

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

**MADISON PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
PLANNING MEETING MINUTES
Mar. 2, 2017**

The regular planning meeting of the Madison Planning and Zoning Commission was conducted Thursday, Mar. 2, 2017, at 7 p.m., in Meeting Room A at Madison Town Campus.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chairman Ronald Clark, Vice Chairman Francine Larson, Amanda Mitchell, James Matteson, John K. Mathers, Brian Richardson, and Joseph Bunovsky, Jr.

MEMBERS ABSENT

Secretary Thomas Burland and Joel Miller

ALTERNATES PRESENT

Elliott Hitchcock, Richard Chorney and Madhavan Parthasarthy

OTHERS PRESENT

Director of Planning and Economic Development David Anderson; First Selectman Thomas Banisch.

The planning meeting of the Madison Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order at approximately 7:02 p.m. by Chairman Ronald Clark.

Academy School discussion with planning consultant conducting the March 14, 2017 public workshop. Director of Planning and Economic Development David Anderson stated that First Selectman Thomas Banisch initiated the idea to obtain public input on the disposition of the town-owned Academy School and its property, so the town hired a consultant who put out a survey, currently available on the town website, and thus far there have been 777 responses. Input is being sought not only from the general public but also from key stakeholders, such as the Historic District Commission, the Madison Historical Society, the Economic Development Commission, and the Planning and Zoning Commission, among other town agencies and officials. Mr. Anderson stated that development of the property would require Historic District Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission approval. A general consensus of the Historic District Commission, rendered Feb. 27, 2017, indicated a preference toward saving the Academy School building front façade—the front third of the building—demolishing the rear, and acquiring a mixed use of the property, Mr. Anderson stated. He anticipates the Planning and Zoning Commission could be asked to consider modifications to the zoning regulations to facilitate development on the site. Requests for proposals will be sent out to solicit private development proposals, and these would be put back out to the public in an open workshop process, and then submitted to a town referendum vote, according to Mr. Anderson. The actual approval process of the development would follow that public vote, according to Mr. Anderson.

Planning Consultant Francisco Gomes, AICP, ASLA, of Fitzgerald and Halliday, Inc., of Hartford, stated that his firm has assisted Madison in the past with various projects, including aiding in the writing of a grant to achieve \$400,000 for the Tuxis Pond walkway. He passed out a draft document to the commission, which included earlier results of the survey, with 688

respondents. Through the process of outreach and seeking what others envision for the property, the goal is to be as inclusive and transparent as possible, thus giving everyone an opportunity to provide input, according to Mr. Gomes. A public workshop on the Academy School is scheduled for March 14, 2017, with over 100 people expected to attend, thus far. Academy School was gifted from Daniel Hand in 1884; it became a public high school in 1887. The building was later demolished and replaced with the current structure in 1921, and a gymnasium was added later; the school was closed in 2004 and transferred to the town of Madison in 2011 by the Board of Education. It would cost several million dollars to renovate the property for use, he stated. There are no deed restrictions on its use, since the state released the restriction that the building remain as a school, according to Mr. Gomes. Academy School is located in both a historic district and the downtown village district; it has 5.1 acres in total, which includes the two ball fields, a basketball court, a playground, and parking. It is zoned R2, he stated. The Academy School, with its latest appraisal at \$5.3 million, would generate \$100,000 annually to the town in taxes, were it owned privately. Any sort of development for a mixture of uses not currently allowed on the site would require zoning modifications, according to Mr. Gomes. It could accommodate 16 to 18 dwelling units, he stated.

Mr. Gomes summarized the survey results highlighted in the packet that he provided to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Survey participants include: those who live within a 10-minute walk of the school, about 110 people, or 15.99 percent; 520 people, or 75.58 percent, who live in Madison but more than a 10-minute walk to the school; and 58 respondents, or 8.43 percent, who live outside of Madison. Of the 688 total number of respondents, 5.81 percent, or 40 people, own a business or commercial property in the town green or Madison center area, and 648 respondents, or 94.19 percent, do not own commercial property in that area. Most of the respondents, totaling 500, or 72.67 percent, have lived, worked or owned a business or property in Madison for more than 10 years; 152, or 22.09 percent, marked two to 10 years; and 36, or 5.23 percent, were members of the town for less than two years. It is valuable to have responses from those who have lived in the town for a number of years, because they know the site, and they know the community, according to Mr. Gomes. Survey results revealed a good representation of different ages of people responding to the questions. The survey also revealed that one-third have either attended or have had a family member attend the school; 11 percent visit the town green area daily, 26 percent visit it a few times per week, and 62 percent visit the town green area once a week or less. Almost 11 percent use the open space, ball court, playground, or ball fields at Academy School a couple of times per week; 39.59 percent use them once a week or less; and 49.78 percent do not use them at all. A majority of concerns about the town green and Academy School area include insufficient parking, lack of activity, traffic, and maintenance; almost 42 percent said they have no concerns with the site. Regarding the significance of the school building itself, 42 percent found the building very significant to Madison's history and/or identity; 36.73 percent found it somewhat significant; and 14.76 percent found it not significant at all. In response to the question as to how the school building should be reused or repurposed, 21 percent stated it should be reused as a school, but a number of people believe not so, because school populations have been declining; 35 percent believe it should be reused for another town use; 26 percent stated it should be redeveloped for housing; 30 percent thought it should be redeveloped for retail and services; 18 percent stated it should be redeveloped for offices; 47 percent thought it should be redeveloped with a mixture of uses; and three percent thought it should not be reused or repurposed. The survey also asked people about the grounds, whether reuse or redevelopment should take place, if it required removal of the ball fields: 22 percent would be in favor, even if it meant the ball fields would be removed; 10 percent would be in favor, if ball fields could be provided near the center of town; 28 percent

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said they would be in favor of reuse or redevelopment, if the playground could remain, as well as a small amount of open space; and 30 percent would not be in favor of redevelopment or reuse if it required removal of ball fields. The survey asked whether townspeople would be in favor of redevelopment, if it required demolition of the school building: 43 percent said, no, that the building needs to be preserved; 38 percent said yes, but it depends on the type of development; 10 to 11 percent said, yes, regardless of redevelopment or preservation of the structure; and 8 percent gave a variety of comments. A final question was, *What should the town do with the Academy School building?* and .63 percent said nothing should be done to the building; 52 percent thought the town should make the necessary investments for the building's preservation or reuse; 47 percent said the town should just lease the building, contingent on the type of use; 44 percent were in favor of the sale of the building, depending on the type of reuse; and only eight percent were in favor of selling the structure, regardless of the reuse.

Mr. Gomes asked the Planning and Zoning Commissioners to voice their ideas and concerns about the future use of the property. Commissioner Joseph Bunovsky stated that there is a lot of nostalgia centered on the Academy School building; people are extremely nostalgic and that will become a hurdle for redevelopment; however, he stated that he would prefer to see the site used. Chairman Clark stated that the process for the disposition of the Academy School involves much more of the community than the members of the Planning and Zoning Commission, and he stated that he does not have any preconceived idea of what would be best for that site. Vice Chairman Francine Larson asked how much are the ball fields used, and First Selectman Banisch stated that they are regularly scheduled, including twice a week use by the seniors, but the prospect for replacing the Academy School fields is really good. Commissioner James Matteson stated that the front façade of the Academy School is almost 100 years old, and it is a part of Madison's history, which he would not want to see removed. He also stated he would like to see any future use of the site to take on the Daniel Hand name.

First Selectman Banisch stated that he is putting together an Academy School profile package to distribute to potential developers; it will contain, for instance, a variety of information, such as the site appraisal, the types of work done on the site thus far, and soil testing results.

Commissioner John Mathers stated that as a new Madison resident, he can relate to the nostalgia of the Academy School, because that area of town is a small New England village, where everything is within walking distance; he looks at Madison as a destination for visitors, and he sees a tremendous opportunity to draw people to the Madison destination. Commissioner Mathers stated that the façade of the Academy School should be preserved; it is an asset, and there is tremendous potential at the site. A mixed-use development of the property could be sold as the way the town used to be, where people lived downtown, walked downtown and shopped downtown, Commissioner Mathers stated.

First Selectman Banisch stated that it is important that the character of the town be maintained, but townspeople must realize that the town of Madison is not going to do anything to the Academy School, because the town does not have the money for it.

Commissioner Richard Chorney stated that in considering the old village concept, with all its different pieces, he likes the idea of maintaining an educational piece that would serve all ages.

Mr. Gomes asked the commissioners if there is anything they would like him to convey at the

workshop. Commissioner Brian Richardson stated that what it will actually cost for the town to keep that building should be conveyed at the March workshop. Commissioner Mathers stated that it is important to convey that the town is not looking for just any development; it is looking to preserve the character of the town. Commissioner Matteson asked that it be conveyed that the Planning and Zoning Commission takes its charge very seriously regarding maintaining the character of the town.

17-03. 891 Boston Post Road. Final review and approval of siding details per condition of approval from the February 16, 2017 meeting.

Director of Planning and Economic Development David Anderson stated that it had been decided that it was not necessary for the applicant to appear a second time before the Planning and Zoning Commission, since it had already approved the application, pending final siding details that would be worked out in a special meeting of the Advisory Committee on Community Appearance (ACCA), which did meet as specified. In the ACCA special meeting, the applicant agreed with the final architectural details, as follows: the existing copper gutter system should be reused, if possible; the revised double hung windows at the new second floor are the appropriate scale/size; the vinyl siding color is to be “linen” and the trim to be “white;” the vinyl “J” mold at the intersection of the siding and the stone façade will be replaced with Azek trim routed to a shape required; simulated divided lites to be installed in all existing glazed openings at the front, including the door; front area to be landscaped with boxwood on each side of door and ground cover elsewhere along the front; and west side door to be fiberglass (painted), with small covered deck at entry to be composite.

Vice Chairman Larson made the motion to approve 891 Boston Post Road per ACCA recommendations of Feb. 28, 2017, as noted: the existing copper gutter system should be reused, if possible; the revised double hung windows at the new second floor are the appropriate scale/size; the vinyl siding color is to be “linen” and the trim to be “white;” the vinyl “J” mold at the intersection of the siding and the stone façade will be replaced with Azek trim routed to a shape required; simulated divided lites to be installed in all existing glazed openings at the front, including the door; front area to be landscaped with boxwood on each side of door and ground cover elsewhere along the front; and west side door to be fiberglass (painted), with small covered deck at entry to be composite, and that the applicant will return to ACCA for signage and lighting approval. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bunovsky and unanimously approved.

Vote to approve 891 Boston Post Road passed, 7-0-0.

IN FAVOR: Chairman Clark, Vice Chairman Larson, and Commissioners Amanda Mitchell, Matteson, Mathers, Richardson, and Bunovsky.

OPPOSED: None.

ABSTAINED: None.

Status update from subcommittee reviewing housing diversity and affordability regulations.

Status update from subcommittee reviewing areas of commercial development potential.

Director of Planning and Economic Development David Anderson summarized the activities of both subcommittees. Regarding housing diversity, the subcommittee is in favor of pursuing the

following: encourage development of rental apartments and units; encourage construction of smaller, more affordable houses; encourage development that would be age focused, with accessibility options built in, thus allowing people to age in place. Regarding commercial development potential, the subcommittee focused on four areas: the General's Residence, at Boston Post Road and East Wharf, which is in foreclosure and in need of repair; 59 Boston Post Road, which is in a commercial district; property between Academy School and Route 79, which is zoned residential but only has one residential home; and the Route 80 circle shopping plaza, wherein across the street is a former daycare facility, which is now vacant. Mr. Anderson stated that with regards to those properties, it is the subcommittee's goal to develop a rational way of looking at them for future development, such as whether they require zone changes. Alex Province of 917 Boston Post Road was invited to share his concerns about the General's Residence, since his house is across the street from the structure. Mr. Province stated that he is concerned about future development of the parcel, as he would not want it to be made commercial; he would like to see the General's Residence preserved and renovated as a historic structure, and he would hate to see it demolished. If too many of these older homes and structures are replaced or torn down, then Madison isn't Madison anymore, Mr. Province stated. Chairman Clark and Vice Chairman Larson stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission cannot control the process, once someone buys a piece of property. Mr. Anderson stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission does have options available to it; for instance, an overlay zone could be created, and that zone could be specific to preservation of historically significant properties; a regulation could be crafted that would state that in order to develop on the site, the developer has to try to preserve the house. The General's Residence has 1.4 acres, Mr. Anderson stated.

Remarks: Commission Chair ~ None.
Director of Planning and Economic Development ~ None.
Other Comments ~ None.

Adjournment

Commissioner Matteson made the motion to adjourn at 8:55 p.m.; it was seconded by Commissioner Richardson and unanimously approved.

Vote to adjourn passed, 7-0-0.

IN FAVOR: Chairman Clark, Vice Chairman Larson, and Commissioners Amanda Mitchell, Matteson, Mathers, Richardson, and Bunovsky.

OPPOSED: None.

ABSTAINED: None.

Respectfully submitted,
Marlene H. Kennedy, clerk