



TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY

Economic Development Commission

Special Meeting Minutes, Monday, October 2, 2023 - 6:30 p.m.
Shepardson Center Room 4
(approved with corrections)

Present:

Chairman Terrence McAuliffe
Commissioner David Cappelletti
Commissioner Jesse Langer
Commissioner Nicole Griffin
Commissioner Armando Paolino
Commissioner Mark Petrucci

Also present Michael Dooling
Anthony Iacovino
Ryan McEvoy
Edward (Ned) Fitzpatrick

Absent Commissioner Frank Mirovsky

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman McAuliffe called the meeting to order at about 6:30 pm with roll call and pledge of allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mark Petrucci MOTIONED to approve the August 28, 2023 meeting minutes, SECOND by Nicole Griffin and unanimously voted.

DISCUSSION

Chairman McAuliffe welcomed guest Michael Dooling, author of "Commercial sprawl threatens historic district" and former news librarian at the Republican-American. Mr. Dooling, a Middlebury resident of 40 years, raised concerns about commercial developments endangering Middlebury's historic charm. He spotlighted the Middlebury Center Historic District, established in 1985, and criticized Dr. Dean Yimoyines for renovations that stripped properties of their historical significance. Mr. Dooling expressed worries over Middlebury's evolving character and called for a dedicated oversight commission.

Chairman McAuliffe highlighted the need to preserve town history while fostering economic growth. Mr. Dooling cited towns like Roxbury and Woodbury, emphasizing their preservation efforts. He advocated for an established historic

commission in Middlebury, pointing out the potential for collaboration with the State Historical Preservation Office.

In discussion with commissioners, Mr. Dooling also touched on infrastructure developments and the idea of a village center, emphasizing thoughtful planning. He discussed the various state agencies involved, and the National Park Service. Concluding, he underscored the importance of maintaining historical integrity and was encouraged by Chairman McAuliffe to bring his proposal for a Historic District to the Board of Selectmen.

NEW BUSINESS

Architecture Review – Southford Park, LLC, 764 Southford Road

Ryan McEvoy, PE of SLR Consulting, presented a proposal for a flex industrial space at 764 Southford Road, currently the site of the Timex headquarters. The 77-acre property is being considered for two new Flex Industrial Space Buildings. The larger building will span 539,000 square feet, while the smaller one will cover approximately 130,000 square feet.

Key considerations include a planned demolition of the current Timex headquarters to make way for the new buildings. In terms of access, the larger of the two buildings will be situated where the existing Timex headquarters stands, while the smaller structure will be closer to Southford Road. Both buildings will be equipped with expansive parking lots, with a capacity to hold up to 410 vehicles and 60 loading spaces. The proposal contemplated all vehicular, tractor trailer, and passenger vehicle access will emerge onto Southford Road. The old Timex Road will be retained but restricted for emergency use, preventing regular vehicular movement. Additionally, all tractor trailers will be directed to turn right towards Southbury, ensuring they don't use Christian Road.

Zoning considerations play a pivotal role in the proposal. Two borders of the property abut residential districts, with varied historical zoning classifications. One stretch along Christian Road has always been residential, but another section to the northwest was reclassified from light industrial to residential after 2006. This shift has implications for parking lot setbacks and vegetation buffers. Despite these challenges, the proposal emphasizes adherence to all setback requirements, ensuring a safe distance from residential lines. For conservation, sections along Christian Road and Southford Road are set to have a conservation restriction, preserving the natural landscape.

Chairman McAuliffe explained the process of an EDC Architecture Review to Mr. Ryan's team. He emphasized that while they review various types of buildings, the

proposed project would be one of the largest they've encountered. The committee focuses on understanding the specific Middlebury area where a building will be situated, whether it's for significant renovation or new construction. The review doesn't delve into detailed technical aspects but prioritizes the landscaping plan, walkways, parking, and views from different perspectives. A primary concern is a realistic rendering of the building post-construction. The committee evaluates colors, materials, and neighboring structures to ensure architectural consistency and adherence to the town's aesthetics. Special attention is given to situations where commercial projects border residential areas, ensuring a harmonious integration. All these considerations are based on architectural standards available on the EDC portion of the town website. Chairman McAuliffe stressed that a decision on the current project wouldn't be made immediately due to its complexity and the need for further evaluation, especially regarding its fit within the neighborhood.

Anthony Iacovino, a project architect with SMMA in Cambridge, Massachusetts, outlined the architectural plans. Noting his 30 years of experience under his belt, Iacovino walked attendees through the design for the two proposed buildings at the site. He emphasized the addition of conservation easements around the structures, specifically crafted to shield them from public view. Through various visual aids, Mr. Iacovino showcased the buildings' limited visibility from key street vantage points, even when considering winter months when foliage is sparse.

He said a distinctive feature of the structures is their simple, industrial aesthetic, achieved primarily using an efficient metal panel system. The flexibility of this system, he noted, allows for variations in color and texture, ensuring adaptability based on the project's needs. Possible utilization of the structures ranges from light manufacturing and R&D to diverse warehouse functions.

Mr. Iacovino further detailed the exterior views of entrances and parking zones, emphasizing their minimal visibility from the public eye. He wrapped up by saying that the building was made from a "kit of parts" with many choices not yet made, allowing potential design features, including vertical fins, that could be integrated to enhance the buildings' visual appeal, while maintaining its industrial character.

In questions from commissioners, Chairman McAuliffe asked if there was a building somewhere in Connecticut that would be representative of the exact kind of construction? Mr. Iacovino said there were some in Massachusetts and Mr. Iacovino said he'd want to see some of them. Mr. Cappelletti was told the panels would be insulated metal, rather than concrete, making them easy to modify. Commissioner Paolino asked that EDC be supplied with the external appearance choices made to be consistent with other areas. What can the building be made to look like? Mr. Iacovino said visual techniques broke up the scale of elongated

building. Chairman McAuliffe said it was best to see an actual building to get see in person. He said the commission didn't make design choices, but only commented or disapproved sometimes. Mr. Iacovino said these buildings are targeted toward warehouse use, but there is no tenant yet. He said the context was the beautiful landscape. Commissioner Langer asked if 60 loading docks and 106 trailer parking spots was typical of light manufacturing. Ms. Griffin commented that "flex space" is a new term, Mr. Iacovino responded that "warehouse" carries a lot of baggage. Mr. Iacovino said there wasn't yet a tenant for the space. Mr. Iacovino mentioned an R &D facility for industrial robots, saying they had a little bit of storage because they had trucks that were delivering the parts, but they were mostly just putting the batteries on, but essentially doing a lot of testing of these robots, a little bit of R &D, a little bit of office, a little bit of warehousing. That kind of tenant would be a real "plum" to get in here. PPP asked if it would be one tenant or multiple tenants and was told it could be.

Ms. Griffin asked about how you would enforce trucks turning right, noting the traffic problems from I-84 tie-ups. She was told signage and geometry of the roads should direct the truckers, but some might violate it anyway.

Mr. Langer asked about the building heights and wanting to go higher. Mr. Iacovino described the rationale for high bay storage, designed around a 50 foot by 50-foot structural bay, which provides the maximum flexibility for the sorts of uses that can go into these spaces, as a result, the long-span joists need to be fairly deep in order to accommodate those kinds of spans.

Ms. Griffin said a detailed "Statement of Use" was required. Attorney Fitzpatrick said this had been submitted to P&Z. Chairman McAuliffe said the commission likely would consider this "warehousing." He said there wasn't a single instance when EDC didn't know what the building would be used for, whether Cumberland Farms, Subaru, or an office building. I think we know this is going to be a warehouse.

Mr. Paolino asked about the conservation easement. Attorney Fitzpatrick said it had been offered to the town. He said the Middlebury Land Trust was not interested.

In comments from the public, Steve Huebner of 98 Ridgewood Dr. asked about the office space amount and was told it was not determined. He also noted no retail parking.

Robert Wedinger of 67 Abbott Farm Road pointed out that none of the renderings showed solar panels that were planned for the roof. Mr. Cappelletti commented that the panels would need to be on the rendering.

Dana Shepard of 302 Hemlock Lane gave the commissioners a scale drawing showing the warehouse in relation to abutting existing homes in Benson Woods and an unbuilt future phase, asking who will want to buy or build a \$700,000 home with the loading docks for the truck base right in their backyard? She noted the lighting and the noise of trucks backing up, and smells. She questioned whether any new homes would ever be built, given that situation.

Don Andrews of 21 Avalon Drive asked about industrial air conditioning and questioned their visibility and noise. He also asked what would happen if the 44-foot height was rejected by P&Z.

Lynn Rose of 400 Long Meadow Road complained of "greenwashing", traffic and smell.

Bob Nerney of 414 Long Meadow Road distributed a PowerPoint presentation presented to P&Z in support of a moratorium appeal. He said renderings from all vantage points should be required.

Commissioner Griffin asked for clarification on whether this was a trucking terminal. Attorney Fitzpatrick said distribution centers and warehouses were synonymous. He said terminology was evolving.

Marj Needham of the Bee-Intelligencer and Jennifer Mahr, 68 Abbott Farms Road asked whether warehousing must be associated with manufacturing.

Commissioner Cappelletti said the commission just needed to understand what was coming in. Chairman McAuliffe said the commission was considering this to be a warehouse and whether it fits.

Ken Kalberer of 110 Ridgewood Drive mentioned the traffic turns.

Chairman McAuliffe said he was hearing comments that had been heard before and were not strictly related to architecture review but was allowing some of them to help the commissioners understand those considerations.

Andrew Kwashnak of 59 Bioski Rd. agreed renderings from all perspectives were needed. He also worried about the high school and truck traffic and fueling for trucks coming and going.

ShawnaLee Waterbury-Kwashnak of 59 Bioski Rd questioned the realism of the renderings with regard to trucks turning while entering and leaving. She also

mentioned vibrations affecting quality of life and health. She also worried about the vibrations affecting antique homes.

Don Andrews of 21 Avalon Drive and Bob Nerney of 414 Long Meadow Road said trucks wouldn't be constrained from using Exit 17 or other routes.

John Pollard, 197 Cheshire Drive said he received the same flyer that everybody got, and said it was put together very well to make a case. He said this size building, and this amount of parking lot and roadways, there's no way that we're never going to see the building. He questioned the ultimate height of the building after construction and said many trees would be taken out. He also questioned the financials and net tax benefits to the town.

Mr. Langer asked about the properties listed in the "Fiscal Outline Proposed 669,500 Sq. Ft. Warehouse" prepared by Mark J. Fougere, questioning why they were chosen. Attorney Fitzpatrick said they were nearby, not far away, and deemed comparable. He also said the project was not looking for any particular tax credits that other towns typically offered. Chairman McAuliffe commented that the project likely wouldn't qualify for the Airport Enterprise Zone tax incentive.

Marj Needham also questioned the financials.

Dana Shepard also mentioned the rezoning of LI-200 over the years.

Mr. Langer asked about keeping vegetation and Mr. Iacovino said it was part of the Wetlands agreement.

Chairman McAuliffe thanked the attendees for their comments and reminded them that the Economic Development Commission can only do its role in the approval process, and it relies on the Conservation Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission to do their work and we defer to their decisions and don't interfere with them. He said many of the comments weren't really about the architecture decision to be made, but the commission was happy to hear them to have a broad perspective to think about.

The commissioners deliberated on next steps. A subcommittee of Nicole Griffin, Armando Paolino and Jesse Langer will meet to gather, organize, and structure project information and get additional information for a decision framework. A workshop for all commissioners will be set for October 16th. The next regular meeting is October 23rd and a possible special meeting could be set for October 30th.

OLD BUSINESS

Reports. N/A

Commissioner Topics. N/A

Video Project: Chairman McAuliffe said B-roll videography was being done Oct. 4 for the video targeted for year end.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

The meeting dates will be voted at the next meeting once holidays are accounted for.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

David Cappelletti MOTIONED to adjourn, SECOND by Nicole Griffin and unanimously voted at about 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terrence McAuliffe
Chairman—Economic Development Commission
cc. Town Clerk, Commission Members,