

JONES & BEACH ENGINEERS, INC.

85 Portsmouth Avenue
Post Office Box 219
Stratham, NH 03885
Telephone: (603) 772-4746
Fax: (603) 772-0227

Post Office Box 484
Alton, NH 03809
Email: jbe@jonesandbeach.com
www.jonesandbeach.com

February 16, 2015

Town of Durham
Attn. Planning Board
15 Newmarket Road
Durham, NH 03824

**RE: Town Planner's Recommendation Response Letter
Site Plan Review Application – Automobile Service Facility
3 Dover Road, Durham, NH
Tax Map 4, Lot 49
JBE Project No. 14011**

Dear Board Members:

Jones & Beach Engineers, Inc., is in receipt of Town Planner's Recommendations dated January 14, 2015. His original comments are in italics and we respectfully offer the following responses in bold below:

Plans

12) *Legend. A legend is needed on each page. Include a label for the off-site fire hydrant.*

RESPONSE: A legend has been added to each page of the plan set, including a label for the off-site fire hydrant.

13) *Corrections. Change actual front setback shown under Notes.*

RESPONSE: The actual front setback shown under Notes has been corrected.

Access, Circulation, and Parking

14) *Access and circulation. There are some significant challenges with access into and through the site.*

RESPONSE: The proposed layout has been redesigned to provide more efficient access throughout the site.

15) *Traffic study. Some type of study is in order. What issues would the board like to see evaluated?*

RESPONSE: This item has been discussed with the Planning Board and it was agreed that a traffic memorandum would be provided with additional material to be provided at the Board's request.

- 16) Urban compact. *This lot is located in the urban compact, so the Town, not NHDOT, approves the driveway onto Route 108. The applicant should check with NHDOT to confirm this is correct.*

RESPONSE: We have contacted NHDOT and have been informed that this project is located outside of the Urban Compact zone; therefore a NHDOT permit is required.

- 17) Waiver - driveway spacing. *The current (not proposed) Site Plan Regulations call for 1,200 foot spacing between driveways. The board may determine this is not applicable due to the existing driveway (which is being modified slightly) or, if it is applicable, then I recommend the board grant a waiver. The applicant has submitted a waiver request.*

9.02 Streets and Access

Roads and/or driveways from development abutting the following main roads shall be spaced not less than 1,200 feet apart: Routes 4, 108, 155-A, Durham Point Road, Mill Road, Bennett Road, and Packers Falls Road. Where such spacing would cause undue hardship, the Board may modify this requirement.

RESPONSE: We have submitted a waiver requesting relief from this requirement.

- 18) Driveway Easement. *There is an easement of only one lane on the westerly side of the Holiday Inn Express driveway and it does not extend through the Holiday Inn Express lot. Thus, it appears that the applicant could use this only for vehicles entering the site from that driveway. But it would require that vehicles enter through the garage, where customers should not be driving. Since this driveway also serves the Holiday Inn Express site the board could probably not restrict its use in general. The easement is described as a 12-foot wide right of way extending for a distance of 100 feet.*

RESPONSE: The revised site plan proposes to use this existing easement for delivery entry into the site only.

- 19) Drive-through bays. *The applicant said that vehicles would be moved through the bays but the customers would not drive them through.*

RESPONSE: The site plan has been revised to eliminate bay doors along the east side of the property.

- 20) Access. *The applicant said at the site walk that the grade at the entrance is a little steep. This will need to be clarified and grading details provided. The new Site Regulations stipulate a stopping platform with a maximum slope of 3%.*

RESPONSE: The site entrance has been redesigned.

21) Truck access. *The applicant should provide turning movement templates to confirm that trucks using the site could move through it adequately.*

RESPONSE: A truck turning plan will be provided for the Board's review at a later date.

22) Parking. *The applicant said that vehicles being worked on would be parked in the regular parking spaces, before and after the work is done. How functional are the 2 spaces at the rear? These vehicles probably cannot exit via the easement on the Holiday Inn lot.*

RESPONSE: The two (2) parking spaces in the rear are intended for employee use only as depicted on the revised site plans.

23) Handicap parking. *A handicap parking sign will be needed in front of the striped aisle next to the space.*

RESPONSE: A handicap parking sign has been added in front of the striped aisle next to the space.

24) Details. *The turning radius at the rear should probably be removed since vehicles will not be traveling through the Holiday Inn lot. Likewise the R1-1 sign (a stop sign) at the rear should probably be removed. The small grass island between the garage doors may be desirable to break up the pavement a little but this could impede traffic flow.*

RESPONSE: The turning radius and the R1-1 sign (stop sign) are now shown as to be removed on the plans.

25) Loading. *How will loading be handled?*

RESPONSE: Loading will occur in the rear drive, which is for loading and employee parking only.

Architecture

26) Architecture. *Elevations are provided. There are a number of elements that I do not believe meet the Architectural Regulations. I can enumerate these later, if needed (or could do so with the architect and/or a committee, if formed). One challenge is having the front public face of the building mesh well with the utilitarian rear section. For the Courthouse district the regulations state:*

a) General character. *With the exception of a few sites, the Courthouse District is largely geared toward automobile traffic, and indeed has sometimes been referred to as "Gasoline Alley." It is the only section in the Core Commercial area where highway-oriented uses are appropriate, and this is reflected in the Zoning Ordinance. Nonetheless, within this rubric, strong design standards are still important.*

Buildings shall be placed as close to the street as practical (in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance) and there shall be no parking situated directly in front of buildings. Parking shall be situated behind the building if practical. If not practical it may be placed on the side of the building provided the parking area is no closer to the street than the main wall of the building.

- b) *Signature buildings. Here are some signature buildings that help to define the character of the Courthouse District. It is noted, however, these buildings are not located in the automobile-oriented section of the district, along Route 108 heading toward Dover.*

RESPONSE: It is the Applicant's opinion that the current design meets the Site Plan Regulations.

- 27) *Style/material. I strongly recommend that a brick building with a parapet roof be used. This is the appropriate idiom for this building rather than an ersatz wood residential look. In the 1910s and 1920s one story automobile showrooms and small commercial buildings at village centers with a high parapet and ornate brickwork (sometimes called "tapestry brick" were built). This style, or even a more daring modern design, would fit in better with "Gasoline Alley," have more integrity, echo other brick buildings in the vicinity, and mesh better with the rear service area. The building at Durham Village Garage (at bottom left) – with adjustments in the design, including removing the garage doors from the front facade – would be a good model. Here are some other examples, though smaller windows would be in order.*





RESPONSE: It is the Applicant's opinion that they meet the current Site Plan Regulations.

- 28) *Siding.* The front building is shown as being fiber cement (such as Hardiboard®), which is an appropriate alternative for wood siding, if siding is to be used.

RESPONSE: No response necessary.

- 29) *Color.* Andrea Bodo suggested using a darker color, one that is harmonious with the Holiday Inn Express building.

RESPONSE: It is the Applicant's opinion that they meet the current Site Plan Regulations.

- 30) *Building overhang.* The applicant asked if an overhang would be subject to the zoning setbacks. Tom Johnson asked to see a detail to make a determination. (I don't see any provision in the ordinance that allows for an overhang to extend over the setback line.)

RESPONSE: The proposed building has been revised to be located within the setbacks.

- 31) *Ad hoc committee.* I recommend that the board establish an ad hoc committee to review the proposed architecture. In emails the applicant has implied a desire to not have a committee. However, the purpose of the committee is to advise the Planning Board about the design. The applicant and his architect would be encouraged, but not required, to meet with the committee. Beth Olshansky, Barbara Dill, Nancy Webb, and Andrea Bodo have expressed a willingness to serve on such a committee if one is established (Beth, Barbara, and Nancy serve on the Madbury Commons committee, along with Walter Rous and Planning Board members David Williams and Andrew Corrow). I can check with Walter Rous to see if he would be interested in serving.

RESPONSE: No response necessary.

Landscaping

32) *Overall plan.* A fairly minimal landscaping plan is included in the packets. The plan needs to be significantly enhanced with more locations for landscaping. As discussed at the site walk, a number of the existing trees on the westerly side of the site will remain. The trees at the rear of the site would need to be removed to accommodate the parking in the rear. The plan should identify the trees to remain and those to be removed, and include a plan for the protection of those to be preserved.

RESPONSE: The Landscaping Plan has been revised to enhance more landscaping locations. Trees to remain and trees to be removed are now shown on the plan.

33) *Landscaping regulations.* The applicant should review the Landscaping section in the proposed site regulations to check for conformity with the requirements. Several waivers would be needed and should be identified, such as the requirement for a landscaping strip 25 feet wide along Dover Road.

RESPONSE: The plans have been revised with enhanced landscaping and have been brought into conformity with the applicable Site Plan Regulations.

34) *Screening.* The parking area must be screened per Section 5.8.2. Medium height shrubs should be used for this, rather than ground covers. Shrubs must be at least 2-1/2 feet in height at installation.

RESPONSE: The landscaping has been revised to depict medium height shrubs for screening the parking area as required.

35) *Parking and landscaping.* Parking is allowed in the 10 foot side and 15 foot rear setbacks provided there is a 5 foot strip of landscaping and solid screening (per 175-111 G. 5.). The proposed landscaping and screening will need to be approved by the board. The Architectural Regulations state: "Parking shall be situated behind the building if practical. If not practical it may be placed on the side of the building provided the parking area is no closer to the street than the main wall of the building."

RESPONSE: A stockade fence has been provided to screen the proposed parking.

36) *Other requirements.* A planting peninsula at the end of the row of cars is required. At a minimum, the parking space closest to the road should be replaced. Assuming that some parking spaces must be eliminated to accommodate landscaping, the applicant will likely need another variance to reduce parking below 12. Planting details for the new landscaping are needed.

RESPONSE: The site plan has been revised to provide additional landscape area adjacent to parking.

Site Details

37) Lighting. A lighting plan is shown. The maximum is 2.1 footcandles which is appropriate. The details of the proposed lights are difficult to read so separate cut sheets on each of the lights should be submitted. It should be made clear which light cut sheets correspond to which lights on the table. Note the height of the pole light on the plans. It may not exceed 20 feet to the bottom of the light fixture. The existing light pole base should be removed from the lighting plan.

RESPONSE: Lighting cut sheets are enclosed herewith and a lighting legend has been added to the table. A note detailing the pole light height has been added to the plan and that the existing light pole base has been removed from the lighting plan.

38) Signage. Attractive, low key signage is in order. Andrea Bodo suggested using a carved wood sign, though there are other materials that are more durable and have a feel of wood (like urethane). The signage should be reviewed by the Planning Board or the parameters should be set as part of the site plan review. Note that freestanding signs are not permitted in the Courthouse District. 175-129 D. of the Zoning Ordinance does not allow a sign to be located "above the roof or parapet line of the building." It appears that the proposed sign does not meet this requirement. The sign will probably not be finalized until there is a tenant, which may not be secured until after Planning Board approval. The Zoning Ordinance permits only exterior-illuminated signs.

RESPONSE: The proposed sign is depicted on the Architectural plans.

39) Bike rack. The zoning ordinance requires a bicycle rack for any site with 10 or more parking spaces. Information on the design, number of bikes to be accommodated, and location is needed. If the board thinks one is not needed the applicant would need a variance (We can see if any other variances are needed to justify a return to the ZBA).

RESPONSE: A bike rack has been added to the plans.

40) Curbing. It appears that all curbing is vertical granite curbing (VGC), except for the small bump out next to the bays. This should be confirmed, and note 12 modified as appropriate.

RESPONSE: All vertical granite curbing is proposed. Note 12 has been modified as appropriate.

41) Snow storage. The plans call for snow to be stored at the edge of pavement or trucked off site. Snow could probably not be stored in the side buffers given the narrowness of those buffers and the presence of trees. Is it acceptable to store it at the rear? It would likely runoff onto the adjacent property and ditch behind the lot.

RESPONSE: Snow will be stored at the edge of pavement until such time as it can be removed.

42) Fire. *The building will probably need to be sprinkled. The department will need to evaluate the ability of the underground stormwater chambers to support the weight of a truck.*

RESPONSE: No response necessary.

43) Asphalt. *The applicant said they would retain much of the existing asphalt on site. It needs to be clarified exactly which areas would be removed and which would remain, and how the existing asphalt would be handled.*

RESPONSE: Due to elevation changes throughout the site, the existing pavement will be replaced.

44) Sidewalk. *There should be a sidewalk from the front entrance to the Town's sidewalk. Also, are there any improvements to the Town's sidewalk that are appropriate to make (as an off-site exaction)? What is the purpose of the sidewalk easement in the front shown on the existing conditions plan?*

RESPONSE: A sidewalk from the front entrance to the Town's sidewalk has been added to the plan. The sidewalk easement was previously granted to allow a sidewalk to be constructed on the subject property.

45) Retaining wall. *A wall is shown on the westerly side. How high will this be? A detail drawing is needed.*

RESPONSE: A retaining wall detail has been added to the plans. Retaining wall height varies from 2.5' to approximately 3.5'.

46) Porous pavers. *The applicant should bring a sample of the pavers to the board to look at and a photograph of what they will look like. How will the turf be maintained?*

RESPONSE: The site plans have been revised and the pavers have been eliminated from the design.

Holiday Inn Express

47) *Measures are needed to mitigate potential impacts upon and views from the Holiday Inn Express (of the service bays). Will vehicles be parked/stored in those aisles next to the hotel? The garage doors on the westerly side would need to be closed at all times except when vehicles are moving through. Would this be creating an enforcement problem?*

RESPONSE: The site plans have been revised and the bay doors and drives have been eliminated from the west side of the building.

48) *Mark Beliveau, an attorney with Pierce Atwood, representing the Holiday Inn Express, contacted me in early November asking about the project. He expressed concerns about the potential impacts upon the hotel, including noise, lighting, hours of operation, circulation, the small amount of landscaping on the site, views toward the bays if the doors are open, the number of cars moving through the site, potential parking of cars on the hotel lot, the view of the site from the hotel. I understand that the hotel spoke against the variances at the ZBA meeting. John Formella, another attorney with Pierce Atwood, attended the site walk on behalf of the Holiday Inn Express.*

RESPONSE: No response necessary.

Utilities

49) *Utilities. April Talon suggested moving the water shut offs off the property and into the road right of way. Gas service is not proposed at this time. Will there be any new utility structures visible from Dover Road? If so they should be screened.*

RESPONSE: There are no proposed new utility structures that would be visible from Dover Road.

50) *Drainage. An underground detention system is proposed. Is there any concern with having a catch basin behind the dumpster? What and where is the steepest slope on the lot? A scale is needed on the grading plan.*

RESPONSE: The site plans have been revised and the catch basin has been relocated. A scale has been added to the grading plan as requested.

51) *Dumpster. A note should be added to the site plan referencing screening and the screening detail shown elsewhere. The enclosure should probably be on all four sides of the dumpster. Should recycling facilities be included? The color for the fencing will need to be determined later. Section 9.4.2 of the new Site Plan Regulations has some standards for dumpsters – 20 feet from the property line and any stormwater inlet. The applicant should apply for waivers as appropriate.*

RESPONSE: A note regarding screening has been added to the site plan as requested. A screening detail has also been added to the plans.

52) *Street light. Mike Lynch stated, "When we installed the new decorative street lighting along Dover Road back in 1999/2000, the Cumberland Farms Canopy did not allow us to install that street light. This needs to be part of the lighting plan for this parcel."*

RESPONSE: The Applicant is not opposed to the Town installing the street light as it did for the remainder of Durham Road.

53) Dover Road. *The applicant said they can handle all of the utilities on this side of the road and would not need to trench or tunnel across Dover Road.*

RESPONSE: No response necessary.

54) Electric pole. *The applicant intends for the electric pole on the easterly side of the site to remain. He estimated a cost of about \$50,000 to bury the lines there.*

RESPONSE: No response necessary.

Other issues

55) Management plan. *We will need a management plan for the project. What sort of information would the board like to see included?*

RESPONSE: The Applicant proposes to return to the Board with a Management Plan once the tenant has been determined.

56) Specific uses. *Though the tenant is not yet identified, we will need to establish specifics for the uses and activities, e.g. what kinds of work will be performed? The applicant has described it as "general automobile repair." Will work be performed only on passenger vehicles? Will work be performed on trucks, motorcycles, and other types of vehicles? The garage door on the right is taller, implying that larger vehicles will be accommodated.*

RESPONSE: The Applicant proposes to return to the Board with a Management Plan once the tenant has been determined.

57) Hours of operation. *Should a limit be established for the benefit of the Holiday Inn Express?*

RESPONSE: As the two uses are both allowed in this District, the Applicant suggests that no special provisions are necessary.

Environmental issues

58) Monitoring Wells. *There are two monitoring wells on the lot – one located toward the rear and one in the front left corner. Is this an active or closed file with NHDES?*

RESPONSE: The NHDES file is in the process of being closed.

59) Gas tanks. *According to the applicant there are no tanks on site.*

RESPONSE: No response necessary.

60) Chemicals, fluids, and waste. *What materials will be used? How will they be stored? How will they be disposed of?*

RESPONSE: These items are to be determined upon tenant acquisition.

61) Soils/ledge. *Have any soil tests been taken?*

RESPONSE: No soil tests have been performed.

62) Permits. *What state permits are needed for a service facility? A NHDES Sewer Connection permit will be needed.*


RESPONSE: These items are to be determined upon tenant acquisition.

The following items are enclosed for review:

1. One (1) copy of Lighting Cut Sheets.
2. Three (3) bound copies of Drainage Analysis Sediment and Erosion Control Plan.
3. Ten (10) reduced-size (11" x 17") copies of plan set.
4. Five (5) full-size copies of plan set.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact our office. Thank you very much for your time.

Very truly yours,
JONES & BEACH ENGINEERS, INC.


Barry W. Gier, P.E.
Vice President

cc: Tropic Star Development, LLC (Letter & full-size plan set via US Mail)