
PLANNING DIRECTOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ADDRESS:	61 & 65 West Main Street
APPLICANT:	Town of Northborough – Fire Department
PROPERTY OWNER:	Town of Northborough
REQUESTED APPROVAL:	Zoning Board of Appeals: Variances for front setback, Electronic Message Center and size of wall sign Planning Board: Site Plan Approval
ZONING DISTRICT:	Downtown Business (DB) District and Groundwater Protection Overlay District Area 3 (portion)
APPLICATION SUBMITTED:	March 7, 2024
PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED:	March 26, 2024

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The project involves construction of a 30,000 sq ft fire station, 53 parking spaces and associated improvements. The municipal fire station is classified as exempt in accordance with Zoning Bylaw Section 7-05-020A.(2), 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. On March 26, 2024, the Zoning Board of Appeals issued two dimensional variances for front setback and for the size of a wall sign, and denied one use variance for a freestanding Electronic Message Center.

ISSUES/COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following comments are based on the site plan dated March 18, 2024 prepared by Pare and the schematic design plans dated March 18, 2024:

1. The Table of Density and Dimensional Regulations (Zoning Bylaw Section 7-06-030) specifies that the minimum front yard setback in the Downtown Business District is 6 feet and the maximum front yard setback is 20 feet. The Zoning Board of Appeals granted a dimensional variance to allow the proposed building to be located up to 40 feet from the front lot line to enable the large fire apparatus to maneuver into/out of the building and maintain the maximum grade of 3% and ensure clear sight lines.
2. The Applicant was granted a dimensional variance to install a wall sign of up to 172 square feet.
3. The Zoning Board of Appeals denied the application for a use variance to allow an Electronic Message Center within the proposed freestanding sign. The Applicant should specify whether the freestanding sign will be removed or whether they plan to submit an alternative design without the Electronic Message Center.

4. The Applicant submitted a number of written waiver requests as detailed below. The Planning Board should determine if they are amenable to the grant of these waiver requests:
 - a. All filing fees, including advertising fee.
 - b. Planning Board Rules and Regulations Section 7.2(C) - Waiver from the required scale of 1"=40'. Most sheets of the site plan are at the scale of 1"=20'.
 - c. Planning Board Rules and Regulations Section 7.2(C)(4) - Locus plan at the scale of 1"=100' showing the location and use of any building within 300 feet of the boundary of the site and driveway and utilities within 200 feet of the subject property along the frontage street. The submitted locus plan is Not To Scale and does not include utility information. A supplemental land use/land cover plan entitled "Figure 1: Site Locus Map" was submitted, but it also does not provide any information about utilities.
 - d. Planning Board Rules and Regulations, Section 7.2(C)(7) - Extending contours at least 50 feet beyond the site boundaries. For the most part, the contours extend at least 20 feet beyond the site boundaries.
 - e. Planning Board Rules and Regulations Section 7.2(D)(1)(a) – Traffic impact assessment.
5. The following required information is missing from the site plan. The Applicant should revise the plan to depict the required information or submit a written waiver request for Planning Board consideration:
 - a. Planning Board Rules and Regulations Section 7.2(C)- All plans and stormwater documents should be stamped by the qualified professional who prepared them;
 - b. Planning Board Rules and Regulations, Section 7.2(9)- Calculation of proposed lot coverage;
 - c. Planning Board Rules and Regulations, Section 7.2(5)- Location of the site relative to the Groundwater Protection Overlay District;
 - d. Planning Board Rules and Regulations, Section 7.2(6)- Location of the site relative to the Floodplain District.
6. A detail for precast concrete wheel stops is shown on Sheet C7.2, however the location of these wheel stops is not depicted on the layout plan. Please clarify where the wheel stops will be located or remove the detail from the site plan to avoid confusion if they will not be installed on site.
7. The landscape plan on Sheet L-1 includes a detail of a fence. Although that fence is appropriate for the top of the retaining wall, the fence around the dumpster should screen the dumpster in accordance with Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-020C.(d). A stockade or white vinyl fence is preferred over a chain link fence with privacy slats.
8. The Demolition Plan (Sheet C2.0) shows removal of the existing brick crosswalk across Route 20 that exists in between 53 & 56 West Main Street. It is not clear if the intention is to replace the crosswalk with a striped crosswalk or eliminate the crosswalk altogether. I strongly recommend against the removal of the crosswalk as the Town is embarking on a Downtown Revitalization effort aimed at enhancing walkability throughout the Town Center and making the area more attractive. I am amenable to an alternative location for the crosswalk, but it should exist

somewhere along the fire department's property frontage and should have a similar stamped asphalt design in a brick pattern so that it matches the other crosswalks in the area.

9. It is unclear if the sidewalk proposed along the east side of the building has a 7" high safety curb at the building egress location per Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030E(4). A detail of the curb should be added to demonstrate compliance with this requirement or the Applicant should submit a written waiver request for Planning Board consideration.
10. I recommend requiring submittal of the retaining wall design for Planning Board review and approval as a Condition of Approval.
11. A detail of the proposed emergency gate should be added to the site plan.
12. I recommend including a Condition of Approval that mandates a connection between the sidewalk along the applicable property frontage and the sidewalk serving the abutting property at 73-79 West Main Street. Alternatively, a new sidewalk could be constructed within the Route 20 right-of-way from the Fire Station to the first driveway serving the Hillside Grill.