which applies to educational purposes, same law as 40B for housing. It is not easy to fight it, but it can be done. To allow this project, natural turf should be used.

We need to look at what should be allowed in the future. Artificial turf is 30 degrees hotter than tar parking lot.

Gideon Schreiber, many of the points for SPR criteria have been already answered. Staff looked at the statement under Dover as a school use not a nonprofit. The petitioner is proposing to create more cohesive landscape area. Conceptual plans for the building will be submitted to the staff for review. New parking lot design is creating better circulation pattern. New wide sidewalks will lead to the site, single curb cut created. 13 bike racks will be placed in key areas. Site was reviewed for surface water drainage. Lighting will be reviewed by zoning office. Staff recommends that the proposed recreational use is appropriate for school use.

Russ Arico, no institution is exempt, BBN failed to make the argument. BBN should be a good neighbor and use natural turf. I am disappointed with tonight's presentation. Petitioner stated that they will go ahead even if not approved.

Eileen Ryan, 48 Pearl Street, I urge BBN and the Planning Board to install natural turf. The proposed artificial turf is dangerous to the environment. Synthetic fields will use toxic materials, artificial turf should not be in our town.

Meredith Fields, 185 Palfrey Street, I have submitted comments to the Board. I am in strong support of all the comments.

Amy Kwesell, once the Planning Board has all the information, KP can tell what can be considered.

Jeff Brown, tonight's hearing is not about the artificial turf.

Andy Campagna, Bicycle Committee, the petitioner did a good job with the pedestrian flow. This is an opportunity to encourage kids to ride to the site, it will reduce the traffic and congestion.

Jason Cohen, we have received many statements, but I still see people providing additional statements.

Jocelyn Tager, Robbins Road, what is happening with the Shick house which is a historic structure? BBN did not show any solar panels on the property?

Jennifer Price, we went to the Historical Commission and received 1 year demolition delay. We have offered for the house to be removed elsewhere.

Jeanne Trubek, 470 Arsenal Street, does the Dover mean that the Board cannot regulate materials?

Amy Kwesell, materials will be regulated under the building code, DEP is in charge of toxic materials.

Leo Martin, Conservation Commission, a letter from the Conservation Commission to the Planning Board, contaminated water from this site is flowing to Charles River. We should think about how to stop polluting everything.

Laurie Bean, former employee of BBN, I have a 13-year-old son, I am thrilled that BBN is building this field. It is hard to play on grass. I am concerned with obesity in children, they need space for organized sports, they need to move. I would not allow it if it was dangerous.

Angie Kounelis, Town Council, we are delighted to have BBN as part of our community. Many years ago, we have received a proposal for this site to build housing. This proposal will save the neighborhood from encroachment. The area is densely populated. It is important that the building will be well designed on Coolidge.

Joe Connors, President of Watertown/Belmont cheerleading program, we utilize all the fields in Watertown, space is diminishing. Watertown schools are renovated, we need more recreational space to be available. We are in support of this proposal.

Chris Beach, I would like to thank the Town Council and Councilor Angie Kounelis for their support. We are in desperate need of fields, there is a risk to play on any field. I can vouch for BBN, kids prosper through academics and sports.

Michael Albano, Lexington Street, Mt Auburn Cemetery director, this proposal will be beneficial to Watertown athletics.

Ryan Murphy, Athletic Director for Watertown High School, this is a great opportunity to offer more programs to our children.

Eileen Zubrowski, 29 Capitol Street, I appreciate BBN proposal but please reconsider the artificial turf. Real grass has cooling effect without any toxic chemicals.

William Fortato, president of youth baseball, we are in desperate need of fields.

Anne Fitzpatrick, Standish Road, Watertown does not want artificial turf. This is a bad start for BBN coming to Watertown.

Elodia Thomas, I have read the BBN statement, this is not about Watertown, this is not good neighbor relationship. I am disappointed in Planning Board, Town Council, etc., they do not understand. Please defer this proposal, let us have another community meeting.

Libby Shaw, I am very disappointed, this is a beautiful project, but terrible to have artificial turf. Natural turf is affordable, please reconsider.

Peter Centola, Recreation Director, BBN is proposing great plan and creating more open space.

Mark Leeward, 29 Alton Road, Watertown Youth Soccer President, I am in support of this proposal. It is difficult to have natural grass, there are 600 players using the field every season. BBN needs actively engage with the community.

Chris, Standish Road, I agree with Elodia and other statements. We need open green space, we expect vegetation. We concerned about influx of life sciences companies coming into Watertown but not with natural grass.

Kristen Peterson, 52 Fitchburg, my son is a student at BBN, I would like him to bike to the BBN field.

Barbara Ruskin, it is important to think about this petition, I don't think they understand our concerns. This Board should wait until the Town Council hear about all the issues. SPR requires discussion about environmental sustainability. Women's soccer team banned artificial turf.

Brian Hebeison, people are not against the field, just are concerned with the artificial turf. BBN will do it under the 40A, they are not being open and honest.

Jeff Brown, tonight I am hearing mostly the concern with artificial turf. If we vote tonight, it will not solve the issue.

Steve Magoon, artificial turf is not subject to PB approval. The BBN is asking the Board to approve the proposal for a field.

Payson Whitney, this would be different discussion without the education aspect.

Jason Cohen, is there a motion to continue this petition until after the Town Council meeting? There is also the 1-year demolition for the Shick house.

Janet Buck, the Shick house makes us to allow to wait and continue this petition. Otherwise I would move to deny it. There are other legal options.

Steve Magoon, I would suggest that what will be in front of Town Council, will not impact Planning Board. Amy Kwesell is providing legal counsel for the Town.

William York, the motion for reconsideration before the Town Council has nothing to do with Planning Board decision. BBN decision to go forward is consistent with the Town Attorney advise.

Payson Whitney motioned that the Site Plan Review be granted based on the advice of the Town Attorney based on the Dover Amendment.

Jason Cohen seconded the motion.

VOTE: 3-1 Janet Buck against

Amy Kwesell, this petition cannot be denied, it will go to Land Court without any conditions. The Planning Board will lose the ability to include any conditions.

- **311 Arsenal Street; ARE_MA Region No.25, LLC – Amendment to Campus Master Plan**

Payson Whitney, as a direct abutter, I have disclosed financial interest under State ethics law to the Town Manager in writing, who approved my participation in this hearing. I have recused myself from any of my condo board's discussions on this matter.

Dante Angelucci, Alexandria Real Estate, square footage is consistent what was previously approved for Athena. The project is LEED Gold, net 0. The initial 30,000 s.f. of building will be replaced with community center. Traffic, parking, impervious surface will be reduced. Storm water report was issued, we have met with the community.

Ari Greenberg, Energy & Sustainability consultant, building 1 & 2 are mostly electric, 93% reduction in overall energy. Building D is 100% electrical. The project exceeds Watertown requirements.

Caroline Braga, we are proposing 2-way entrance at Kingsbury which was previously approved. Now we will focus on being accessible to the community. Open space is now 12.2 acres. Lot of concern was about trees that will be removed, but the original proposal has changed to preserve more existing trees, from 249 to 202 to be removed. We will focus on preserving the larger trees. We have also offered to transplant some of the trees.

Jeff Brown, there are 10-12 trees along the side of the garage to be removed, are they small enough to be transplanted?

Jason Cohen, this proposal was submitted today, are the public comments not applicable?

Dante Angelucci, the changes were made now but the plans were submitted last week. We have plans showing the original submittal and changes. There is an opportunity for additional changes.

Caroline Braga, some of the trees are not in a good condition, some were compromised with utility equipment, etc. and could not be saved. Shuttle drop-off location has changed as per Town request and some trees were removed. We are proposing mix of native and canopy shaped trees.

Ed Roberge, Stantec, we are looking to retain as much as possible water runoff from the site. The proposed system exceeds requirement of DEP.

Caroline Braga, we will provide appropriate connections, working with the Town, connecting Arsenal Park, enhancing routes and shared roads. Bike parking will be distributed on the site, indoor parking in west garage.

John Sullivan, we have followed design process with David Gamble, Town Consultant. Building 1 is located south of 311, 4 story lab building, 10' higher than the garage. East garage will be screened, materials relate to building 311, copper finish and transparent elements. Building 2, 4 story, 112,000 s.f., glassy structure, lower reflectivity glass, complimenting the historic buildings. Building D is part of the original Master Plan, will be for community uses also.

Dante Angelucci, \$3.5 million in mitigation plus \$9.5 million, \$40,000 for Blue Bike station. More for Mossessian Theater lobby renovation. We are trying to address the tree concerns.

Gideon Schreiber, a special PB meeting has been scheduled for Monday June 14, 2021, at 7 pm to continue tonight's presentation.

Jason Cohen, I want to see tonight's changes on the plans.

Barbara Epstein, Spruce Street, I am very excited about this proposal, Alexandria is making effort. This is a major improvement of the campus.

Jocelyn Tuger, I would like to thank Alexandria for attention to community comments.

Ernesta Karczki, 77 Riverside St, many letters have been send expressing concerns regarding trees, transportation and energy issues.

David Leon, Russell Ave, there are some concerns regarding handicap accessible parking.

Janet Buck motioned to continue the above petition to Monday, June 14, 2021, at 7 pm.

Jason Cohen seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0 In Favor

Jeff Brown adjourned the meeting at 10:40 pm.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 10:40 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 6/9/2021 available in the DCD&P office.