

FARMINGTON PLANNING BOARD
153 Farmington Falls Road
February 9, 2015
Minutes

Planning Board members present were Bill Marceau, Lloyd Smith, Thomas Eastler, Gloria McGraw, and Craig Jordan. Alternate members present were Matt Smith and Jeffrey Wright.

Chairman, Clayton King, and Donna Tracy were unable to attend.

Others present were Town Manager, Richard Davis; Code Enforcement Officer, Steve Kaiser; and Code Enforcement Assistant, Jane Ford. Representing UMF were Laurie Gardner, Executive Director of Finance and Administration; Jeff McKay, Facilities Director; Tom Perkins, Engineer - Dirigo Architectural Engineering; Mark Power, Engineer - Trane/Ingersoll Rand; and Tim Brochu, Surveyor - CES Inc.

Abutter Frances Harton, residents Alden Smith and Bill Crandall, UMF professor Matt McCord, and approximately 18 other members of the public were present, including Ann Bryant and Bobbie Hanstein from the press.

In Chairman King's absence, Vice Chairman, Bill Marceau chaired the meeting.

1. Designate alternate members, if needed

Mr. Marceau designated Mr. Matt Smith and Mr. Wright as voting members for this meeting.

2. Review minutes of December 8, 2014

Mr. Matt Smith made a motion to approve the minutes of December 8, 2014 as written.

Mrs. McGraw seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5 – Affirmative 2 – Abstained 2 - Absent

Motion carried.

3. McDonald's Corporation –

APPLICANT UNABLE TO ATTEND DUE TO WEATHER
REQUESTS TO BE MOVED TO MARCH 9th AGENDA

Construction of a New 4,892 SF Restaurant

303 Main Street (same location)

Site Review Application #15-SR-01

Soil Erosion Control/Storm Water Management Application #15-SS-01

At the applicant's request, Mr. Marceau suggested that this project be reviewed at a Public Hearing and possible site walk-over at the March 9th meeting.

Mrs. McGraw made a motion to conduct a Public Hearing for the McDonald's project.

Mr. L. Smith seconded the motion.

VOTE: 7 – Affirmative 2 – Absent
Motion carried

Mrs. McGraw said she'd like to amend her motion that the Board meet at the site at 6:00 P.M. and then return to the building to conduct the hearing.

Mr. Jordan said the primary issue with McDonald's regards aesthetics. He said there was a great deal of public input during review of the Rite Aid project and people attended to voice their opinions.

Dr. Eastler said it is fairly dark at 6:00 P.M., and it might be a better idea to conduct the hearing here and maybe have a separate site walk-over if needed. He added that we also don't know what the weather will be like.

Mr. Jordan said he feels that the Board should conduct the Public Hearing here first so that the general public can speak.

Mrs. McGraw said that she just envisioned a ten minute walk around, but will withdraw her amended motion if that's what the Board wants to do.

Mr. Marceau said he feels that we should have the hearing here in the building first.

Dr. Eastler said that if it turns out that we need to have a site walk-over, we can then schedule it for a later date. He added that he feels the presentation will likely be very complete.

VOTE: (On Mrs. McGraw's original motion)
7 – Affirmative 2 – Absent
Motion carried

4. UMF – New Construction of 5,800 SF Biomass Central Energy Plant

519 Wilton Road

Map U13 – Lots 073, 074, 075, & 076

Corner of Perkins Street and Quebec Street

Site Review Application #15-SR-02

Soil Erosion Control/Storm Water Management Application 15-SS-02

(Representatives for this project had not yet arrived)

Mr. Crandall began the discussion and said he thinks this project is a great idea for the community and will result in jobs.

Mr. McCord said he has questions regarding the stack height, the number of trucks making deliveries, and the zoning of this area.

Mr. Kaiser said the campus is an allowable use in this Village Residential district, and this project is a part of the campus infrastructure.

Mr. Marceau said there are examples of plants like this all across the state. He said he didn't think emissions will be a concern and added that he feels this will be a positive thing.

Regarding the height of the stack, Dr. Eastler said it will be 50' and that's about five stories.

The UMF project team arrived, and Mr. Powers said this will be a biomass plant for central heating that would be fueled by wood chips, which are now common, and they will be locating it in what is now a campus parking area. He continued that the wood chips are locally harvested which helps the local economy, and the waste ash can be utilized by farmers. Full scale plans were then handed out the Board members, including a drawing of the stack and building.

Ms. Harton asked if this heating project is allowable in the Village Residential district.

Mr. Kaiser said it will be located on the UMF campus and this structure and system will be used for heating campus buildings, which all presently have heating systems. All such heating systems are part of the campus infrastructure, and the campus is an allowable use in the Village Residential district.

Mr. Crandall agreed that heating systems are an integral component of the school's infrastructure.

Dr. Eastler said look at the other public schools in town with their chip and pellet systems, and asked about the number of heating plants currently on the UMF campus.

Ms. Gardner said there are 44.

When asked about chip deliveries, the engineers stated that there would be four loading bays.

Dr. Eastler said other buildings receive fuel via regular truck deliveries to oil tanks.

Ms. Harton, an abutter who lives directly across from this proposal, said she has lived there since 1944 and doesn't want to look out of her window at the proposed plant, adding that if it looked more like a house it would be a different matter. She continued that there will be large delivery trucks which will cause her house to vibrate, she feels vibrations now from the Fitness Center, and her house was built pre-1835 and may be damaged from the traffic and/or the construction.

Mr. Marceau said that the engineers will address that issue and they can also do surveys.

Ms. Harton said the streets there can't handle large trucks, and asked if they will be liable for any damage to her house, adding that it is very close to the road, not even 20 feet away.

Mr. Powers said they expect to have 10 deliveries per week during heating season, and the plant will burn approximately 4,400 tons annually or 300 tons weekly. He said the plant can hold a 3-4 day supply of chips, and deliveries will be scheduled for such times as to minimize the disruption to traffic in town and activities on campus.

Ms. Harton expressed concern that the value of her house will decrease due to the plant and the truck traffic, but her taxes won't go down.

Mr. Perkins said Mr. Brochu will do an analysis of the truck traffic associated with the plant, and they are working on the design showing the routes trucks will take entering and exiting.

Mr. Brochu said their initial plans were to go directly in and out from Quebec St.

Mr. Powers said that the route and delivery times have not yet been settled.

A resident asked if they planned truck access via Perkins and Lincoln Streets, and whether they would be digging up the streets to install lines.

Ms. Harton asked if they had looked at other sites, such as behind the Fitness Center.

The engineers stated that they looked at other possible sites, but none were financially feasible.

Mr. Crandall said when he worked on campus, there were many large trucks going through the area and asked - what's the difference with such traffic to this site?

The engineers said these will be 40' trailers with 30 ton loads, and that they will get back to the Board with more details on access.

Mr. Marceau said there are already heavy plow trucks full of salt/sand in the area.

Mr. Matt Smith said a loaded tractor trailer can weigh up to 100,000 lbs.

Mr. Alden Smith asked about the description of the Village Residential district which is on page 20 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Kaiser read the following: "*The purpose of the Village/Residential and Village/Business Districts is to preserve and build upon the existing village-like character of the downtown areas of Farmington, West Farmington, and Farmington Falls and to allow for growth that is compatible with the architectural/historic and cultural character of these areas by promoting the reuse of buildings therein and prohibiting incompatible uses such as heavy industrial uses.*"

Ms. Harton asked if this area would need to be re-zoned.

Mr. Kaiser said the UMF campus is an allowable use in this district, and the proposed project is part of the infrastructure of this allowable use, therefore no.

Ms. Harton said she checked with UMF before she expanded her house and asked them if they had any plans for this area at that time and the answer was no. She said that this will change the dynamics of the area, adding that if they built a nice brick building that looked more like a house, it would be a different situation.

The engineers said they are trying their best to make this fit in with the university and the community, and that this present plan is not finalized,

Mr. McCord asked if the building was steel over concrete.

Mr. Brochu said, like the Education Center, the exterior is brick on the lower half with pre-molded panels above.

Dr. Eastler said this meeting will lead to a public hearing, and in the past we went to lengths regarding facades, giving the new Rite Aid as an example. He said other prior Board actions have resulted in making buildings more appealing. Regarding Ms. Harton's concern about the value of her house and view factor, Dr. Eastler said the view right now is a parking lot and an appropriate building could improve this view. He continued that the project team needs to be prepared for the public hearing and provide additional façade renditions showing other designs, materials, color options, etc. He said these visuals would be extremely helpful, adding that it would also be helpful to see other renditions of the stack and how it could meld into the neighborhood.

Mr. Crandall asked if there were any similar facilities we could look at for comparison.

The engineers said that the nearby Mallett School burns wood pellets, the new High School burns wood chips.

A resident said this is not a good comparison.

Mr. Marceau asked about capacity comparison regarding the above mentioned schools - would it be the same amount?

The engineers said the boiler would be 500 HP and generate 16,000,000 BTUs, which is five times the output of the Mt. Blue facility.

Mr. Marceau suggested that photos be brought to the hearing so residents and interested parties won't have to travel to view existing plants.

The engineers said many other universities and colleges have biomass plants, and here we had no existing building to fit this into. They stated that Colby's plant is larger than that proposed here, and is not comparable because it is not a stand-alone plant.

Mr. Alden Smith asked for an example of a plant that was constructed in the middle of a town, and also asked how they plan to replace the lost parking spaces.

A UMF representative stated that UMF has well over the required parking spaces for the campus, and the proposed building wouldn't be expanded in the future.

A resident asked if the plant's capacity could be increased, and the engineers said they could install a larger boiler in the future.

Mr. Jordan asked why the rendered view now shows the stack as compared to the first picture that didn't, and both are dated the same.

The engineers stated that they added the stack to the original drawing when requested by Mr. Kaiser and changing the date was an oversight.

Mr. Jordan asked if the building sketch given out tonight was final.

The engineers stated that it is not a ready to build design, and they wanted to get feedback from this meeting to finalize façade and other details.

Mr. Jordan said, then it is not complete.

Mr. Jordan asked about the relationship of the stack height to the surrounding buildings in the area. He also said that 33 parking spaces are required, not the 22 shown. He said we need a parking analysis.

Mr. Wright asked why not put the stack inside the building.

The engineers stated that the stack will be stainless steel lined, that the combustion is so efficient that it can be outside the plant, that precipitation is more efficient as an external process, that it's a more efficient use of interior space, and they will provide stack visuals at the next meeting.

Ms. Harton asked about noise levels.

The engineers replied that there would be no audible noise from the heat generation process, that there is no power generation involved, that there would be no fuel grinding at the site, that conveyers will move the chips, and that the trucks are self-unloaders.

Dr. Eastler said noise is in the ear of the beholder but sound is a pressure that can be measured. He said he would want to know the sound pressure levels outside the plant and what the ambient decibel levels would be at 100 feet away and 200 feet away. He asked if it will be within 45 dB, and will it be measured at "A, B, or C" level. He said that the plant should be buttoned up so there would be no escape of sound. Dr. Eastler added that in the past when the chip mill expansion was reviewed, the Board imposed limits on sound pressure levels and addressed other technical issues such as exterior lighting, truck traffic, etc. He said he would like to see an analysis of truck traffic and access for this project.

The engineers said they could provide actual readings from another similar existing plant for comparison.

Mr. Marceau said that this appears to be a genuine concern of the neighborhood, and we also need photographic representations of the visual impact of the building and stack from different angles.

Mr. Brochu said that the plant will be built into the site slope which will lessen the visual impact of the building and stack, and the interior height from the building floor to roof peak is 33'.

Mr. Marceau said then the stack will be less than 20' higher than the building.

Mr. Crandall said the stack is behind the building which will lessen the visual impact.

Dr. Eastler reiterated the need for a "view-shed" analysis.

A resident said there are dorms in the neighborhood and they could be affected.

Dr. Eastler said any sound will radiate concentrically outward with equal impact in all directions. He also said the facility will have educational value as an example of green energy technology for students.

Dr. Eastler continued that the building's displacement of a few parking spaces is no loss as the existing parking lot is lumpy due to inadequate basing. He stressed the importance of proper sub-base installation for this project, stating that there is a lot of glacial till and clay in the area, noting that the native material under Preble Hall and the library is 10,000 year old beach sand from when Farmington was 500 feet lower than it is today.

Mrs. McGraw asked if there was an adequate supply of chips for this facility.

The engineers replied that there is more biomass growing in Maine than we're using, therefore the chip supply is sustainable and we are not going to run out any time soon, adding that this region is an especially strong producer.

Mrs. McGraw asked about waste ash removal.

The engineers replied that the ash will be 1% of the wood chip volume burned, so the plant would generate approximately 40 tons of wood ash annually, and they are still working on the removal aspect which will likely be land spreading as fertilizer.

Dr. Eastler asked if the ash was compostable and the engineers stated that it was.

Mr. Crandall said that biomass procurement for the facility would add to the local economy.

The engineers said that typically there is a five-fold economic multiplier effect caused by such biomass purchases.

Mr. Lloyd Smith said there will be noise from the truck's diesel engines idling at 1,200 rpm while unloading, which takes about ½ hour.

The engineers said that they will check other facilities to get sound levels during operation and unloading, that the trucks will back into the building leaving the trailers partially inside and the engines outside, and that the chip bin is separated from the rest of the plant and will operate from 7:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.

Mr. Matt Smith said that, with the doors having to be open while unloading, a noise assessment is a good idea. He added that these tractor trailers are 53' in total length, it will be hard maneuvering these through the narrow streets in Farmington, and he has seen them get tied up trying to make some nearby intersection corners.

The engineers stated that they will do a turning radius study.

Mr. Matt Smith said this could add 200 truck trips per year to roads like Front Street.

The engineers responded saying that such truck traffic will vary seasonally as the plant will only operate when heating the campus, with the peak delivery months being January, February and maybe March.

Mr. McCord said regarding school kids on Middle, Perham and Quebec Streets, truck traffic is dangerous to them.

A resident suggested going up Lincoln St. for access instead as that's all college property anyway.

Mr. Davis said the major routes should be used as much as possible and the side streets less.

Mrs. McGraw said you looked at other spaces, this sounds like a wonderful plan, but it's in a lousy location. She asked where else they considered.

The engineers said the parking lots behind the Fitness Center and the Education Center, as well as the parking lots on Prescott Street, were considered, but the cost of the piping from those sites was not financial feasible so they chose this location. They also stated that they have been developing the design for over two years and have spent a lot on engineering this location and doing test borings, etc.

Ms. Harton asked what the payback time was for this project, and the engineers said ten years.

Mr. McCord asked about the moisture content of the chips.

The engineers answered that the moisture content would be no more than 45%, with particulate emissions of .025 ppm after scrubbing which will meet DEP/EPA requirements. They added that there will be a reduction in greenhouse gas by burning wood chips, which are from a sustainable source, as opposed to using fossil fuels.

Dr. Eastler compiled a list for the UMF project that will need to be addressed at the public hearing:

- List and photos of stand-alone plants in other places
- Examples of façade options (materials, colors, etc.) and the possibility of incorporating the stack inside, both to be more residentially compatible
- Exterior sound pressure level data regarding noise from self-unloaders and idling diesel engines, and possible noise attenuation measures
- Access management plans showing tractor-trailer routes through town to site, and in and out of driveway, including turning radii
- Exterior lighting
- Possible landscaping
- Snow removal
- Waste (ash) removal
- Geotechnical data (soils, borings, etc.)
- Chip moisture data and emission variability for same

The engineers said that the boilers can take chips with between 14-45% moisture content, and added that the plant will hold 124 tons of chips.

A resident asked which way the bays faced, and the engineers replied to the south, which orients the roof for future solar possibilities.

Mr. Lloyd Smith asked, after the first of April, what quantity of chips would be stored, and the engineers said all would be burned during the heating season and left empty for the summer.

Mr. Lloyd Smith expressed concern about when the roads are posted, usually mid-March, and said trucking then can damage local streets.

The engineers said they will abide by postings and follow allowance protocols for same, adding they'll do an analysis of this, and commented that the weight distribution per axle for a tractor-trailer is no more than for a plow truck.

The Board decided that Public Hearings will be scheduled for their next meeting on March 9, 2015 regarding the UMF project and the McDonald's project.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 P.M.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jane Ford.

Planning Board

Date