



**CITY of BEVERLY**  
**PARKING AND TRAFFIC COMMISSION**

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June 9, 2020 (revised)

Mr. Paul Guanci, President  
Beverly City Council  
City Hall, 191 Cabot Street  
Beverly, MA 01915

Ms. Ellen Hutchinson, Chairperson  
Beverly Planning Board  
City Hall, 191 Cabot Street  
Beverly, MA 01915

RE: **Recommendation to the Planning Board and the City Council: Order #<sup>110</sup>~~107~~ Special Permit  
Application by the Beverly City Council for a proposed redevelopment at 7 Sohier Road (n/k/a 20  
Colon Street) – Briscoe Village LLC**

Dear Ms. Hutchinson:

The City of Beverly Parking and Traffic Commission (“Commission”) has conducted a review of the proposed redevelopment project by Briscoe Village LLC – a partnership of Harborlight Community Partners and Beacon Communities – located at the former Beverly Middle School at 7 Sohier Road. The subject property is a triangle-shaped parcel between Sohier Road and Colon Street, in proximity of the Gloucester Crossing intersection.

The proposed project includes an historic renovation converting the existing Briscoe School building into 85 affordable senior living residences and 6 live/work residences, while preserving the existing auditorium as an approximately 500-seat theater. This project concept reflects the priorities expressed in the RFP issued by the City in 2019, for which this application was the City’s selected development partner. The Project also proposes a new parking area layout containing 234 spaces, together with significant screening/landscaping enhancements compared to current conditions. A 2-acre recreation area at the rear of the site and the historic “turf bowl” at the intersection of Sohier Road and Colon Street will each be retained by the City.

The Commission's review included the following materials related to the proposed project:

1. Illustrated Concept Plan depicting the proposed site layout, including re-designed parking and landscape design, prepared by SV Design and dated April 27, 2020;
2. Traffic Impact and Access Study ("TIAS") for the proposed Project prepared by Greenman Pederson Inc. ("GPI") dated May 1, 2020; and
3. Construction Management Plan prepared by Keith Construction, Inc. dated April 17, 2020.

The Site Plan and TIAS included queue and capacity analysis of the following intersections:

- Route 1A (Rantoul Street / Cabot Street) / Cabot Street
- Route 1A (Cabot Street) / Colon Street
- Route 1A (Cabot Street) / Charles Street / Beckford Street
- Colon Street / Sohier Road
- Colon Street / Brimbal Avenue
- Sohier Road / Charles Street / Site Driveways
- Sohier Road / Swan Street / Site Driveway
- Sohier Road / Herrick Street

The project site is approximately 0.9 miles from the Beverly Depot train station and 0.5 miles from the Montserrat train station on the MBTA's Newburyport/Rockport Commuter Line. The Bus Line 451 connecting Salem Depot and North Beverly passes through Cabot Street to the east of the proposed site location and the Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) provides shuttle service throughout Beverly, including a stop at the nearby Beverly Council on Aging (BCOA). Additionally, the BCOA offers curb-to-curb shuttle service within the City of Beverly via wheelchair accessible vans and shuttles for trips to doctors' appointments, hairdresser appointments, to and from the senior center, and other essential services, which is especially relevant to the targeted tenants for this proposed project.

During a meeting held on May 5, 2020, the Commission reviewed the proposed building, site plan and related traffic data presented by the applicant, in addition to information shared in a presentation made to the Commission. As this was a preliminary review prior to official submission, the Commission requested some additional information prior to the next meeting, including: review of trip distribution as compared to other theater traffic; wayfinding and additional information related to theater parking; and clarification on other traffic patterns. No action was taken by the Commission at its May 5, 2020 meeting.

At its June 2, 2020 meeting the Commission the project was officially presented. The meeting included a recap of information and provided additional information requested by the Commission on wayfinding signage, parking layout, traffic circulation, and mitigation, including off-site projects proposed in conjunction with the City. Following review and discussion during the June 2, 2020 meeting the Commission found that the project adequately accommodates traffic generated under build conditions, and provides adequate parking to support the proposed project. Specifically, the Commission made the following observations:

- Weekday and weekend peak trips on non-event days represents an increase of 1.8 and 1.7 percent, respectively, over existing conditions (vacant). On event days, traffic volume increase will range from 4.8 percent at the weekday PM Peak and up to 16 percent along Sohier Road on Saturday midday peak in the worst-case scenario. However, these represent increases over existing traffic volumes as of February/March 2020 with the former Briscoe Middle School closed. The redevelopment of the site with the proposed senior housing, live-work studios and theater /

auditorium is anticipated to generate fewer vehicle trips on the adjacent roadway network by 13 to 93 percent as compared to the previous use of the Briscoe Middle School.

- The Sohier Road southbound approach to Colon Street is expected to operate at LOS E during the weekday AM and PM peak hours under 2027 Build Non-Event conditions and LOS F under 2027 Build Event Conditions. However, during preliminary review, the City expressed a desire to realign Sohier Road to provide a more T-type intersection, which would provide a dedicated left-turn pocket on the Sohier Road southbound approach, provide additional queue storage along Colon Street for the signalized intersection with Route 1A, and improve the safety of the Sohier Road / Colon Street intersection. The applicant included this layout in their proposed plan as part of the site plan review process, with the understanding that the City will be undertaking the improvements to the intersection. With implementation of these improvements by the City, all movements at this intersection are expected to operate at LOS C or better during the weekday AM and Saturday midday peak hours under Event and Non-Event conditions. In addition, the delay on the Sohier Road approach will be reduced by up to 87 percent and queues will be reduced by up to 600 feet.
- The Brimbal Avenue southbound approach to Colon Street is anticipated to operate at LOS F during the weekday PM peak hour under 2027 Build Event and Non-Event conditions. The City has been monitoring this intersection as new developments are constructed in the area to assess whether installation of a traffic-control signal is warranted at the intersection to accommodate increased traffic volumes. GPI conducted a traffic signal warrant at the request of the Planning Department and continued monitoring is recommended. GPI proposes an alternative mitigation to be minor geometric improvements to enhance intersection operation, including widening the roadway to create a left-turn lane and relocation of STOP lines to improve collision outcomes. Additional traffic data collection is required as a condition of the North Shore Crossing development, however, the required post opening data collection program has been delayed until COVID-19 restrictions are eased and daily traffic resumes to more normal activity. The additional traffic data should also provide further understanding of traffic impacts at this location.
- The 234 on-site parking lot is designed to provide appropriate parking for the residential uses with flexibility to provide additional evening and weekend capacity for larger theater events. 156 spaces will be allocated for the 91 residential units and support staff (where 182 are required by zoning), 78 spaces will be available for theater use, with 10 of those designated as shared spaces for access the City-owned playing field. The applicant is seeking Special Permit relief to provide a parking ration of 1.71 spaces/unit rather than 2.0 spaces/unit as required by the Zoning Ordinance. This is anticipated to be adequate parking because the studio and one-bedroom units will be occupied by seniors who are less likely to have multiple automobiles per household. Additional parking demand for events at the theater can be provided off-site within 500-feet of the site, including 67 spaces along the MBTA rail line opposite the site. The mitigation plan includes ample wayfinding sign and clear communication at the time of ticket purchase and on the website to direct theater patrons where to park.
- The applicant is proposing to implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures to reduce vehicles trips to the site and mitigate parking demand. These include:
  - A transit-accessible site convenient to commercial areas.
  - Significant improvements to the pedestrian environment around the site including reconstructing the Sohier Road edge of the site to create a new sidewalk, landscaped grass strip, and consistent curb line.
  - A new bus shelter on Sohier Road.
  - Access to MBTA RIDE and other local programs to residents.

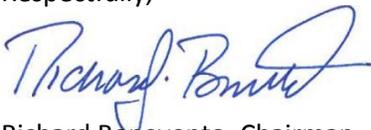
- Partnership with the North Shore Transit Management Association (NSTMA) on common initiatives.
- Clear information sharing with residents regarding public transportation options.
- Secure bicycle storage in the form of 1 space per unit within the building and bicycle racks on the exterior for residents and visitors to the site.
- Restoration of the Turf Bowl to represent its historic condition, with this area to be owned by the City.
- Construction of a new Access Roadway at the north of the site to access the site and provide improved access to the 2-acre recreational fields to be owned by the City.
- Strategies to identify remote parking that may include the Beverly Senior Center and the Beverly High School and potential shuttle service to and from these locations during performance events.

In view of the forgoing the Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to recommend approval of the site plan and special permit referenced above, subject to the following conditions:

1. The areas on the site shall be designated for pick-up and drop-off and include livery services and ride sharing vendors.
2. Bike racks shall be included throughout the premises, as shown on the plan.
3. Wayfinding signage to be used shall be unique and distinguishable to the theater use and implemented clearly directing the public to designated parking areas for auditorium events.
4. Once an operator is selected for the theater, the operator shall meet with the Parking & Traffic Commission to further discuss parking and traffic management, including shuttle services and other mitigating methods/options.
5. Parking information shall be included on the venue website and made available to patrons when purchasing tickets.
6. Work shall be coordinated between the proponent and the City through the Department of Public Services for the applicant's sidewalk and landscape improvements along Sohier Road and Colon Street.
7. Traffic mitigation as presented by GPI in the Traffic Impact Analysis to be provided to the City's Department of Public Services for the City to make improvements, including signal timing adjustments.

The Commission would like to thank the City Council and the Planning Board for the opportunity to comment on this project. Please feel free to contact me or Darlene Wynne, Planning Director, if you have any questions relative to the Commission's recommendation.

Respectfully,



Richard Benevento, Chairman

RB/dw

cc: Parking & Traffic Commission members  
Darlene Wynne, Planning Director  
Michael Collins, Public Services Commissioner  
Eric Barber, City Engineer  
Miranda Gooding, Attorney for Applicant  
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