The Planning and Zoning Commission of the Town of Avon held a meeting at the Avon Town Hall on Tuesday May 21, 2019. Present were Linda Keith, Chair, Thomas Armstrong, Vice Chair, Mary Harrop, Joseph Gentile, Peter Mahoney, Lisa Levin, Brian Ladouceur, Jr., and Alternates Elaine Primeau and Linda Preysner. Absent was Alternate Jill Coppola. Also present was Hiram Peck, Director of Planning and Community Development.

Ms. Keith called the meeting to order at 7pm.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Ladouceur motioned to approve the minutes of the April 23, 2019, meeting, as submitted. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Harrop and received unanimous approval.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

CIP FY 19-20 8-24 Referral

Mr. Armstrong motioned to approve the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for FY 2019-20, under a Section 8-24 Referral of the State Statutes, with a finding that the Program does not conflict with the 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mahoney receiving unanimous approval by the Commission.

Avon Village Center Status Update

Present were Robert M. Meyers, on behalf of the Carpionato Group; Kelly Coates, Carpionato Group; Mike Cegan, ASLA, and Joe McDonnell, ASLA, Richter & Cegan, Inc; Ben Anderson, principal/architect, and Nat Skerry, design principal, Jacobs Engineering, Boston; and Eric Brown, architect, Prellwitz, Chilinski Associates (PCA), Cambridge, MA.

Attorney Meyers reported that the lease for Whole Foods is fully executed and Whole Foods has accepted a building consistent with the building the Commission wants. He noted that there is a short delivery date meaning construction will start soon. He explained that the Whole Foods lease requires the construction, completion, and leasing of four adjacent buildings at the same time that Whole Foods opens. The four buildings are Buildings R5 and R8, which abut Whole Foods to the north, and the two buildings to the west; these buildings will be built simultaneously with Whole Foods and make up Phase 1A. Mike Cegan will present a PowerPoint of Phase 1A as well as a video that shows what these buildings would look like when done. Ben Anderson and Nat Skerry will present detailed renderings of Whole Foods building and Eric Brown, architect, will present renderings for Buildings R5 and R8. He explained that if the Commission is in agreement with what they will see tonight (giving Mr. Peck authority to work out minor changes or bring items back to the Commission if needed) the developer is ready to move forward with design, construction documents, bidding, bonding, and building.

Mike Cegan presented a PowerPoint for Phase 1A, noting that the focus is on architecture. He explained that Town Staff has been working diligently with the project team to complete construction documents. Phase IA includes Buildings R4 (Whole Foods), R5, R8, and also R1 and R2; the boulevard entrance at Climax Road and Route 44; the roundabout; the intersection of Main Street with North Main Street; connecting into Climax Heights and the parking lot behind the Town Hall complex. All site improvements and landscaping for Phase 1A will also be done. Mr. Cegan confirmed that the screening of the parking lot (Whole Foods) from Route 44 will still be done; nothing has changed in this regard. A brownstone wall and green hedging is still proposed and an integral part of the project. He presented a short video that provides a feel for the whole village theme and character.

Ben Anderson, principal and market sector retail leader with Jacobs Engineering, explained that a lot of time has been dedicated to understanding the priorities in Avon. Meeting minutes have been reviewed, as well as the design guidelines, and comments from the developer and tenant clients have been reviewed. He noted that he grew up in CT and is familiar with New England. He explained that we have an 18-year relationship with Whole Foods and have done many similar projects in similar settings. He noted his understanding of creating a destination in Whole Foods and being able to sit outside and socialize.

Nat Skerry reviewed the building elevations for Whole Foods (Building R4), via the PowerPoint, showing the previously approved design as well as the new proposed design. The proposed Whole Foods is a large building and concepts have been implemented to break down the building into smaller masses and pieces. He noted two primary elements; one being the main entry on the east side with a multi-story large gable structure and lots of glass and indoor and outdoor connections. Very traditional with a center entry and a canopy. The other major element is a corner gable structure, seen as you enter from Climax Road; both gable structures tie the building together. A gable is also introduced in the middle of the building to further break things up and offer variety along the street. An outdoor covered area is proposed for outdoor seating and gathering spaces. High quality wood elements, clapboard, and cement products will be used on the exterior of the building.

Mr. Anderson explained that the building is large, 45,000 SF, such that breaking up the roof lines helps to break down the massing and scale of the building while also helping people see inside the building and what’s occurring inside.

Mr. Skerry explained that the corner gable structure part of the building creates the feel of another individual building. A painted wooden trellis is also proposed for outdoor seating and gathering area along the main roadway.

Mr. Anderson pointed out that the building doesn’t feel one-sided and only facing the parking lot. The building provides a presence on the road such that it does not feel like you’re entering a center where there is only one front elevation; all four sides have been considered relative to the building’s character.

In response to Ms. Levin’s question, Mr. Anderson clarified that the east elevation faces the bike path.

Mr. Skerry explained that the east side of the building is clad with brownstone and a series of recesses to create texture; some trellises are also proposed for added texture. The north corner/elevation (seen as you come down Climax Road) also has a gable structure and the mezzanine is in this location. Materials proposed are fiber cement clapboard and a castone base, which will run around almost the entire project. The loading dock area introduces red brick, with brownstone wrapping around loading dock. He addressed the corner entrance noting architectural elements like trim boards, board and batten (siding) to break up the building volume/massing and add visual interest. Glass has been used along the walkways for transparency into the building. There are four gabled roofs in total; a simulated slate material is proposed.

Mr. Anderson displayed to the Commission a sampling of materials to be used. He acknowledged that the colors of the samples (brownstone and brick) may not look exactly like the colors shown in the renderings, noting that the samples are more to get an idea on textures. He explained that he has worked extensively to find products and suppliers in order to get the closest color matches. He reviewed each of the materials and the locations to be used on the building. He pointed out that the brick material is to be used primarily in the loading dock area and nowhere else.

Mr. Peck explained that the recent building constructed behind the police station was faced with brownstone and is a pretty close match to the existing brownstone in the area and would be appropriate for this project.

In response to Mr. Armstrong’s questions/comments, Mr. Anderson explained that the corner of the building that will be viewed by people on Climax Road can be landscaped to dress it up. The pedestrians shown in the renderings for the back side of the building are only there for purposes of scale; no people will be allowed behind the building. He explained that four street lamp lights are proposed and there will be lighting under the canopies and at certain entries; the building has a lot of glass that will help illumination at night. Mr. Anderson pointed out the locations of several entrances and access ways for Whole Foods, from all sides of the building, noting that he doesn’t think any changes are necessary to the Climax Road elevation/orientation.

In response to Mr. Ladouceur’s question, Mr. Anderson explained that a mezzanine for Whole Foods is used as an employee break area and offices for staff/managers; the area is not open to the public.

In response to Ms. Keith’s question, Mr. Anderson explained that if outdoor display of merchandise is not permitted, Whole Foods will not do it. The items shown outside in the renderings was done merely to create place making. He clarified that all purchases for any items sold at Whole Foods takes place inside the store.

In response to Mr. Armstrong’s questions, Mr. Coates explained that every lease for every Whole Foods requires approximately 10 parking spaces (just for Whole Foods parking lot) with charging stations for electric vehicles. He addressed the gateway building (R3 at Climax Road) explaining that there is no requirement for this building to be constructed at the time of delivery for Whole Foods. He explained that the requirement of the Whole Foods lease is that the other aforementioned four buildings be constructed; there is no requirement for Building R3.

Mr. Ladouceur asked for confirmation that there is no prohibition on construction of Building R3, as it is shown on the approved plans. It does not have to be constructed at the same time as Whole Foods and the other four buildings but it is understood that it will be constructed at some point.

Mr. Meyers explained that while Building R3 will probably command the highest rent per square foot in the entire project, it cannot be built on spec. However, the pad for this building will be created during the Whole Foods construction and utilities extended to enable future construction.

Mr. Anderson confirmed that the locations of wall signs shown on the renderings is where the signs will be placed, in response to Mr. Armstrong’s question.

Ms. Keith commented that the plans are much improved and more in line with what the Commission has been looking for adding her optimism moving forward.

Mr. Anderson explained that they have worked very hard with everyone to get things to this point.

In response to Mr. Ladouceur’s question about barriers to protect people in outdoor areas from vehicles, Mr. Anderson noted his understanding explaining that normally those types of details come later on in the process (contained in the construction plans) and were not included so as not to cloud tonight’s information/presentation. He offered assurances that pedestrians would be safe and aesthetically-pleasing safety measures would be taken.

Attorney Meyers asked for input from the Commission regarding the Whole Foods building so that the project can move forward.

Mrs. Harrop commented that she is very pleased with tonight’s presentation for the Whole Foods building.

The Commission unanimously agreed that the plans presented tonight for Whole Foods are acceptable.

Mr. Ladouceur motioned to approve the plans presented tonight by Carpionato/Jacobs, dated May 21, 2019, for Whole Foods (Building R4) with comments from Town Staff and the Commission relative to minor adjustments and construction plans.

Ms. Levin seconded the motion that received unanimous approval.

Eric Brown continued the PowerPoint presentation addressing Buildings R5 and R8, noting that there has been a lot of coordination with Town Staff. He addressed Building R5 noting that the architecture is the same as presented previously, with gabled, metal-seamed roofs, brick, and a pergola on the end. Varying roof lines, awnings, gazebo in the middle, and sign opportunities, give the Building a village feel. The change in grade has been utilized to provide more architectural variety. He referenced the small building near the trail, noting the tower element, roof, brownstone, and clapboard. All historic materials like brownstone, brick, fiberglass shingles, fiber cement, and metal roofs will be used. Brick elements will be used on both ends of the buildings as well as the rear (which faces the utility area of Whole Foods). Detailed cornices and bases are used to provide varying colors. He explained that brick has been wrapped around the corner on both ends to end cap the building, at Mr. Peck’s request. Mr. Brown addressed Building R8 noting the mixture of materials such as brownstone, fiber cement, fiberglass shingles, and awnings.

Ms. Keith asked if all the glass could be modified with fancy decorations or sculpting. The building is flat and has no character and she asked if something could be put over the tops of the glass areas such as bow windows and ornamental tops.

Mr. Mahoney commented that the same colors and materials are used on every façade and asked if different color variations could be used to make it look like different buildings instead of just one space/building with different roof lines, as was shown in the older/original drawings.

Mrs. Harrop commented that the original drawings looked like different buildings while this drawing looks like one building.

In response to Mr. Armstrong’s question, Mr. Brown confirmed that the pergola portion of the building is rounded.

Mr. Brown explained/clarified that the same materials and colors are not used on every façade, adding that it is difficult to get renderings to accurately reflect the colors and materials used. He provided for the Commission hard samples of color palettes for tans, creams, and sandy colors and a cooler palette with medium and light and gray tones. He confirmed that all the facades will not be the same, as a mixture of colors/tones will be used. He explained that a mixture of smooth and textured clapboard will be used. Three storefront colors will be used such that the frames that house the glass will be a mixture of white, medium bronze, and gray. He indicated that some of the glass areas (windows) will be inset utilizing colonnades (columns) and some will not, adding that it is difficult to see the amount of variation provided from the renderings. In addition, two different colors of precast will be used as a transition from brownstone to brick, to provide a smooth transition. In the rear of the building three different but similar colors of CMU (concrete masonry unit/block); some colors will be darker than others. He pointed out the four colors of metal to be used, bone white, classic white, two shades of gray, and clear silver. Two different colors of brick; one is a wire cut with a consistent color and the other is molded brick with a blend of colors. Mr. Brown confirmed that while the renderings might appear flat the actual buildings will be quite varied both in terms of massing and details as well as materials. He explained that while he does not have any samples of roofing material, he explained that fiberglass shingles and standing-seam metal roofs will be used, which is very common in New England; the roof color will be gray. He addressed the façade of the building noting that some areas will be a mixture of flat panel and clapboard; two different textures and five different colors. He addressed the windows explaining that tenants will bring their own branding, adding colors and awnings; retail tenants need glass so that people can see into their store. He noted that he can add a bay or bow window.

Mr. Meyers commented that the concept of adding bay and/or bow windows could be worked out with Mr. Peck.

Ms. Keith commented that she would like to see some bay or bow windows.

Mr. Brown confirmed that they can definitely look into adding some bays and bows along the way, to add variety.

In response to Mr. Armstrong’s question, Mr. Brown referenced the renderings explaining that there is a lot of movement in the building, both forward and back and up and down.

In response to Mr. Peck’s question, Mr. Brown confirmed that there will be one source of brownstone for the entire project.

In response to Mr. Armstrong’s question, Mr. Meyers explained that Building R8 (next to the bike trail) contains restrooms and probably an ice cream stand.

In response to Mr. Gentile’s question, Mr. Meyers explained that while he doesn’t think offices are proposed for the four aforementioned buildings to be constructed at the same time as Whole Foods, there are no tenants at this time for those four buildings.

In response to Mr. Ladouceur’s question on a timeline, Mr. Meyers explained that if the Commission approves the buildings just discussed (R5 and R8), the developer has noted that June 1, 2019, is the date hoped for delivery of construction plans followed by bids, financing, bonding, and construction.

Mr. Armstrong motioned to approve conceptual plans for Buildings R5 and R8, as presented by Eric Brown, on Carpionato/Jacobs plans dated May 21, 2019, subject to further input from Town Staff regarding materials/textures/colors, and modifications to windows (bay and/or bow).

Mr. Gentile seconded the motion that received unanimous approval.

In response to Ms. Keith’s comments/concerns about trucks on Climax Road during reconstruction, Mr. Meyers acknowledged his awareness and offering assurances that advice/recommendations from Town Staff, Mr. Peck, and the Traffic Authority will be sought and followed relative to road closures, bypass roads, detours, etc. He confirmed that road construction that is part of Phase 1A is coming in the near future. He clarified/confirmed that no utilities will be brought in first from Route 10 (Simsbury Road), as noted in the original approved plans. Mr. Meyers concluded by confirming that any and all changes to the road construction timeline will be approved by Town Staff.

Mr. Coates addressed scheduling explaining that the date to break ground for Whole Foods is August 10, 2019. He noted that everything on the schedule he presented to the Commission at the last meeting has been done and is on target, except the building located behind Whole Foods, as this has to be worked out with Town Staff. Everything on the list has a delivery date of June 3 (Monday) to the Town and this still holds with one exception because the bid documents are not 100% approved. A race is on to get foundation and structural plans for the Whole Foods building for review and approval by the Fire Marshal and Building Official in time for August 10.

In response to Ms. Keith’s concerns about infrastructure on Climax Road, Mr. Coates explained that they are looking to streamline and improve the approved process which will need approval by all of Town Staff. There’s a lot of work to be done to accommodate the building pad for Whole Foods; the other buildings can get built quicker. He confirmed his understanding that the asbuilt information relative to road utilities in Climax Road may not be 100% correct adding that the head of construction is present tonight and hears what is being said. He added that both VHB and Fuss & O’Neill have created very detailed plans for this project and they are the best of the best.

Mr. Coates indicated that while there are a lot of items to get done, he would definitely like to be on the Commission’s June agenda. He explained that the next two buildings to construct might be more tenant driven such that if firm commitments are not secured spec building designs will be done quickly to get this portion of the project done. He further explained that the intent is to do the roads with the least possible disruption to the neighbors because the project is going to get built. After hours phone numbers will be provided should there be any concerns.

Mr. Armstrong asked for a 24/7 contact at the Carpionato Group should anything go wrong.

Mr. Coates noted his understanding explaining that a contractor contact will be provided. He added that Messrs. Meyers and Cegan will be continuing members of the project team for the next 8 years, and they are local.

In response to Mr. Armstrong’s question, Mr. Coates confirmed that the next phase will contain residential.

Ms. Keith noted her tempered optimism and excitement after tonight’s presentation adding her hopes that the Commission can get back to what they had in July 2018.

In response to Mr. Ladouceur’s questions, Mr. Coates confirmed that August 10 is the proposed start date for Whole Foods which would officially open 50 weeks later. He also confirmed that everything in Phase 1A will be complete (including roads) when Whole Foods opens. All construction will be completed before Whole Foods opens.

Non-printed Agenda Item

Mr. Peck provided to the Commission a copy of parking study (*Parking at Mixed-Use Centers in Small Cities, 2006, prepared by Marshall and Garrick, UCONN).* He noted that Avon was used as one of the samples in this study. He indicated that the study finds that for a significant amount of the time excessive parking exists. He explained that he has drafted some revisions to Avon’s Parking Regulations and forwarded to the Town Attorney for review. He commented that he would discuss different ways to address Avon’s current Parking Regulations at a future meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

Linda Sadlon

Planning and Community Development

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