

**FRANKLIN PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC MEETING
May 25, 2022 6:00 p.m.
City Hall, Council chambers**

Minutes

Call to Order: 6:00 p.m.

Attendance: Chairman Dave Liberatore, Mayor Jo Brown, Councilor Valerie Blake, Rob Sargent, Christine Dzujna, Kathy Lauer-Rago, Tim Flaherty, Christine Sheedy (arrived at 6:05), Alternate Councilor Ted Starkweather, Alternate James DeBernardo, (Absent: Alternate Donna Tully)

☐ **Pledge of Allegiance**

☐ **Approval of Minutes from 4/27/2021.** Member Dzujna made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Member Flaherty. **Motion carried 6-0-1.** Councilor Blake abstained as she was not at that meeting.

☐ **New Business:**

- ☐ **P22-08:** ARG NIFLNNH002, LLC d/b/a Vitex Extrusion, LLC, owner, is seeking a Site-Plan review for 19,000 +/- sq. ft. of additions. The property is located at 43 Industrial Park Drive, Map/Lot 101-008-00 in the I1 [Industrial-1] zoning district.

Mayor Brown made a motion to accept the application as complete, seconded by Member Dzujna. **Motion carried 8-0-0.**

Jeff Merritt from Granite Engineering, LLC presented the application on behalf of Vitex Extrusion, LLC. He gave an overview of what the company does, what the process is, the size of the current building, lot size and the proposed changes. He explained how the current configuration for the building does not allow for the larger trucks they are now using so they are proposing to add 6 new bays, a covered drive-thru loading dock and a new employee breakroom as the current breakroom will be reconfigured to manufacturing space. They will need the new breakroom for the significant employee increase they are expecting. He also explained the stormwater drainage system and infiltration system. The lighting plan includes building-mounted lighting, dark-sky compliant and LED for efficiency. In landscaping he explained that most of the vegetation will stay but they will need to change the grading in some areas and will be removing some trees. They plan to replace those with new plantings. The additions to the building will be the same height as the current facility.

Chairman Liberatore asked if any of the Board had questions. Mayor Brown observed that some of the catch basins were being removed and asked if what is being added is enough to compensate for that. Mr. Merritt confirmed that it is as the stormwater is being re-routed through and around the building to other catch basins so it is actually an improvement. He also pointed out that the additions will be going on current pavement so there will be no change in the impervious surface.

Member Starkweather asked about the "box truck" bay and is it for trailers or straight jobs. Mr. Merritt confirmed that it would not be for trailers, only straight jobs. Member Starkweather observed that the turning radius would be different in those bays. Mr. Merritt confirmed his observation and said that trailer trucks would be restricted from that bay.

Chairman Liberatore asked if there were other questions from the Board before turning it over to Director Creighton for his input. Director Creighton had very few comments on this project as he had already reviewed the plan with the Fire Inspector prior to submission and they felt the plan was very well done. Both the Fire Department and the Municipal Services Department are still reviewing it but they did not see any major concerns. This design is better for the environment, safer and less noise as everything will be inside now. He observed that the stormwater report actually indicates an improvement.

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Chairman Liberatore opened the discussion to the public. Ron Cote of 88 Salisbury Road asked if he could be shown exactly where the addition is going in relation to his property. Mr. Merritt showed him on the map and plans exactly where the proposed addition will be. They confirmed that it was not any closer to his property than the current building.

With no other comments the public hearing was closed and brought back to the Board. Member Dzujna asked how much acreage there is between the building and Route 127. Mr. Merritt said that if he had to guess, he would say about 20 acres. Member Dzujna asked if there would be any increase in noise. Mr. Merritt said there would not be.

Mayor Brown made a motion to approve the application:

"I move to approve the Site Plan application for Vitex Extrusion, 43 Industrial Park Dr, Map-Lot 101-8.

The approval is consistent with the draft decision provided by the Planning Director, with any amendments made by the Board and noted in the minutes."

Motion was seconded by Member Dzujna. **Motion carried 8-0-0.**

- ☐ **P22-09:** Franklin Savings Bank, owner, is seeking a Special Use Permit for a ground-mounted solar electric system. The property is located at 575 South Main Street, Map/Lot 119-027-00 in the B1 [Low-density Business/Commercial] zoning district.

Member Flaherty made a motion to accept the application as complete enough to begin the review. Seconded by Member Dzujna. **Motion carried 8-0-0.**

Heather Iworsky of ReVision Energy presented the application. She gave an overview of the project explaining that it will be only for self-consumption; the energy will not be sold. She explained that the roof does not allow for panels to be mounted on it so it will be a ground-mounted array. They will need to remove some trees and rocks to make space but will replace some of the trees with grass and natural vegetation. She then explained how the system is built and that it will meet the wind and snow load requirements for Franklin. The connections will be underground so they will need to dig trenches for the conduit but that will be covered with grass.

Chairman Liberatore asked how far the panels will be from South Main Street. Ms. Iworsky said the plan shows them 84.5 feet from the center of the road and 61.5 feet from the rail trail. She added that there will be no glare or lighting involved, and no noise, just a low hum from the panels. Chairman Liberatore asked if the energy generated for only for Franklin Savings Bank (FSB). Ms. Iworsky confirmed that any excess that FSB did not use would be net metering to offset neighbors.

Member Flaherty asked if Eversource would be doing anything with poles on the property. Ms. Iworsky said she did not believe they would be, she understood them to be all set with the project.

Mayor Brown observed that it looks like much of the vegetation could be preserved from looking at the plan. She asked Director Creighton to confirm that. Director Creighton explained that the measurement on the plan is from the center of the rail trail but the property line is only about 25 feet from the panel so it is likely that all the trees on FSB property would need to come down.

Councilor Blake asked if there is any maintenance required on the panels. Ms. Iworsky explained they need to check them periodically for animals and the grass between needs to be mowed, but they are very low maintenance. Director Creighton asked about the height of the panels to which Ms. Iworsky confirmed they are 11 feet tall.

Alternate DeBernardo asked about efficiency and if they need to be replaced as they lose efficiency. Ms. Iworsky confirmed they do lose efficiency over time but these panels are warrantied for 25 years. If they are not meeting the minimum requirements, they would be replaced. Alternate DeBernardo followed up with a question about technology changes and how they handle upgrades. Ms. Iworsky said the technology has not changed much over the past 11 years.

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In another 10 years they will still be working, still efficient and manufacturers are required to recycle panels if they need to be replaced.

Chairman Liberatore opened the hearing to the public but no one spoke on it so it was closed and brought back to the Board. Director Creighton explained that his recommendation is to continue this application to date certain. This is the first ground-mounted request that has come before the Board since the new ordinance was adopted. Many of the requirements are not addressed: it has not been surveyed, there are small design criteria missing such as fencing, overall square footage of disturbance, etc. and they need to be addressed to make a recommendation. The technical department review is still needed as well. He suggested they continue it until the July 27, 2022 meeting. Member Flaherty asked why not the June meeting but Director Creighton explained the deadline for June would not give them sufficient time to address all the issues.

Mayor Brown made a motion to continue the application until the July 27, 2022 meeting of the Planning Board.

Seconded by Member Dzujna. **Motion carried 8-0-0.**

Ms. Iworsky asked what the timeline is for installation once they have an approval. Director Creighton said they do not have to wait 30 days if they don't want to, they can install immediately upon approval. Member Flaherty asked how long the install would take once it was started. Ms. Iworsky said it takes about 2 weeks.

☐ **Old Business:**

☐ **Other Business:**

☐ **Planner's Update:**

Director Creighton gave an update that the crosswalks have been painted, Phase 1 of the water park is just about complete, there are a number of new businesses downtown with new signage going in and façade improvements. There have also been many businesses putting things on the sidewalks like signs or product displays and he is working with City Council and businesses to regulate that. He shared that he has also had some discussions about campgrounds and we can look into revisiting that if it is the directive of the Board. Chairman Liberatore explained that he is spearheading that question as he believes we need to keep visitors here to spend money within the City. Mayor Brown shared that during other events, camping has gone well. Member Sheedy also spoke in support of revisiting campground approvals. Alternate DeBernardo asked if we have seen an increase in visitors and where are they staying. Mayor Brown said she believes there has been an increase in visitors but most of the license plates are from around New England and within a day's drive.

Director Creighton also shared that he has been looking into the Downtown Overlay District regulations. Many areas of it are too strict for building businesses. Parking requirements are a big issue but he needs direction from the Board. They make sense for residential areas but seem too restrictive for businesses and he would like to look into it if the Board chooses.

Alternate DeBernardo asked some questions regarding the school budget, the City budget, etc. Mayor Brown explained that those are beyond the scope of the Planning Board but invited him to attend the City Council and School Board meetings as they are working on those issues.

☐ **Adjournment:**

Mayor Brown made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Blake. **Motion carried 8-0-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.**

- The next Planning Board regular meeting is scheduled for June 22, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. and the application dead line date is June 1, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

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Judy Bibbins

Administrative Assistant for Planning and Zoning