



TOWN OF COLONIE

347 OLD NISKAYUNA ROAD

LATHAM, N.Y. 12110



Town of Colonie Conservation Advisory Council Meeting Minutes – August 21, 2014

Present: B. Ulrich, D. Allard, L. Weed, S. Kulkarni

Meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

The meeting minutes from the August 7th meeting were accepted, moved by Don Allard and seconded by Sudhir Kulkarni.

Council Discussions:

Laura Weed reported that the key to the CAC poster cabinet in Town Hall is lost. If it is not relocated soon, we will ask the maintenance folks in Town Hall to drill out the lock and replace it with a simple latch.

Don Allard asked us to consider if it might be possible to make the sprawling Town of Colonie a bit more user-friendly by doing long-term planning to establish more downtown-like and community friendly areas. Laura pointed out that there is such a plan in place, and that was the reason for the extremely short setback area requirements for commercial buildings in the current Town law, as well as the requirements that parking for commercial buildings be in the back of the building rather than in the front. The problem is that older buildings do not comply, and most newer projects do not want to comply because it makes them look strange compared to the older buildings, and makes disability access, deliveries and parking all less convenient. As a result, the planning board regularly receives requests for waivers on these requirements. The Town Board is actually considering dropping the requirements. Don does not think that these set-back requirements should be dropped. The new projects on Rt. 9, between Maxwell Rd and Rt. 155, in Latham, have complied with the requirements. We have yet to see if that section of Latham becomes more user friendly and community oriented, or if it just hampers traffic flow and convenience for the local businesses.

Planning Board reports

Laura Weed reported on the Planning board meeting on Aug 12, 2014

Northway Mall Petco Parking Lot Expansion 1440 Central Ave. Waiver Request

The developers plan to keep green space by shifting it from one area of the Target/Northway Mall property to another. The whole area is grandfathered in at 16% green space. The new green space will be the creation of an island at the far end of the Target lot. The greenspace between Petco and Central Ave. will become parking spaces. Three mature trees will be transplanted. Porous pavement will be added. The appearance of the Petco building may be upgraded. The developer claimed that it is currently somewhat dangerous to have customers dodging traffic in the roads between Petco and Staples, or between Petco and Target to get to the Petco store. A Board member suggested adding fencing, and board members asked questions about what effect this plan will have on the current CDTA park and ride station in the area. He pointed out that the Board is working to expand Park and ride with CDTA in the area, and does not want the Petco project to interfere with that plan. Waiver approved.

Senior Housing and Services Center 11 Elks Lane: Sketch Plan Review

The developer is planning a 48,400 sq ft, three story building featuring 100 senior apartments, which will be called *Elks Lane Apts*. A one story common building is in front. The developer presented updated plan modifications. There is a 5.9 acre parcel woodland buffer and parking garages in the rear of the site. Emergency access out Abedar Lane to 155. The size of the parcel has increased to 14 acres, of which 8 acres will be left wooded. There will be 77% green space. The architect rotated the building to

move it further from Abedar lane properties, in response to objections from neighbors. The architect reduced the heights of the apartments building to lower the overall aspect of the building, and also made the roof lower and flatter. A buffer of 17 ft. tree plantings will block sight lines from the nearby neighborhood. There is a cliff down to a stream at the rear, which will be left alone.

The neighbors were notified of the plans at a meeting held by the developer on July 28th. This is a moderate income project costing \$800 for a one bedroom apartment, and \$1100 for a two bedroom. IDA guidelines will govern increases in rents; there will be a maximum 2% increase in rent annually. Colonie Senior Centers is the developer, and they are a not-for profit, and will provide a van to service the residents of this building, as well as other senior citizens in the town. An EMS station may be located here as well, but the developer thinks that senior residents would not welcome this. The qualification for being a senior is 55 yrs. of age, but most senior centers house 85+ folks. The apartments will be classified as independent living, so no medical facilities will be on the site. The income requirement is that the senior's annual rent be no more than 1/5 of their income. Sidewalks were suggested on Watervliet Shaker Rd. No conclusion.

The TDE said that the scale and visibility issues previously raised have to be addressed, as well as access for emergency vehicles, and traffic around the building. This is a high density project; 30 single residence apts. Elks Rd. needs to be made a town road, rather than a private road, to accommodate this project. The TDE wants more detail on plantings, heights of buildings and trees, etc.

Kathleen Dalton would like to see info from other groups representing seniors on the need for the project. Neighbor Karen Smith; this is single resident area and people have invested a lot of money in their property. It changes the nature of the neighborhood. The people in the building will need lots of healthcare visits. Since the traffic in Rt. 155 is already at standstill in the rush hour, the increased traffic and potential need for ambulance visits is a serious problem.

Neighbor Bruce; This project is too big and loud for a residential neighborhood.

Michael Stapleton; The Town code requires that new development be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. This project degrades the surrounding property values. The scale is too large for the area. Traffic is already at gridlock at rush hours and when the nearby grade school opens and closes for the day. Why not reuse the Little Sisters of the Poor property, which is being abandoned by the sisters, and which has been used as a nursing home for years?

Roy Marsh. The emergency access road is within 40 ft of his property. He fears what this project will do to his property values.

Board member Dalton: Gridlock might affect ambulance arrival times.

Developer: A traffic study has been done that compared traffic trips at the Sheehy senior citizens Center and the Beltrone Center. Peak traffic is higher in a single family block than in a senior center. About half of the building's residents will have cars.

The TDE commented that projects like this do not have a significant effect on property values.

The Sketch Plan was accepted, the developer will be returning will be retuning for concept approval.

Life Covenant Church 685 Watervliet Shaker Rd. Sketch Plan Review

The plan is for a 36,000 sq.ft. Church. At prior meetings, the Church's plan for Moffit Lane egress and ingress to the site was rejected. From Jan 2013 until now, the proposal has been subject to numerous postponements. The ODA classification and DOT & planning staff recommendation is for the project to have access through Moffit Lane. The post office currently owns Moffit lane. The church has offered to buy it, but the post office won't sell it. The lane was constructed to be a town road, but the town doesn't want it. Developer Zee points out that if Moffit Lane access is rejected, the April 2014 regulations from DOT for commercial property require that the curb cuts and access road to be built should be 75 ft. from Moffitt lane. The current plan being presented is for an access Rd. and curb cuts to be on Rt. 155, 90 ft. from Moffitt Lane. For non-commercial property the rule is 85 ft. Zee says the Church meets the standard either way.

The location of the curb cut is restricted by proximity to a Northway on-ramp. The Church plans to hire the town police to direct traffic during church services. The current plan is for 2 church services on Sunday morning, which the church hopes to expand in the future.

TDE Joe Grasso reports that the traffic problems are a concern. Grasso wants a firm commitment for a traffic cop on a regular basis in perpetuity. He also observed that the new access proposal was not in the materials that the town TDE considered, and it may interfere with turning lanes from other streets, such as Holly Lane.

TDE also wants to see what the impact of the sight of the church from the Northway might be.

Developer: A Traffic consultant is here with review. Zee points out that Planning Boards should be accommodating to Churches.

Traffic Study Person: All access roads are classified as D or better, all others are C or better. Further, Sunday morning is an especially low traffic time. The traffic increase point is only for 15-20 mins after services. For most services there will not be a need for a traffic control officer.

Susan Millstein: How many congregants are there in the Church?

Developer: Less than 750 congregants. Optimistically, the church offerings might grow to seven services per week. Zee; There is already data from five nearby churches in the traffic report. This Church is a replacement for one that is currently on Sand Creek Rd, next to the Sand Creek Middle School.

The Board tabled the project and requires re-submission of concept review, because of the access issues. It will be on a subsequent planning board meeting.

Adjournment: Don Allard motioned to adjourn the CAC meeting at 7:45, Sudhir Kulkarni seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Laura Weed, Aug 29, 2014