

**DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD  
MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR HEARING  
Thursday November 7, 2024**

A regular meeting of the Barre City Development Review Board was held in person and video conference. The hearing was called to order by Chair Sarah Helman (Ward II) at 7:00 pm., noting quorum was met.

**Present:** Ward I members Linda Shambo and Vice Chair Chrysta Murray; Ward II member Jayme Bauer; Ward III members Katrina Pelkey and Colin Doolittle, and At-Large members Kendall Schmidt and Liz Turner. It was noted that Jessica Egerton had resigned from the Board.

**Absent:** At Large Vacant Seat

**Staff Present:** Michelle La Barge-Burke, Permit Administrator; Janet Shatney, Planning Director

**Public Present** (from presentations and sign-in sheet): In-person: Bob Purvis; Polly Thomas; Dotty Ricks; Cheryl LaFrance; Gary Watson; Robert Wells; David Roy; Nicola Anderson; Ben Sturtz; Pam Moreau; Chip Castle; Austin Shaw; John Alden. On-line: Matt Mears; Paul Simon; Craig Chase; William Chase; Tammy Davis.

2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** None

3. **Visitors and Communications:** None

4. **Old Business:**

a. **Consideration of October 3, 2024 Minutes:** Motion to approve the minutes was made by C. Murray and seconded by C. Doolittle, **motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

b. **Consideration of October 3, 2024 Decision:** Motion to approve by J. Bauer, seconded by K. Schmidt, **motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

5. **New Business:**

**18 S Main Street – Turning Point Center Application:**

Chair Helman read the brief overview of the matter before the board for the evening; asked if there was anything needing to be read into the record, M. La Barge-Burke stated there was not. Chair Helman asked if there was any ex parte communication among the board members that needed to be disclosed and the response was there was none. Lastly, she noted to the applicant that the board is currently comprised of 8 members out of 9, and that in order to receive approval of their application that there must be 5 votes in the affirmative to pass, and that they are down one member and can postpone the hearing if they choose – the applicant chose to proceed.

**David Lawrence, 18 South Main Street.** Seeks Design Review and Major Site Plan Approval; Design Review Overlay District, UC-2 Zoning District.

Motion to open hearing by C. Murray, seconded by L. Turner at 7:07 pm, **motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

Present for the application were John Alden of Scott+Partners; Bob Purvis, Executive Director for Turning Point Center; and Matt Mears of DuBois & King Engineers. The Oath was administered by Chair Helman.

Chair Helman asked if anyone had anything to add from the application and staff report that was already received and was invited to speak.

- J. Alden stated they have pulled together several grant funders and now have the ability to get this project going. They have the SHPO's [State Historic Preservation Office] approval as the structure is eligible to be a Contributing Historic Structure.
- This is a great location in the downtown and to be there for the local clientele.
- J. Aden spoke to the façade changes, interior changes and the rear section of the building that is not historically significant and remove and replace with something more functional.
- R. Purvis stated that the style of the building, a Greek revival cottage style is simple, durable and welcoming to the people they serve. He is very excited to restore the building and get the center there next year.
- There were site challenges, including the rear steep slope; ultimately deciding not to destabilize the slope in any way now, and will bring the parking lot just to the toe of said slope.
- The rear addition is contextually compatible with the front section, as the neighboring properties are not similar in style to each other at all.
- The applicants all understand there is limited space on the lot for snow storage, and have a set location for the garbage dumpster.

Chair Helman asked each of the Board members if they had any comments or questions:

- K. Pelkey wondered that if all the exterior doors were wider, were the interior doors smaller? J. Alden stated that all door openings are designed to be fully accessible and there will be no step-up into the building. R. Purvis stated that with the wheelchair ramp along the side of the building, the structure will be fully accessible, will have appropriate signage and there will be cameras and a doorbell for assistance.
- C. Doolittle asked how many staff will need parking spaces since it is so limited. R. Purvis stated that there are currently 12 staff members, and a couple live nearby who will be able to walk to work, so that more spaces remain open to the guests. Most guests are walk-ins, and the others are several of their groups like AA [Alcoholic Anonymous] that will use the facility and they meet early in the morning, or later in the evening. C. Doolittle asked if the neighbors had been contacted about the parking, and R. Purvis stated they plan to. Next, snow removal was asked about, and R. Purvis stated they aim to work out arrangements with BHA [Barre Housing Authority] for trash and snow removal with them.
- No public comments or questions were directed toward the applicants.

With no further comments from the Board or the public, Chair Helman stated that the Board would go into deliberative session after the hearings to make a decision, and the applicant could call the Permitting office tomorrow for the decision if rendered, and will receive a letter within two weeks.

Motion to close the hearing by L. Shambo and seconded by C. Doolittle at 7:24 pm, **motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

**0 Seminary St & 0 Campbell Place – Turning Point Center Application:**

Chair Helman read the brief overview of the matter before the board for the evening; asked if there was anything needing to be read into the record, M. La Barge-Burke stated there was not. Chair Helman asked if there was any ex parte communication among the board members that needed to be disclosed and the response was there was none. Lastly, she noted to the applicant that the board is currently comprised of 8 members out of 9, and that in order to receive approval of their application that there must be 5 votes in the affirmative to pass, and that they are down one member and can postpone the hearing if they choose – the applicants chose to proceed.

**City of Barre, 0 Seminary Street & 1 Campbell Street.** Seeks Design Review and Major Site Plan Approval; Design Review Overlay District; Special Flood Hazard Area, UC-1 Zoning District

Motion to open hearing by C. Murray, seconded by J. Bauer at 7:27 pm, **motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

Present for the application were Paul Simon of Park Architecture; Robert Wells of DEW Construction; Brian Lane-Karnas of DeWolfe Engineers; David Roy of Weimann Lamphere Architects. The Oath was administered by Chair Helman.

Chair Helman asked if anyone had anything to add from the application and staff report that was already received and was invited to speak. A clarifying question from the audience was asked when could someone speak, and Chair Helman added that the applicants spoke to the project, and the Board would then ask any questions, and then she would open to those in the audience who were sworn in and chose to speak.

- B. Lane-Karnas stated that he and those folks representing DP Seminary Street, LLC, the developers are proposing a new housing project on the lots currently known as 0 Seminary Street and 0 Campbell Place.
- The entrance to the building would be off Seminary Street, entering the site with an underpass of the proposed structure. The proposed building will utilize the existing access point off Seminary, not adding any new, with a proposed 20-foot wide curbcut, and the height of the designed structure is such to accommodate Barre City fire trucks.
- There are no current utilities to the site, and the City would supply that; power is already there, but will be underground along Seminary Street as it would be in the way of the building.

- The proposed design and application meets all of the Design Review requirements found in the Barre City Unified Development Ordinance.
- Applicants asked for a waiver to waive the street tree requirement because the required sidewalk, setbacks and burying the power line would leave no room for the trees; and a waiver of the open space requirement.
- R. Wells stated that this is a targeted project with Downstreet Housing, a local housing authority, and is excited to bring the project to fruition to increase housing in the City.

Chair Helman asked each of the Board members if they had any comments or questions:

- C. Doolittle asked about Flood Hazard Regulations and how it would be built. B. Lane-Karnas said that the design is a slab-on-grade. C. Doolittle asked if they knew where the floodwaters actually were at the site, and B. Lane-Karnas stated he did not, but in following the FEMA regulations, the design is to have the building 2 feet above the base flood elevation, which is above the required one foot above.
- C. Doolittle asked about storage and flood resistant materials interior, and D. Roy said that yes, the design is such that it would be built to withstand mold. Storage for the tenants will also be in the areas that are two feet above flood elevation. He also asked about the landscaping and there was a mulched path designed, and why not paved? B. Wells said that the mulched path is designed with steel edging and is in a narrow area that could be conducive for mulch. The setbacks for landscaping is eight feet and why not hardscaping like a stone-dust type path. B. Lane-Karnas said this area is not a high-end pedestrian access, as the design puts people through the front of the property, especially for safety and security.
- B. Lane-Karnas expanded on the street-tree waiver and explained that with the buried utilities in the vegetative strip, the required four-foot space, that by planting a tree, it would be tight to the building and look like half a tree. This would not be practical space to plant trees. D. Roy went on to explain that smaller shrubs and perennials could be planted that their root system would be a fibrous root system, one that spreads horizontally and not down into the soil like a tap-root system for a tree does.
- L. Shambo asked about their waiver requests and wanted to know more about requesting an open space waiver, and why not structured parking? B. Lane-Karnas stated that the Board has the ability to waive the open space requirement, meaning necessary green space on the property within the design, because the property is within a half-mile of several parks and playgrounds within the city. The project meets the affordable housing requirements. Structured parking means an actual parking deck structure just for parking, and the waiver of such is because there is parking provided on the property for the tenants, and any extra needed parking could come from purchasing parking passes from the city.
- K. Pelkey wanted to know about snow removal as the site is tight. R. Wells said that they would store snow temporarily and remove it as necessary. K. Pelkey also asked about the location of the handicapped ramp, and why was it in the rear of the design. B. Lane-Karnas stated that the project design meets all ADA requirements, the entrance is closer to the parking lot, and when the first floor is already two feet above base elevation, the ramp must be long, so that the ramp in its location made sense being closer to the parking lot.
- J. Bauer asked where the applicants were with the City's Public Works requirements and the state water supply. B. Lane-Karnas stated that this zoning review is high-level and the

first pass to then continue into other permitting. They are talking to other city departments already, but taking a step at a time as they go further along.

With no other questions from the Board members, Chair Helman then asked if there were any public comments.

- Others sworn in to testify included Polly Thomas and Dotty Ricks from the First Presbyterian Church; Cheryl LaFrance from Northfield Savings Bank.
- D. Ricks stated the church sustained greater than \$500,000 in damages from the flood. She supports Downstreet and helping the homeless, but is very concerned with the run-off, what is being taken into consideration if it affects the church, and is afraid the proposed building will cause the church to flood again. B. Lane-Karnas explained there are two types of flooding; the first being rain and run-off. This type of flooding would be handled with storm drains to reduce the amount of water on the site. The second type is called riverine flooding, and that comes from the swelling and subsequent riverbank overflow, and that cannot be controlled. D. Ricks also asked about a potential fence between the church property and the designed property, and B. Lane-Karnas stated that a fence is not designed, but the significant landscaping would be the buffer. D. Ricks is concerned that their green space would be diminished by the residents and children using it rather than church members using it to be able to sit and contemplate. B. Lane-Karnas stated that if the church is wanting a fence, that they would be happy to have those conversations. Lastly, she asked about trash, and R. Wells pointed out the dumpster location.
- P. Thomas stated that there is a little spring under the church, and a sump pump runs constantly. Have the applicants thought about this during excavation. R. Wells stated that site borings have been done, and the water table is actually 6 to 7 feet down, and that the footings for the structure are designed to only be 5 feet deep. P. Thomas also stated that with this design, the parking is being taken away and where are people going to park when they go to church? This is good for housing, but not good for parking, and is there any other plans for parking? R. Wells responded that those types of questions should be posed to the City Council. Lastly, there are stained-glass windows in the church, and are worried about vibrations and losing them. R. Wells said there is no plan for or need for blasting currently.
- C. LaFrance echoed concern around parking. It was explained that Northfield Savings Bank has been asked to give up one parking space along their owned strip, and with the guardrail gone the public parking will go away. The guardrail should be replaced or with something similar, and stated the bank was told they can find parking elsewhere, but they choose not to. Snow pile locations were of concern, and with the project designed to have less than one parking space per unit, this will put pressure on their private lot.
- Nicola Anderson from Downstreet Housing and Community Development; and Ben Sturtz from Evernorth were then sworn in and stated they wanted to address some things. Downstreet is excited to bring 31 units of housing to the downtown. They are comprised of studio, 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units. Those with multiple bedrooms are conducive to families and once rented, the occupants are longer term. N. Anderson addressed the accessible unit requirement; and stated that it is not a 1:1 parking to unit ratio, and public transportation is paid attention to. If parking is needed, spaces will be leased elsewhere.

- B. Lane-Karnas also stated that noting the guardrail is on Northfield Savings Bank property, and per the zoning regulations, there is no requirement for off-street parking in the downtown.
- Craig Chase, Bill Chase and Tammy Davis were then all sworn in to speak. C. Chase stated that he was told that the City Manager called this an underutilized parking lot, but it is not and many cannot find parking. He stated 20 people from his building use the parking lot, and why are they being penalized for using that lot. This new building will devalue his; he supports the project, just not in this location. He also wondered why the users have not been approached with the idea that parking is going away, and eliminating this parking is ludicrous. He stated that if no one will listen, he will take it to the next level. Chair Helman encouraged him to speak to the City Council.
- B. Chase stated he has owned his building with his wife Carol, and there are now 6 businesses in the building. He stated this project once built will shut them all down; he agrees with everything C. Chase said, and is hard pressed to be in business if this happens.
- T. Davis asked for confirmation that the entrance will be off Seminary Street. With 31 apartments, what would be the capacity of the building – 60 people? N. Anderson made the comparison to 22 Keith Avenue where Downstreet offices are and there are 30 units and only 14 parking spaces are utilized by the residents. T. Davis stated that she has a hard time getting people out of her parking lot [355 N Main St.] as it is not a public parking lot and has real concerns about displacing parking.

With no further comments from the Board or the public, Chair Helman stated that the Board would go into deliberative session after the hearings to make a decision, and the applicant could call the Permitting office tomorrow for the decision if rendered, and will receive a letter within two weeks.

C. Murray made the motion to close the hearing at 8:29 pm and was seconded by K. Schmidt, **motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

## 6. Deliberative Session

Motion made by C. Murray and seconded by K. Pelkey to enter into deliberative session, inviting both M. La Barge-Burke and J. Shatney to join at 8:29 pm, **motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

Motion by C. Murray and seconded by K. Pelkey to exit deliberative session at 8:50 pm, **motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

Motion by L. Turner and seconded by C. Doolittle to be back in public session at 8:51 pm, **motion carried unanimously at 8-0-0.**

- **18 S. Main Street:** Motion made by C. Doolittle and seconded by L. Turner to approve application as presented with the condition that the Zoning Administrator be allowed to approve any immaterial or non-substantial changes to the criteria without having to come back before the DRB for revision, **motion carried unanimously 7-0-0.** It was noted that J. Bauer was not back in session with the rest of the Board due to technical

difficulties. Chair Helman asked that the motion be restated now with J. Bauer fully joined, the motioner repeated the motion to approve the application as presented with the condition that the Zoning Administrator be allowed to approve any immaterial or non-substantial changes to the site plan without having to come back before the DRB for revision, with the seconder approving. No further discussion, **motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

- **0 Seminary Street & 1 Campbell Place:** Motion made by C. Murray and seconded by K. Schmidt to approve the application as presented for the new multifamily building, granting a waiver for open space due to several parks within a half-mile radius; also granting a streetscape waiver due to the proximity of underground utilities and the alternative mitigative proposal while also conditioning that the Zoning Administrator be allowed to approve any immaterial or non-substantial changes to the criteria without having to come back before the DRB for revision.

Discussion occurred with C. Doolittle ensuring that the Board agrees that the requirements under the zoning regulation's Section 3105 performance standards like noise, vibration, odor, etc. were met. L Turner stated that her being an attorney teaching land use laws that these were subsets and have been met. **Motion carried unanimously 8-0-0.**

7. **Roundtable** – L. Shambo stated she did not have any water due to the various line breaks, that is isn't pleasant, but there is a city-wide boil water notice. Chair Helman reminded Board members to sign up for the City's new messaging system ReGroup.

Discussion regarding the January 2025 meeting ensued, that it falls to January 2, the day after a holiday, and wanted to be sure members could attend a Board meeting if there is one, and not away. Chair Helman asked if the date worked or should it be moved as a special meeting to January 8? Board members all stated the standing date will be fine. M. La Barge-Burke stated there are at least 2 applicants for the December 5, 2024 meeting date.

8. **Executive Session:** - None
9. **Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm on motion from C. Murray seconded by K. Schmidt, **motion carried 8-0-0.**

The open portions of this hearing were recorded on the video meeting platform.

Respectfully Submitted,

Janet E. Shatney, Department Director