

**PLANNING BOARD MEETING  
MINUTES**

Minutes of the Augusta Planning Board meeting held on February 23, 2016

Board members present: Justin Poirier, Alison Nichols, Delaine Nye, Steve Dumont, Tom Connors, Bill McKenna, Pete Pare, Corey Vose

Board members absent: Heather Pouliot

City staff present: Matt Nazar, Betsy Poulin.

Guests present: Lee Allen, Troy McDonald, Bob Gage, Lisa Hodgkins, Craig Hodgkins, Donald Rodrigue, Therese Rodrigue, Tony Loiko, Darin Fredette, George Pillsbury

**Tabled from February 9, 2016 Meeting.**

**Public Hearing: Major Development and Conditional Use. Application of Franklin Land Associates, LLC to build a 9,100 SF Dollar General Store with associated parking, stormwater management and roadway improvements on a vacant lot. Assessor's Map 57, Lot 9. Located at 296 Eastern Avenue in the Planned Development District (PD).**

Matt Nazar gave an overview of this agenda item. The Board was looking for more information about the building design in particular. The applicant made modifications to the building design and provided additional handouts at the meeting.

George Pillsbury sent a message via email which was summarized.

Public Hearing Opened:

Public to Speak in Favor of the Application:

Lisa Hodgkins. Feels the proposal is quite nice and it will be good for the neighborhood to have access to the facilities the store provides. The smaller store layout is more convenient for elderly than big box stores. It will be a convenience for people, affordable shopping, and create jobs.

Public to Speak Against the Application:

George Pillsbury. He is not against the store itself. He is concerned with how the proposal will affect the character of the neighborhood. He has concerns that the character of the area will change to the look of Western Avenue. More development like this can affect the neighborhood. Many empty storefronts exist in the city which could be used.

Public to Speak Neither for nor Against the Application:

Tony Loiko. He bought, with Darin Fredette (present at the meeting) the small ranch to the east of the driveway entrance. They are working with Coffin Engineering. The fence is currently on the property line and feels it should be moved back onto the Dollar General property, to allow room for maintenance of the fence and leave a better bufferzone. He would like it moved 5 feet.

Public Hearing Closed.

Lee Allen, Northeast Civil Solutions. The fence is moved back 4 feet from the property line. Moving the fence 5 feet would start to encroach into the buffer. For the landscape plan, the tree species are more columnar to help avoid conflicts with overhead wires. Plants in the right-of-way have been moved back onto the site.

Bob Gage, GBT Realty. The architecture has been revised. Any Board questions?

Delaine. The latest image of the architectural is better than what we received in our packets. She still has concerns. Are the windows false?

Bob: They are called spandrel panels and cannot be true windows due to the shelving inside. They are typically blacked out with tinted glass.

Matt: They would be similar to CVS or Walgreens.

Delaine: The roof looks like it is not finished. Did you copy another building on Eastern Avenue? Delaine shows some pictures of other gateway buildings in the City. CVS has real windows. Walgreens has gable roofs. This building does not look like the Walgreens. Rite Aid on Hospital Street has clapboards, gable roofs, etc. All these designs look like other well built buildings in the area. She would like to see something that fits in more.

Bob: This is not a copy of anything in the area, but it has worked at other locations. How about a gable roof?

Alison. Agrees with Delaine. It was her hope from the discussion a few weeks ago that the redesign would be different and look less industrial and less like a box. The variations on the CVS and Walgreens look good.

Bob: He can redesign to have parapets on different levels, but he feels the current design looks better.

Alison. It would look better to wrap the materials around the sides of the building.

Delaine: Would you like a copy of these pictures?

Bob: The CVS has a mansard roof and is very similar. Does the rest of the Board feel the same?

Peter. The windows should be discussed. The windows on the outside are opaque, but not true windows. This is standard for retail buildings because they need shelf space. Other buildings in the area have flat roofs, but at what point is the neighborhood being sacrificed? He understands it is a gateway, and feels the store would be beneficial to the neighborhood. He understands why the windows are designed that way. What material are the clapboards?

Bob: The current design is vinyl, but it can be changed. We desperately want to build this building, have room in the budget for upgrades.

Corey: Doesn't have an issue with the windows. Glass windows could be a security issue if they were true windows. He doesn't want every building in the city to look the same. Feels buildings can have their own identity. The CVS has two sides with different rooflines, and being more appealing from 3 sides would be preferable. Doesn't want the applicant to be asked to keep coming back.

Bob: Nothing was done on the sides because trees are there and the building is set back from the road.

Corey: The trees around the building could be removed in the future, so more architectural definition would be good.

Tom: Is anyone opposed to the business, or is it just the look?

Alison: The business is not an issue, just trying to make it fit with the neighborhood.

Justin: Most of the windows are on other similar buildings are fake, but the top is clear glass to let in light. Sales signs are typically inside the glass.

Board Discussion:

Delaine: Matt, most of the buildings have common elements. True windows, clapboards, typical New England architecture. The ones lacking this character were built before zoning. There are clear instructions in the Comprehensive Plan that should be followed.

Matt: No new commercial buildings have been constructed in this area. Some have been reviewed by the Board, but not constructed.

Delaine: This is an opportunity to decide whether or not to use the Comprehensive Plan to review projects on Eastern Avenue. It is an opportunity to not lower the bar for design. Page 29 speaks of the Sense of Place and design standards with high quality materials. Page 32 allows for more mixed use development with a walkable design. Page 35, under Guiding General Principles: the City's gateways should receive special attention with better site design standards including Eastern Avenue. Page 40, under East Side Residential, design and landscape standards should happen in a way to improve the character of the neighborhood. Page 41, under East Side Residential, form based zoning focusing on building design and scale should be used in the area to allow for reuse of the building in the future. She feels the applicant had a second chance to come back with a better design and they did not. She feels it is a big box look and they could do better.

Peter: Feels the aesthetics are subjective and discussions could go on for a long time. He does not want to lower the bar, but how do you set it and how do people agree on what is right? It is hard to get consensus with a group. We need to articulate what the bar is for the applicant to meet. He doesn't want to frustrate people coming to start businesses.

Corey: Feels a book of sorts could be helpful for what designs are appropriate for different areas of the City. Everyone has different opinions on what is attractive. Three sided top of wall/roof detail would be good for this building. Doesn't want to keep sending people back and forth for redesign. Feels the Board should give clear guidance to the applicant. Feels the roofline could be different.

Alison. Neighborhood compatibility is subjective and hard to define.

Pete. Could the windows be operational?

Bob: Would a gable roof be satisfactory if brick and spandrel windows were removed?

Delaine: Feels a gable would improve the look. Windows removal would not be acceptable. Could the entrance be defined better for a New England character? She would not vote for this as proposed tonight. Would want to see another rendition with an improved façade.

Matt: The roof projects out two feet from the façade; it could look two dimensional in the drawing. Corey, you suggested wrapping the roof around, would you want it all to wrap around the building?

Corey: Removal of the windows would not be ok for him. Would like the brick, clapboards and roofing to wrap around the two sides of the building.

Bob: Shows an image of a building with closed shutters and a gable roof. Taller entrance pediment. Full gable roof with the same building footprint.

Pete: Did we decide on the siding?

Bob: Vinyl is planned, is that OK?

Delaine: Wants it to look like clapboards. OK with vinyl, but would accept hardiboard/cement board.

Bob: Roof HVAC would be screened, and be on the ground to the west of the building. The path would wrap around the HVAC. Fence set back 4 feet from the property line, acceptable to abutter? (Yes).

Alison: How tall are the lights?

Bob: 18 feet.

Tom: Will there be another sign on the property?

Bob: Yes, another sign will be near the entrance, internally lit like the one on the building. It would adhere to the standards in the area.

Alison: This is concerning the application of Franklin Land Associates, LLC for a Major Development and Conditional Use Review as per Sections 4.5 and 6.3.4. The applicant is proposing to build a 9,100 sq ft Dollar General Store with associated parking and stormwater drainage on a vacant lot. The project is located at 296 Eastern Avenue in the Planned Development (PD) zone and can be found on Tax Map 57, Lot 9.

I have considered and agree with the Findings of Fact in the staff review and would like to add the following findings:

1. On February 17 the applicant submitted two additional building design options and a revised landscaping plan.
2. On February 23 the applicant submitted two more additional building design plans.
3. The HVAC units will be located on the ground on the west side of the building and the planned sidewalk will extend around them.
4. Option # 4 as presented this evening has met acceptable standards.

I move to approve this application.

Second: Corey

Vote: 7:0. All in Favor. Motion passes.

**Minutes**

February 9, 2016 Minutes

Motion by Alison to approve the minutes with noted corrections.

Second: Steve.

Vote: 6:0:1. Corey abstained as he was not present at the meeting.

**Adjourn**

Motion by Pete to adjourn at 8:11 pm.

Second: Corey.

Further Discussion. None.

Vote: 7:0. All in Favor. Motion Passed.

Minutes by Betsy Poulin, Assistant Planner.