

**Public Hearing Minutes
Planning Board
SITE PLAN REVIEW and SPECIAL PERMIT, MULTIPLE PRINCIPAL STRUCTURES
HOLYOKE HOTEL, 245 WHITING FARMS ROAD
(meeting is being recorded)**

On Tuesday, January 13, 2015, the Holyoke Planning Board continued the Public Hearing (from Nov 25, 2014) regarding a Site Plan Review, and Special Permit for Multiple Principal Structures for Holyoke Hotel submitted by Shield Hotel Management for the property located at 245 Whiting Farms Road. The Hearing was held at 7:30 p.m. in the 4th Floor Conference Room of the City Hall Annex, 20 Korean Veterans Plaza, Holyoke, Massachusetts.

Planning Board

Mimi Panitch Chairman
Christian LaChapelle Vice-Chairman
Mark Joy Secretary
John Kelley Member
Eileen Regan Member

Planning Staff

Marcos Marrero..... Director
Jeffrey Burkott Principal Planner
Claire Ricker Senior Planner
Sharon Konstantinidis.... Head Clerk

Others Present

John Furman Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB)
John Redmond Shield Hotel
Matthew Sokop City Engineer

MIMI PANITCH, at 7:46 p.m., called for a motion to reopen the Planning Board Public Hearing. A motion was made by JOHN KELLEY and seconded by EILEEN REGAN. The motion carried 5-0.

JOHN FURMAN provided a brief overview of the project, a review of the changes since the November 15, 2013 approved plan (file #95), and submitted updated plans since the November 25, 2014 Public Hearing dated 12/31/2014. He stated that he was seeking conditional approval pending a review of the outstanding comments.

JOHN FURMAN stated that the intent of the project has not changed only the use of the building known as Rest2/Retail has changed from a restaurant use to 5600+/- square foot of additional retail space. In addition, the pool has been relocated from the north side to the south side and the parking area reconfigured. The building known as Rest2/Retail was shifted (north) to accommodate parking in the front which yielded an additional 27 parking spaces. A trash area was created in the back of the building and would accommodate a roll out type of dumpster if the truck turning radius was not adequate. In addition to the 27 parking spaces, the plan shows a raised pedestrian area which could provide 12 additional parking spaces if needed.

JOHN FURMAN, regarding the Fire Department’s requirement for access from Whiting Farms Road, stated that Shield’s Hotel property is separated from Whiting Farms Road by a 30 foot easement with the abutting property owner (O’Connell Oil). Therefore, their signature is required on the MADOT application for a curb cut and an agreement has not been reached. O’Connell is displeased that they will be losing valuable parking spaces within the Shield parking lot as he believes that O’Connell currently does not meet the parking requirements. Once this issue is resolved and the application is signed by O’Connell, Shield can move forward with applying for a curb cut with MADOT. In addition, from the O’Connell access driveway to the 91N on ramp is considered by MADOT as a “no access line”; no curb cut is allowed. VHB would need to petition MADOT for a “break in access” approval which is a lengthy and costly process. MR FURMAN stated that the Fire Chief has accepted that Shield will continue to pursue MADOT approval with no guarantee of success.

JOHN FURMAN, regarding the Whiting Farms Road intersection design, stated that a 30% design plan was submitted to the DPW and City Engineer for review prior to MADOT submittal. Additional comments relative to traffic turning lanes were discussed. Proposed was proper signage to indicate that the right lane was for the proposed development; straight for Lower Westfield Road; additional signage with a curb cut graphic indicative of a right turn for I-91. He added that the previously approved plan showed a flashing yellow light at the left turn at Lower Westfield Road and Whiting Farms Road which has since been completed.

JOHN FURMAN stated that none of the above changes effect the Stormwater Permit and all of the outstanding DPW comments from the letter dated 1-12-15 would be addressed.

Regarding #4, he stated that discussions with the PVTA have begun to determine if a bus will be entering the new development or using the pull off on Whiting Farms Road. It is undetermined if the bench and trash receptacle in the right-of-way was needed. A concrete pad for a bus shelter would be installed at the internal bus stop.

Regarding an email received by the City Engineer relative to sewer service, JOHN FURMAN stated that he would televise (camera)the work when extending the sewer to Lower Westfield Road; a water usage analysis would also be performed.

A letter dated 1-13-14 was received from the Water Department requesting minor design changes to which they would comply.

JEFFREY BURKOTT requested that all comments previously mentioned be submitted in writing as well as the responses to the 43 comments as listed in a letter dated 1-12-15. (see VHB Memorandum Jan 6, 2015)

Regarding #24, he asked if the proposed crosswalk between the new hotel and restaurant #1 was the best location as it was not a convenient natural travel path for customers. JOHN FURMAN stated that it could not be relocated due to the turning radius of the vehicles. JEFFREY BURKOTT stated that the pedestrian connection between Restaurant #1 and Restaurant #2 to Retail #2/Retail was also not a convenient natural travel path for customers since the destination was closer then the travel path. JOHN FURMAN stated that there is connectivity to every building although not always ideal; they have met all ADA requirements. By eliminating the corner parking spot (6) for a crosswalk and remain ADA compliant, a ramp was required which resulted in a sloped surface between the patio and the crosswalk.

Regarding #30, JOHN FURMAN stated that he understood that a Special Permit to exceed the sign size was required. He added that the proposed pylon sign located near the highway portion of the site was considered a pylon sign, and not a billboard, as it was not longer then it was wider and it was located on their property and not in a right of way. MARCOS MARRERO clarified that the pylon sign was facing the highway to inform of the business and not the businesses entrance and therefore a billboard. JOHN FURMAN disagreed and noted that a pylon sign had to be near the entrance and not face the entrance; he recognized that the proposed pylon was not located near the entrance. JEFFREY BURKOTT read the Zoning Ordinance definition for a sign off premises. MARK JOY noted that the sign was not off-premises as it is located on his property. JOHN FURMAN stated that they were not seeking approval of the sign with this submittal and that Shield would be back for a Special Permit for an Increase in Sign Size.

Regarding #31, JOHN FURMAN clarified that 2 handicapped spaces were provided for each use on the site.

Regarding #42, JOHN FURMAN stated that there was no intention on using the "future parking spaces"; they were proposed to show there was a potential for additional parking.

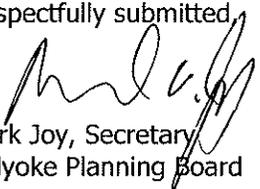
Regarding #43, JOHN FURMAN noted that the configuration has not changed; the straight arrow was on the wrong directional lane; and study shows that it warrants a traffic light.

MIMI PANITCH asked for those that wished to speak in favor or against the project, or to ask questions to come forward. No one was forth coming.

Adjournment

MIMI PANITCH, at 9:07 p.m., called for a motion to close the Public Hearing. A motion was made by EILEEN REGAN and seconded by MARK JOY. The motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,


Mark Joy, Secretary
Holyoke Planning Board