



TOWN OF BROOKLINE

Massachusetts

PLANNING BOARD

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To: Brookline Board of Appeals
From: Brookline Planning Board
Date: September 26, 2013
Subject: Construct a two story addition to a public elementary school for four additional classrooms
Location: **27 Francis Street (Lawrence School)**

Atlas Sheet: 27
Block: 126
Lot: 9

Case #: 2013-0076
Zoning: T-5
Lot Area (s.f.): 80,258 s.f.

Board of Appeals Hearing: October 17, 2013 at 7:30 pm

BACKGROUND

1929 - A bill was passed by the state legislature allowing a small portion of the Lawrence School to be located on the Longwood Playground.

December 2012 - The Building Department issued an RFP for Plans and Specifications for Modular Classrooms for Lawrence. A Committee of Seven selected Flansburgh Architects.

March 14, 2013 - The School Committee voted to add up to four (4) classrooms at the Lawrence School.

April 10, 2013 - A neighborhood meeting was held at the Lawrence School auditorium to present proposed drawings and plans to interested parents and neighbors. A Lawrence School Project Oversight Committee (LSPOC), chaired by Deputy Superintendent of Admin. and Finance and made up of the Principal, two (2) teachers, two (2) school committee members, two (2) parents and two (2) neighbors was appointed. The charge was to decide on: 1) Siting of the Construction, 2) Exterior Cladding and Fenestration, Dumpster location, 3) Location of HVAC and other roof mounted systems and their relationship to noise requirements, 4) Traffic and Parking logistics (deliveries, truck and safety vehicle access, pedestrian access), 5) Landscaping, pathways and other green issues.

The LSPOC met four (4) times - May 9th and 28th, June 19th and July 10th. At the third meeting the majority voted to site the structure in a manner that was not favored by the neighborhood representatives.

Subsequently, the Committee revisited certain design elements and decided to reconvene to reconsider the siting vote. At the fourth meeting, the current siting design gained agreement.

SITE AND NEIGHBORHOOD

27 Francis Street is the site of the Amos A. Lawrence School School, a Brookline public K-8 elementary school. The school, which abuts Longwood Park, serves the Longwood Medical neighborhood and has a capacity of 620 students. Lawrence was fully renovated in 2003-2004, with additional space added for classrooms, a library, and a cafeteria.

The current site conditions consist of the existing school parking area located on the Northeast corner of the school property. The parking area is bordered to the South by the existing 1929 Lawrence School and the 1972 addition. It consists of an upper section and a lower section; the upper section has twelve (12) standard parking spaces and one (1) handicapped parking space with an entrance drive and an exit drive from Newell Road. The parking area is buffered with an existing 12 x 6 foot landscaped area along Newell Road. The lower parking area is required for access to two existing doorways that are approximately 3 feet lower than the upper parking area. This area is accessed by a stair and ramp to the West. The lower area ramp is required to allow for deliveries to the cafeteria, access to the compactor and recycling bins for trash removal and bobcat access for snow removal.

APPLICANT’S PROPOSAL

The applicant’s proposal consists of a new two-story pre-manufactured 5,892 s.f. addition with two classrooms on each floor and a two-story glass connector linking it to the main part of the school. The additional space will address overcrowding and allow new growth at the school and will accommodate approximately 66 new students. The school currently has 660 students.

The new classroom building will be wrapped with a brick façade that matches the color, size and banding of the 1972 addition. The sloped hip roof will complement the existing hip roofs of both the 1929 and 1972 structures. The addition is sited to allow for the maximum distances from the abutters on Newell Road. The glass entries separating the new classroom building and the existing 1972 addition creates a new entry point at the rear of the building and allows light into the new lobby. The new classroom building façade takes its cues from the 1972 building façade and ties in with the house styles on Newell Road and the surrounding neighborhood.

A landscaped buffer is proposed to provide screening for residents abutting both the new classroom building and the new access drive. There will be a 2000 s.f. landscaped buffer on the north and east elevations of the new classroom building and a 10’ x 90’ landscaped buffer along the east property line. The new access drive allows for truck deliveries to the school and for trash removal. The existing compactor will be relocated to the southern end of the access drive and fully enclosed by opaque fencing and a 6 foot high gate.

FINDINGS

Section 5.08.2 - Exceptions to Dimensional Requirements for Uses 9 & 10

Sec. 5.43 Exceptions to Yard and Setback Requirements

Sec. 5.50 Front Yard Requirements

	Required	Proposed	Finding
Front Yard Setback	25’	18.5’	Special Permit*

*Under *Sec. 5.08.2*, the Board of Appeals, by **special permit**, may modify dimensional requirements for non-profit educational.

Under Sec. 5.43, the Board of Appeals, by **special permit, may modify dimensional requirements if counterbalancing amenities are provided.*

Sec. 6.02, Paragraph 1; Table of Off-Street Parking Requirements
Sec. 6.02.4.a&c General Regulations Applying to Off-Street Parking Facilities

	Required	Existing	Proposed	Finding
Parking	4 addtl.	13	0	Special Permit*

Under Sec. 6.02.4c, the Board of Appeals, by **special permit, may modify parking requirements for non-profit educational uses to allow reasonable development in harmony with other uses permitted and as regulated in the vicinity. The school currently has an on-street sticker parking program and this will be expanded to meet the needs of employee parking. Approximately six new staff will be added to the current 104 staff members.*

Sec. 8.02.2 Alteration and Extension

A **special permit** is required to allow an alteration or extension of a non-conforming structure.

PLANNING BOARD COMMENTS:

The Planning Board supports this application for four new classrooms at the Lawrence School; it will allow Brookline to meet the needs of its expanding school population and to address current overcrowding in the school. Many public meetings were held to discuss design issues and address neighbors’ concerns. Changes were made to the design and landscape buffering was added to screen the addition from the Newell Road abutters.

Although the school will lose 13 parking spaces, the Lawrence School has for years had an on-street parking sticker programs for teachers, which has been very successful. Additional parking stickers will be issued to accommodate those losing their spaces on the school grounds and the hiring of approximately six new staff members. A transportation demand management program should be implemented to encourage use of carpools and public transportation.

The benefits of this addition are great as it will allow neighborhood children to attend a school close to home and provide a new modern physical environment for the four classrooms. The Planning Board also found that the project is in general harmony with other uses permitted and regulated in the vicinity and meets the special permit requirements under Section 9.05 as follows:

- the site is appropriate because a public school should be located in the neighborhood of the children it will serve, and a lengthy public process was undertaken to choose a design with the least impact on the neighborhood;
- the use will not adversely affect the neighborhood; to the contrary, it will benefit the neighborhood by providing a modern new classroom wing;

- there will be no nuisance or hazard to vehicles or pedestrians created, since a staff parking sticker program, already well-established, will be expanded to meet the additional parking needs.

The Planning Board also notes that attorney Scott Gladstone presented conditions on behalf of the condominium associations at 21 Newell Road and 27 Newell Road. The Planning Board determined all but one of those conditions has been incorporated into the current plans. The last proposed condition pertaining to parking on Newell Road is under the purview of the Transportation Board, not the Planning Board.

Therefore, the Planning Board unanimously voted to recommend approval of the requested special permits, based on the elevations prepared by Flansburgh Architects and dated August 1, 2013 and the site plan by Waterman Design Associates and dated 6/24/13 as modified by the 9/26/2013 presentation and subject to the following conditions.

1. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall submit final plans and elevations, subject to the review and approval of the Assistant Director of Regulatory Planning.
2. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall submit a final site and landscape plan, subject to the review and approval of the Assistant Director of Regulatory Planning.
3. Prior to the Certificate of Occupancy, the expanded on-street parking sticker program shall be implemented, as well as other traffic mitigation measures, after the traffic study is concluded, including signage and traffic calming methods, if needed, subject to the review and approval of the Director of Transportation and Engineering.
4. 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 floor plans and 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.