



Amesbury Technical Review Committee

March 19, 2025

City Hall Auditorium

62 Friend St.

9:30 am

In attendance: Jim Wilson, Nick Cracknell, Chief Bailey, Robert Serino, Nipun Jain, Lisa DeMeo, Chief Nolan, and Becky Frey

Absent: Lauren Blatchford, Joe Buckley

Chief Bailey called the meeting to order at 9:45 am.

Project Review:

1. 201 Elm St.

Nipun Jain commented that the applicant had presented a site plan for a Historic Preservation Special Permit. They made a preapplication to the Planning Board and have now filed a full application. The applicant presented revised drawings to the Design Review Committee last night. In those plans they put in a driveway at the existing curb cut on Elm St. with a detached garage and turnaround. That driveway would service the existing historic home. The next building is a 2-unit residential structure with driveway access to Monroe St. The last building is a single-family cape with a driveway on Monroe St. The proposal includes a series of retaining walls in the back of the existing house, around the 2-unit building, and around the single-family cape along Monroe St.

Lisa DeMeo commented that the driveway on Elm St. was not on the plan they originally submitted. The Design Review Committee should not be approving changes like that without the input from the DPW. Nick Cracknell responded that the Design Review Committee is an advisory board to the Planning Board. They review the vertical construction, and the Technical Review Committee reviews the horizontal construction. They have to sync up at the end. The DRC looks at the landscaping, lighting, and architecture. They are not a binding board.

Lisa DeMeo commented that the Elm St. driveway is too close to the intersection. The storm water overflow grate locations will need to be confirmed. The one closer to the intersection in the big driveway needs to be relocated because it is too close to the intersection. Runoff cannot go to the intersection.

Lisa DeMeo questioned what the addresses of the new units would be. Nick Cracknell responded that the existing house would be 201 Elm St. The other lot is 6 Monroe St. It is likely the two additional units built would be 2 and 4 Monroe St. Rob Serino commented that they would work with the Assessor's Office on that.



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Lisa DeMeo questioned where the construction entrances would be. Greg Southard responded that it was a tight lot. They are trying to save a 1730s house that could be demolished instead. The construction entrance would likely be in the middle lot. Lisa DeMeo commented that they will need to clarify the construction sequencing and they will need to get driveway permits when they are ready.

Nick Cracknell commented the previous plan that showed the garage for the existing house and rear addition facing the driveway in the middle lot. It was too much congestion to adequately get 6 parking spaces in that space. It would not allow for any visitor parking spaces. They revised the plans to put the garage on the Elm St. side instead of a large retaining wall. They should reduce the size of the garage to 22 by 22. This plan is putting a lot on the site and that would be one way to reduce it. They should push the turn around down five feet and don't make it wider than 12 feet. They should provide an 18-foot width in front of the garage. That would enable the area to fit 4 cars.

Nipun Jain commented that the original plan submitted had the Elm St. driveway as overflow parking. The middle driveway had 2 spaces for the existing house and 4 garage spaces in the barn. DRC was concerned about a car being parked in front of the garage and suggested moving the middle curb cut to maneuver the cars coming in and out. It is 16 feet wide. They suggested extending the curb cut on the last house to make it wider for cars to maneuver more easily. The turning radius is important. There will be retaining walls on the site to create some flat areas. The grading in the back largely remains the same.

Lisa DeMeo commented that she would like a right turn only sign at the driveway on Elm St.

Rob Serino commented that he did not have any issues with site plan.

Chief Bailey commented that he was concerned about the driveway on Elm St. and agreed with Lisa DeMeo about the right turn only sign.

Howard Snyder commented that the barn was centered because of the relationship to the house. The applicants should take a look to see if they can rotate the building to get deeper parking. Nick Cracknell responded that they could move the curb cut instead of rotating the building. There is still a strong relationship even with separate lots. They can provide more building design comments offline.

2. [276-278-280 Main St.](#)



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Engineer TJ Melvin and Architect Randy Johnson were present to speak to the application.

Nipun Jain commented that this application is being filed under the comprehensive permit 40B regulations. It will be going to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Randy Johnson commented that there are currently 3 structures on the site. There is the main historic building, a small wood frame structure, and an FCF facilities special needs housing building. The ZBA application focuses on 4 new proposed structures which will yield a total of 8 units. The units will be for people who graduate the program and enter a more independent living situation. There is also a proposed administrative building that is part of the ZBA application package. They will be reconfiguring all the parking on the site. There are currently parking spots in front of the main building and veterans housing. The proposal is to move all the parking to the middle and transform the front paved area into landscaping. There are 13 existing parking spots, and the proposed project will total to 22 parking spaces. The focus of this project is the construction of the 8 units, but there will be a minor modification to the main building. They will be removing one of the fire escapes from the second floor of the main building. That has been reviewed as acceptable. This will allow space for a sidewalk connection from the back part of the site to Main St. There will be room for a 20-foot-wide access driveway and a 4-foot-wide sidewalk. The other modification would be to the existing FCF building. The ramp will be reconfigured to make the parking work.

Rob Serino questioned what the intended use was for the current FCF housing building. Randy Johnson responded that it would remain the same. That building is not managed by Housing Support. Rob Serino commented that from a fire department standpoint it would require a sprinkler system with an addition. Randy Johnson responded that they showed the addition on the plan, but it was not part of this project. Both additions are shown on the plan to allow Millenium Engineering to do the storm water calculations. Rob Serino noted that the main building was sprinkled so an addition would be ok from a fire department perspective.

Randy Johnson commented that they are proposing compact units, and each duplex is about 800 sf. The administration and maintenance building will be the same scale and footprint. There is a mixture of perimeter fencing today. They will be replacing the chain link fence in kind. The fence on the east side will be retained as is. The fencing on the north side will be replaced. The site of the dumpster enclosure is located on the eastern side of the site, and it will be screened with opaque fencing.



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TJ Melvin commented that the front of the site is mostly remaining as is. They will still access the site at the existing curb cut. It will be reduced to a 20-foot access, and they will replace the sidewalk with a new 4-foot-wide sidewalk. In the back the lane will widen to 24 feet and have parking on both sides. There will be a dumpster on site. There is a hatched area for a turnaround for fire trucks and trash trucks to access the site. They will be catching the storm water and treating it in sub surface treatment stations. The roof runoff will be caught by a roof dry well. For the utilities they will bring in an 8-inch water and 8-inch sewer line. The existing building will continue to have the existing connection it has now. There is not a lot of grading needed. They meet the storm water management standards.

Rob Serino questioned what truck they used for calculating the turning radius. TJ Melvin responded that he did not know the exact dimensions, but confirmed he could send the turning template. Rob Serino questioned where the hydrant was. TJ Melvin responded that it was near the dumpster.

Lisa DeMeo commented that they show 5 test pits on the site plan, but they are not where the underground storm water system is going. TJ Melvin responded that the soil was very consistent and there is little grade change. They can do another test pit to confirm it is consistent in that area.

Lisa DeMeo commented that the new driveway and sidewalk will impact the stairs on the main building. Randy Johnson responded that both sets of the stairs will be removed.

Lisa DeMeo questioned if the 8 units would all be rentals. Randy Johnson confirmed that was correct. Lisa DeMeo commented they would need to discuss the utility connections to see if it is better to have one service per building or per unit. Randy Johnson responded that they were pushing for one meter because the tenants don't pay that.

Lisa DeMeo noted that the construction entrance could be longer. The detail is too narrow and too short. It should be industry standard. TJ Melvin confirmed they would update that.

Randy Johnson commented that there was a portion behind the main building that had access off Bartlett Place, but that would mostly be for maintenance and deliveries. Chief Bailey questioned if that entrance would be closed off. Randy Johnson responded that it would not be closed off, but it would not be the main access.



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Chief Nolan questioned if they knew what the addresses would be. Randy Johnson responded that he was not sure about the addresses. Rob Serino commented that they have had a lot of issues with addresses recently for other projects. They will need to coordinate on this.

Chief Nolan commented that the main building is 276 Main St. This project has been on the table for a couple years and questioned if there was an update on the water infrastructure. Lisa DeMeo responded that they were in the process of applying for a grant. They did a pressure test. The water line will be alright for a while and is not in danger. This project will not tip the scale.

Rob Serino commented that these units won't have to meet sprinkler standards because the hydrant is in the front.

Nick Cracknell commented that he presumed there would be tip downs on the sidewalk at the curb cut. It is worth looking at landscaping for the site. There are inconsistencies between the Millenium and architectural plans. The trees that are being preserved on the top sheet of the plan should be accurately shown. There is some landscaping in front of the building, and it could be improved. They could still consider removing access off Bartlett Place. The DRC can look at the appropriateness of the privacy fence and retaining the chain link fence. There may be a better fencing solution. It is important to clarify that those two additions are not proposed. The DRC needs to look at what the applicant is proposing. The applicant needs to clarify if they are showing the additions to account for the storm water calculations only or if they are trying to get the additions preapproved with this proposal. They can talk about at the DRC. The screening between the duplex structures could be better. The jogging between the middle duplexes does not need to happen. They need to ensure the dumpster is adequate for the solid waste when increasing the units from 19 to 27. They need to show it has capacity. It would be better to put up a sign for that area that says no parking in the back area instead of striping it. They need a landscape plan. There should be an outdoor space for the people that live there. They should identify a central mailbox location.

Howard Snyder reiterated that they should clearly label the proposed additions as future construction and put in dash lines, so they are not solid. A community gathering public space would be valuable with a greater population. If the proposed steel frame pavilion is something intended for community gathering, then they should pull it out to a central location. Nick Cracknell commented that the additions are the weak link of the entire project from a design perspective. It would likely delay approvals if they were part of the



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project as they are. If they are not happening in the next 2 years, then they should remove the detail.

Nipun Jain commented that the snow storage area should be shown. There is a lot of pavement and parking. They need to show the truck turnaround can still happen. They will also need to very clearly show what they are restoring in the front of the buildings. They need to clearly show how they are improving the pedestrian connection. Nick Cracknell commented that it looks like they are making significant alterations to the front façade. It will be important to do that well.

3. 26 Friend St.

Chris Horan, Aileen Graf, Avery Woodworth were present to speak to the project. Nipun Jain commented that this proposal is for an existing building at 26 Friend St. They are working to create a traditional streetscape.

Chris Horan commented that the building is currently a 14-1500 sf single story commercial building with an entrance on the front right and an addition in the back. This proposal will remove that addition to create parking and they will add 2.5 stories onto the building.

Aileen Graf commented that there is currently a one story building with Pizza Factory on one side and a park on the other. This proposal will add 2.5 stories above to fill in the streetscape. The second and third floors will be full stories and there will be a third unit under the mansard roof. This will create 3 residential units and one commercial space on the ground floor. They've redesigned the storefront and moved the doorway for the entrance to allow for both commercial and residential access. It will be the same scale as the building adjacent to it. The alleyway will provide trash storage. In the rear elevation they created parking. There is currently parking there with the small one-story addition that will be removed. There will be a back entry for the residential units with small balconies. They are increasing the sizes of the storefront windows and wrapping them around the corner panel next to the park. They are working with the city to activate the park and add picnic benches. They talked about a fence to screen the parking, but they are proposing to put in a hedge instead to allow for more space. They would put the hedge on the city property.

Lisa DeMeo commented that they will need to go through city property to access their parking. Chris Horan confirmed they were aware and added that was how it was today as well.



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Chief Bailey questioned if they were planning to add 3 residences. Aileen Graf confirmed that was correct. They will be 2-bedroom units. Chief Bailey commented that it did not seem like enough parking. That whole area is congested. Chris Horan commented that they were aware of that. They reduced the bedrooms from 3 to 2 to help mitigate that.

Lisa DeMeo commented that they are looking at the best way to handle that parking lot. If these parking spaces are approved, then it may tie the City's hands on what they are doing in that parking lot down the road. Avery Woodworth noted that was the way the parking lot is working now. Right now, it is a loop and there is room for these spots to get out. Chief Bailey questioned what would happen if the city wanted to reconfigure the parking lot. Avery Woodworth noted that it would be a problem because the proposed parking is on the 26 Friend St. property, but they need access.

Nick Cracknell commented that the city would need to work with this property owner in the future to ensure there is access to those spaces. They would be remiss to pass this opportunity by. Access is a real concern, but that's not an issue that can't be resolved. Chris Horan added that this project doesn't work without parking.

Rob Serino commented that fire did not have any concerns site wise. The building will need to be sprinkled and have a fire alarm.

Lisa DeMeo commented that they will need to coordinate on the water and sewer connections.

Nick Cracknell commented that they did a fantastic job resorting the bottom of the building. They will work together to activate the park. There is an opportunity to do some outdoor dining in the park and expand the ground floor out the door. A restaurant could go in there and have exclusive use through an outdoor dining permit.

Administrative:

1. Minutes 3-5-2025

The minutes were tabled to the next meeting.



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Nipun Jain motioned to adjourn at 11:12 am. Seconded by Nick Cracknell. The motion passed unanimously.