



TOWN OF
STONEHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD
781-279-2695

STONEHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

(in accordance with provision of M.G.L. c.30A, §§ 18-25)

Wednesday, May 28, 2025

Town Hall Hearing Room

7:00 PM

Members Present: Chair Frank Vallarelli, Vice Chair Kevin Dolan, Marcia Wengen, Brianna Kelly and Associate Member Ellen McBride.

Also present at the meeting: Attorney Charles Houghton, architect Daniel Skolski, property manager Kimberly Powell and Attorney Kristine Hung.

Mr. Vallarelli called the meeting to order at 7PM. He introduced the Board members including Ms. McBride who would sit in for member Dan Moynihan who has been recused on this matter.

1 Montvale Avenue

The Chair moved onto the only public hearing of the evening. This public hearing was continued from April 9, 2025 and May 14, 2025 with a site visit held on May 8, 2025. The legal notice was read into the record on April 9, 2025 as follows:

“You are hereby notified that the Stoneham Planning Board, acting as Special Permit Granting Authority, will hold a Public Hearing Wednesday evening, April 9, 2025 in the Hearing Room, Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. to hear all persons interested in a petition for a special permit by ONE MONTVALE AVE, LLC of P.O. Box 990009, Boston, MA 02199, pursuant to Section 4.6.3.1 and 4.6.3.2 to convert a portion of the existing building at One Montvale Avenue, Stoneham, Massachusetts to 51 residential units with 26,279 square feet of the building to remain commercial office space, together with 295 parking spaces in the two existing parking garages on site. Plans by DMS Design LLC dated 11/19/2024, Sheets A-1 to 11 and Ex 1-8 and VHB plan Sheet SV-1 dated 10/23/24 and Site Plan C-1 and C-2 dated 2/18/25 by Engineering Alliance, Inc. may be seen daily except Friday afternoon in the office of the Town Clerk”.

Mr. Vallarelli invited Attorney Houghton to speak on the matter. Mr. Houghton reminded the Board that they had asked for some changes to the plan, including a trash/recycling room for the town house units on the top two floors. He thought that they could go through the changes after which he would discuss the criteria under the bylaw and a pamphlet on the Mass Eye & Ear renovation.

Mr. Skolski, the architect on the project, walked the Board through the minor changes such as the labelling of trash/recycling rooms made on some of the sheets and elevator doors now shown

on the plans. The residential vestibule now shows the mailboxes drawn in and the flow in from Flint Avenue to drop off packages. Ms. Wengen indicated that there had been concern at the last meeting of vehicles being able to turn around and not back the whole way out. On sheet C-1 Mr. Skolski pointed out the width for two way traffic and the turnaround area. Ms. Wengen asked if they could drive in, drop off package, turn and leave. Mr. Skolski indicated that to be the case. Mr. Dolan asked whether they could turn around or would have to do a three point turn. Mr. Skolski responded that it'd be a three point turn. Mr. Dolan commented there'd still be noise backing up but Mr. Skolski assured him that it would not be as much as backing up the whole way.

Mr. Skolski continued on to say that sheets A2 and A3 showed new labels for the trash/recycling rooms and elevator doors were now marked on the plan. Same with sheet A4. On sheet A5 he brought the Board's attention to the newly added trash/recycling room for the town houses on the upper floors that the Board previously asked for. Mr. Vallarelli asked what the space was before. Mr. Skolski responded that it had been extra hallway space. Ms. Wengen clarified that the trash room is only on the first floor of the town houses.

Ms. Wengen asked about the 980 square feet. Mr. Vallarelli wondered too whether that was for both floors. Mr. Skolski responded that would be the square footage for the floor with the kitchen and living room space. The second floor of the town house is additional square footage.

Ms. Wengen asked if there was passage from the residential units to Mass Eye & Ear. Mr. Skolski stated that there is access but that they would most likely add an alarmed door which would only be used in the case of a Fire.

Mr. Skolski indicated that there were no changes to sheet A7. On A8 they added a window to the outside of the building to add natural light to the additional trash room. They have also labelled the door to the package room.

Mr. Skolski went over what they believe to be a preliminary construction plan. They will clarify the expectations of the crews moving through the site. There would be sidewalk protection, most likely a level of staging on the side to protect pedestrians from any falling debris. Construction fencing would be added, the separation gate installed near dumpsters and where the crane might be staged. They are not anticipating a major blocking of the garage on the right.

Mr. Dolan asked about current package drop offs. Mr. Skolski indicated that they can use that package drop as a staging area as it won't be utilized until the residents are living there. Mr. Vallarelli asked how Mass Eye & Ear receives packages. Mr. Skolski said that it won't interfere with their package delivery. Mr. Houghton stated that they come in and drop from the upper area parking.

Mr. Skolski moved on with the prospective construction schedule. The made the schedule based on January 2, 2026. Could be a bit sooner or a bit later. Acting on a January start they expect to be complete by March 2027 with a 15 month schedule. They will mobilize the crews, address the gates and safety and add temporary bathrooms and/or offices. They will layout the town houses and do selective demolition. The new addition will be added at the top and they will work on framing down from there. Mr. Vallarelli asked if it would be gutted to the studs. Mr. Skolski stated that it would but that they aren't load bearing walls. Ms. Wengen asked if debris would be

trucked off site daily. Mr. Skolski stated there would be some live loading and drop off daily. Mr. Vallarelli asked if they had chosen the contractor. Mr. Skolski said the contractor is still unidentified.

Mr. Houghton stated that a construction schedule will be helpful and they are happy to do it. He mentioned that Kimberly Powell the property manager had created a handout for the Board documenting the last year of construction while Mass Eye & Ear performed their renovations. It wasn't ideal and created issues in the building that they would like to avoid this time around with their own construction. Mr. Houghton cited section 16 of the lease agreement. He believes the lease covers what will happen but suggests that they are also fine with the language proposed at the last meeting by Attorney Hung which stated that there be a "requirement for a Construction Management Plan to be reviewed and approved by appropriate Town departments with provisions for coordination with abutting property owners and Mass Eye & Ear." He has never seen language like this involved with a Special Permit but understands that this is a unique situation. He believes that it better address their concerns than the itemized addendum attached to the Mass Eye & Ear letter received by the Board. The seventeen points they commented on were really outside the Special Permit. Mr. Houghton agreed that a construction management plan would be in the best interest of both parties. He also mentioned Ms. Powell's handout which shows what not to do and what should be avoided by having coordination.

Ms. Wengen asked Mr. Houghton to explain the handout. He stated that it was a report and pictures depicting what happened during Mass Eye & Ear's renovation and the problems that occurred. Ms. Kelly asked if they had received a Special Permit. Mr. Houghton stated that they renovated under a building permit and there was no management plan in place.

Attorney Kristine Hung of Riemer & Braunstein was present representing Mass Eye & Ear. She stated that she is agreeable to using the language that she herself had suggested at the last meeting. She did bring up a small point about the existing storage of medical files on the bottom floor. They are willing to work with the landlord should it be necessary to move the files elsewhere in the building. Mr. Skolski believed they could do one of two things. They can either design around the existing storage or if that doesn't work they will talk about a mutually agreed upon space somewhere else. They will most likely try to keep it along with access by a hallway.

Ms. Wengen asked about the 51 storage units on the plan. She asked if those would belong to the tenants. Mr. Skolski indicated they are for the residential units.

Mr. Dolan read the language presented to the Board about a "requirement for a Construction Management Plan to be reviewed and approved by appropriate Town departments with provisions for coordination with abutting property owners and Mass Eye & Ear." He then asked Mr. Houghton and Ms. Hung if this was mutually agreed upon. They indicated that it was.

Mr. Houghton went through the criteria under the bylaw. He and the Building Commissioner agreed that this building located in the Central Business District allows for housing above the first floor and the first floor front. Mr. Houghton explains also that the Building Commissioner determined the first floor front as the Main Street level not the basement level below. Ms. Wengen asked if the Montvale entrance is the first floor. Mr. Houghton stated on that side it is, but on the Main Street side there is a level underground. The back of the building is at grade. The building has grade changes and they

aren't changing that or the building as it was built 40 years ago. Mr. Houghton continued ticking through the criteria for the Special Permit. They have 172% more parking than is required. They have about 124 extra spaces.

A trip generation plan by Vanasse & Associates acquired for the ZBA hearing showed that there were less trips than the previous office/commercial use. This project would not adversely affect the neighborhood. The evolution to residential is not as intense. This is a better use for the neighborhood. The plan for the apartments and town houses fits nicely into the existing structure. There is access to the site by Main Street and Montvale Avenue. They haven't calculated the anticipated tax revenue that these units will generate but it will increase substantially from what is currently paid. They expect about \$1.8 million gross from the rental income on the residential units which doesn't include Mass Eye & Ear.

Ms. Wengen asked about Stormwater. Mr. Houghton indicated that isn't necessary because the site is completely developed. Ms. Wengen asked if it is only Site Plan. Mr. Houghton agreed just Site Plan after this.

Ms. Kelly asked about the accessible spaces that she had inquired about at an earlier meeting. She did not see them marked on the plan. She wanted to know how many spaces there would be and where. Mr. Skolski responded that it is a condition of the building permit. They have to comply. Mr. Houghton knows that it is at least 1 space for the first 15 units and then there's a chart to calculate the remainder. He'd guess there'd be at least 20 located near the entrances and elevators on the ground or roof levels of the garage for the residential units.

Ms. Kelly asked if the residents can get in on every level from the accessible spaces. Mr. Houghton and Mr. Skolski responded that from the ground floor and roof level where there is elevator access.

Mr. Vallarelli asked if there were any more questions. Ms. Powell, the property manager, wanted to make the Board aware that they had conversations with Mass Eye & Ear for years about the buildout. Mass Eye & Ear spoke about their desire to purchase the building. In the end it wasn't feasible for them. Ms. Powell continued to say that they knew of the owner's plans to create residential units. They offered to move them to the 4th or 5th floor entirely. Mass Eye & Ear wanted to stay where they were. Mr. Vallarelli asked why not make them all residential. Ms. Powell stated that ideally they'd like to be all commercial. They'd listed it with two different brokers with no luck, the market just wasn't there.

After reading from the May 14th minutes that had not been approved by the Board yet, Ms. Wengen asked about a right hand turn only from the Flint Ave garage as Mr. Kilty of 6 Rowe Street had been concerned at the last meeting and was not present this evening. Ms. Kelly stated that there is a right turn only sign from the Montvale Ave garage. Mr. Vallarelli also mentioned that the Board could not address Mr. Kilty's other concerns about the loading zone and/or no parking on Flint Ave as that is under the Traffic Commission and the Town Administrator's authority. Ms. Wengen thought that the Town Administrator just made the decision on the no parking. She didn't think it included the no right hand turn. Ms. McBride thought that all of it was dependent on the Town Administrator. Ms. Wengen also asked if the construction management plan would be public. Mr. Dolan stated it would be available as part of the decision.

Motion to close the public hearing was made by Mr. Dolan and seconded by Ms. McBride. All members present voted in favor 5-0.

Mr. Dolan made a motion to accept under 4.6.3.2 incorporating all department comments, the plans dated May 27, 2025, the condition that a construction management plan & schedule be reviewed and approved by appropriate departments and shared with the abutters and the tenant Mass Eye & Ear. Mr. Vallarelli added the ZBA decision should be incorporated. Mr. Houghton explained to the Board that for the registered land recording, it needs to have it indicated on the pages that all attachments are incorporated as part of the decision. Mr. Skolski added that when referencing the engineer letters conditioned in the ZBA decision that they should be noted as two separate letters both dated January 18, 2025. Ms. McBride seconded the motion made by Mr. Dolan. A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted in favor 5-0.

Ms. Kelly made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Mr. Dolan. All members voted in favor 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Maria Sagarino
Town Clerk

Documents and other exhibits used by the Planning Board during this meeting to be made part of the official record but not attached to these minutes:

Plans by DMS Design LLC dated 11/19/2024 and revised May 27, 2025, VHB plan Sheet SV-1 and sheets by Engineering Alliance, Inc.

Parking study by Vanasse & Associates for 1 Montvale Avenue

Two letters dated January 18, 2025 by structural engineer for 1 Montvale Avenue pertaining to the two parking garages as conditioned in the ZBA decision.

Letter from Mass Eye & Ear with Addendum A received on May 8, 2025.

Email from Linda Barth of 12½ Flint Ave.

Highlighted Section 16 from Mass Eye & Ear lease agreement.

Mass Eye & Ear Construction Challenges Report