

Starksboro Development Review Board
Minutes of February 10, 2022
Draft

Board members present: Dan Nugent, Alexsys Thompson, Rob Liotard, Jon Fenner

Unable to attend: Ben Campbell, Rich Warren, Arnell Paquette

Others present: Kris Perlee (ZA), Susan Klaiber, Tom Estey, Koran Cousino, Brad & Nancy Boss, Tony Porter.
Zoom participants: Cyndi Labelle, Greg Orvis, Luke McCarthy, Tabatha Hill, Kathy Deluca, Suzanne Orvis, Doug Dague, Carin McCarthy, Alan Quitner

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair D. Nugent.

Town of Starksboro has submitted an application (22-500) for a site plan review and waiver request for property located at 397 Jerusalem Road in the Town of Starksboro. The proposed project for removal of existing fire station and construction of new station.

D. Nugent read warning.

K. Cousino provided an overview and background of the project. S. Klaiber provided additional information. J. Fenner asked if it was a historic building. S. Klaiber stated it was on the state registry but not the national. R. Leotard stated tht the schoolhouse and not the garage were historic.

S. Klaiber presented the criteria (written document attached)

1 – D. Nugent stated that the building did not meet the architectural standards for this zone. It did not have a 6/12 pitch roof and was not parallel to Jerusalem Rd. R. Leotard asked if building could be rotated. S. Klaiber stated that if rotated it would increase the amount of the building that would be in the setbacks. L. Thompson asked if the DRB could deviate from the standards. D. Nugent stated they could. L. Thompson asked if money was driving decisions around the building. More discussion occurred around the design. T. Estey stated that the building was turned so fire trucks could make the turn. T. Porter stated that he felt the design would distract from the schoolhouse. He feels that the Town needs to follow the regulations like everyone else. R. Leotard stated that the DRB needs to justify any deviations from the regulations. K. Cousino stated the Town was not looking for favors and wanted to follow the rules. L. Thompson stated that a fire station can look like a fire station and if that doesn't work maybe the regulations need to be modified. A. Quitner discussed the need to focus on the need for a fire building, not the design.

2 – D. Nugent asked how many people would be needed to man 2 trucks. T. Estey stated 2-4. D. Nugent had concerns about safety of having social activities next to a fire station. A discussion occurred about safety issues. J. Fenner feels now is the time to address the issue.

3 – J. Fenner asked if walkway was connected the handicap parking spaces, S. Klaiber said yes. J. Fenner asked if connecting walkways are paved. S. Klaiber said they are not currently planned to be paved, but they would if that was a requirement.

4 – D. Nugent asked about adding more parking to SE side of lot. D. Nugent asked T. Porter if he felt that the parking in ROW would cause any issues. T. Porter said no. A. Quitner stated that not much traffic on the road. J. Fenner stated that per section 3:16, the additional parking will require landscaping.

5 – T. Porter has concerns with runoff onto his property. D. Nugent said that stormwater mitigation may be necessary. Discussion around water and terrain occurred.

6 – No additional comments

7 – A discussion around signs occurred.

8 – No additional comments

9 – J. Fenner asked if the fire station would have bathrooms. S. Klaiber stated that there would not be bathrooms in station and the fire department would use the schoolhouse bathrooms.

10 – No additional comments

J. Fenner asked for the for the criteria document be sent to the board. There was a discussion around design changes. Many options were offered. J. Fenner asked if the DRB cannot approve as presented what are other options. J. Fenner asked T. Hill if she had any concerns being an abutter. She stated that they have concerns about the visual impact on their property and would like to see it kept a minimal as possible. More discussion around design occurred. S. Klaiber stated that they would gladly look into changes but wasn't sure where to start. She stated that committee didn't want to spend money on new designs only to have them sent back to make more. DRB decided that the should have a working meeting to formulate a list of design changes and then provide to Schoolhouse Committee.

The following materials were submitted:

- A. 22-500 Application
- B. Fire Station #2 DRB Waiver Request Final 2-4-22
- C. DRB Site Plan Review Responses Final 2-4-22
- D. JCCC Summary Report to SB 12-3-19 rev for DRB 2-10-22
- E. Site Plan FS#2 JSH rev PKG
- F. JSH Final Survey Plat
- G. Elevations FS_A2.0 11-8-19
- H. Floor Plan FS_A2.0 plan 11-8-19
- I. Elevations SH_A2.0 11-8-19
- J. Floor Plans SH_A1.0 11-8-19

Motion: J. Fenner made motion to continue hearing to March 10, 2022. L. Thompson 2nd.

Motion carried (4-0)

Hearing Closed at 8:50

Motion to adjourn: R. Liotard moved to adjourn and L. Thompson 2nd.

Motion carried (4-0). (8:55pm)

Review Criteria

(1) Siting and Design. The Jerusalem Schoolhouse has been in its current location since 1874. In the early 1970s an addition to house a fire truck to serve the South Starksboro/Jerusalem area was constructed. This addition is in major disrepair and needs to be replaced. In order to meet expected housing increase in this high- density residential district over the next 50 years, the fire department anticipates the need for an additional fire vehicle to meet the needs and therefore a two-bay fire truck garage is proposed. With approval of the requested setback waiver, the proposed location and design can meet the needs of the Town without needing to incur the considerable additional costs of acquiring land, the cost of new infrastructure (electric, septic, well, etc.) as well as costs for surveying, land transfer taxes, and legal services that would be needed if co-location is not approved.

The existing property is located at the “center” of South Starksboro/Jerusalem and is thus the ideal location for siting a fire station – near where residential and commercial structures are located with easy access to the Route 17 corridor. The design of the new fire station is proposed to be a shed roof 21’ 3.5” in height, considerably lower than the 30’ 6” height of the adjacent Schoolhouse. The shed roof design was chosen because it is felt that it best responds to the height and siting of the surrounding buildings by reducing the building mass as much as possible. The fire department needs to have some space over the trucks on the interior for rigging, which drives up the height of the building. By using the shed design and sloping to the rear, the building will also be visually diminished from view to the major travel route, Rte. 17. It also allows creation of space over the trucks for access where it is needed without having to increase the massing of the entire structure. The visual impact of the new building is thus minimized both from Jerusalem Road and from the neighboring Jerusalem Corners Country Store and Route 17. This design and siting also allow the historic Schoolhouse to be the most visually prominent, which was seen as advantageous for the neighborhood and to meet the intent of the zoning bylaws.

While the lot is small it is sufficient for constructing a new fire truck garage, provides adequate space between the two structures to accommodate a paved walkway to the entrance of the new addition to the Schoolhouse as well as an attractive grassy area between the two buildings. The location of the property, in the High Density zoning district, means that these two important facilities will remain convenient for anticipated future development and will contribute to the town’s goal of concentrating development in and around the town’s existing villages, hamlets, and neighborhoods.

(2) Vehicular Traffic and Circulation. There is no change in vehicular traffic anticipated. There is an average of 1 fire call per week for Starksboro. Currently, there is one Fire Department pumper truck housed in the South Starksboro garage. When a fire call comes in, one volunteer arrives to take the truck to the location where it is needed. Access to the Fire Station will be gravel and will be of sufficient size to allow washing trucks while fully parked off the road, a major improvement from current conditions. Other exterior circulation will include paved parking and walkways for ADA access to the new entrances in the schoolhouse addition and fire station. Unpaved parking along the road for 8 vehicles is proposed for a total of 10 vehicles. In addition, two parking spaces will be located on the southwest side of the fire station reserved for Fire Department volunteers.

(3) Pedestrian Traffic and Circulation. There are no changes to pedestrian traffic and circulation anticipated. There is minimal pedestrian traffic anticipated as there are no sidewalks in the area and only one nearby residence. The only pedestrians likely to be in the area are those attending a function at the Schoolhouse. Adequate access is provided from the designated handicapped access parking on the east side of the Schoolhouse and the adjacent paved walkway that leads to a handicapped access entrance to the Schoolhouse. Providing this handicapped access to the building is a major goal of the overall project as

currently there is no handicapped access. Given the topography of the site, the proposed side entrance will provide excellent access without the need to construct a ramp. Once inside the building, a ramp leads into the vestibule providing access to the kitchen, handicapped bathrooms and to the main meeting space that is currently inaccessible to the mobility impaired. The walkway to the side entrance is located 24 ft. from the side entrance of the fire station and reserved fire department parking spaces providing adequate safety for the very infrequent occurrence of a Schoolhouse event and a fire call happening simultaneously.

(4) Parking. Designated parking is provided for 10 vehicles, with two of those spaces designated as handicapped. The maximum expected number of persons to attend any event at the Schoolhouse is 48. It is estimated that this maximum number of people attending an event might occur three or four times per year. It is expected that the majority of events at the Schoolhouse will attract 15-20 persons at a time. Currently, the Schoolhouse and grounds might attract a group of 50 once every couple of years; the more regular current and past uses attract 10-15 persons (e.g., Tai Chi, Bone Builders, church, holiday and birthday parties). The number and variety of events to be held at the Schoolhouse is expected to increase following renovations however the number of participants at each event is not expected to change significantly from current usage. Ten spaces are viewed as an adequate but not excessive amount of parking for the expected usage. While the 10 designated Schoolhouse parking spaces are located in the setback, along the road, this has been the parking location for as long as cars have parked at the Schoolhouse – perhaps a hundred years. It is requested and anticipated that this parking location will be “grandfathered” in. While not shown on the site plan, it has been suggested and agreed to that there would be an additional two reserved parking spaces on the southwest side of the fire station designated for fire department volunteers.

(5) Stormwater and Snow Storage. Stormwater run-off will be managed with grading as part of the construction process and run-off will be directed away from the new fire station and the Schoolhouse. Low-impact development techniques that minimize the amount of run-off generated will be used to the extent that is physically and economically feasible. The majority of snow removal needed will be in the driveway in front of the fire station as well as the two designated fire department parking spaces along the building. There is plenty of space to the east of the fire station for snow storage. Handicapped access parking spaces will also need to be cleared of snow. Again, there is plenty of room to the east of the spaces for snow storage.

(6) Lighting. At the Schoolhouse, the plan calls for a single light over what is currently the front door, facing the road. In addition, there will be a single light over the entrance door on the East side of the building as well as a light on the Southeast corner of the building to provide lighting for the handicapped parking spaces. At the Fire Station there will be a single light fixture over each West entry door as well as a downward facing flood light over the truck entry doors. None of this lighting should have impact beyond the Schoolhouse and Fire Station property.

(7) Signs. All signs will be designed and located to minimize adverse effects on the historic nature of the Schoolhouse while providing needed information related to parking, no parking, and entrances. Each building will have a tasteful, simple sign indicating the name of the building e.g., “Jerusalem Schoolhouse” and “Starksboro Fire Station #2”

(8) Landscaping. Landscaping is expected to be minimal and will be designed to enhance the appearance of the property. Screening of any utilities will be provided. Any trees, shrubs or garden areas will be situated so as to not interfere with the access needed for entry and exit of fire department vehicles from the fire truck garage.

(9) Energy Conservation. Both the new Fire Station and the addition to the Schoolhouse as well as renovations to the Schoolhouse will include several energy efficient features and will meet or exceed the current energy code. The design of the fire truck garage includes the minimum height needed for access above a fire truck for servicing while standing on top. This lower profile roof design will result in less space to heat. The roof design does, however, provide the possibility of roof top solar panels in the future should this be desired. It is not anticipated that such solar panels would be appropriate to be added to the roof of the historic Schoolhouse. New water closets, lavatories, shower, kitchen and other sink fixtures along with all associated plumbing will be low flow. High efficiency LED lighting will be used throughout interior and exterior. Insulation will be added to the existing Schoolhouse building. New building areas will include cavity insulation with continuous insulation on exterior or stud walls. Insulated metal panel siding will be used on the fire truck garage.

(10) Compatibility with the Town Plan and Other Regulations. The proposed project of co-locating a new fire truck garage (aka Fire Station #2) on Town owned property adjacent to the historic Jerusalem Schoolhouse is compatible with the *Starksboro Town Plan 2018-2026* in a number of important ways. As noted in the purpose of the Town Plan on page 3 “*A town plan should state the town’s aims in terms broad enough to allow application to a wide range of situations, yet with sufficient detail to serve as a strong foundation for land use regulations and other implementation tools. The plan should allow for flexibility and creativity in its application in order to achieve an appropriate balance between competing objectives*”. Following are references to several Goals and Objectives from the Town Plan followed by statements of how the proposed project addresses those goals and objectives. (Page numbers noted are from the Town Plan).

4.1 HOUSING

Objective 4.1.02 (P.43)

02 Minimize the amount of productive farm and forest land that is converted to developed lots.

Co-locating the new Fire Station on the existing lot contributes to minimizing the amount of productive farm and forest land that is converted to developed lots which could happen if a new fire station were to be built on a separate lot.

4.4. COMMUNITY UTILITIES, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Objective 016 (p.47)

Maintain the firehouse and rescue squad station within Starksboro village and the fire department substation in South Starksboro, and explore the feasibility of other actions that could minimize response times, especially in the town’s more densely populated areas.

Expanding the facilities and equipment available to the South Starksboro substation beyond one fire pumper will be critical to reducing response times in the High-Density Residential District as additional housing is built in the future as well as providing services in the Route 17 corridor. Route 17 has developed into a main east-west artery for commercial, agricultural, forestry, recreational and commuter traffic.

4.5. RECREATION

4.5.01 Goals (p. 49)

G21 Preserve the interrelated values of community, neighborliness, independence and privacy essential to Starksboro’s small-town character.

Since closing as a public school in 1968, the Jerusalem Schoolhouse has been used by 4-H, exercise, yoga and Tai Chi classes, church, hunters’ breakfasts, Bingo nights, and a variety of South Starksboro civic groups. The lack of handicapped accessibility, adequate plumbing facilities, and reliable central heat have all contributed to a gradual decline in usage and appreciation of this historic building, especially by the young.

4.5. RECREATION

4.5.02 Objectives (p.49)

O19 Support existing recreational infrastructure and programs that benefit youth and adult sports. O20 Support development of recreational facilities for adults and children within or near the town's population centers that can be shared with all town residents.

Maintaining and improving the Jerusalem Schoolhouse helps support a facility that can be used for recreation for all ages and is located in one of the town's population centers.

4.9. LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

4.9.02 Objectives (p.57) O45 Encourage residential and business development to concentrate in and around the town's existing villages, hamlets and neighborhoods.

By adding a second building to the small lot that the Schoolhouse currently occupies, density of use would be increased at the center of the hamlet of South Starksboro rather than locating a new fire station on a separate lot.

SOUTH STARKSBORO PLANNING AREA (p. 61)

P111 South Starksboro should remain a secondary location for compact residential and small-scale business development in town. The desired character of this planning area is that of a rural, primarily residential hamlet. Specifically, it should be a place:

. That may have public spaces or buildings, and/or small-scale businesses that are readily recognizable and help define the area's identity.

. Differences in building design, architectural detail and setbacks should break the mold of a cookie cutter, suburban development pattern.

Increasing the density of use on the Jerusalem Schoolhouse property to include a slightly enlarged schoolhouse and a separate enhanced fire truck garage for the Fire Department would be in exact alignment with this stated objective of a compact development in this area of town. The fire station siting and building design are purposely proposed to not detract from the attractive historic Schoolhouse.

The hamlet of South Starksboro is defined by an intersection, a general store and gas station, and the Jerusalem Schoolhouse. Increasing density in this location is specifically encouraged by the Town Plan.

More than once, the Town Plan calls for "*encouraging development to concentrate in and around...existing hamlets and neighborhoods.*" The proposed project does just that.