

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Site Visit
Friday, September 10, 1999
SPR 00-0002, Boltwood Walk Parking Garage, Town Of Amherst

MEMBERS: Frank McNerney; Chair, William O'Neil, Sara Berger, Bob Grose
STAFF: Niels la Cour
APPLICANTS: Applicants - Barry Del Castilho, Town Manager; Carl Seppala,
Parking Garage Building Committee;
OTHERS: Noel Ryan, Superintendent of DPW; Dan Dulaski, Town Engineer;
Ned Markert, Buildings Maintenance Manager; Alan Root, abutter.

The Site visit began at 8:00 a.m. in the front lobby of the Town Hall since it was raining. Several mounted drawings showing the general layout, landscaping, and pavement types, along with elevation drawings were on display. Mr. Seppala of the Parking Garage Building Committee presented a general overview of the project and used the drawings to orient the group to the site. In his presentation Mr. Seppala discussed the following: vehicular and pedestrian access and circulation on the site; elevations and slope of the site; pavement and walkway treatments; landscaping and other site amenities.

The group asked questions and discussed issues indoors before taking a brief tour of the site in the rain. The following issues were discussed:

Number of parking spaces

The total number of parking spaces will be dependent on how the bids come in and whether an ell in the subsurface level will be built or not. The number given for consideration was 188 parking spaces.

Vehicular circulation

It was noted that the intersection at Lessey Street and Main Street would be reconfigured in conjunction to the construction of the parking garage to make access to the site easier and safer. It was also noted that several design features had been included to inhibit through traffic using the site as a shortcut. These included raised pedestrian ways and a circuitious route to get through the site.

Building structures

The three building structures on the site were identified and described. These included the stairwell head house, the canopy for handicapped vehicle parking near the Bangs Center and the elevator/stairwell head house that also contains ventilation exhaust fans, electrical and other utilities.

Architectural design criteria

Mr. Seppala said that three design criteria were used for the structures on the site; 1) surrounding architecture; 2) budget; and 3) maintenance issues. He noted that they were intended to fit into the architectural context, but not necessarily copy any existing architecture. The structures were also designed to be durable and require a minimal amount of maintenance. He also mentioned some discussion the Building Committee has had with the Public Art Selection Committee concerning funding they had and whether permanent public art could be incorporated into the designs. Concern about postering was also mentioned.

Lighting

Most of the lighting on the site will be using the same ornamental pedestrian/street fixtures found elsewhere in Boltwood Walk and along Main Street in Sweetser Park. There will also be some lighting along the trellis and ramp to the lower level where the lighting fixtures are wall mounted globes. Mr. Seppala said they had still not resolved how the lighting would be handled in the stairwells.

Surface treatment

There was concern expressed that the pavers would buckle as they had along the adjacent Bangs Center sidewalks. Mr. Seppala said that those earlier pavers were only set in sand and that the proposed pavers would be heavier duty concrete pavers set on a much more stable subsurface.

Parking and revenue control

Mr. Seppala said this issue had not been completely resolved yet. However, there would most likely be parking meters on the surface level with some type of ticket machine and leasing arrangements for the lower level. There are several options under consideration.

Abutting property improvements and deliveries

Mr. Seppala said that the garage design had not provided explicit answers to all the questions, however, there were many design considerations to enable solutions and not preclude future use/changes.

Snow removal

Mr. Seppala said they had been in close consultation with Mr. Markert to address this maintenance issue. He also noted that the ramp to the lower level would be heated to avoid any snow or ice buildup.

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Energy management system

Mr. Markert noted that all of the electrical and mechanical equipment would be tied into the energy management system in the Bangs Community Center.

Landscape plantings and maintenance

Mr. Seppala said that a drip irrigation system would be installed to insure the survival of the landscaping. He also noted that all of the plant species to be used were hardy varieties.

Tow truck access

There was concern whether tow trucks would be able to get in to assist disabled vehicles. Mr. Seppala said that should not be an issue on the surface level. Because the structure is being reinforced, there is no need for the headache bars at the entrances. He said he thought that tow trucks will be able to get into the lower level, although the flat bed tow trucks may not be able to. The clearance will be 7'6".

Handicapped accessibility

Mr. Seppala said that the Building Committee and designers had worked hard to meet the accessibility codes. He noted some of the design features used to deal with the changes in grade. He also note that Myra Ross of the DAAC had expressed concern that there were not enough design features included for the visually impaired. Mr. Seppala said that this was being taken into consideration and there were several suggestions that would likely be included in the final plans.

Solid waste disposal

The large trash dumpsters around the site were noted by the group. Mr. Del Castilho said that they preferred not to use any room on the site for solid waste disposal facilities. Instead they were working on a much more labor intensive, but more aesthetically acceptable system of smaller containers that would get emptied more often, thus eliminating the need for the large dumpsters.

