
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 Town seeks two dimensional variances and one use variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals. 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.(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 site plan dated January 11, 2024, prepared by Pare and the schematic design plans dated February 22, 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 proposed building is located 39 feet from the front lot line. Per the Application, 19 feet of relief is necessary to maneuver the large fire apparatus into/out of the building, maintain the maximum grade of 3% and ensure clear sight-lines.
2. The Applicant is interested in installing an Electronic Message Center within a freestanding sign that can be used by the municipality to advertise public events, such as Annual Town Meeting and Local and National Elections, as well as public messages (i.e. location of public warming stations during storms). According to Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-040, Electronic Message Centers are only allowed in Highway Business and Industrial Districts. The Applicant seeks a use variance to enable installation of the Electronic Message Center. Note that the size of the proposed monument sign conforms to the maximum size requirements for a freestanding sign in the Downtown Business District.

3. The Applicant is interested in installing a wall sign of 145.33 square feet. Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-040G.(1)(a)[1][b] specifies that the maximum size of a wall sign in the Downtown Business District is 32 square feet. Given the size of the front building façade and its setback from the road, a larger sign is desired to enhance legibility and provide a more appropriate scale relative to the facade. The Applicant seeks 113.33 square feet of relief on the size of the wall sign.