

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
August 1, 2019**

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Nistico, John Alden, Diane Clemens, Steven Shaw
(Andrew Boutin was absent).

ADMINISTRATION: Robin Pierce, Community Development Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Greg Rabideau, Rabideau Architects, Inc; Tyler Cote,
Rabideau Architects, Inc; Doug Henson, Lamoureux &
Dickinson; Roger Dickinson, Lamoureux & Dickinson;
Brett Grabowski, Milot Real Estate;

- AGENDA:**
1. Call to Order
 2. Audience for Visitors
 3. Additions/Amendments to the Agenda
 4. Minutes
 5. Review and Sign Ethics Policy
 - Elect Chairperson and Vice-chairperson
 6. Public Hearing
 - Comprehensive Plan
 7. Public Meeting
 - Conceptual Plan, Mixed Use Development, Removal of Existing Buildings, 9 & 11 Park Street - VC District, Park St, LLC, owners.
 8. Other Planning Commission Items
 9. Adjournment

1. CALL TO ORDER

David Nistico called the meeting to order at 6:04PM.

2. AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS

There were no comments from the public at this time.

3. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions or amendments to the agenda at this time.

Robin Pierce, Community Development Director, added an agenda item to discuss the proposed colors for 1 Main Street, which will occur after agenda item #7.

4. MINUTES

May 16, 2019

MOTION by Steven Shaw, SECOND by John Alden to approve the minutes of May 16, 2019 as written. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

May 23, 2019

MOTION by Steven Shaw, SECOND by John Alden to approve the minutes of May 23, 2019 as written. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

June 6, 2019

MOTION by Steven Shaw, SECOND by John Alden, to approve the minutes of June 6, 2019 as written. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

5. REVIEW AND SIGN ETHICS POLICY

A. Elect Chairperson and Vice-chairperson:

MOTION by John Alden, SECOND by Steven Shaw, to nominate David Nistico for Essex Junction Planning Commission Chair. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); nomination carried.

MOTION by David Nistico, SECOND by Steven Shaw, to nominate John Alden for Essex Junction Planning Commission Vice Chair. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); nomination carried.

6. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Comprehensive Plan:

Mr. Pierce noted that this agenda item was a placeholder in the event that the Village Trustees made any changes or recommendations to the Village Comprehensive Plan during their review. The Village Trustees accepted the final draft Village Comprehensive Plan at their July 23 meeting, and there are no changes for the Planning Commission to discuss at this time.

7. PUBLIC MEETING

A. Conceptual plan review for a proposed mixed-use building and removal of existing buildings; construct 9,000 s.f. commercial space on 1st floor with 48 studio apartments on the upper floors with parking deck at 9 & 11 Park Street in the VC District by Park St, LLC, owners:

Application participants were sworn in by the Chair of the Planning Commission.

Mr. Pierce introduced this agenda item as a conceptual plan for demolition and construction of a proposed mixed-use building. The conceptual plan has been reviewed by staff.

Tyler Cote of Rabideau Architects Incorporated walked through the proposed conceptual plan. The proposed new building will include 9,000 square feet of commercial space on the first floor and 48 studio apartments on the upper floors. Additionally, it will include below-grade parking, surface parking, and an elevated deck that would help ameliorate parking pressure in that area of the Village. He added that the proposed design aligns with the Town Plan's development goals of mixed-use buildings that would additionally consolidate development into urban areas of the Town and Village and bring diversity to the area. He also noted that Park Terrace would be widened at its intersection with Park Street and a 5-foot Village sidewalk would be installed.

Mr. Dickinson of Lamoureux & Dickinson provided a civil plan review and described the proposed parking, streets, sidewalks, curbing, ramps, driveways, and landscaping for the conceptual plan. He outlined Park Terrace's current dimensions and proposed expanded dimensions under the conceptual plan. He reviewed the dimensions of the proposed new sidewalk and corresponding parking. He described shared two-way driveways, surface parking, and ramps to below-ground and above-ground parking.

Mr. Alden requested that connections between parking design drawings and final site plans be cross-checked to ensure that they align when the final plan is presented to the Planning Commission. He additionally requested that the site plans include the perimeter of the deck and garage in relation to the existing layout.

Ms. Clemens asked for clarification regarding previously-installed infiltration cells in the streets on the property. Mr. Dickinson replied that the infiltration cells in question were installed on behalf of a previous project on this parcel and will be removed, but that they could be reused if they are removed carefully. Mr. Alden suggested adding this to the demolition plan.

Ms. Clemens also asked about accessibility of compost, recycling, and trash receptacles. Mr. Cote clarified that the containers can be brought down to the sidewalk and the trucks can be backed up down the driveway into the parking lot for disposal.

Mr. Alden asked for more specific detail about the space around the parking garage in terms of elevation and dimensions. Mr. Cote replied that his firm is currently working with a structural engineer on this design. Mr. Alden suggested that whatever design element separates the parking garage from the driveway could be an opportunity to integrate that edge of the structure in an aesthetically pleasing way. Mr. Alden also commented that the number of parking spaces in the proposed plan is impressive and that extra spaces would help alleviate parking scarcity on Park Street.

Ms. Clemens emphasized the importance of a well-designed parking garage, since many tenants will be facing the parking garage from the proposed building, and that retail customers will most likely approach the building from the parking garage. Mr. Rabideau replied that all sides of the building will be given the same design considerations and that he recognizes the importance of a well-designed structure. Mr. Shaw added that illustrations and visualizations for future iterations of this conceptual plan would be helpful for future presentations to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Cote then described the proposed mixed-use building's design elements, layout, and building materials. The lower level will be primarily brick, to mirror appearance of 4 Pearl Street. Sections of the lower level of the building will be broken up by grey Nichiha panels and siding, and upper levels will be a darker grey than the base and will have lap siding, with white windows and trim. The storefront portion of the building will either be black or dark bronze. Mr. Cote noted that this mix of colors and materials will help break up the building aesthetically.

Mr. Alden commented that the building's higher floors do not look like they are being broken up, and that 3-dimensional renderings would help to illustrate the design elements further. He also commented that several elements such as fenestrations seemed to change in style and those patterns should be as consistent as possible to adhere to the historic district design standards. He also asked for further details on the cornice design, but these will be forthcoming in 3-dimensional renderings.

Mr. Shaw made a general comment that many of the more recently proposed developments have focused primarily on including studio and one-bedroom apartments, and asked if this is market-driven. Mr. Rabideau replied that it has to do with the cost of rentals, that the price of two-bedroom apartments is increasing, and that there is a current demand for smaller apartments. He added that increasing density could help bring down cost, and that having smaller units allows the developers to offer better amenities within the units.

Mr. Alden asked about plans for a potential small plaza and patio space next to the building, and if there are details. Mr. Pierce noted that staff had suggested adding a fountain, a cluster of trees, or another sort of extra feature to the plaza to elevate the appearance of the space and streetscape. Mr. Nistico emphasized that the aesthetic details are crucial to ensuring that the Planning Commission has enough information to make informed decisions regarding proposed plans.

MOTION by John Alden, SECOND by Steven Shaw, to close the public portion of conceptual plan review for Mixed Use Development, Removal of Existing Buildings, 9 & 11 Park Street, Park St, LLC. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

Ms. Clemens noted that the above-grade parking will be open to the sun, and asked whether the Planning Commission should explore adding solar panels and gazebos to the upper deck in order to meet shade requirements (20%). Mr. Alden replied that care should be taken to consider how additions to the upper deck of the parking garage may impact the views of tenants on upper floors of the building who face the parking garage, and that he agrees with the plan as it stands for that element. Mr. Pierce also pointed out that solar panels may impact the elevation of the building.

MOTION by John Alden, SECOND by Steven Shaw, to approve the Conceptual Plan for Mixed Use Development, Removal of Existing Buildings, 9 & 11 Park Street, Park St, LLC with the following stipulations:

- 1. All Staff comments in this Staff Report shall be addressed to the satisfaction of Village Staff prior to submission for Final Site Plan approval.**
- 2. Stormwater management will be provided entirely on-site. The Village Engineer shall review and approve the site prior to a CO.**
- 3. The landscaping Plan for Final Site Plan review shall include the addition of a fountain instead of the middle set of steps from Park Street to the plaza at the front of the building.**
- 4. Construction equipment and material unloading/loading etc. shall occur along Park Terrace to avoid disruption/damage to School Street.**

5. All work shall comply with the Village of Essex Junction Land Development Code.
6. Upon approval of building use a change request will be submitted to obtain additional water and sewer use allocations by the applicant to the Village.
7. The Village reserves the right to require drainage improvements in the future if drainage problems arise as a result of this project.
8. There shall be no disturbance to the roadway and curbing along Park Street.
9. All staff comments in the Staff Report shall be addressed and satisfied prior to application for Final Site Plan review.
10. The materials and colours proposed shall receive approval from the Planning Commission. Samples of the materials and colours shall be provided to the Planning Commission no later than Final Site Plan application.
11. The applicant shall complete and sign a Sewer Capacity Voluntary Permit Revocation Form prior to the Village releasing a Letter of Capacity to the State of Vermont.
12. Applicant shall ensure there is no light trespass onto the adjacent property.
13. The applicant shall store snow on the property or have it removed from site.

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

FRIENDLY AMENDMENT provided by Diane Clemens and accepted by John Alden and Steven Shaw, to strike the word “fountain” from above stipulation #3 and replace with “point of interest.” **VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.**

John Alden made an AMENDED MOTION, seconded by Steven Shaw, to approve the Conceptual Plan for Mixed Use Development, Removal of Existing Buildings, 9 & 11 Park Street, Park St, LLC with the above and amended stipulations.

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

8. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

The Planning Commission discussed the proposed color plan for the property at 1 Main Street, but the discussion was postponed pending a site visit by the Planning Commission and until further details are available.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Steven Shaw, SECOND by Diane Clemens, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.