

**PLANNING BOARD
TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH, New Hampshire**

Minutes of September 10, 2012

Members Present: Chairman Rick Monahon, Alan Zeller, Rick Clark, Alternate Jerry Galus, Alternate Audrey Cass, Tom Weeks, Ivy Vann and Barbara Miller, *ex officio*.

Staff Present: Carol Ogilvie, Director Office of Community Development; and Laura Norton, OCD Administrative Assistant.

Chair Monahon called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He welcomed the audience and introduced the members and staff. He noted there were no cases this evening but there was a Preliminary Conceptual Consultation with representatives of the Scott-Farrar Home regarding a proposed 63-unit retirement community consisting of independent living apartments, assisted living apartments and memory care units, with associated community areas, located at 11, 13 & 15 Elm Street, Parcel ID #'s U023-039-000, U023-040-000, U023-040-100, and U023-041-000 in the General Residence, Family, and Rural Districts.

Rick Clark recused himself and Chair Monahon appointed Ms. Cass to sit.

Chair Monahon noted "we have received material from the applicant which is a fairly detailed set of information." He noted the purpose of the meeting was a conceptual presentation but asked "is the applicant looking to see if the application is ready to be accepted as complete?" Ms. Ogilvie replied "this is a preliminary review application; the applicant is here to present and receive input from the Board and audience before filing a formal site plan application."

Chair Monahon noted the process of having the applicant present followed by questions from the Board and then questions from the audience. Mr. Ogilvie noted "this is not a public hearing but the public may speak at a preliminary to identify any issues or concerns they have at the Chair's discretion."

Ed Despres introduced himself as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Scott-Farrar Home. He noted the presence of several other Board members in the audience without introducing them. He apologized that their Executive Director, Joanna Kennedy, was unable to be present. He also noted Thomas Hanna their legal counsel and Gerry Menke of EGA, P.C. their architectural firm were present as well.

Mr. Despres began with "I would like to start by going backwards" and proceeded to give a brief history of the Scott-Farrar Home. He noted their history began in 1909 with the incorporation of the *Peterborough Home for the Aged* on Vine Street. One of those incorporators was Helen Farrar and 19 years later in 1928 her descendants moved the home to 9 Elm Street.

Mr. Despres noted that Jennie Scott (who was born and lived her 97 years in Peterborough) was a major benefactor of the home. When she died in 1951 she bequeathed half of her considerable estate to the Peterborough Home for the Aged. Her will stipulated the home on Elm Street be

demolished and a “new and fireproof home for the aged” be built at its present location. “In 1957 a new non-profit organization was incorporated as the Scott-Farrar Home” he said adding “with a history of the home you can see where we started, where we are and why we are here with proposed expansion plans.”

Mr. Despres presented one of several graphics and pointed out the current structure along with a smaller house to the south and a large farmhouse with barn to the south of that. He noted Scott-Farrar bought the smaller house several years ago and in 2008 purchased the farmhouse and barn. “With the adjacent field we now have just under seven acres of land” he said. He also pointed out the boundary lines of the property.

Mr. Despres noted he had been a Trustee for 6 years and has seen the home struggle with its census. “We have 18 rooms with 15 or 16 occupied by residents” he said. He added “we want to keep our mission going. We are a charitable, non-profit organization and intend to stay that way.” He noted several advisors have told them they are too small. He noted “even the Attorney General’s Office has told us 18 rooms is too small.” He went on to describe a new 63-bed facility comprised of 25 independent, 20 assisted living and 18 memory care units.

Mr. Despres noted several reasons they could not just expand their current facility. “Financially it is not feasible” he said. He added the rooms are small and all single occupancy, most with half baths. He told the audience and members that the Board had taken several road trips to different facilities in Vermont and New Hampshire “looking at the competition and seeing what we *could* be.” He said they looked at the architecture and the construction “but more importantly getting second opinions on what our advisors have been telling us.” He noted “we benefited from their experience from both the financial and feasibility aspect of things and found we are not up to the competition with what we have to offer.” Mr. Despres noted a market study that had been done came up with a number of 63 units adding “the studies were very positive and the market can absorb what we put together.” He went on to note “the time is right, we have the best site in town, close to the Downtown and close to Route 101. We have a beautiful back yard and are just a 5 minute walk from where we began 103 years ago. We have a lot of positives to work with; it is like being anew in the same neighborhood.”

Mr. Despres read their Mission Statement which included “providing a healthy, safe, home-like environment for the Monadnock Region’s older citizens at an affordable cost. The professional quality of care, diverse back grounds of the residents and variety of activities contribute to a rich and stimulating atmosphere. A home dedicated to meeting the needs of each resident in a dignified and caring manner.” He noted “we would like to continue that going forward, stay where we are and grow on that site.” Mr. Despres then introduced Gerry Menke, CEO of the architectural firm EGA, P.C. of Newburyport, Massachusetts.

Mr. Menke began by expanding a bit on his credentials. He concluded by noting the firm’s expertise in senior projects “of one type or another” citing 55+ communities, specialty care, skilled care, long term care and hospice.

Mr. Menke reaffirmed the appeal of the site so close to the downtown area and reiterated the presentation was preliminary. "We want feedback and how things may be improved, this is not cast in stone" he said.

Mr. Menke then gave a brief review of the existing conditions of the current site and building. He noted the lot was 6.6 acres "flanked by Evans Road, Elm Street and the Nubanusit River." He noted a mature heavy wooded buffer along the river and pointed out the five structures and curb cuts on the parcel. He noted the parcel was located in three zoning districts (Rural, Family and General Residence) as well as the wetland setbacks, all of which he pointed out on a graphic.

Mr. Menke reviewed the topography of the site as well, noting the high point of the land and the gradual dropping off of 30 feet to a grassy/gravel area by the river. "This site really works for us" he said.

Mr. Menke moved on to the proposed plan. He reiterated the market study and the support of 25 independent, 20 assisted living, and 18 memory care units. He pointed out 16 covered garage spaces and a new maintenance building. He used several graphics as he described the retirement community project. He noted the building would be 2 ½ stories in height and 73,000 square feet in size. He briefly reviewed the associated (common) community areas including the lobby and dining areas.

Mr. Menke reviewed the security of the memory care units with their shared service component but separate wing and private gardens. He noted the assisted living and memory care units were located on one side and on one level with the independent living and administration offices on the other side. He looked to the Board and said "the biggest design challenge of this site is to continue the mission without having the current residents move out, that is non-negotiable." He went on to show a 2-phase plan of how they intended to build the site around the current facility (taking approximately 8 months) and then move the residents, demolish the building and complete phase 2 (estimated to take 4 months).

Ms. Miller asked about the staffing with Mr. Menke deferring to Board Member Eldon Munson who sat in the audience. Mr. Munson noted the staff would be "upwards of 54 to 55 when the facility is up and running. Full census and fully staffed."

Mr. Menke reviewed their plan for a second entrance to the facility off Evans Road. He pointed out the entrance was located right between the lot lines of the neighbors across the street for minimal impact. He told the members the old barn may be re-usable, perhaps as their new maintenance building, and noted the landscaping and height difference of the structure.

Mr. Menke noted the provision of 82 parking spaces with the addition of another 15 spaces in the grassy area to the south. He noted "the practical need is for 70 spaces but we have gone ahead and shown them on the plan" adding "our hope is to pave them out as necessary." Mr. Despres interjected "not paving the grassy (overflow) area downsizes the impervious surface areas, a concern we discussed at our neighborhood meeting."

Mr. Menke pointed out the walking trails, current crosswalks and other options for crossing the street. He noted the curb cuts were purposely opposite the Winter Street and Nubanusit Lane curb cuts. He told the members “the ordinance allows a height of 50 feet and 25% building coverage. We will have 13 %, and be completely non-combustible. In referring to a sketch he pointed out simple gable ended forms with the middle portion climaxing to the arch. He noted the roofline would be kept down by using a series of dormers “typical of New England architecture.”

Ms. Vann interjected “I know you have expressed the building as 3 stories, but how high is it?” Mr. Menke replied normally in New England three stories is 35 feet but that has yet to be calculated. I can say it will be less than 40 (feet).”

Mr. Menke concluded by describing the expression of the building as being one that fit into the pattern of the neighborhood. He noted the building’s appearance was important to the residents, the staff and its own marketability.

A summary of the project followed with a brief discussion on the location of the facility, parking, natural topography and grading to accommodate the building height and (vehicle) headlight screening.

Chair Monahon noted “that is great, anything more?” Attorney Hanna introduced himself and spoke briefly. He noted the Board of Trustees was aware that a Special Exception from the ZBA would be necessary. “This type of residential facility is allowed by Special Exception, we know we need to get that” he said. Attorney Hanna added “this week I will be writing to the two Boards (Planning Board and ZBA) to request a joint hearing, I think this is the perfect case to do so.” Attorney Hanna went on to note “Special Exception and Site Plan criteria are redundant and overlapping in several areas. For that reason and efficiency we are requesting a joint hearing, most likely for the week of October 22nd.” He concluded “that will give us ample time to enable us to digest what we are hearing from the neighborhood meeting and this preliminary presentation.” In conclusion Attorney Hanna said “in the mean time we will prepare the site plan and our application and continue to move forward, thank you.”

Mr. Galus asked about a traffic study. The response was that a preliminary traffic study had been done “and in a nutshell summary, it shows minimal impact on the neighborhood.” A woman from the audience interjected “what about Evans Road?” Chair Monahon noted that for the purposes of keeping the process clear and systematic all questions and concerns for the audience would be addressed in turn. He assured the woman she would have her opportunity to speak.

Chair Monahon closed the Preliminary presentation at 7:45 p.m. and moved on to questions and concerns from the Board.

Mr. Weeks began with a question about the parking areas and whether or not everything would be paved. It was noted the Planning Board has the authority waive or condition the parking regulation formula of 1 space for every 2 residents.

Ms. Miller asked for clarification regarding the staffing. She noted the facility would have 63 units and asked “did I hear you say 54 or 55 staff members for that many units?” Mr. Munson replied “yes, it is 24-hour care.” Ms. Miller replied “wow that is better than the Ritz.”

Ms. Vann asked for clarification on the existing vegetation. Chair Monahon noted “my only question is a strategic one.” Chair Monahon noted the three distinct zoning districts that the property was located within and asked Mr. Menke “is there anything in your preliminary strategy that made you wish that the boundary line between the zones might be altered or wish it were alterable?” Mr. Menke replied “*oh sure*,” adding “but we take the zoning districts as hard and fast law.” Chair Monahon asked “is there any benefit if those lines were not hard and fast?” Mr. Menke took a moment and replied “oh gosh, we are happy with this plan, it doesn’t gain us enough to fight that battle.” Mr. Despres added “according to our history lesson we were here first and zoning moved in around us.” Chair Monahon assured “we do not like to discourage people early on because of zoning problems.” Attorney Hanna noted the time frame involved and the need for a town meeting vote would bring the project into another year, adding “the home cannot afford another year.”

Ms. Cass voiced her concerns over the parking area to the north (by the river) with Mr. Menke noting “we will comply with all the regulations.” Mr. Weeks asked about storm water management with Mr. Menke confirming that plan would be done. Mr. Galus asked about the farmhouse and asked “is that a residence?” Mr. Menke replied “yes.” Mr. Galus asked “will it be torn down?” Mr. Menke replied “yes.” Another member asked about addressing the traffic changes for Evans Road with Mr. Menke noting “we certainly can, we have not because we have focused on Elm Street, where the most traffic would be.”

There were no further questions from the Board. Chair Monahon opened the meeting up to questions from the public at 8:40 p.m.

Chair Monahon addressed the woman who had asked a question earlier in the presentation. He asked “what was your question?” Teri Wenblad introduced herself and said “it has been answered” referring to a traffic study and the traffic impacts to Evans Road. Ms. Wenblad noted her concern about the 22 parking places accessed by Evans Road “specifically employee parking” she said “24 hours a day.” She added “there will be people going in and out, there will be a considerable amount of traffic compared to what goes down there now.” She also noted her concerns about the traffic on Elm Street and exiting/entering Evans Road from Elm Street. “Turning in or out 75% of the time I have a near-miss from someone who is flying down that street” she said.

Linda DuBreuil introduced herself as a resident of Evans Road and asked about the delivery and heavy trucks accessing the site via Evans Road. Posy Bass introduced herself as a resident of Elm Street. She noted her general support but also her concerns. “The parking is driven by the zoning” she said adding “and it is really way more that the home needs. I would hope the Planning Board would waive some of the requirements based on the population.” Ms. Bass also noted the traffic issues on Elm Street stating “I never imagined the traffic on Elm until I moved there. It is crazy.” She concluded by noting “this project might initiate some serious thinking about traffic calming on that road, it is pretty bad.” With a smile Mr. Despres interjected “we will try to bring residents who drive slower.”

Deb Kaiser introduced herself as a member of the Heritage Commission and began with “thank you Ed, you covered most of the history for us.” She referenced a document the Commission had submitted to the Planning Board that provided background information and suggestions to the Board for consideration while reviewing the plan as well as the demolition of the neighboring farmhouse and attached barn. Ms. Kaiser described the neighborhood in the early days as a mix of mills and residential. She noted “it is wonderful to have elder care but we do have concerns.” She went on to describe several suggestions that addressed the visual impact of the building as well as retaining and maintaining the farmhouse and barn. She noted “today the neighborhood is primarily residential with homes laced along the tree-lined street. She noted a resurgence of new families moving in and upgrading their homes. She said she felt a bit better once she had seen the plan noting “for 73,000 square feet you have camouflaged it pretty well but remember most of the surrounding houses are small. By comparison this is a very large project, I hope you keep that in mind” she said.

Ms. Kaiser noted a few other alternatives that the Heritage Commission felt may facilitate the preservation of the residential streetscape and diminish the large impression of the facility. “Anything you can do to keep it in dimension is important” she said adding “if would be shame to discourage the further insurgence of the neighborhood.”

A young woman stood up and asked “why do you have to take the barn and the house down? This is too modern, too big and too commercial. It takes the flavor of the neighborhood away.” When asked to identify herself for the record she replied “I am King from the corner of Elm and River Streets.” Ms. King went on to note the styles of the homes on Elm Street were largely European stucco houses built in the early to mid-1800s. Ms. King also noted the traffic issues on the street and concluded by reiterating “it is too modern and too commercial.”

Kate Coon introduced herself and said “I am not opposed, I think this is OK.” She noted she would like to see certain screening and added landscaping “so the car port won’t be so blatant.” Ms. Coon also agreed with what so many had said previously noting, “traffic is insane.”

Henry Taves introduced himself as an Elm Street resident. He noted “I live in the Mill across from the grassy area used for subsidiary and overflow parking.” He noted that area is not clear on the site plan. “It is not paved but it is a part of the circulation of the land and it should be shown” he said.

Mr. Weeks asked “is this a residential development? Adding “I only raise that question because of the Groundwater Protection Zone. If it is then 20% of the lot area must be impervious.” Mr. Weeks referred to §245-14 E (1) and a brief discussion followed. Ms. Vann noted one way to address the problem would be to use pervious pavers.

Mr. Clark introduced himself and noted “I worked on it” adding the structure was all concrete walls and broken up (space wise). “It is all wrong” he said. He noted that when the building was built in 1957 things were different “It was state-of-the-art back then” he said adding “today it may serve well as a prison but that would be it.” Mr. Clark added “anyone who would buy that building would have to tear it down. They cannot continue to go on the way they are so they will have to go

out of business or go elsewhere.” Mr. Despres interjected “it took us longer to come to that same conclusion, but yes.”

Ms. Bass asked about possible waivers for the parking requirements noting the Summerhill Assisted Living Facility had been successful in that endeavor. Chair Monahon replied “yes there is absolute precedence that has been established for road widths and parking regulations in the past.”

Nils Wenblad introduced himself and asked (Mr. Despres) about the roads trips and the other facilities they had visited. “What types of settings are they in?” he asked. He qualified by adding “residential? rural?” Mr. Despres replied “a mixture of mostly residential and rural adding “one facility opening in the fall is commercial/residential.” Someone, somewhere asked about the size of the facilities (number of units) with Mr. Despres noting “they were in the 60 to 90 unit range, similar to what we are looking at.” Mr. Despres reiterated they also got a flavor of the parking designs, staffing needs and building architecture on their tours. “And interesting enough” he said, “there was nothing small; nothing out there was 18 rooms.”

Laura Campbell introduced herself as an Elm Street resident. She began with “I want to say that all the people I have talked to support the mission of Scott-Farrar. We understand the need for a larger facility. I for one am trying hard not to be afraid of change. Change can be good, and we all know them as a good neighbor.” Ms. Campbell went on to note her concerns about the design of the facility in the neighborhood. She noted she felt them at the neighborhood meeting “and I feel the same concerns as I look at them now.” She noted the anxiety of the residents of Evans Road citing increase in parking and traffic “without even a way to buffer that is a big concern” she said. As for Elm Street, Ms. Campbell noted the project could have done a better job of embracing the neighborhood. “It is more like they turned their backs on the neighbors” she said. She noted the houses on Elm Street were dense and close together. “Density is not a problem” she said adding she hoped the Planning Board would address the streetscape (or lack thereof), the large setback and the total difference in the scale of the building. Ms. Campbell also briefly spoke about the traffic situation on Elm Street and the desperate need for traffic calming. “We need to do something on that street” she said.

A brief discussion about the traffic issues including speeders, line of sight problems and the banking of the road followed. Ms. Vann noted the “wide-openness” of the street getting to Route 101. “I think the whole street needs to be thought about” she said.

Ms. Campbell asked if the Board would be accepting written comments and concerns from the public as well as the time frame involved. Chair Monahon replied “you are absolutely welcome to give us input in any form” adding “and remember it is important to understand while this is a preliminary hearing it is part of the permanent record, just like the Minutes. There will be many more meetings.”

Susan Phillips-Hungerford introduced herself and asked, as a non-resident of the town if she could speak. “I am a former resident” she said noting she lived on Winter Street for 15 years and still has her business in the Downtown. Chair Monahon responded positively and she began with “my first thought is to lie down in the road to prevent it from being built.” She briefly touched on several

aspects of the project; including some architecture that she thought negatively impacted the neighborhood.

Dario Carrara introduced himself as the Code Officer and Zoning Administrator. He asked for a general Planning Board response to the presentation before them. A very informal straw poll showed the Board's interest and support. Mr. Clark was quite positive noting "I am totally for it. That is why I am on this side of the table." Chair Monahon reiterated that they were at the very beginning of the process "with many more meetings to come."

In closing Ms. Campbell reiterated the traffic problems on Elm Street and the need for the town's attention to those issues.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant