

BEDFORD PLANNING BOARD
Town Hall
Selectmen's Meeting Room
April 25, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeffrey Cohen, Chair; Shawn Hanegan, Clerk;
Amy Lloyd; Lisa Mustapich

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sandra Hackman

STAFF PRESENT: Glenn Garber, Planning Director; and Cathy Silvestrone, Planning A.A.

STAFF ABSENT: Catherine Perry, Assistant Planner

OTHERS PRESENT: See Attached

Jeffrey Cohen, Chair, convened the meeting at 6:15PM

Shawn Hanegan, Clerk—Read the Evacuation Announcement

Note: All submittals are available for review in the Planning Office

DEVELOPMENT SESSION:

1. 62-88 Great Road/Blake Block—discussion to determine adequacy of parking at Blake Block with the addition of a 4th food tenant, as a minor special permit amendment.

Chair Cohen announced that this is not a public hearing; and therefore he would call on people to speak if need be. Mr. Cohen explained that this evening's discussion is about one subject only; to determine if the adequacy of parking at the Blake Block is a minor amendment to the existing special permit if a fourth food tenant is allowed; and that during the May 14 meeting, further Blake Block issues are scheduled to be discussed.

Chair Cohen reviewed the following submittals provided by Attorney Pamela Brown in support of this discussion:

- Letter dated, April 23, 2013 stating that the applicant's position is that a combination of the off-street parking at the rear of the Blake Block, plus additional parking available within easy walking distance is sufficient to service the needs of the Block during all hours of the day/night while accommodating other surrounding businesses.
- Attached to the April 23 letter was: 1) prior correspondence related to parking in Bedford's town center as it relates to the proposed tenants for the Block and two graphics indicating pedestrian routes and parking located within 1,000 ft. of the Block.

Ms. Brown explained that the original special permit called for 71 parking spaces (if carriage house was not built) based upon the anticipated commercial and residential projected uses; as various businesses came forth to be potential tenants, the number of parking spaces has fluctuated between 72 – 77 spaces; however because a fourth food business has inquired to be a tenant, Chris Laskey, Code Enforcement Director, expressed concern that the parking demand at peak times might exceed the approved number of spaces; and therefore he suggested that the applicant return to the Planning Board for a determination of parking adequacy in the form of a minor special permit amendment.

Ms. Brown shared that the known tenants are Ginger Japanese Restaurant, Wicked Good Frozen Yogurt, Ken's Deli, and Bedford Rug; and that the final two commercial spaces are proposed as an organic nail salon and a healthy food café. Ms. Brown reviewed parking calculations for each use, and noted that uses classified as a restaurant will have somewhat higher of a peak demand than a retail use. Ms. Brown revealed several points that had bearing on her determination of the adequacy of parking in Bedford's Town Center area to service the variety of uses. Some of those points were as follows; 1) in most active town centers visitors are accustomed to walking approximately 1-3 blocks to reach their destination; 2) a good amount of Wicked Good Yogurt customers at peak lunch time will most likely visit the site by foot, or already be visiting other establishments in the Block; 3) immediately in front of the Block there are 19 available spaces that are hardly used during the weekday or evening unless the Church (on the common) or town is hosting a special event; 4) the Blake Block parking lot consists of 52 spaces, which covers a significant amount of the calculated demand; 5) available in the Town Center area, less than 1,000 feet away, is approx. 100+ parking spaces; 6) the Block itself will continue to include a mix of uses that will promote shared and off peak parking; 7) parking is self-regulating; for patrons who prefer to park close to the Blake Block will learn to schedule their trips to avoid peak periods; and 8) because there are a number of people who are employed in the area, and there are many students coming from the Middle and High schools, it is expected that many of these patrons will walk to the site.

Ms. Brown commented that visitors from out of town may have initial trouble seeking alternative parking for the Block during peak demand; however, maps online will be provide showing alternative parking areas for users of the Block.

Board members reviewed, shared concern, and questioned the various parking calculations that Ms. Brown provided for specific uses at the Block, as well as the overall parking calculations for the Town Center Area.

Shawn Hanegan stated that he is concerned that people will park along Fletcher Road instead of along the Great Road or at Town Center because it is closer.

Ms. Brown said that she agrees with Mr. Hanegan that people may try to park along Fletcher Road depending on what direction they are coming from.

Mr. Hanegan commented that in other towns no parking signs in residential areas are more prominent; and that Fletcher Road is not clearly marked.

Amy Lloyd stated that, unless people are specifically told they can't park on Fletcher Road through proper signage, they most certainly will do it. Ms. Lloyd added that she is mostly concerned for the first 2-3 houses on Fletcher, as these houses would be the most impacted.

Lisa Mustapich shared that she is excited about the potential tenants and would like the applicant to explore a shared parking arrangement with nearby businesses.

Ms. Brown said she was not in favor of pressing the shared parking concept with nearby businesses. Ms. Brown stated that if the businesses want to be successful at this location, they will seek ways to free up parking spaces.

Chair Cohen, pointed out that currently the permitted amount of allowable spaces at the Blake Block totals 72 spaces; and that this calculation was based on proposed uses and peak demand assumptions under the zoning bylaws. Mr. Cohen reiterated that Chris Laskey wasn't comfortable approving the fourth restaurant use because

the four restaurants may have similar peak demands, thus creating a potential to exceed the overall parking demand on site. Mr. Cohen would like to hear from the residents before the Board makes a determination.

Lee Vorderer, 42 Fletcher Road, expressed that she isn't concerned if one or two extra cars are parked along Fletcher Road; however, she is concerned about making a decision based on the unknown; and then asked what recourse would there be if this area becomes overwhelmed due to traffic and parking issues.

Chair Cohen asked Planning Director Garber if he knew what recourse the town center area becomes overwhelmed with traffic and parking issues.

Director Garber said if there is an overspill of parking from the Blake Block; this could be grounds to reopen the existing special permit. However, if the town center area in general causes public safety issues, then the Police and/or the Selectmen, as Road Commissioners, could impose traffic restrictions along Fletcher Road.

Lisa Mustapich mentioned that cars parking along Fletcher Road may actually calm traffic and slow cars down.

Mark Siegenthaler stated that parking on most streets in Bedford is not allowed; however, it is possible to have a posted restriction added.

Richard Davidson, 39 Fletcher Road, declared that Fletcher Road is already used as a cut-through road; and that this residential area is currently changing from an old established neighborhood to new families with younger children. Mr. Davidson said the Blake Block is located on a dangerous corner; and added that the thought of having traffic from four restaurants, and other establishments over and above the existing neighborhood conditions is dangerous and concerning.

Robert Bass, 42 Fletcher Road, said he is looking for a compromise. Mr. Bass pointed out that a downside of instilling no parking restrictions on Fletcher Road is that the residents of Fletcher Road will no longer be able to have visiting guests utilize on-street parking.

Susan Sepe, 43 Fletcher Road, mentioned that her property is located on the same side as the Blake Block; and that she has witnessed on many occasions cars flying down Fletcher Road; and therefore she is especially concerned about on-street parking in this area. Ms. Sepe also mentioned that since Ginger opened, she has already observed some issues.

Ben Littauer, 37 Fletcher Road, stated that it is unrealistic to believe that people patronizing the Blake Block will park at the Town Center. Mr. Littauer said that he doesn't want Fletcher Road marked for no parking because of the same reason stated by Mr. Bass.

Ms. Sepe articulated that parking signs stating "for residents only" could be added.

William Moonan, Selectman, shared that Faye Russo, Coordinator for Old Town Hall events, said she was not interested in a shared parking arrangement nor was Right-At-Home (the business located on the opposite corner of Fletcher Road from the Blake Block); however, Sovereign Bank is okay with people using their parking lot during non-business hours. Mr. Moonan pointed out that a decision to include a fourth restaurant establishment or not because of parking demand isn't just about Blake Block and its tenants, it's about everyone in the immediate area who needs parking.

Lisa Mustapich suggested restriping the parking area at Patriot Place to provide additional parking for the Blake Block. Mr. Blake didn't think this would be favorable to the tenants at Patriot Place.

Ms. Mustapich asked if more bike racks would be required if a fourth restaurant was allowed.

Stephanie Davidson, 39 Fletcher Road, noted that behind the Blake Block there are well marked off-street parking signs; and then suggested that some public signs leading to the Town Center area be added.

Planning Director Garber stated that the Town Center parking area is invisible to Great Road; and that this is part of the problem, even beyond the Blake Block.

Ms. Davidson said she is really concerned for the safety of the young families located on Fletcher Road and Fitchdale, as she too has witnessed a high rate of speed from cars cutting through.

A brief discussion took place and people agreed to look for solutions that would require signage.

Lisa Mustapich reported that she is in favor of more food establishments at this location; however, she recommends that the applicant go before the Selectmen to get permission for employees of the Blake Block to park at the municipal lot within the town hall center campus.

Planning Director Garber said that a special requirement could be attained for monitoring on-street and on-site parking, curbside parking on portions of Fletcher Road during peak hours, plus request that the town provide data for a 1-year monitoring program to see if future action is needed.

Shawn Hanegan said he agrees with including mitigation measures; however he has concerns with the follow-through. Mr. Hanegan also suggested having the businesses' employees park off-site; and that this be enforced.

Ms. Brown stated that she isn't in favor of a monitoring situation until there is proven reason to begin one. Ms. Brown asked for people to be patient and see how things evolve; then if an issue happens to arise, begin a monitoring program.

Amy Lloyd mentioned that everyone wants a bustling Center of Town; however, there is a degree of unsettledness between the balance of cars and people. Ms. Lloyd said she doesn't want to ignore the residents' concerns; however, she pointed out that there already seems to be an existing problem on Fletcher Road; and therefore she suggested to Mark Siegenthaler to speak with the Selectmen to see if they would entertain resolving the existing issues on Fletcher Road.

Mark Siegenthaler said he agrees it would be nice to do something on Fletcher Road; however there are a variety of approaches that need to be considered.

Ms. Lloyd suggested collecting data regarding the number of cars parked in the town center area and see where people are going.

Mark Siegenthaler shared School Way and Elm Street area will be improved in the near future; and therefore this area will become more desirable to park and walk to the Center of Town.

Planning Director Garber suggested seeking low cost signage to direct visitors to alternative parking areas and display this signage on a wider radius, and not just at Blake Block.

Shawn Hanegan spoke about how difficult it is to cross Great Road and if there was something that could be done.

Planning Director Garber suggested to Mr. Hanegan to review Great Road Master Plan to see what solutions have been suggested.

Chair Cohen reiterated that the Special Permit for the Blake Block indicates there are 72 allowed parking spaces; and therefore the Board needs to determine if by adding a 4th food tenant, is this a minor or major change to the special permit amendment.

MOTION: Lisa Mustapich, move to grant a minor special permit amendment of Brian's LLC, subject to the following conditions: 1) The applicant is obligated to prepare and submit at quarterly intervals or greater, for a period of one year after all businesses in the Blake Block are in operation, a parking and traffic monitoring report to Planning, Police, DPW, and Code; 2) at the end of the one year monitoring period (or earlier) if overflow parking from the Blake Block is proven to have a negative impact on Fletcher Rd or other neighbors on an ongoing basis, the applicant and necessary town officials will work together to resolve these issues. 3) if the applicant fails to meet the requirements of the monitoring program, then this would constitute non-compliance with the special permit amendment; and therefore the applicant would be subjected to resolution under statute and the local zoning bylaws. (Amy Lloyd seconded the motion)

The vote of the Planning Board was as follows: (4-0-0)

Jeffrey Cohen –yes

Lisa Mustapich—yes

Amy Lloyd—yes

Shawn Hanegan—yes

Sandra Hackman—absent

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Lisa Mustapich moved to adjourn the meeting. (Amy Lloyd seconded the motion)

VOTE: 4-0-0

TIME: 7:30 PM