

1. Amesbury Planning Board Meeting Minutes

2. In Person Meeting – February 24, 2025, at 7:00 PM

3. Chairman Pascal Rettig called the February 24, 2025, Planning Board meeting to order at 7:06 PM.
4. *To submit a public comment ahead of time email Becky Frey at freyr@amesburyma.gov. To speak live at the meeting fill out a public comment form and turn it into Becky Frey. There will be a public comment portion of each public hearing discussed tonight.*
5. *The Chairman notes that tonight's Planning Board meeting is being recorded by Amesbury Public Access Television; this legal step has been taken but does not act as the official record. The written meeting minutes by the Recording Secretary is the official record.*
6. Pascal Rettig initiated roll call –
7. Keith Ratner – YES
8. Joel Nice – YES
9. Michael Jewell – YES
10. Tracey Chalifour – YES
11. Tom Salemi - YES
12. David Frick – YES
13. Pascal Rettig - YES
14. Also: Nipun Jain (Planning Director) and Becky Frey (Community Development Coordinator)
15. Joel Nice motioned to elect Keith Ratner as acting chair. Seconded by Michael Jewell.
unanimous.
16. Ketih Ratner initiated roll call –
17. Keith Ratner – YES
18. Joel Nice – YES
19. Michael Jewell – YES
20. Tracey Chalifour – YES
21. Tom Salemi - YES
22. David Frick – YES
23. Pascal Rettig - YES
24. Motion passed 7-0
25. **Minutes – 12-9-2024**
26. Tracey Chalifour motioned to approve the minutes from the 12-9-24 Planning Board Meeting. Seconded by Joel Nice.
27. Keith Ratner initiated roll call –
28. Keith Ratner – YES

- 29. Joel Nice – YES
- 30. Michael Jewell – YES
- 31. Tracey Chalifour – YES
- 32. Tom Salemi - Abstain
- 33. David Frick – YES
- 34. Pascal Rettig - YES
- 35. Motion passed 6-0-1

36. Minutes – 1-13-2025

- 37. Tracey Chalifour motioned to approve the minutes from the 1-13-25 Planning Board Meeting. Seconded by Joel Nice.
- 38. Keith Ratner initiated roll call –
- 39. Keith Ratner – YES
- 40. Joel Nice – YES
- 41. Michael Jewell – YES
- 42. Tracey Chalifour – YES
- 43. Tom Salemi - Abstain
- 44. David Frick – YES
- 45. Pascal Rettig - YES
- 46. Motion passed 6-0-1

47. Minutes – 1-27-2025

- 48. Tracey Chalifour motioned to approve the minutes from the 1-27-25 Planning Board Meeting. Seconded by Joel Nice.
- 49. Keith Ratner initiated roll call –
- 50. Keith Ratner – YES
- 51. Joel Nice – YES
- 52. Michael Jewell – YES
- 53. Tracey Chalifour – YES
- 54. Tom Salemi - Abstain
- 55. David Frick – YES
- 56. Pascal Rettig - Abstain
- 57. Motion passed 5-0-2

- 58. David Frick motioned to take 80 Haverhill Road out of order. Seconded by Joel Nice.
- 59. Keith Ratner initiated roll call –
- 60. Keith Ratner – YES
- 61. Joel Nice – YES
- 62. Michael Jewell – YES
- 63. Tracey Chalifour – YES
- 64. Tom Salemi - YES
- 65. David Frick – YES
- 66. Pascal Rettig - YES
- 67. Motion passed 7-0

68. Continued Hearings – 80 Haverhill Road

69. Nipun Jain commented that they had prepared a draft decision for the project and circulated it to the Board Members. They have included the provision about the landscape buffers at the rear of the property line and across from the patio. Most of the other conditions are typical. There are some specific to the project such as the affordable unit and architecture details. Since the draft was amended a few times, it was brought to our attention that a couple of waivers were amiss. Page 8 of the draft decision includes 2 additional waivers. One pertains to the width of the aisle proposed at 20 feet instead of the required 24 feet. The second is to waive the requirement to show a traffic report, and instead accept a memorandum. Those were the two major amendments made to this draft. On page 12 the specific amendment requested that the screening plants be planted at the initial height of 6 feet.
70. Lisa Mead commented page 12 paragraph 14 should have the fence along the property line requirement struck through. Nipun Jain agreed.
71. Tracey Chalifour commented that she did not get a chance to read this document and questioned if the draft covered the concern about snow storage near the fence at the back of the property. Lisa Mead confirmed the decision required that 6-foot evergreen arborvitaes along that area.
72. Joel Nice questioned if they updated the site plan to show the screening in that location. Nipun Jain commented that it has not been shown but it is required to be submitted.
73. Tracey Chalifour questioned if it was assumed they would be planted in front of the chain-link fence. Lisa Mean responded that they have to be on the 80 Haverhill Rd. property and the fence is on the abutter's property.
74. Keith Ratner opened public hearing.
75. There was no one present to speak.
76. Nipun Jain commented that he did speak to the abutter's attorney, and they indicated they were satisfied with the conditions in this decision.
77. Michael Jewell motioned to approve decision dated 2/24/25 for the site plan and special permit at 80 Haverhill Rd. with the edit on page 12 in section 14. Seconded by Joel Nice.
78. Keith Ratner initiated roll call –
79. Keith Ratner – YES
80. Joel Nice – YES
81. Michael Jewell – YES
82. Tom Salemi - abstain
83. Tracey Chalifour - abstain
84. David Frick – YES
85. Pascal Rettig - YES
86. Motion passed 5-0-2
87. Tracey Chalifour motioned to close the public hearing for 80 Haverhill Rd. Seconded by Joel Nice.
88. Keith Ratner initiated roll call –
89. Keith Ratner – YES

- 90. Joel Nice – YES
- 91. Michael Jewell – YES
- 92. Tracey Chalifour – YES
- 93. Tom Salemi - Abstain
- 94. David Frick – YES
- 95. Pascal Rettig - YES
- 96. Motion passed 6-0-1

97. Preapplication – 5 and 9 School St.

- 98. Michael Jewell commented that the Board already saw a presentation for this 3 months ago.
- 99. Nipun Jain commented that this was about the steps involved with disposing the property. This has more design items, and the intent is to get any Planning Board input on what else may need to go into RFP. It is also important to show this concept is ready for permitting and has the support of the city and Planning Board.
- 100. Michael Jewell questioned how people would get from the parking lot to the library. Nipun Jain commented that it would be covered in the presentation.
- 101. David Frick left the meeting at 7:25 pm.
- 102. Tom Salemi questioned if this precluded something else from being proposed. Nipun Jain responded that the intent of the presentation is to show what the city's goals are for the redevelopment of both properties.
- 103. Howard Snyder introduced himself as the new Senior Project Manager and commented that he could entertain questions. They have considered the pedestrian connection in the presentation. They worked to develop a firm concept plan that reflects the goals of the property. It has been written into the RFP and it is what the city would like to see. A developer can come in with other proposals if it meets the ordinance.
- 104. Nick Cracknell commented that they came before the Planning Board and spoke about putting this property through the disposition process. They hope to issue the RFP in March. The more predictability they can give the marketplace in terms of permitting the higher return they will get for the property sale. Every nickel goes to a stabilization fund for the library. 5 School St. was originally a single-family structure built in the 1860s and it is known as the Orlando Bagley house. It has been condemned for 2 years. The city had previously operated some offices out of there for 12 years. The property was originally acquired for a library expansion. It is a 2.5 story building in the Central Business District with a gross living area of 2,160 sf. Cars can park side by side and the assessed value is \$429,000. The Ordway School was built in the early 19th century. It was also used for city offices and vacated just before Covid. It has been vacant for 4-5 years. Most people look at the building and don't like it because of the 1980 improvements. This lot is bigger and encompasses half of the library angled parking and the fire parking. They are proposing to subdivide this lot to keep the parking here. It is also condemned and has mold issues and water penetration. It is assessed at \$876,200. The city will not get this in return. They need expedited permitting to get this under redevelopment this year. It would cost the city \$250,000 to demolish these structures and another \$250,000 to put a parking lot on it. The city's goal for this redevelopment is historic preservation. The 5 School St. house is a little less historically

significant. There are concerns on the foundation. They have allowed the proposition to reconstruct the house in kind. That is not the goal, but they are not taking it off the table. Ultimately that would be a Planning Board decision. They have to save the Ordway Building but if they prove it is more cost effective to reconstruct 5 School St., then that may be the outcome. The intent is to revitalize the School St. corridor. This will bring in new tax revenue. There has been a lot of discussion of taking tax revenue off the rolls with the new city hall. The tax revenue from this redeveloped area should exceed what they are leaving on the table. There is a dedicated walkway from School St. to the library. The net sale of the proceeds will go to the library for repairs. They are hopeful this will be permitted through the historic preservation permit, which is why this presentation is happening for the Board. For the Ordway they will only be selling the 8,000 sf and 8 parking spaces. They will be removing the additions to bring it back to the 1880 finish. Next to the Ordway will be the 15 foot walkway. On the other side of that is the 5 School St. single family house. They are allowed to ask for an ADU. The lot will be half its size. They are putting forth their preferred development scenario. This will reduce the uncertainty and soft costs. The intent of this exercise is to demonstrate conceptual support. All comments are informal and non-binding. The Board could vote to show support of the concept to City Council.

105. Michael Jewell questioned how many units they were proposing for the Ordway. Nick Cracknell responded that the City Council order states up to 8 units in the Ordway that's why 8 parking spaces are allowed. Eight units would be very small. It is more likely they will have 4-5 units in the Ordway, but they will see with what the bids come up with. Michael Jewell questioned if 5 School St. was limited to a single-family home. Nick Cracknell confirmed that was correct. It is a small house. It does not work well as a 2 family. It could work for an ADU with one additional parking space and a landlord structure. Michael Jewell questioned if there would be affordable units. Nick Cracknell responded that if there are more than 5 units in the Ordway, then they will need to have an affordable unit. Putting in 8 units is ambitious, and they would be almost micro unit sized. They will need egress and common space too.
106. Tracey Chalifour questioned if the bids would be based on a design like this. Nick Cracknell responded that they would be required to remove the 1980 additions. Developers would be left with what's there to bid a project. They could put office space in there. The Bill is not mandating residential.
107. Tracey Chalifour commented that the side of the School St. has 4 meters on the wall. Nick Cracknell responded that it was a 2 family when the city bought it. There are 2 kitchens. There is barely room in the driveway for 2 cars. An ADU and single family would be the better solution. Tracey Chalifour agreed that made sense to do it that way to avoid parking on the street. Nick Cracknell commented that still may happen, but it definitely would with a two family.
108. Tom Salemi questioned if the number one goal was historic preservation or library proceeds. Nick Cracknell commented that they were on the same level. Any idea to expand public safety or other municipal use would be 10s of millions of dollars. There has been a collective realization that was blue sky thinking and not realistic in this fiscal environment. At this point those buildings need to come down this year or let them go. There is a huge financial benefit to do this. This is about saving money and putting the properties back on

tax roll. It will potentially be creating more housing and revitalizing the neighborhood. The sale proceeds will not go into the general fund. They will be going to the library.

109. Tom Salemi questioned if approving this would preclude anyone wanting to restore 9 School St. and do something different with 5 School St. Nick Cracknell responded that there was no path of least resistance. 5 School St. is the most cost-effective housing to construct. They put the replace in kind provision in there just in case to make sure they didn't underestimate the cost of restoration.
110. Nipun Jain commented that between this and the parsonage and church restoration that part of downtown will truly stand out. The Ordway speaks to restoration and the house speaks to a mill town. They are indicative of Amesbury history. If they allow any kind of development on the parcel, then it will be a struggle to find the right fit.
111. Nick Cracknell noted that it was a balancing act between trying to get as much possible for the library, but not at the expense of School St. Everyone is getting something out of this.
112. Michael Jewell commented that it looked like a pretty good concept.
113. Joel Nice commented that the historic preservation permit has been a huge success in the city. Joel Nice questioned if they would consider a larger project if there was a potential that 5 School St. would be demolished. Nick Cracknell responded that the goal is to restore both buildings. The spirit of the order is to keep it simple. There would be a lot of challenges to expanding the Ordway without making it complicated.
114. Nipun Jain commented that they look at the opportunities, but expediency is a high priority too. The goal is to make sure developers see a straight forward project that works for everyone.
115. Michael Jewell questioned what the timeline for this would be. Nick Cracknell commented that their goal is to issue the RFP in March. The city attorney is reviewing the documents now. When it is ready it will have to go to the central register. They should have bids in April, then they will review the criteria to filter the submittals. The goal is to have a contractual agreement in May. Then the developer would get permits before they close.
116. Joel Nice commented that the buildings will not last the next winter. This was a lot of work, and the due diligence will hopefully have people lining up. It will be exciting to see this becoming an application.
117. Tom Salemi agreed it would be a good outcome.
118. Pascal Rettig agreed and noted this work would help with expediency and predictability. It will also be easier to compare bids when they are comparing apples to apples. Keeping it simple will benefit the town and help permit it efficiently. This will be a huge improvement to the Ordway.
119. Tracey Chalifour agreed the concept looked great. There are some regular developers in town that would be able to handle this. Nick Cracknell confirmed they would be reaching out to anyone in the area.
120. Michael Jewell motioned to support the concept preapplication plan for 5 and 9 School St. Seconded by Tom Salemi.
121. Keith Ratner initiated roll call –
122. Keith Ratner – YES

- 123. Joel Nice – YES
- 124. Michael Jewell – YES
- 125. Tracey Chalifour – YES
- 126. Tom Salemi - YES
- 127. David Frick – ABSENT
- 128. Pascal Rettig - YES
- 129. Motion passed 6-0

130. Administrative – Stantec Invoices

- 131. Keith Ratner read the Stantec invoice into the record.
 - 1. Stantec Invoice for 80 Haverhill Road in the amount of \$2,337.00.
- 132. Michael Jewell motioned to pay the invoice listed above. Seconded by Joel Nice.
- 133. Keith Ratner initiated roll call –
- 134. Keith Ratner – YES
- 135. Joel Nice – YES
- 136. Michael Jewell – YES
- 137. Tracey Chalifour – YES
- 138. Tom Salemi - YES
- 139. David Frick – ABSENT
- 140. Pascal Rettig - YES
- 141. Motion passed 6-0

142. Adjournment

- 143. Michael Jewell motioned to adjourn at 8:16 pm. Seconded by Joel Nice.
- 144. Keith Ratner initiated roll call vote –
- 145. Keith Ratner – YES
- 146. Joel Nice – YES
- 147. Michael Jewell – YES
- 148. Tracey Chalifour – YES
- 149. Tom Salemi - YES
- 150. David Frick – ABSENT
- 151. Pascal Rettig - YES
- 152. Motion passed 6-0