

TOWN OF WESTFORD
DEVELOPMENTAL REVIEW BOARD MINUTES
Minutes for November 13, 2023.
Site Plan Review
Approved on December 11, 2023.

Board Members Present: Matt Wamsganz (Chair), Francois Ross (Vice Chair), Bill Cleary, Jesse Labreque, Andrew Collier, Dennis Angiono,

Board Members Absent: Peter Armata,

Also Present: Harmony Cism (DRB Coordinator, Zoning Administrator), Callie Hamdy (Minute Clerk), Donovan Ward, Andrea Letorney, Mark Letorney, Calef Letorney, Jeff Olesky, Joe Wagner, John Wagner,

The meeting began at 7:00pm

Amendments to Agenda

There were no amendments.

Citizens to be Heard, Announcements & Other Business

There were no citizens to be heard, announcements or other business.

Sketch Plan Review for Planned Unit Development, Site Plan Amendment and Conditional Use Amendment – Rovers North Inc

Property Applicant: Rovers North, Inc. (approx. 10.9 acres) located on Route 128 in the Rural 5, Rural 10 and Water Overlay Zoning Districts. This is a proposal to expand the commercial operation by constructing an additional 70'x140' commercial structure with additional parking. The creation of an additional principal structure on the lot will require DRB approval as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) with a designated open space.

Matt disclosed that he has worked with Jeff Olesky in the past but did not think this would color his opinion.

Donovan Ward was present on behalf of the Letorneys and Rovers North. He gave a presentation on the project. It is a mixed use commercial/residential property. Septic, pump station and disposal field were shared utilities between the residential home and the commercial buildings. The commercial buildings had their own community water supply. They are proposing a shipping and receiving building that will be served by its own mound wastewater system which already has a permit from the state and will share the community water well. There were no impacts to the wetland body or wetland buffer. The mound system is close to the MRO, so they were proposing a silt fence. There will be more parking for additional employees, 79 total spaces. The open space as required by the PUD was also outlined. They currently need a stormwater erosion permit and are currently going through Act 250 review. The property is already heavily landscaped, and an inventory of existing trees was provided. There is a cedar shield already present, and they will also have tree plantings along the new parking lot. The new green space was also proposed to be landscaped and the lighting was dark sky compliant to town standards.

Matt Wamsganz, DRB Chair, went through the staff report.

The property had previously gone through a conditional use, but with this new addition the staff report suggests separating the combined two lots into a separate lot for commercial and residential uses. The issue with this is much of the infrastructure is on the residential lot. Mark explained it has always been the smoothest to merge the two properties, they cannot sell the house as it is too close to the boundary line and would have to come as a packaged deal if sold. It had previously been viewed collectively together. Matt thought as long as we can review it as one, including all the acreage for both parcels, than it would be okay.

The DRB went through the R5 point system so that Preliminary and Final Plat hearings could be potentially combined. The final score was 24 out of a necessary 27. Matt thought 27 was achievable with adjustment to several points.

There was discussion of whether the open space should be contiguous or fragmented. In the case of this lot, the turnarounds required by the intended use made the fragmentation of the open space a non-issue.

Matt asked if the number of daily and weekly trips would increase. Mark explained that it is a 65 employee system so it could be 65 plus trips per day, but they have no intention of having that many employees, just need the extra building. Matt knows they do not intend to, but if they approve the plans which has space for 65, than it is approved regardless. Mark explained the issue they face as Rovers is they do not have enough space to process orders, and this new building will allow for the most efficient use of current employees. They do not intend to build all 65 parking spaces. Francois asked if it would be possible to change the plans to better reflect their intent? He feels this would be better for their point system rating. Calef believes the employee parking spaces are a valid concern. Matt asked why they want more parking spaces if they do not need them? Mark explained that the cost and time of going through Act 250 is a significant cost to the company. They know they can develop up to 20% of their area under current land use and development regulations, so they went for the max amount to get Act 250 out of the way. Bill thinks that they should ask for what they want and then apply for an extension after. Mark explains the time and cost of going through Act 250 again is extraordinary. It took almost three years to go through the process last time and by the time everything had finished they had outgrown the building they had applied for. They have been in Act 250 process for this current project for 17 months already. Calef asked if they had said they were going for the full 65 if that would be a dealbreaker? Matt was not sure. Harmony explained that the regulations only state that increased trips cannot change the character of the area. Jesse was not sure how much they can change the character of VT Route 128 with increased traffic, it is already a state highway with lots of traffic. Bill thinks it is clear it will increase trip ends since they are going to be putting out more product, the question becomes are the trip ends too much for the area or not? Jeff Olesky noted that the project will also go through traffic review as part of Act 250. He does not think the Agency of Transportation or Act 250 would view it as a traffic generator in its most built out extent.

The applicant should explain if there are increased sounds associated with the new structure. The goal is to make the fulfillment system at Rovers more efficient. It will have receiving at one end and shipping at the other. The activity that occurs now in the original building would be occurring at this building instead, so the noise would be the same. The building is also made out of wood which will dampen noise compared to metal.

Are there any hazardous materials associated to the new structure? Some vehicle parts of considered hazardous materials, but this is not different to what they have been doing. They do have a workshop on the property, but they are not a waste generator. Francois asked what the most hazardous material in the building would be. Calef responded they do have corrosion prevention materials, but they do not intend to move any of that into the new building. There is oil in shock absorbers, fuel treatment or motor oil, brake fluid etc. that would be present at the new building.

Matt opened the floor up to public comment.

John and Joe Wagner were present, they have been neighbors with the Letorneys for 30 years. They have concerns for the impacts of the extra traffic, lights from the cars, the outdoor storage and noise. In particular, the parking behind the building will be facing Joe's house. Lots of people come and go and there are a lot of headlights. They would like to see the parking spaces and lighting addressed. They do not want excess storage used for extra vehicles or parking. Their biggest concern with noise is the lift when it is in reverse. If it is going in and out of the new building it is even closer to their property. Matt asked if there was an opportunity to add more landscaping to help with the lighting area? Dennis suggested some sort of rural fence. The Letorneys thought this was possible. The Wagners did not see Rovers slowing down on production. The concern over the buildings not being seen from 128 has pushed the location of the buildings near to the Wagners. Some of the parking spots are right near their driveway. Mark thinks they could easily construct a berm or a fence to give the Wagners a good visual block.

Minutes of October 9, 2023 Meeting

Bill motioned to accept the minutes as presented. Dennis seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

Andrew motioned to adjourn at 9:00 p.m. seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

Submitted by,
Harmony Cism, DRB Coordinator

Callie Hamdy, Minute Clerk