

Lenox Town Hall

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Planning Board Minutes, 07/26/2016

Lenox Planning Board July 26, 2016 Minutes

Members in Attendance

Kameron Spaulding (KS), *chair*; Kate McNulty-Vaughan (KMF); Tom Delasco (TD), *vice chair*; Pam Kueber (PK)

Staff in Attendance

Gwen Miller (GM), Land Use Director/Town Planner

Guests

See list at end

KS called the meeting to order at 6:10 pm. He waived the approval of minutes of previous meetings. He read the public notice for the ZBA hearing to be held August 3, 2016 regarding the petition of:

CRW Holdings, LLC, d/b/a Miraval Lenox, for the property owned by 55 Cranwell LLC at 55 Lee Road (Map 3, Parcel 54 and Map 4, Parcel 71-1) in the Residential "R-1A" district. The Petitioner seeks to modify an existing Special Permit under Section 9.4 "Special Permits" and Section 6.10 "Estate Preservation Area" of the Lenox Zoning Bylaw.

KS reviewed the scope of the Planning Board (PB) in this process. The PB's interest is in: reviewing applications for special permits; compliance with the town bylaw; compatibility with the town's Master Plan; compliance with standards concerning the environment; compliance with good site design, architectural style, etc., and compatibility with surrounding lands.

KS recused himself because he is president of the Lenox Chamber of Commerce and Cranwell is a member. As vice chair, TD took over.

Miraval Presentation

Steve Rudnitsky (SR), president of the Miraval Group, provided an overview. Miraval is a leader in wellness destinations, resorts and spas. He described Miraval's Tucson, AZ, property, noting that Cranwell will be developed along similar lines. The plan for Cranwell is to:

- complete the previously approved plan to add 43 rooms
- renovate, repurpose and/or preserve existing structures (spa, mansion, Sloane's and Beecher's)
- preserve the 18-hole golf course
- build new structures (new spa, mindfulness center, guest cottage, activity hub, outdoor pool and gardens).

SR believes the project will drive more business to Lenox and generate new jobs. Miraval will pay \$1.1 million in development fees and contribute \$1.3 million annually in taxes. Miraval is committed to using local suppliers when possible. He said construction could begin in the first quarter of 2017 and officially open in 2019. In the meantime, the current Cranwell will continue to operate.

Sydney Smithers (SS) of Cain Hibbard & Myers said CRW Holdings LLC, d/b/a Miraval Lenox is seeking amendments to the existing special permits granted to existing/prior Cranwell owners, i.e., to permit previously approved rooms and to add spa, wellness, mindfulness, and activity/gathering centers.

A 1986 permit allowed up to 350 guests in an Estate Preservation Area. A 1996 modification allowed the reallocation of rooms. A 1997 modification allowed the reallocation of some areas, authorized a new hotel, and increased the total room count.

The plan is to construct a 53-room guest cottage/hotel to be built just east and north of the mansion, add two rooms to the Olmstead building, refurbish all existing rooms and repurpose the mansion as guest reception with valet parking, dining, a banquet facility, and 12 rooms. All these areas would be connected by enclosed walkways. The plan also involves construction of a pedestrian and golf cart tunnel under Route 20, reconfiguration of the main driveway and parking, and new signs on the stone walls at the entrance.

In terms of meeting the PB requirements, SS said that the project complies with zoning and dimensional requirements (consistent with past special permits, though seeking waivers from strict compliance with driveway width and certain parking requirements). It also complies with the town's Master Plan (the project will have no changes in use, maintains open space, and secures the longevity of the property as a resort). There

are no environmental concerns. The project respects the PB's desire for good design, layout, and architectural style. And the project is compatible with surrounding areas and development.

David Rau (DR), senior architect for architects Hart Howerton showed a series of aerial view maps and renderings of various resort buildings and grounds. He said the eclectic style reflects the idea that the Scottish-inspired mansion is a large country estate with outbuildings that resemble those that would be found on an estate (stables, cottages, etc.). The plan includes restoring the interiors in the mansion (wood-paneled walls, etc.) The existing spa building will be altered significantly and will house a fitness and education facility. A new spa will be built elsewhere on the property. He noted that the new guest cottage/hotel next to the mansion will resemble a British country hotel.

He answered PB members' questions regarding buildings to be demolished, overall architectural style of the campus, treatment of the exterior of the Great Estate-protected mansion.

Steve Mack (SM) of Foresight Land services said his firm prepared an impact report. They reviewed two parcels (easterly, 86 acres including the mansion; and westerly, 78 acres) both located in the R-1A zone. He said while the property includes Bordering Vegetative Wetlands, no portion of either parcel is in a Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, nor is it located within an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). He pointed out a number of improvements:

- Roadway and access – there will be one 20'-wide entrance drive from Route 20, using the existing curb cut; the Walker Street access will remain the same
- Parking – there will be 438 spaces in four locations (mansion, Sloane's and Beecher's cottages; and on the west side of Route 20)
- Pedestrian s– there will be a 16'w x 12'h concrete tunnel under Route 20; this will require a Ch 85 bridge review by MA DOT; it will be for use by resort guests and golf course users
- Utility upgrades – there will be significant improvements to existing utilities. Additional water needs will still be below the allowable usage. There will be additional investment in storm water management (drainage, etc.)
- Fire protection – working with the Lenox fire chief, there will be access to two sides of every building and five new hydrants. Tests have been completed to ensure adequate flow.
- Wetlands – a permit will be needed to demolish staff housing on the westerly parcel.

Jon Dietrich (JD) of Fuss and O'Neill said his firm conducted a traffic impact study, including existing conditions and projected traffic conditions up through 2021; estimated trip generation; and peak hours traffic assessment, both for weekdays and Saturdays (especially mid-day). He said additional volume on weekdays would be 21 vehicles and 53 vehicles on Saturdays – a less than 1 percent in peak hour traffic. He said the sight distance at the driveways is adequate.

JD and other Miraval representatives answered PB members' questions regarding driveway width and aisle spacing in the parking areas.

SR and other members of the Miraval group took additional questions from members of the PB, regarding:

Q: Great estate properties, particularly maintaining original features, character and historic landscaping

A: SR said the mansion sets the tone for the plans for the entire campus. Miraval will maintain the integrity and update where appropriate the structures and ensure that the areas around them meet guidelines. DR added that any records for the original landscaping of the mansion are long lost so there is nothing available to preserve. But Miraval will seek to install landscaping appropriate to the site.

Q: Restricted open space and opportunity for public access to open space

A: SR said Miraval is aware of and respectful of building restrictions within the designated open spaces. SS added that public access is restricted to use of the golf course and restaurants. Miraval would be open to further discussion about public access to trails, etc.

Q: Kitchen garden and proximity to driveways and parking (concern about salting of roadways)

A: SR said no specifics of the garden are yet available.

Q: Employees' ability to live locally

A: Many employees will have the opportunity to work both in Lenox and in Tucson. Kyle McCarthy, Miraval's director of human resources, added that some employees will be students from overseas who are part of a hospitality training program (J-1 visa program).

Q: "Indoors-orientation" of the plan

A: SR gave an example of Miraval's most recent project, on the beach in California. Many of the activities there are outdoor-focused and he expects there will be ample outdoors opportunities in Lenox as well.

Q: Lenox as choice for new resort

A: SR said marketing studies showed that New England was the correct site for them. He said everyone knows Lenox as a resort destination with other things to do in and around town and this reputation will add to the overall Miraval experience.

Q: Extra parking

A: The plan calls for 438 spaces in all for employees and guests; only 276 are required by the bylaw. Because most guests will be driving to Lenox rather than flying in, there will be a need for extra spaces.

Before opening the meeting to questions from local residents, TD read a letter from Alan Milbauer, a member of the Board of Trustees at Fairwynds, a complex of 47 homes adjacent to the Cranwell resort. The letter encouraged approval of the application.

Harriet Klein, 13 Blossom Hill Rd.

Q: Setback requirements

A: The proposed guest cottage will meet the setback requirement (25 feet from the lot line and 35 feet from the street).

Q: Height of tallest building

A: The highest building is 45 feet at the roof peak.

Q: Direction of sewer system flow

A: Existing municipal connections will be used. SM indicated in which directions the sewer lines extend.

Lois Schottenstein – 11Blossom Hill Rd.

Q: Sewer system, loss of view, retention of residents' privileges currently in place at Cranwell

A: Miraval will adhere to existing agreements in place (regarding use of the spa, Sloane's, etc.). Plus, there will be day spa programs for local residents.

Robert Speilman, 1 Fairwynds Dr.

Q: Automobile access, booking of hotel room, valet process

A: Where the gate will be located at the main entrance will not impede residents' access to their homes, the pool, tennis courts, etc. While Miraval primarily sells packages, they would consider selling rooms alone. Miraval has chosen to employ the valet process to allow better control of the flow and volume of cars.

Susan Foulds, 42 Walker St.

Q: Economic impact on Lenox; "closed environment" of a full-service resort

A: Miraval has not looked at the economic impact on the town. But one of reasons Lenox was chosen is that it offers many amenities – shops, galleries, restaurants, etc. – that resort guests would want to explore. Town Planner Gwen Miller (GM) added that the town has not conducted an economic impact study. Overall, the town expects businesses proposing to locate in Lenox to have a strong business model and a multiplier effect on retail and dining businesses, as guests may visit downtown during their stay.

Eileen Carroll, 327 Walker St.

Q: review of campus footprint

A: plans were reviewed, showing where each building will be.

The public comment portion of the meeting was closed at 8:21 pm.

Members of the PB held an open discussion regarding the Miraval presentation, public comments, and next steps.

KMV moved to endorse the project as presented; PK seconded. The motion was approved (3-0). The PB will gather its comments and GM will draft a memo for the PB's approval prior to the ZBA hearing on August 3, 2016. If a quorum is available, the PB will meet to review and approve the memo. If a quorum is unavailable due to travel plans, GM or TD will bring the PB's comments as provided to GM to the ZBA hearing on August 3 and state them for the record.

The meeting was adjourned 8:40 pm.

Submitted by

Alison Sneider

Guests in Attendance

Town residents:

Lee Abraham
Rochelle Bernard
Vic Cappadona
Eileen Carroll
Brenda Curtis
Jon Dietrich
Clarence Fanto
Susan Foulds
Ken Fowler
Erik J. George (?)
Ron Hinds

Joy Jaffee
Stanley Jaffee
Stephanie Kinsth
Harriet Klein
Claire Lowery
Paula Lustbader
Deanna Manjiti (?)
Linda Messana
Ann Morgan
Matthew Polk
Sam Pushtin
Alan Schottenstein
Lois Schottenstein
Jacqueline Spielman
Robert Spielman
Tom Walston
Dave Ward
Arleen Weiner

Applicant representatives:

J.G. Collins
C. Hosea
A.H. Glover
Wendy Greiner
James Neville
Steve Mack
Kyle McCarthy
David Rau
Steven Rudnitsky
Sydney Smithers