

# **TOWN OF HUNTINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION**

SITE PLAN REVIEW #14-1

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSION OF LAW AND ORDER

RE: Huntington Town Hall

## **INTRODUCTION**

On January 16, 2014, the Huntington Town Hall Committee, acting as agent for the Town of Huntington, submitted an application for Site Plan approval for new ramps, stairs, and a lift to the Town, including parking.

The property is located on State Aid Highway #1 in Huntington Center: 4839 Main Road.

A public hearing was convened on March 10, 2014 and closed on the same date.

Further, the hearing was held in conjunction with the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a request for a setback variance.

## **FINDINGS OF FACT**

An overview of the project was presented by Aaron Worthley.

The Town Hall was constructed in 1903 on a narrow lot; the building is “skewed to the property line, but square to the road.” The rear property line is 62 feet from the back of the building.

The building has not been at full function since 2001 when a burst pipe created problems with mold and the restrooms were removed.

The Town Hall Committee would like to bring the building back to full public use and needs to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and accessibility standards. Under Section 4.3 of the Huntington Zoning Regulations, last amended July, 9, 2012, Site Plan Review is required for town and other public structures.

The project consists of:

1. Wheel chair ramp on the front of the building;
2. Platform lift on the exterior to the rear of the building with an entrance from the interior of the building;
3. Escape stair (fire escape) from the second floor on the back of the building; and
4. Interior work – remodeling of the restroom (not subject to review) and modification of the landing and stairs, which are currently noncompliant.

The building has an existing ramp and back stairs; neither of meet the Vermont building codes for public building on ADA.

The Commission reviewed the criteria under Huntington Zoning Regulations:

1. Adequacy of site layout and design to protect significant site features is not applicable.
2. Safety of vehicular and pedestrian circulation on the site and on the adjacent street network. With limited space in front of the building, the site plan optimized handicapped parking adjacent to the ramp. Street parking has been historically used in this village and for this building and a map showed 70 parking spaces south of the building, both off and on the road. All parking at the town and school property is within walking distance. Pedestrian safety could be managed with a mobile crosswalk structure, which would serve to slow down traffic for pedestrian safety. The Commission concluded that this criteria was adequately met.
3. Parking is addressed in the plan. The neighbors have been consulted. Setbacks have been addressed by a Variance approval issued by the Zoning Board of Adjustment earlier in the evening. Snow removal would need to be managed carefully as the area in front of the building is tight. Plowing the driveway and the necessary removal of snow would be part of the operating procedure. A landscape plan was provided with the application, showing modest raised beds and small trees.
4. Hours of operation will follow Performance Standards. Hours may vary slightly, depending on the season, and there will be communication with the neighbors before scheduled events.
5. Exterior lighting for safety without creating offsite glare. No changes will be made to the single, down light, circa 1960s, which is on the front of the building. Currently, there is no existing lighting on the rear of the building. In the proposed plan, three lights will be put on the ceiling of the roof of the back stairs. The plan is to have switches near the doors with a timer when the doors are opened. There is a plan to have another light near the door, with a similar switch.
6. Adequacy of sewer and water. Water source is a drilled well that services all the town buildings in this village. Currently, there is a septic tank and leach field in front of the building. The leach field may be grandfathered. The Committee will cap the tank and install an alarm, so when near full, the contractor will pump; ongoing maintenance is less than a rental. For large events, a portable toilet may be required.
7. Draining and grading for storm water runoff and erosion. Not applicable as this is a small area with no slope.
8. Consistency with the Town Plan. The ramp on the historic building has gone through "quite a few plans to get the ramp centered on the building." There will be no above-deck posts. The THC hired a consultant to review the ADA project plans. Also, Vermont Department of Historic Preservation has reviewed the document and approved the plan.
9. Hazardous wastes and avoidance of run-off is not applicable. An improvement will be made for the kerosene tank on the back of the building, which will be put on a slab. It has to be covered and it will be under the stairs.
10. Conformance with design standards.
11. Utilization of renewable energy resources. The Committee will be installing a new roof that will take into account the installation of solar panels.
12. Signs. No changes to signage, except for small, standard signs for handicapped parking.
13. Conformance with other matters in the regulation and Subdivision Regulations. No issues were raised.

Members of the public in attendance at the hearing on March 10, 2014 were: Aaron Worthley, Terry Boyle, Linda Fickbohm, Dawn Taylor, Edmund Booth, Heidi Racht (HPC clerk).

The Planning Commission members present during the hearing on March 10, 2014 referred to above were Knox Cummin (chair), Everett Marshall, Mark Smith and Beverly Little Thunder (constituting a quorum); and the members present during deliberations on January 23, 2012 were Knox Cummin (chair), Everett Marshall, and Mark Smith (constituting a quorum).

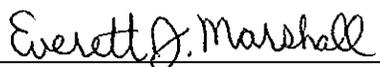
#### CONCLUSION OF LAW AND ORDER

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and after deliberations on April 1, 2014, the Commission has concluded that the project has met the requirements of Section 4.4 of the Huntington Zoning Regulations (subject to the conditions set forth below). Further, the project plan received high praise from the Planning Commission for thoughtful ADA renovations to an historic public building.

#### DECISION OF APPROVAL AND CONDITIONS

Following deliberation on April 1, 2014, Site Plan Approval was granted by a unanimous vote of the Huntington Planning Commission with the following conditions:

1. at events with on-street parking, a mobile traffic control device be placed in the road for pedestrian safety.
2. The ending time for large events would follow the Performance Standards in the Zoning Regulations. No events would continue past 11 pm.
3. Use of portable toilet for large events (40 or more people) or installation of a second toilet.
4. Exterior lighting will meet Performance Standards.



Everett Marshall, acting chair  
Huntington Planning Commission

Dated this 1st day of April, 2014.