

**SITE PLAN REVIEW TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**CONFERENCE ROOM A
CITY HALL, MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE**

2:00 PM

July 7, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Peter Stith, Chairperson, Assistant Planning Director; David Desfosses, Project Manager – Engineering & Operations; Chad Putney, Acting Deputy Fire Chief; Peter Britz, Director of Planning & Sustainability; Shanti Wolph, Chief Building Inspector; Zachary Cronin, Assistant City Engineer, Eric Eby, Parking and Transportation Engineer; Vincent Hayes; Planner II – Development Compliance

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mike Maloney; Deputy Police Chief

ADDITIONAL

STAFF PRESENT: Kate Homet, Environmental Planner and Sustainability Coordinator;
Jennifer Crockett, Administrative Assistant I

MINUTES

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of the **June 2, 2026** meeting minutes.

P. Britz moved to approve the June 2, 2026 meeting minutes as presented, seconded by D. Desfosses. The motion passed unanimously.

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. REQUEST TO POSTPONE The request of **Rafferty Investment Group LLC (Owner)**, for property located at **64 Bridge Street** requesting Site Plan Review approval for demolition of the existing structure and construction of a ten (10) room three-story Inn with associated site improvements. Said property is located on Assessor Map 126 Lot 55 and lies within the Mixed Residential Business (MRB) District, Character District 4 (CD4) and Downtown Overlay District. **REQUEST TO POSTPONE (LU-26-36)**

DISCUSSION AND DECISION OF THE BOARD

P. Britz made a motion to postpone the application to the August 4th TAC meeting. Z. Cronin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

P. Britz made a motion to postpone Item III. B, 238 Austin Street to the August 4th TAC meeting. D. Desfosses seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

III. NEW BUSINESS

- A.** The request of **Marissa Valverde (Owner)**, for property located at **20 Central Avenue** requesting Preliminary and Final Subdivision approval and Site Plan Review approval for the subdivision of one lot into three lots, each with a single-family dwelling and associated site improvements. Said property is located on **Assessor Map 209 Lot 30** and lies within the General Residence A (GRA) and Highway Noise Overlay Districts. (LU-26-84)

[Timestamp 7:55] *C. Putney arrived at the meeting.*

SPEAKING TO THE APPLICATION

[Timestamp 8:11] Engineer Drew Olehowski and team from Haley Ward came to present the project. A response to staff comments was handed out. Mr. Olehowski reviewed the project and noted that this parcel was originally a 5-lot subdivision that was merged at some point by the City, they are continuing to research where that currently stands and the route moving forward, whether they have to merge that back into a single lot first before they subdivide. P. Britz stated that the Assessor said that there were still 5 separate lots.

[Timestamp 12:13] Z. Cronin said that the northern 10-foot sewer easement is actually for drainage and that this either needed to be updated on the existing conditions plan or cleaned up in the easement language. S. Wolph asked if they were all pole foundations. Mr. Olehowski confirmed that was correct. S. Wolph asked how lot 3 was discharging to the storm drain on the right and then to the catch basin, would it be by gravity drain or would it be pumped up. Mr. Olehowski responded that it was intended to be by gravity and that he would confirm that and the finished floor elevation. S. Wolph asked if all the lots perimeter drains would go to an approved location and not just leaching out around the perimeter. Mr. Olehowski responded yes and that the plans would be updated to show this. D. Desfosses said that the basement was higher than the existing discharge pipes and that the finished basement floor elevation was missing. He asked for the test pit logs and locations on the existing features plan and detail for the exterior wall for the foundations, the drainage that ties in and how it ties in on the plan set. He stated that they do not allow 4" pipe to be used underground, it should at least be 6" for the C502 rain garden detail. Z. Cronin asked that they remove the head wall on lot 3 of the landscaping plan.

[Timestamp 20:24] S. Wolph asked if it was ok that the easement went through the entry walkway and driveway, as it doesn't go through the house, they could dig into it if needed. TAC members further discussed the easement, the foundations of the houses on lots 2 and 3, and that the easement language would need to be modified to state that the City is not responsible for repairs to hardscapes.

PUBLIC HEARING

[Timestamp 25:07] Jami Barnes of 22 Central Avenue expressed that some of the issues with the existing drainage problem were addressed. She said that her property and the other properties to the back of 20 Central Avenue experienced a lot of drainage issues and wet basements and she wanted to make sure the runoff was addressed. She also wanted a buffer between properties as one of the new houses would be close to her house, such as a fence or landscaping buffer, since they would be going from one neighbor to three neighbors. Mr. Olehowski responded that yes there would be a landscaping buffer in-between and that her property was up gradient of the project site, so water flows from 22 Central Avenue to 20 Central Avenue. Ms. Barnes stated that she ran a hair salon out of her home and was worried about construction impacts and disruption. She asked if the vegetative fencing would be mature trees. Mr. Olehowski responded that there would be a number of Northern White Cedars at a minimum planting height of 8 feet. Ms. Barnes asked if a fence all the way down was ever thought about. Mr. Olehowski responded that a fence could be considered.

[Timestamp 29:35] DeeDee Wallace of 2 Beechwood Street said that all of the water came towards her house and the rain garden, she was worried about mosquitoes and how effective rain gardens are in drying out. She stated that they had finally gotten new curbs and paving and now sewer, water, and curb cuts on Beechwood Street and two and a half blocks of gas line dig up on Central Avenue would be quite the disruption of the pavement. Ms. Wallace was also concerned how two new driveways on their small block would affect rainwater on the street.

[Timestamp 31:42] Julie Higgins Van Sickle of 24 Central Avenue expressed that her property directly abuts 20 Central Avenue and that the property line was a straightaway with nothing between the properties. She said that area is where the water drains and when there is heavy rain it gets very wet and has a lot of mosquitoes, so she agrees that rainwater is a major concern. Ms. Van Sickle agreed with Ms. Barnes regarding the concern over traffic. She would like a fence abutting the full length of her and 22 Central Avenue's properties to segregate the lots.

[Timestamp 34:21] Carrie Blake of 2 Beechwood Street stated that she was concerned with the age of the drain that goes across the yard. D. Desfosses responded that it was reinforced concrete and was built as part of I95, so roughly 1972. Ms. Blake is worried about when and if repairs are needed, that this development is all right on top of it. Her foundation drain, sump pump, and other non-stormwater drain into the catch basin at the end of their driveway which feeds into the old drainage across the street. She is concerned that rocking the boat over there could create problems and floods, because there's a lot of drainage that comes from the highway, the neighborhood at the other end of the street, and Ashland Street behind them. Any sort of additional drainage not going in the proper area is going to be a problem for them. Ms. Blake stated that the apartment to the right has only parking for two cars and they occasionally park on the street and there is street parking along Beechwood Street on both sides that smaller houses use for parking, so any additional cars parking on Beechwood Street would make getting in and out of their driveway a nightmare.

[Timestamp 38:07] Mr. Olehowski stated that the only low points in their drainage plan are the rain gardens and they are designed to drain within 24 – 48 hours, so you would never expect standing water or any kind of ponding water in those features meaning mosquitos aren't typically an issue. He stated that they did try to limit the amount that they had to cross the road with utilities but, each

home needs its own services. They modified the proposed electrical service to only come across the road once with an overhead wire and then go underground to the new houses and will be coordinating with DPW for tie-ins in the road. He stated he would have a chat with the applicant about landscape buffers and fencing. Mr. Olehowski did not expect a need to park in the street as these will be 3-bedroom single-family homes with garages and ample driveway space. He stated that they will coordinate closely how the foundations are installed and make sure to protect the drain during construction.

DISCUSSION AND DECISION OF THE BOARD

[Timestamp 40:26] D. Desfosses provided a summary of action items needed to be completed. S. Wolph asked if the houses in the plans were conceptual structures or if they would be built as proposed. Mr. Olehowski stated that the homes in the plans will be the ones constructed.

D. Desfosses made a motion to continue the application to the August 4th TAC meeting. Z. Cronin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- B. REQUEST TO POSTPONE** The request of **Alea LLC (Owner)**, for property located at **238 Austin Street** requesting Preliminary and Final Subdivision approval to subdivide one lot into two lots and demolition of the existing structures to construct a single-family dwelling on each lot. Said property is located on **Assessor Map 135 Lot 61** and lies within the General Residence C (GRC) District. **REQUEST TO POSTPONE (LU-25-177)**

DISCUSSION AND DECISION OF THE BOARD

P. Britz made a motion to postpone Item III. B, 238 Austin Street to the August 4th TAC meeting. D. Desfosses seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- C.** The request of **124 Group Inc (Owner)**, for property located at **124 Heritage Avenue** requesting amended Site Plan approval for minor site improvements including a garden, ADA accessible ramp, parking lot re-striping, stormwater conveyance modifications, lighting and landscaping. Said property is located on Assessor Map 284 Lot 8 and lies within the Industrial (I) District. (LU-26-61)

SPEAKING TO THE APPLICATION

[Timestamp 44:22] Engineer Neil Hanson from Tighe & Bond, Anne Hayes and Ally Lynch from Gather, and other members of the project team came to present the project. Mr. Hanson reviewed the project, stating that they would require a state wetland permit and that they were going before the Conservation Commission tomorrow. He said that a memo can be made detailing the stormwater flows for pre and post construction conditions.

[Timestamp 47:21] D. Desfosses stated that the primary concern is that the front yard of the building is the detention pond, so he wants to make sure it has been assessed and that the detention

pond is going to be able to detain the amount of stormwater that it has to. Right now, the lawn is built up so high that the water is running off into the road and not into the detention pond. It is fine to build a garden area as long as there is adequate room once it is determined how much water needs to be contained. He asked where the roof water was going. Mr. Hanson said it was going to the parking lot. He stated that the lawn was originally graded as a wide swale. They will look at how it was supposed to function and compare it with what they are proposing. C. Putney stated that he had a general concern as the other tenants on the property had not been able to adequately or appropriately store idle pallets, dumpsters, and things like that. He will need to see on the plans where trash storage is going to be and a note saying they need to comply with idle pallet storage, meeting fire code. It is currently an issue that has been ongoing.

[Timestamp 49:58] P. Britz confirmed the details regarding the raised beds with Ms. Lynch and Ms. Hayes. K. Homet asked about the new curb bump out by the beds. Mr. Hanson stated it was an inlet to fix the water problem to prevent current conditions from reoccurring.

PUBLIC HEARING

[Timestamp 51:34] The public hearing was opened, no one spoke, the public hearing was then closed.

DISCUSSION AND DECISION OF THE BOARD

[Timestamp 51:59] TAC members discussed the need to review the drainage and the timeline for the project. Mr. Hanson stated that they wanted to get stuff built so that next spring they can get up and running.

Z. Cronin made a motion to continue the application to the August 4th TAC meeting. P. Britz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- D.** The request of **Colonial Properties LLC (Owner)**, for property located at **833 Islington Street** requesting a Parking Conditional Use Permit to allow 9 parking spaces where 21 are required. Said property is located on Assessor Map 165 Lot 6 and lies within the Character District 4-W (CD4-W). (LU-26-85)

SPEAKING TO THE APPLICATION

[Timestamp 54:20] Owner Scott Rafferty from Colonial Properties LLC came to present the project. Mr. Rafferty reviewed the project stating that the current tenant would remain, Open Concepts Realty & Co would have office space and a showroom, and a grab n' go restaurant would occupy the building. He stated that through this process they learned that a portion of Frenchman's Lane is owned by the State and that about a foot of the current parking spaces along the building are in Frenchman's Lane and that they had to be removed. Mr. Rafferty is working with the State to get the parking spaces back; this is a 4 to 12-plus month process. He compared the restaurant model and available parking to similar restaurants nearby.

[Timestamp 1:00:10] Z. Cronin stated that at least one ADA spot was needed. TAC members discussed the best location to add an ADA complaint space to the plans. E. Eby was concerned that not enough parking was being provided. The restaurants mentioned all have massive parking issues and folks are not complying with parking regulations and are parking illegally. He said that an arrangement with the mall for parking could work if you can get people to park there and walk across the street. E. Eby stated that the other issue with having parallel parking on Frenchman's Lane is where will people turn around. He stated that grab n' go style restaurants create more traffic than traditional sit-down restaurants as there is more in and out traffic. Mr. Rafferty said that bicycle racks and moped parking could be added to the front of the building. E. Eby stated that the parking demand needs to be shown, not just what is required by the Ordinance, but what the use of the site needs.

[Timestamp 1:05:43] TAC members asked about the use of the patio space and stated that a CUP would be required for outdoor dining. Mr. Rafferty explained that it was intended to be staff space with pavers and a few tables not for restaurant space. He asked TAC members if it was worth acquiring Frenchman's Lane to go from 9 parking spots to 12. TAC members discussed the classification of the showroom as office space versus retail and how that would reduce the parking calculation. Z. Cronin asked if food would be prepared onsite. Mr. Rafferty confirmed that it would be. Z. Cronin stated that an exterior 1,000-gallon grease trap would be needed. This could be under parking spaces or between the building and the sidewalk out front. TAC members further discussed the parking requirements and the acquisition of Frenchman's Lane. D. Desfosses said that the applicant should wait for the City to acquire the title to Frenchman's Lane and then ask the City for a license for parking. This would define how many parking spaces exist and the applicant can determine the use of the building based on that. They can stay with retail and office uses now, but wait on adding the restaurant.

PUBLIC HEARING

[Timestamp 1:20:08] David Wajda, treasurer of the 871 Islington Street Condo Association stated that the site was currently not in compliance with parking and could have grandfathered the parking before with one business. He stated that The Kitchen and Getty Bagel were not in the West End neighborhood. In Gallagher's Plaza, Hannaford's Plaza, down by Louie's, etc. that whole area has ample parking. Getting down to 871 Islington Street, they are probably the only one who has the proper number of parking spaces. Since the increase with the development of the area, traffic has increased and has strained their property and Hannaford's Plaza for parking. Their driveway is used as a turn around and is causing issues and safety concerns. People who are walking cut through their parking lot and don't use the sidewalks. The city is giving away the parking area and that's one of the biggest problems that the city has, is that we have no parking. Every little bit like this hinders everybody else who does have the legal parking. He read a portion of the letter from the City to the previous owner that states they would like option two to accept the portion of Frenchman's Lane adjacent to Islington Street from the State and then convey the area to the owners of 833 Islington Street. The City and the property owner should seek consent from the State. This option would also condition on the provision of an access easement to 871 and 855 Islington Street, which would define maintenance and liability responsibilities. He thinks the City is in the frame of wanting to take over responsibility and maybe in time that can be worked out with parking spaces, but he doesn't think if 21 are required that 11, 12, or 13 spaces would be acceptable.

[Timestamp 1:26:28] Joe Fedora of 871 Islington Street Unit 8A said that he supports local businesses as much as he possibly can, but he wanted to underscore what Mr. Wajda said, that over the past three years they have noticed an increasing number of utilization of their lot by non-residents because of the proximity to all of the businesses on the street. Mr. Fedora stated that this is despite all of their signs, and they have put up even more over the last year, indicating that it's a private lot, no parking, you will be towed. It doesn't stop people from coming in there. It would be nice, if they were allowed, for people to park in the Hannaford lot to go to any of the other businesses. His experience has been that people will park wherever it is the most convenient and most are willing to take the gamble that they're not going to get towed. They all have signs up now, the yoga place, pottery studio, Bank of America, and people still park there. It not only creates the inconvenience for them if they don't have space for themselves, their guests, and any deliveries but it puts an additional burden on them for enforcement and risking confrontations with people. Mr. Fedora said he wanted everyone to keep in mind that keeping Frenchman's Lane open for traffic is important from an emergency standpoint, as to get back to the railroad tracks, the button factory, and the other businesses the only ways in are through Gallagher's lot or Frenchman's Lane. Right now, it is hard for delivery trucks to maneuver in there.

DISCUSSION AND DECISION OF THE BOARD

P. Britz made a motion to continue the application to the August 4th TAC meeting. D. Desfosses seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:26 PM.