



PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Town of Durham

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Planning Consultant's Review

Planning Board Meeting – Wednesday, June 17, 2020

- IV. **Public Hearing - Mill Plaza Redevelopment**, 7 Mill Road. *Continued discussion of landscaping and requested waivers; presentation of Colonial Durham's report on property values (if ready); and discussion of procedure and schedule going forward.* Continued review of application for site plan and conditional use for mixed use redevelopment project and activity within the wetland and shoreland overlay districts. Colonial Durham Associates, property owner. Sean McCauley, agent. Joe Persechino, Tighe & Bond, engineer. Ari Pollack, attorney. (Rick Taintor is serving as the Town's Contract Planner.) Central Business District. Map 5, Lot 1-1.
- I recommend that the Board reopen the public hearing and vote to continue it to June 24 or July 8, 2020.

Please note the following:

- 1) On June 10, 2020, the Planning Board opened the continued public hearing on the revised Site Plan for the Mill Plaza redevelopment project. The applicant's consultant, Emily Innes, presented revisions to the proposed landscape plan and discussed the waivers and other discretionary approvals that are being requested. After public comment on the landscape plan and stormwater impacts, the Board discussed the requested waivers from the foundation planting strip requirements and the minimum width of landscaped areas. Board members also discussed replacing the smaller ornamental trees in the landscape plan with larger shade trees in order to provide more environmental benefit, and finding ways to provide larger planting areas to promote long-term tree health. The Board voted to continue the hearing to a special meeting on June 17 to continue discussion of the requested waivers, and to hear a presentation from the applicant on the real estate analysis that the applicant indicated would be available no later than the morning of June 12.
- 2) As of 9:50 this morning I have not received Colonial Durham Associates' real estate report. Therefore, I assume that this matter will not be presented at the June 17 meeting, but will instead be deferred to the June 24 meeting.
- 3) Colonial Durham Associates hopes to provide the traffic study soon, with the intention of presenting it at the July 8 meeting. Emily Innes has asked if the Board could make a decision at the June 17 meeting as to whether it wants to commission an independent peer review of the traffic study (as was done for the stormwater management study).

Settling that question now could allow for presentation of the study, the peer review, and the applicant's response at a single Planning Board meeting. However, waiting for completion of the peer review would also further delay the initial presentation of the applicant's traffic study.

- 4) The following topics (at least) will have to be addressed in subsequent meetings. I have indicated suggested meeting dates for some of these topics, and the Board may want to start thinking about this schedule (which, of course, is always subject to change depending on whether the applicant's materials are available).
 - Discussion of CDA's real estate report (possibly at the 6/24 meeting if the report is presented at the 6/17 meeting)
 - Discussion as to whether the Board will commission an independent economic or real estate impact study, and what the scope of that study should be (this question was discussed at the May 13 meeting but a decision was deferred until after Board receives and discusses CDA's report) (possibly 6/17 or 6/24)
 - Presentation and review of CDA's traffic study (7/8 or later)
 - Presentation and review of the independent peer review of the traffic study (after 7/8)
 - Presentation and discussion of the independent economic or real estate impact study (if the Board decides to commission such a study)
 - Residential uses (i.e., mixed-use conditional use permit) (perhaps on 7/8 if the traffic study isn't ready for that meeting)
 - Wetland and shoreland conditional use permit criteria
 - Architectural design standards
- 5) At some point in the process – probably after completion of all or most of the above – CDA will have to submit a new complete plan set that will respond to the comments and issues identified on the current plan set. This would include removing the off-site parking concept from the plans as decided at the June 10 meeting, resolving discrepancies between the site and landscape plans, and other changes based on comments from the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Taintor, AICP
Community Planning Consultant
June 12, 2020