



**Town of Henniker
Zoning Board
Tuesday, January 19, 2022
Henniker Community Center**

Members Present: Chairwoman Doreen Conner, Robert Pagano, Ron Taylor and Selectman Leon Parker
Member's Excused: Vice Chairwoman Joan Oliveira and Gigi Laberge
Town Planner: Mark Fougere
Recording Secretary: Nadine Scholes, absent
Guests: Paula Amato, Dan Gearan, David Chase, and Joanne Coppinger

Chair Connor called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

B) Public Meeting:

Case 1. ZBA Case 2022:01:

Proposed Special Exception request per Article VIII, Section 133- 33 paragraph A, to allow for an 30,000 square foot +/- expansion to the existing gymnasium complex that will include new gym space, seating areas, fitness center, locker room area, support spaces and amenities, Applicant/owner New England College, Map 2 Lot 391A, 419 z5 and 418 z1, 38 Grove Street, Zoned EOD Education Overlay District and CV Commercial Village.

Chair Connor explained that they have 2 board members absent for this hearing and she gave the applicant the opportunity to table the application to next month or to move forward today and the applicant wanted to move forward today.

Paula Amato, Vice President and CFO of New England College explained the expansion would provide the space needed for an additional gym. In addition, the fitness center would be relocated, expanding locker rooms, meeting spaces for students and administrative offices.

David Chase and Joanne Coppinger from RFS Engineering presented the proposed plans for Phase 1 and Phase 2. The new structure would be connected to the existing buildings. The gym would be 108' by 108' and would have seating available for up to 1200 people with pull out bleachers on both sides.

The proposed expansion would be within setbacks and the existing lobby would be demolished and reconstructed as part of the expansion. The proposed building would be prefabbed as the other newer buildings on campus to keep a similar look and fit in with the existing buildings.

Ron Taylor asked where would parking be located. Per code there would need to be 1 parking space for every 300 sq. ft. of area.

Paula Amato noted that there will be no additional students just adding space to spread out activities and students.

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Leon Parker asked how many parking spaces are available at the overflow parking lot behind the open space. Paula Amato estimated 100 to 115 spaces.

Chair Connor asked that the Special Exception application criteria be presented.

1. Please describe how the specific site is an appropriate location for the requested use or structure?

It is an appropriate location because the addition connects to the existing athletic buildings and had the same use group. It also has an existing private road and existing pedestrian ways to connect to.

2. Please describe how the requested use will be compatible with neighboring land uses.

The use is an expansion of an existing use, has the same use group/type as adjacent buildings, and has architectural design features and exterior finishes to blend into (or comparable with) the campus's architectural contextual fabric.

3. Please describe how the requested use will not create undue traffic congestion or unduly impair pedestrian safety.

There is existing sufficient vehicle parking near and around the athletics complex, off Grove Street and there are multiple vehicle access points to the complex, thus limiting congestion. Parking attendants will be utilized on an as-needed basis.

New pedestrian walkways will connect to existing pedestrian pathways as needed and required to provide access to all sides of the addition.

4. Please describe how the granting of the permit would be in the public interest.

Granting the special exception for an athletic complex in the Educational Zone is in the public interest because it is an educational use and in conformance with the intent of the zoning district, which is to support educational uses and programs. It should be noted that the use is not a new use but an expansion of an existing use, as the existing athletics complex and program had been in existence for a long time. The general public benefits from supporting the college and all its programs and facilities, as the college is an asset to the community as a whole.

5. Please describe how the proposed use would not create hazards to the health, safety or general welfare of the public, nor be detrimental to the use of or out of character with the adjacent neighborhood.

The Athletic Center blend architecturally with the surrounding neighborhood by utilizing quintessential New England architectural forms as well as adopting some of the campus' design context and details.

This addition will enhance the general welfare of the public by the following:

- a) providing a better community venue for the athletes;
- b) strong attention to diversity, equity and inclusion;
- c) to follow the fundamentals of LEED, as a basis of design;
- d) full ADA compliance.

6. Please describe how the proposed use would not constitute a nuisance because of offensive noise, vibration, smoke, dust, odor, heat, glare, or unsightliness.

The center will incorporate noise-reducing strategies so that no acoustic impact will be perceptible beyond what is allowed by the zoning ordinance. No smoke, fumes, dust, odor, glare, or excessive heat will be produced by the project. The building will be maintained to be clean and neat in appearance.

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All exterior lighting will be dark-sky compliant.

Chair Connor opened the hearing to questions from the Board.

Bob Pagano asked what LEED was. David Chase replied it was Green Energy Natural Standard.

Bob Pagano asked if there would be any commercial use proposed, snack vendors, etc. David Chase stated there would be a snack counter but unsure if commerce vendors would be used.

Chair Connor asked if there was a plan for the time differential between Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Paula Amato explained that the timing of the phases would be contingent on fundraising, making it difficult to predict an accurate time frame. Chair Connor asked if it were possible that phase 2 does not occur without fundraising. Paula Amato replied that was a possibility. Chair Connor asked if phase 1 was funded. Paula Amato said they are waiting on pledges to be fulfilled.

Leon Parker asked what the biggest impact would be if phase 2 were not constructed. Paula Amato replied that would be more interior updates to create office space and if that cannot be done the current space could be reconfigured to separate the offices that are doubled up.

Chair Connor opened the hearing up to the public and questions comments. There were none. Chair Connor closed public comment.

Chair Connor moved to enter into Board deliberation. Leon Parker seconded. Motion carried. 4-0.

Ron Taylor recommended a condition be noted for the Planning Board to review detail for parking when application is reviewed.

Bob Pagano would question if the tax exemption would need to be lifted if there were commercial activities on site. Chair Connor stated that was not under the purview of the Zoning Board.

The Board entered into deliberations.

Criteria #1: Is the site an appropriate location for the requested use or structure?

The Board agreed that the expansion was compatible with the existing building structures.

Criteria #2: Is the requested use compatible with neighboring land uses?

The Board agreed that the expansion was compatible with the existing uses in the area.

Criteria #3: How the requested use will not create undue traffic congestion or unduly impair pedestrian safety.

The Board agreed that traffic would not be any worse than it was during events, but noted the applicant provided plan for parking attendants' and would install the appropriate pedestrian walkways to the parking areas.

Criteria #4: Describe how the granting of the permit would be in the public interest.

The Board agreed that the expanded fitness center would be in the best interest of the college due to the limitations of the existing center.

Criteria #5: Describe how the proposed use would not create hazards to the health, safety, or general welfare of the public, nor be detrimental to the use of or out of character with the adjacent neighborhood.

The Board agreed there would be no issues with this criterion.

Criteria #6: Describe how the proposed use would not constitute a nuisance because of offensive noise, vibration, smoke, dust, odor, heat, glare or unsightliness.

The Board agreed precautions were presented to prevent additional nuisance to the public.

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Mark Fougere noted it was discovered during review that a merger would be necessary, the current lot line runs through the expansion structure. Both lots are the same owner and could be merged prior to, and as part of the Planning Board application review.

Leon Parker moved to approve ZBA Case 2022:01 for a Special Exception from Article VIII, Section 133- 33 paragraph A, to allow for an 30,000 square foot +/- expansion to the existing gymnasium complex that will include new gym space, seating areas, fitness center, locker room area, support spaces and amenities. Bob Pagano seconded.

Comments: Ron Taylor noted that the recommendation for the Planning Board to review the details for required parking, traffic, and the lot line adjustment, be noted with the approval for the Special Exception.

Motion carried, 4-0

C) Meeting Minutes July 21, 2021

The Board members reviewed and presented proposed changes.

Leon Parker moved to approve the meeting minutes of July 21, 2021, as amended. Bob Pagano seconded. Motion carried, 4-0.

Chair Connor moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m. Leon Parker seconded.

Motion carried, 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nadine Scholes

Minutes Approved: 08/16/2023