

IPSWICH PLANNING BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting remotely using ZOOM

Wednesday, January 12, 2022

7:00 PM

Pursuant to a meeting, notice posted by the Town Clerk and delivered to all Board members, a remote meeting of the Ipswich Planning Board was held on Wednesday, January 12 2022, remotely using ZOOM. Board members Carolyn Britt, Jeffrey Anderson, Mitch Lowe, Toni Mooradd, Helen Weatherall and Associate Member Laurie Paskavitz were present. Staff Ethan Parsons and recording secretary Odile Breton were present.

Britt convened the meeting at 7:01 PM with a quorum present.

Britt requested an acknowledgement of attendance for all members present.

Citizen Queries: None noted.

Britt reviewed meeting protocols and the process for public hearings. She described the agenda for Ora, Inc. this evening.

Continued Public Hearing: Ora, Inc. for Site Plan Review, and a Special Permit to use 55 Waldingfield Road as a “Great Estate” for business purposes pursuant to Section IX.H of the Zoning Bylaw. The proposal involves the alteration of more than 2,500 sq. ft. of commercial space as described in Section X.B.1 and the increase of required parking spaces by more than 10 as described in Section X.B.3 of the Zoning Bylaw, as well as associated site work, at 55 Waldingfield Rd. (Assessor’s Map 62, Lot 14), located in the Rural Residence A Zoning District, pursuant but not limited to the sections of the Zoning Bylaw cited herein as well as XI.J

Britt noted voting members for the application are Anderson, Lowe, Weatherall, Mooradd and Britt. Chip Nysten, attorney representing Ora, Inc., John Harden, architect (Olson Lewis), and Jennifer Williams, Project Manager for Ora, Inc. were present for the applicant.

Britt provided a summary of items received from the applicant, citizens, and Friends of Waldingfield. Britt requested the applicant to provide an update on the open space proposal.

Nysten said the proposed open space area amounts to 41% of the land. He reminded the Board that the total land area is approximately 39.9 acres. Nysten reviewed the proposed open space and said 40% is required (approximately 15.9 acres):

Area A	4.4 acres	11%	Abuts Ipswich River (8.8 acres CR)
Area B	5.2 acres	13%	Abuts Julia Bird Reserve

Area C*	4.0 acres	10%	Abuts Waldingfield Rd
Area D	2.8 acres	7%	Paddock area on site
TOTAL	16.4 acres	41%	

*Harden noted Area C includes new walking path to complete the loop trail and parking. Harden reviewed the public access. He noted 8.8 acres is in a private conservation restriction (CR) dated back to 1973 and does not include public access. There is equestrian access at the discretion of the property owner. Ora, Inc. requests that 50% of the 8.8 acres be included in the open space requirement as public access will be added.

Lowe is concerned that the crossing in the 8.8 acres will not be allowed. Anderson said the request for 50% of Area A makes sense as public access will be created. Weatherall said none of the 8.8 acres of land should be allowed since it is already in a CR. Mooradd said it is important to include Area A and 50% credit toward the open space requirement is reasonable. Lowe said 50% credit for the 8.8 acres (Area A) is reasonable to include and public access provides a benefit to the Town. Weatherall noted the GEPD does not allow land already in a CR to be included in the bylaw requirement. Anderson replied that the Building Inspector provided guidance and noted 8.8 acres is in a private CR with no public access. Anderson said it is at the discretion of the Board to allow credit for the land as public access is a benefit to the Town. Paskavitz agreed that 50% credit for Area A is reasonable and opens the property to the community. It is a worthy community benefit.

Anderson noted the proposed loop trail was originally going to go through Area B. Harden explained that several community members pointed out an existing trail in the Julia Bird Reserve. Ora, Inc. proposes the connection of the existing trail to Area A. Anderson questioned Area B as setbacks. Lowe noted that the Town can change setbacks in the future and said Area B should be included in open space. Mooradd concurred that Area B should be included in open space.

Public Comment:

Nancy Baker asked if trees would be removed to create the loop trail.

Ralph Williams (Open Space Committee member) – said a CR is to preserve land and not provide public access. He said land already in a CR should not be included in the open space requirement.

Andy Brengle (Open Space Committee member) – said OSC wants both paddocks included in the open space requirement. The only way to protect the paddocks is to include the land in a CR. He said the land in the existing private CR should not be included.

Tad Heuer (Foley Hoag LLP), attorney for Friends of Waldingfield, stated the land in the existing CR and land that is already protected under other laws and regulations should not be included. He said the Town can not put land in a CR into another CR. The land from Area A should not be included under the GEPD. Britt responded that the Area A land is not to be put into another CR but rather to include in calculating the open space requirement.

Britt asked Parsons if Town Counsel was aware of all the issues related to open space. Parsons said no. Britt suggested the Board gather questions and get clarification from Town Counsel.

Anderson said Area D is a good development toward open space and Britt agreed. Weatherall said Area C is a critical area to conserve. It was noted that a small hill area adjacent to a paddock was not included. Harden explained that the paddock is defined by an existing fence and the fence abuts the edge of the hill. Ora, Inc. wanted to include the defined paddock.

Public Comment:

Katrina Hart is concerned about traffic on a narrow, country road and with a business on site.

Nathaniel Pulsifer said the trail on the northeast side of the property leaves the property and goes on Greenbelt land.

Dennis Murphy, attorney, sent a letter to the Board and has clients that can purchase 55 Waldingfield Rd. There is another option to conserve Waldingfield.

Will Friend, 951 Highland Steet, Hamilton supports the Open Space Committee that the 8.8 acres of land should not be included in the open space calculation. He asked if the PB is going to speak to its Town Counsel. Britt said the Board is gathering questions for Town Counsel.

Parsons stated that Town Counsel gave the opinion that the Board has discretion to apply guidelines. Britt said it would be helpful to have a discussion with Greenbelt to verify trails and access to its property. Britt said the applicant needs to expand Area C to include the hill adjacent to the paddock (approximately 1 acre). The applicant did not provide a reason as to why the area was not included.

Low summarized the applicant needs to provide information on clearing to create trails and written consent from Greenbelt about use of existing trails. The Board needs Town Counsel to put in writing that Board has discretion in applying guidelines. Weatherall is concerned the Board is taking straw polls without legal advice.

Harden noted that Area B would be protected if trails need to go on the property. He said clearing would involve removing fallen trees rather than cutting trees down.

Bryan Townsend noted a permanent trail easement exists for equine use and the Board should contact the Essex County Trail Association.

Nylen introduced revisions to Phase 2 and 3. He noted the building mass was reduced. Williams described the working environment on site. She noted that remote work is first but there will be a need for employees to gather for business activities. Harden presented Phase 2 and 3. He noted parking includes 80 spaces which is a 60% reduction from previous plans. The proposed new building would go behind the Mansion and Carriage House. He said the new building and parking will not be visible from Waldingfield Road.

Ian Johnson, Sustainability Consultant (Linnean Solutions), discussed “Regeneration Design”. He explained using the existing building, deep energy retrofits, renewable energy, LEED Building certification, and efficient sizing of the project as sustainable strategies. He said the

project will try to maximize the life cycle of the building. Anderson said it is great that an in-depth analysis was done this early in the project. Lowe thanked Johnson for the presentation.

Public Comment:

Wayne Castonguay, Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA) – provided Ora, Inc. with a comment letter and was appreciative that comments were included in the sustainability presentation. He suggested the Board include IRWA recommendations as conditions in its decision. He said that there should be no new ground water wells and the project should be on Town water and not well water.

Nancy Baker noted that LEED certification goal for the project should be gold or platinum. She had questions regarding location of dumpsters, heating and rain gardens.

Jack Whittier, 35 Waldingfield Rd, asked if LEED certification will be the same for all buildings. He asked if there were phases after 3.

Will Friend, 951 Highland Street, Hamilton is also concerned about future phases after 3. He asked what is visible from the Ipswich River. He is concerned about glare from solar panels.

Chris Florio said Waldingfield Road is not a place for a corporation.

Nylen said the applicant is not prepared to discuss plans beyond Phase 3. There are no plans at this time and reminded the public that Ora, Inc. would have to come before the Board for any further development.

Britt asked the discussion to move to traffic. Heather Monticup, traffic engineer (Greenman Pedersen Inc.) reviewed the traffic impact. She included Phases 1 through 3 in the analysis and updated the study to reflect the reduction in employees to the site. She noted comments and responses to peer review.

Elizabeth Oltman (TEC) did the peer review on the traffic study. She explained her technical review of the study is to ensure industry standards were followed. She said the traffic will significantly increase in traffic and the road is designed to handle the increase. She suggested focusing on safety entering and exiting the site.

Weatherall is very familiar with Waldingfield Road and described existing conditions. She said it is a scenic road. Anderson said the Town can make Waldingfield Road a “No Thru” traffic road. Lowe said the Board needs to get outstanding items and discuss with Town staff how to wrap up the application.

Parsons noted the extension for the application is through January 31, 2022.

Anderson moved to continue the public hearing to January 27, 2022 at 7:00 PM at a meeting using ZOOM and Weatherall seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Adopt Minutes of December 16, 2021

Lowe requested spelling correction: it should be “swept path analysis”, not sweat path analysis.

Mooradd moved to adopt the minutes as drafted and edited and Weatherall seconded. The motion passed with 4 votes.

Discussion about meeting protocols and general operational matters

Mooradd provided a draft to Board members. The Board discussed that time expectations set ahead of the presentation were helpful. Questions from the public and Board can be answered by the applicant at the following hearing. Parsons said setting ground rules establishes expectations for the meeting. Lowe said the draft provided by Mooradd is a good outline and checklist.

The discussion went to electing a vice-chair. Britt noted it would be helpful to have a vice-chair. It was noted in the previous meeting that Mooradd volunteered to be vice-chair.

Lowe moved to nominate Mooradd as vice-chair through June 30, 2022. Paskavitz seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Paskavitz moved to adjourn and Lowe seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 10:28 PM.

Meeting minutes prepared by: Odile Breton

Adopted on: February 17, 2022