



**TOWN OF HINGHAM**  
**PLANNING BOARD**

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DEC - 4 2020

Town Clerk  
Hingham, MA

**NOTICE OF DECISION**

**Special Permit A3**

- Applicant:** Hingham Historical Society
- Project Site:** 181 North Street  
Hingham, MA
- Plan References:** “181 North Street-Hingham”, dated 9/2/2020 and revised to 10/27/2020, 1 sheet, prepared for the Hingham Historical Society, prepared by Cavanaro Consulting.

**PROCEEDINGS**

The Applicant is seeking Site Plan Review in Association with a Special Permit A2 with waivers under Sections I-G and I-I of the Zoning By-Law, and a Special Permit A3 parking determination, and such other relief as necessary, in order to make site improvements and use the Benjamin Lincoln house as a museum, at 181 North Street, Hingham (the “Property”). The property is located in the Residence A Zoning District. Pursuant to (1) the Order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts dated March 12, 2020 Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law and applicable provisions of the Open Meeting Law found at 940 CMR 29 et seq., the public meetings of the Planning Board were conducted remotely. The application package was filed with the Planning Board on August 19, 2020. The hearing was opened on October 19, 2020 and continued to November 2, 2020 at which time the application was acted upon. Board members on the panel were Rita DaSilva, Kevin Ellis, Gordon Carr, Judith Sneath and Alternate Member Ted Matthews who was sitting for Gary Tondorf-Dick who was recused. The application was presented by Paula Bagger and Deidre Anderson from the Hingham Historical Society (HHS), Ben Wilcox, Wilcox Construction and John Cavanaro, Cavanaro Consulting. The project was peer reviewed by Pat Brennan, Amory Engineers.

**BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION**

Mr. Cavanaro presented the project to the Board and explained that the Hingham Historical Society has now entered into a Purchase and Sale Agreement to acquire the Benjamin Lincoln House at 181 North Street. A condition associated with the Community Preservation Act funding that this project received is a successful application for a special permit to allow the HHS to open the house as a museum.

Mr. Cavanaro explained that the short term projected operations were based on the model in place at the Old Ordinary. The model would include opening the house for docent led tours and limiting the number of visitors present on the property at any one time. The house would also be

open to researchers and scholars by appointment as well as Society staff and volunteers engaged in collections care and management. Other uses anticipated on the site include a small office area for staff and volunteers when working on site, and, occasional small events which would be open to a limited number of participants. It is expected that the intensity of use at the site would remain low due to Covid-19 as well as the economic downturn. The Applicant noted that the full programming schedule and projected events has not been developed yet; it is simply the desire to secure approvals now to complete the purchase. The museum will be open year round as it is heated. The experience at Old Ordinary is that tours are capped at 12 people and they are typically not full. Each tour generates one or two vehicles and some groups walk to the site from Hingham Square. School tours are anticipated and they take place at Old Ordinary now in the fall or spring with a school bus dropping off and picking up the children. Entrance to the house will be through the rear entrance where there is adequate space for the outdoor assembly of visitors. A handicapped parking space and a ramp is being installed adjacent to the rear door also. Limited exterior lighting is proposed consistent with the residential scale of the property. The existing driveway is to be used for one way circulation. There will be three additional parking spaces installed adjacent to the Lincoln Street entrance to the site. The HHS has been working with the neighbors and are sensitive to their concerns.

The Board reviewed the site design and the relief needed for the project. Board members expressed concern about the lack of safe pedestrian access both to the site and from the street to the building. The Board expressed support for the project overall but noted that it is a change in use from residential to a museum, which is a public facility, so it is important to ensure the site functions safely for everyone. The Board stated that with the Old Ordinary and Fountain Square it is more likely that pedestrian traffic will increase in this area and as such it is important to have safe locations identified for crossings. The Board reviewed the proposed parking areas and asked what the basis was for providing 3 regular spaces and one handicapped space. The Applicant stated that they are not sure what the ultimate programming schedule or scope will be so for now they are modeling this site after the Old Ordinary. The HHS noted that having fundraising events will be critical to the success of the museum also. The Board explained how challenging it was to determine the sufficiency of parking without knowing the scope or intensity of the proposed use. The Board asked where visitors would park for the fundraising events and how big they would be. The Board noted that there wouldn't be enough on-site parking for a large event and there is no traffic management plan or safe pedestrian access to facilitate safe access to the site so it is possible that police details would be necessary. The Board clarified that museum tours or fundraising events up to 16 people were considered to be regular museum operations but the "invitation only" fundraising events for groups larger than 16 people would be required to have a police detail in place for the entire event unless and until the permit is modified and a traffic management plan is provided to help describe how the site and visitors (vehicular and pedestrians) will interact. The Applicant stated that a group of up to 16 people could access the site as there are 4 parking spaces, understanding that one space is a handicapped space. The three spaces by Lincoln Street require modest relief as designed, and those particular details will be handled under the Special Permit A3.

The Board reviewed the driveway and supported having the width increased to 12' at a minimum in keeping with the Bylaw. The Applicant stated that they were improving the turning radii at the entrance and exit to accommodate the fire truck and that this improvement would benefit all vehicular traffic accessing the site. The driveway is one way circulation and signage will be put in to clearly guide vehicles. The driveway will be surfaced with stone dust which will be easier to walk on than gravel, which the Board supported in an effort to facilitate pedestrian access,

especially for those with limited mobility. This property has a preservation restriction on it and the thought was that stone dust was more in keeping with the historic character than asphalt would be, if paving was allowed under the restriction. The amount of physical alteration to the site is minor although it would be a slight increase in impervious surface. To mitigate any additional drainage the Applicant was asked to install 12" of gravel under the stone dust on the widened area of the driveway on the North Street side of the property.

### **WAIVERS**

The Board discussed the following waivers and made findings:

1. Section V-A.3 – TABLE OF PARKING DIMENSIONS to allow three 18' parking spaces with no overhang where a length of 20' or an overhang is required (for a 18' space)
  - a. Finding: The waiver requested is minor and this is a slow speed and low traffic volume parking area. As such granting this waiver should not impact the functionality of the spaces.
  
2. Waiver of Section V-A.3 table of parking dimensions to allow an aisle width of 23.6 behind the westernmost parking space where 24' is required
  - a. Finding: The waiver requested is minor and this is a slow speed and low traffic volume parking area. As such granting this waiver should not impact the functionality of the drive aisle or the parking spaces.
  
3. Waiver from Section V-A.5.e to allow parking space that requires the maneuvering of a vehicle onto or into a public way
  - a. The northern most spot on the Lincoln Street side requires maneuvering into the public way but not into the traveled way, and as such is not creating a safety hazard.
  
4. Waiver from Section V-A.5.e. Loading spaces as the loading space is not on the plan.
  - a. This building will be used as a museum and it is not expected to have much demand for deliveries or the need for a loading space. If a delivery is expected it will be received via the handicapped entrance during off peak hours. As such a separate designated loading space is not indicated for this use as presented.
  
5. Waiver from V-A.5.1 – requirement to have parking spaces surfaced with asphalt, etc.
  - a. The applicant has proposed surfacing the driveway and parking spaces with stone dust to better facilitate pedestrian movement while retaining the historic character.

After discussion Kevin Ellis made a motion to grant the waivers with the findings as discussed. The motion was seconded by Judy Sneath and Board members Sneath, Ellis, Carr, DaSilva and Alternate Member Matthews voted in favor, no opposed, Gary Tondorf-Dick was recused.

### **FINDINGS – SPECIAL PERMIT A3**

- a) *The parking is sufficient in quantity to meet the needs of the proposed Project;*
- The Board found that the 4 parking spaces as proposed are sufficient to serve the museum operations as presented at this time.

- The parking determination is based upon the auditorium ratio of one car per three seats/persons, and a 25% reduction has been applied.
- The proposed parking is insufficient to support special events outside of general museum operations or invitation only fundraising events for more than 16 people.

*b) Pedestrian access and circulation has been provided for;*

- The Board found that pedestrian access to the site needs improvement in the long term as this area continues to become a more active historic and cultural district however this is not under the control of this applicant. Sidewalk extensions may be warranted in this area with coordinated crosswalks to enable pedestrians to safely cross the roads to access Fountain Square as well as the Benjamin Lincoln House.
- The applicant has agreed to participate in a collaborative conversation to increase pedestrian safety in this area.

*c) New driveways have been designed to maximize sightline distances to the greatest extent possible;*

- The Board found that no new driveways are proposed and the sightlines are as existing.
- The existing driveway is being widened to 12' minimum and turning radius was improved to facilitate access and egress from the site.

*d) It is impractical to meet these standards and that a waiver of these regulations will not result in or worsen parking and traffic problems on-site or on the surrounding streets, or adversely affect the value of abutting lands and buildings; and*

*e) The granting of relief is consistent with the intent of this By-Law and will not increase the likelihood of accident or impair access and circulation.*

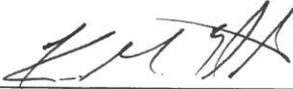
- The Board found that the applicant understands that in order to increase the use of the site a modification of this permit is required.

### **VOTE AND CONDITIONS**

Upon a motion made by Kevin Ellis and seconded by Judy Sneath, with Board members Carr, Ellis, Sneath, DaSilva and Alternate Member Matthews in favor, no opposed and Board Member Tondorf-Dick recused, the Board voted to Approve the Special Permit A3 for the Hingham Historical Society as shown on the plan titled "181 North Street-Hingham", dated 9/2/2020 and revised to 10/27/2020, 1 sheet, prepared for the Hingham Historical Society, prepared by Cavanaro Consulting, as presented at the hearings, based on the findings, with the waivers, and subject to the following conditions:

1. For invitation only fundraising events of more than 16 people a police detail is required for the duration of the event.
2. Museum operations are regularly scheduled tours for no more than 16 people or fundraising events for no more than 16 people.

3. Before the site is used for anything other than tours up to 16 people or invitation only fundraising events, a Traffic Management Plan is required to be submitted to the Planning Board.
4. To increase use of this site a modification of this permit is required and it shall include a Traffic Management Plan.



Kevin Ellis, Chairman  
Hingham Planning Board

EXECUTED this 4<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2020

Votes:

In favor: Carr, DaSilva, Matthews, Sneath, Ellis

Opposed: none

Recused: Tondorf-Dick

Cc: Town Clerk, Building, Jeff Tocchio, Pat Brennan, A. Young, ZBA, DPW.