

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MINOR PROJECT REVIEW COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 8, 2022

10:00 AM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

John Rogers
Don Lussier
Jesse Rounds
Med Kopczynski
Donald Farquhar
Michael Hagan, Alternate

City Staff Present:

Megan Fortson, Planning Technician

Members Not Present:

Kürt Blomquist, Alternate
Mari Brunner, Alternate
Steve Dumont Sr., Alternate

I) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Rogers called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM. Roll call was conducted.

II) Minutes of Previous Meeting – March 10, 2022

Mr. Kopczynski made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 10, 2022. Mr. Lussier seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

III) Public Hearing

- a. SPR-881, Modification #2 – Site Plan – 342 Winchester St - Applicant Sampson Architects, on behalf of owner Riverside Improvements LLC, proposes to renovate the eastern tenant space and build an addition approximately 321 sf in size on the building located at 342 Winchester St (TMP#111-004-000-004-000) for use as a Ramunto’s restaurant. The site is 0.68 acres in size and is part of the larger Riverside Plaza located in the Commerce District.**

Mr. Rogers introduced SPR-881, Modification #2.

Tim Sampson of Sampson Architects stated that this project proposes to redevelop some currently unused space at the rear portion of the building where Delta Dental is located for use as a restaurant, to renovate some exterior space to create an addition that will be utilized as back of house space

for the restaurant, and to create an outdoor seating area that will be approximately 450 square feet in size. There are no changes are proposed to the parking; however, there will be a minor increase in the amount of impervious surface on the site due to the proposed outdoor seating, which will have a canopy over it. He showed the site plan and stated that the proposed restaurant is about 20% of the building. He showed the location of the outdoor seating, stating that it was approved by the landlord. He showed the outside space and existing concrete wall, stating that they propose putting a roof over it, to use as back of the house for the restaurant. He continued by stating that existing bathrooms inside will be reconfigured. He showed the enclosed area where they propose to put the dumpster and add some screening. He continued by stating that it is a simple, straightforward project, fairly small in scope. He recently handed out examples of what is being proposed for siding and noted that he will probably have to come back to formally present that.

Mr. Rogers stated that before Mr. Sampson continues his presentation, the committee needs to hear from City staff regarding the completeness of the application.

Ms. Fortson stated that the applicant requests exemptions from submitting a grading plan, a landscaping plan, lighting plan, drainage report, traffic analysis, soil analysis, historic evaluation, and screening analysis. She continued that staff recommends the committee grant the requested exemptions and accept this application as complete.

Mr. Kopczynski made a motion to find the application complete as recommended by staff. Mr. Rounds seconded the motion.

Mr. Lussier stated that he has no problem with the motion as presented. He continued that one of the exemptions is the drainage report. He looked at the original site plan and the drainage report that was done for that site, and that drainage report had a higher amount of impervious coverage than Mr. Sampson's proposal has. The drainage report done at that time can be used as justification for omitting the drainage report now. However, regarding one of the requirements in the design criteria of that original work, they were using the drainage system, the pipes themselves, as a retention basin. They did that by installing choke plates into the drain lines. Those sorts of things tend to disappear over time, so he would like to propose as a condition of approval that the applicant will need to submit documentation and evidence that the restriction plate is in place according to the original design. If the applicant is okay with that, he has no problem omitting the drainage report. Chair Rogers stated that he also has questions regarding some of the drains coming off the building.

Mr. Kopczynski stated that he did not intend for the motion to be seen as approval of any waivers. His intent with the motion was to find that the application is complete. He assumed that as the committee discussed the project, if there were any issues, they would rise to the table.

Mr. Lussier stated that he thinks the function of the motion is to waive the applicant from the requirement to submit a drainage report, among others. Chair Rogers replied yes, that is how he would take it – that the committee actually is approving the completeness, the waiver requests are being allowed. He thinks they can cover those with, as Mr. Lussier mentioned, a possible condition.

Mr. Kopczynski replied that for the record, that was not his intent. He continued that he does not have a problem with that, but it was not his intent.

Ms. Fortson stated that for the sake of clarity, the MPRC does not have the ability to grant waivers from the Planning Board standards. She continued that with this motion, the committee is just granting the applicant an exemption from having to submit an item. Waivers would be actual relief from the standard itself. Thus, the MPRC is essentially just saying that they did not think it was necessary for the applicant to submit X, Y, and Z.

The motion to accept the application as complete passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Rogers asked Mr. Sampson to continue his presentation.

Mr. Sampson showed the proposed elevations, the location of the existing coolers, and the proposed stone and door, and the covered outside seating. He showed the proposed meter bay, stating that it would have some sort of enclosure around it so the people sitting outside do not have to see it. He continued that the second egress is on the opposite side. He showed where they propose to extend a concrete wall down into the cooler and enclose and insulate that so it can be used as additional interior space. He continued that it is partially roofed and they propose enclosing it.

Mr. Sampson stated that this is existing space that was a pizza place years ago. They propose turning a portion of it back into a pizza shop.

Mr. Kopczynski asked if this would be an additional Ramunto's restaurant in Keene or if this would replace the existing Ramunto's restaurant. David Ingerman, owner of Ramunto's, replied that the existing one will be closed probably at the end of the year, mainly due to resource issues, having enough staff, etc.

Chair Rogers noted that Mike Hagan is here as an alternate, involved with the deliberations but not the votes.

Mr. Hagan asked about the proposal for the overhead door. He continued that there is a requirement for insect screening for restaurants, such as an air curtain or an air screen, which can be expensive. He wanted to make sure the applicant was aware of that. Mr. Sampson replied that he has discussed that with City staff.

Mr. Lussier asked about planned changes to water or sewer connections. Mr. Sampson replied no, they are in the existing locations.

Chair Rogers stated that he knows there are some existing downspouts that are dumping to the riprap area between the sidewalk and the building. He asked if that riprap area will be removed and replaced with, he is assuming, a concrete patio. Mr. Sampson replied that they are discussing materials and trying to find a good impervious paver. Chair Rogers asked if it is correct that the roof drains as well as the other overflow scuppers will still be draining to a pervious surface. Mr. Sampson replied yes. Chair Rogers replied that he sees Mr. Sampson has shown some new

drainage for the awning/roof system on the plans that is proposed to be connected into the existing drainage system, not just into the ground. Mr. Sampson replied that is correct.

Chair Rogers stated that what Mr. Sampson shows as the existing dumpster location is actually not the legitimate dumpster location; it might be where the dumpster lives today, but not per the originally approved site plan. He continued that he sees that Mr. Sampson proposes putting it back into what should be the approved dumpster location. He noted that there is a Fire Department connection within the proposed dumpster enclosure, as well as the sprinkler room access door. He would ask the Fire Chief what concerns he might have. He believes the dumpster was supposed to live much further down in the area that Mr. Sampson proposes to enclose, so these two areas that may need to be accessed in an emergency would not be impeded by a dumpster. Mr. Sampson replied that if staff has a better dumpster location in mind that is fine. He showed an alternative location.

Chair Rogers replied that that is actually the location right in front of the fire connection; it becomes tight in the enclosure to have both a dumpster and the fire access points. He will let the Fire Chief speak to the importance of having access to that sprinkler room. The fire connection is to the left side of that area. Having seen how dumpster truck drivers work and how the dumpsters get slammed all over the place, he has concern about those two areas. Mr. Sampson stated that he is open to a different location. He continued that this just seemed like the easiest and most convenient place to put it. Chair Rogers replied that that was where it was supposed to be to begin with; it is not supposed to be outside of that screened-in area. That just happens to be where it sits today, by the choice of the dumpster truck driver. He appreciates it going back somewhat in the area where it is supposed to be. If it were much further back, the fire connection and that door would not be impeded.

Chief Farquhar stated that he echoes Chair Rogers' comments about making sure there is access to those areas. He continued that if the dumpster is going to be in that area there would need to be some sort of physical barrier for the dumpster. Mr. Lussier asked if he means a bollard or something to that effect. Mr. Farquhar replied yes, something physical to make sure the area is not encroached upon over time.

Mr. Rounds asked about the requested exemption from the landscaping plan. He continued that they would want to see landscaping, to make sure it meets the site development standards.

Chair Rogers asked if anyone else had more discussion. Hearing none, he asked if the applicant had anything else to add.

Mr. Sampson stated that regarding drainage, he has been in touch with someone about a stormwater plan. He continued that he has been struggling to find someone who could do a drainage plan. They are looking into meeting this requirement. Mr. Lussier replied that again, the original drainage calculations for this site were based on a much larger parking area than what is currently out there, so he doesn't feel that it's necessary for them to be submitted; however, his concern is whether or not the drainage system was actually built the way the original designers intended it to be built. That is just a matter of opening up the catch basin that the restrictive plate is in and confirming that it is in place and operating.

Chair Rogers asked if there was anything else. Hearing none, he closed the public portion of the meeting. He asked staff to deliberate on this application. He would point out that there are a few concerns they have to think about as part of the motion, with Mr. Lussier's comments about confirming that the drainage retention system is properly operating as designed. Mr. Lussier clarified, "installed and operating as per the designer's original intent." Chair Rogers stated that he would also like to see some sort of condition placed that the fire connection and the sprinkler room are protected in some manner that meets the approval of the Fire Chief.

Chair Rogers asked if staff has any other concerns to address at this point. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

Mr. Lussier made a motion to approve SPR 881, Modification #2.

Chair Rogers asked if there are conditions to add to the motion. Ms. Fortson replied that staff drafted a recommended motion with recommended conditions, which has been distributed to the Community Development Director, the Chair, and the Vice Chair. She continued that if they feel any of those conditions are appropriate, they can be put into the motion.

Mr. Rounds stated that the draft motion does not include a condition about the fire connection. Chair Rogers replied that they can modify the draft motion to include it.

Mr. Kopczyński made a motion to approve SPR-881, Modification #2, for the renovation of the eastern tenant space and the construction of an addition on the building located at 342 West St (TMP #111-004-000-004-000), as shown on the plan set identified as "Ramunto's Tenant FitUp, Riverside Plaza, 342 Winchester Street, Keene, NH 03431" prepared by Timothy Sampson at varying scales on October 19, 2022 and last revised on November 23, 2022 with the following conditions precedent, prior to signature by the Minor Project Review Committee Chair:

1. Property owner's signature appears on the proposed plan.
2. Submittal of five paper copies and one digital copy of the final plan set.
3. Submittal of one paper copy and a digital copy of color elevations showing the dimensions of the building and the proposed screening mechanism for the electric meters at the southeastern corner of the building.
4. Submittal of documentation satisfactory to the City Engineer that the existing drainage system is installed and functioning as designed and approved under SPR-881 (signed by the Planning Board Chair on 6/18/1999).
5. Submittal of a revised site plan showing the following:
 - a. Dumpster screening plans and details, including a gate, to ensure the dumpster will be fully screened.
 - b. The new locations of any existing landscaping that is relocated and the location, species, quantity, planting height, and mature height of all new proposed landscaping on the site.
 - c. Protection of the sprinkler room and fire connection areas within the dumpster enclosure subject to approval by the Fire Chief.

Mr. Lussier seconded the motion.

Chair Rogers asked if there was any further discussion. Hearing none, he asked for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hagan asked if, with the new Supreme Court ruling, this is also subject to final approval, and if the applicant will have to come back before the board. Mr. Rounds replied yes, they will have to come back to get final approval. Mr. Lussier asked if the applicant has to be here for final review. Mr. Rounds replied no, but there may be questions. Mr. Hagan stated that prior to the issuance of a building permit, final approval will be required. Mr. Rogers replied that that clarity is helpful for the applicant and the board.

IV) Adoption of 2023 Meeting Schedule

Chair Rogers asked for discussion or a motion.

Mr. Rounds made a motion to adopt the meeting schedule for 2023. Mr. Lussier seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

V) Upcoming Meeting Dates

- December 22, 2022 at 10:00 AM
- January 12, 2023 at 10:00 AM

Chair Rogers stated that at the next meeting, they will vote on a Chair and Vice Chair.

VI) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Rogers adjourned the meeting at 10:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan Fortson, Planning Technician