



Town of Brookline

Massachusetts

PLANNING BOARD

Town Hall, 2nd Floor
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445-6899
(617) 730-2130 Fax (617) 730-2442

Steven Heikin, Chairman
Robert Cook, Clerk
James Carr
Linda Hamlin
Blair Hines
Mathew Oudens
Mark J. Zarrillo

To: Brookline Board of Appeals

From: Brookline Planning Board

Date: May 9, 2019

Subject: Construct a new school building

Location: 20 Newton Street, Dexter/Southfield Schools

Atlas Sheet:	98	Case #:	2019-0032
Block:	357	Zoning:	S-40
Lot:	1-2	Lot Area (s.f.):	±1,537,007

Board of Appeals Hearing: **May 16, 2019 at 7:05 pm**

BACKGROUND

1996 & 1997 Board of Appeals, Cases #3326 & 3326A – On October 3, 1996, the Board of Appeals granted a special permit for height relief for a two-story addition to an existing three-story academic building (the Mid-Rise Building). A one-year time extension for this approval was granted on November 25, 1997. Only one story of the two-story addition was ever built.

September 28, 2000, Board of Appeals, Case #3620 – The Board of Appeals granted a special permit for height relief for a new 53,200 s.f. science center building.

February 2004/November 2005, Administrative Site Plan Review – The Dexter/Southfield Schools applied for administrative site plan review of a proposal to replace a two-story modular building (approximately 2,700 s.f.) with a three-story addition (27,800 s.f.). The proposal was determined not to require zoning relief. Due to funding delays, the school initially applied for administrative site plan review in February 2004, but needed to reapply in November 2005.

January 2008, Board of Appeals, Case #080001 – The Board of Appeals granted a special permit for height relief for construction of a fifth floor on the Mid-Rise Building.

February 2017, Board of Appeals, Case #2016-0088 – The Board of Appeals granted a special permit for height relief to replace an existing indoor ice rink (Thorndike Rink) with a new 48,020 square foot multi-use field house building attached to the adjacent indoor athletic/ice rink building.

2019 – Dexter School complied with administrative site plan review as required for educational uses in residence districts, per Zoning By-Law Sec. 9.11.

SITE AND NEIGHBORHOOD

20 Newton Street is the site of a non-profit boys' private day school, the Dexter School, and a girls' private day school, the Southfield School. The campus is located atop one of the highest hills in Brookline, Mount Walley, on the former estate of Mrs. R.W. Sears, and then a seminary for the Mary Knoll religious order. The school maintains the former estate house and out buildings. The school has made various changes to the site since it purchased the property in 1967, including building multiple classroom buildings, a gymnasium, a science center with an observatory, a field house and other recreational facilities, including a pool, ice skating/tennis facility, and athletic field.

The surrounding neighborhood is primarily residential, with the exception of Larz Anderson Park, which is on the other side of Newton Street across from the site. The School is bounded by Boston to the east and the Brandegee Estate and Allandale Farm to the south and west.

APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The applicant, the Dexter/Southfield School, proposes to construct a three and a half story lower school building (28,766 s.f.), which will be attached to an existing school building (Hewitt) via an enclosed breezeway. The building will be located on a portion of an existing field between the newly constructed Kraft Field House and the Hewitt Building, facing St. Paul's Avenue.

The building's façade will include CMU block, terracotta tile rainscreen walls, spandrel glass and metal panels, and there will be a roof made of asphalt shingles.

FINDINGS

Section 5.09.2i – Design Review - non-residential uses in a residential district with more than 5,000 square feet of gross floor area or with 10 or more parking spaces require a special permit subject to the design review standards listed under *Section 5.09.4(a-1)*. All the conditions have been met, and the most relevant issues are discussed below.

Because the site is currently an open field, no significant landscaping will be removed. The Building will not be seen from Newton Street because it is interior to the site. It will, however, be seen from St. Paul's Way, a dead end street that separates Brookline from Jamaica Plain. On the opposite side of St. Paul's Way are several buildings which make up the campus of The Daughter's of St. Paul's Convent, which in addition to housing nuns also runs a publishing facility. A little further away and closer to Newton Street are single family homes in Boston.

[Please see the attached Design Report from the applicant.]

Section 5.30 – Maximum Height of Buildings

	Maximum	Existing	Proposed	Finding
Height of Proposed Building	35 feet	NA	53' (3 ^{1/2} stories)	Special Permit*

* Under Section 5.08.2, the Board of Appeals may grant a special permit to modify the dimensional requirements in Article 5 of the Zoning By-law for uses #9 (religious) and #10 (educational) to the extent necessary to allow reasonable development of such a use in general harmony with other uses permitted and as regulated in the vicinity.

Section 6.02.4C – Off-Street Parking Space Regulations
Section 6.04 – Design of All Off-Street Parking Facilities

Parking	Required	Existing	Proposed	Finding
Spaces	305	332	325	Complies

* Under Section 6.02.4.c, the Board of Appeals may permit modification in the requirements specified in this Article as applied to Use #10 (educational) and Use #15 to the extent necessary to allow reasonable development of such a use in general harmony with other uses permitted and as regulated in the vicinity.

Section 8.02.1 Alteration and Extension

A special permit is required to alter a nonconforming structure.

Modification of BOA Cases #3326, #3326A and 3620, 2016-0088

No modification of these BOA cases is needed.

PLANNING STAFF COMMENTS

Although the school enrollment and staff will increase slightly with the new school building and the added capacity, there should be minimal traffic and parking impacts as the children, for the most part, arrive in buses. The large campus, over 35 acres, provides plenty of room for parking for teachers, visitors and school buses, and the traffic circulation pattern will remain the same. Because the new building will be located on an open field, trees will not have to be removed. The building is interior to the site and there are no single family homes directly opposite it.

PLANNING BOARD COMMENTS

The Planning Board was supportive of this new lower school building. They found the design to be sensitive to and well-integrated within the context of the overall campus and the impact on any surroundings to be minimal due to its location on the interior of the site. The Board also felt

that the zoning relief requested is minimal and that while the proposed building is over the allowable height, it is still lower than other buildings on the campus and relief is available under Section 5.08.2. The Board did express interest in seeing sustainability initiatives incorporated and more playfulness in the design, as it is will be serving young children in grades 3 through 5.

Therefore, the Planning Staff recommends approval of the architectural plans prepared by ARC and dated 3/21/19 and the site plans (C-1 to C-5) prepared by Beals + Thomas and dated 1/30/19, subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Prior to issuance of a building permit, final elevations with material specifications shall be submitted to the Assistant Director for Regulatory Planning for review and approval.**
- 2. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall submit a final landscaping plan, subject to the review and approval of the Assistant Director of Regulatory Planning.**
- 3. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall submit to the Building Commissioner for review and approval for conformance to the Board of Appeals decision: 1) a final site plan, stamped and signed by a registered engineer or land surveyor; 2) final building elevations, stamped and signed by a registered architect; and 3) evidence that the Board of Appeals decision has been recorded at the Registry of Deeds.**

pss

