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## PLANNING DIRECTOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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<b>ADDRESS:</b>	61 & 65 West Main Street
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	Town of Northborough – Fire Department
<b>PROPERTY OWNER:</b>	Town of Northborough
<b>REQUESTED APPROVAL:</b>	Design Review for Project Seeking a Special Permit for Groundwater Protection & Site Plan Approval
<b>ZONING DISTRICT:</b>	Downtown Business (DB) District and Groundwater Protection Overlay District Area 3 (portion)
<b>APPLICATION SUBMITTED:</b>	N/A
<b>PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED:</b>	N/A

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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The Town seeks approval to construct a 22,000 sq ft fire station, 53 parking spaces and associated improvements. This use is classified as exempt in accordance with Zoning Bylaw Section 7-05-020A.(1), but does require site plan approval from the Planning Board in accordance with Zoning Bylaw Section 7-03-050. Within the Groundwater Protection Overlay District, a fire station, which is a necessary public facility, is a by-right use per Section 7-077-010D(1)(a)(6). The property consists of two lots totaling 3.54 acres and 412.7 feet of frontage. The property conforms to existing dimensional requirements. The proposed building will be served by municipal water and sewer.

### ISSUES/COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

**The following comments are based on the draft schematic design dated January 11, 2024. Comments dated February 26, 2024 are based on the plan set last revised February 14, 2024 and associated submittals:**

1. The following additional information should be submitted for Design Review Committee review: in accordance with Planning Board Rules & Regulations Section 7.3:
  - A. Complete Site Plan in accordance with the submission requirements identified in Planning Board Rules & Regulations Section 7.2.
  - B. Schedule of all exterior materials and colors;
  - C. Landscaping plan showing all proposed changes and describing all materials including plantings (identify species, number and size at planting);
  - D. Photographs of adjacent buildings and properties.

Note that the permitting authority requires the submission of written waiver requests for any areas of non-compliance.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment:** The updated submittal includes the information identified above in bullets “C” and “D”. Additional design-related site plan requirements were submitted, but the schedule of all exterior materials and colors is still outstanding.

2. The Table of Density and Dimensional Regulations (Zoning Bylaw Section 7-06-030) specifies that the maximum front yard setback in the Downtown Business District is 20 feet and the maximum building height is 45 feet. The proposed building is located 44 feet from the front lot line and the building height (hose tower) is approximately 58 feet. The Applicant should either adjust the building setback and height to comply with the dimensional requirements of the DB District or seek a dimensional variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: The revised plan shows a tower height at 68' feet. I have been advised that the Architect will seek a zoning interpretation from the Building Inspector as to whether the hose tower qualifies as "habitable floor space". If it does not, then the hose tower will be excluded from the "building height" definition and no relief from the Zoning Board of Appeals is necessary. I defer to him.**

3. In my opinion, the design of the building is very attractive and meets the spirit of the Design Guidelines adopted in 2012.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: Modifications were made to the design of the hose tower including the addition of a clock, several windows and decorative elements.**

4. The schematic plan would be more legible if it were accompanied by a legend. Please include a legend on the next version of the plan so that it is easier to determine if the proposed features comply with the site design standards specified in Zoning Bylaw Sections 7-09-020 and 7-09-030.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: The revised site plan includes a legend.**

5. It is unclear if a sidewalk is proposed along the east side of the building as the surface treatment symbology is consistent with landscaped surfacing. If no sidewalk is proposed for this location, the Plan should be modified in conformance with Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030E. Note that sidewalks abutting buildings shall be provided with a 7" high safety curb at building egress locations per Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030E(4).

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: The Plan has been revised to depict concrete sidewalk. A detail should be added to the site plan submitted for Planning Board approval showing the 7" high safety curb in accordance with Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030E(4).**

6. All building and freestanding signage should be submitted for review by the Design Review Committee. Information pertaining to sign location, construction materials, dimensions and lighting should be submitted. Sign design should conform to Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-020D(2). Exterior lit signage is preferred for properties located within the Downtown Business District.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: Wall and monument signage was submitted for Design Review Committee review (see Sheet A301 and the document entitled "Building Sign", prepared by HKT Architects Inc. dated February 22, 2024), however the particulars regarding that signage, including dimensions, materials and lighting, were not submitted. Note that Electric Message Centers (EMCs) are not currently allowed within the Downtown Business District,**

and the maximum size of a freestanding sign in the Downtown Business District is 32 square feet (height not to exceed 12 feet to the top of the sign structure). Also, Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-040(1)[b] specifies that the maximum size of a wall sign in the Downtown Business District is 32 square feet. If you want a type or size of sign that is not permitted within the Downtown Business District, relief will need to be obtained from the Zoning Board of Appeals in the form of variances.

7. Please submit spec sheets and a photometric plan for all wall, walkway and parking lot lighting. Energy-efficient LED lighting is preferred and it should not cast light beyond the borders of the subject property. Exterior lighting should complement the architecture of the proposed building as well as the site.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: The Plan was updated to include the specifications and photometric plan for all wall, walkway and parking lot lighting. However, the photometric plan does not reflect the latest driveway, parking lot and exterior lighting configuration depicted on Sheet C-600. This discrepancy should be addressed on the plan set filed with the Planning Board.**

8. Electric, cable and telephone lines shall be installed underground per modification to Zoning Bylaw approved at the April 2023 Annual Town Meeting.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: Utilities Plan Sheet C-600 still does not depict the location of underground electric, cable and telephone lines. This should be addressed on the site plan submitted to the Planning Board for approval.**

9. Please include details of the benches and bollards encircling the transformer and generator pads.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: This comment is partially addressed. The detail of the benches is provided on Sheet 1. A detail for the bollard light was also included on this Sheet, but I suspect that the bollards that will encircle the transformer and generator will not be lit. If this is the case, the site plan should include the detail for an unlit bollard.**

10. Please denote the location of electronic charging stations. To satisfy the Town's climate change mitigation goals, I strongly recommend installation of rooftop solar panels and/or a solar carport. The formal site plan review submission package should include information about design features will be incorporated into the building to reduce energy and water consumption.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: In the response letter from HKT Architects Inc. dated February 22, 2024, it is acknowledged that 6 EV chargers will be installed and 5 will be made EV ready for future installation. Those locations are depicted on Sheet C-300. Also, the letter states that the roof will be made solar ready.**

11. Please demonstrate compliance with Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030C.(2)(b), which states that no parking space shall be located within 8 feet of a building wall. It appears as though the

parking space in the southwest corner of the building (near the stormwater treatment area) does not comply with this requirement. If it cannot be moved, you could ask for a waiver.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: The parking lot layout has been adjusted so that all spaces now comply with this requirement.**

12. The design of the retaining wall should be submitted for Design Review Committee review. At its highest point, the retaining wall will be 29' tall. I recommend terracing at the highest point of the wall to make it less imposing.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: Three retaining wall options were submitted for Committee consideration. The first option is a single wall that is 31' tall at its highest point. Ivy would be installed at the top of the wall that will cascade down eventually screening the wall. Additional vegetation, including deciduous and coniferous trees, would be planted at the top of the wall. The other two options feature terracing of the walls, but the overall height will be 36' tall at the highest point. Option #2 shows two walls- a 9 1/2' wall, a 20' planting bed and then a 27 1/2' wall. Option #3 shows three 12' walls with 18' planting beds in between each wall. The second and third options will result in the greatest amount of land clearing and grading activities, but small trees and bushes can be planted within the planting beds to obscure the mass of the retaining walls. The Design Review Committee should specify their preference.**

13. A bike rack for up to 6 bikes is required per Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030F(1). The location and specification of bike rack should be submitted for Design Review Committee review.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: This comment is addressed by the inclusion of a bike rack in front of the fire station, adjacent to the front walkway. The detail for the bike rack is included on Sheet L-1.**

14. Street trees should be installed along the Route 20 frontage, set back from the roadway so as to not interfere with sight distances, at 25' intervals to soften the view and minimize heat island impacts (See Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030E(7)).

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: The Landscape Plan includes a total of 11 trees of various sizes and species along the Route 20 frontage. Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030E(7) requires 17 street trees to be planted along a property with 413 feet of frontage. The Site Plan should be revised to include 6 additional trees along the property frontage or the Applicant should submit a written waiver request for Planning Board consideration.**

15. Please identify snow storage location(s) for the paved parking lot/area east and south of the building.

**February 26<sup>th</sup> Comment: Sheet C-300 shows the updated locations of snow storage areas. This comment is addressed.**

**Additional Comments:**

- 16. Note that “3 UP” is identified as a type of tree on the Landscape Plan, but the legend does not include that abbreviation. “3 UA” (Princeton Elm), on the other hand, is included within the legend but not the plan. I suspect a typo that should be corrected on the version of the site plan submitted to the Planning Board. Also, note that the site plan shows only 2 UV trees, not the 3 that are identified in the table.**
  
- 17. The Site Plan should be modified to include ADA-compliant ramps and detectable warning plates where the new Route 20 sidewalk will terminate at the driveways.**
  
- 18. Currently the sidewalk along the applicable property frontage does not connect to the sidewalk serving the abutting property, 73-79 West Main Street. I recommend making that connection or constructing a new sidewalk within the Route 20 right-of-way from the Fire Station to the first driveway serving the Hillside Grill.**
  
- 19. The site plan submitted for Planning Board approval should include a detail for the dumpster pad and enclosure.**
  
- 20. The north and south elevations of the hose tower show a pointed roof, but the west and east elevations show a flat roof. Please clarify whether the roof will be pointed or flat and what the height of the roof will be utilizing the definition for “Building Height” found in Zoning Bylaw Section 7-02-040.**