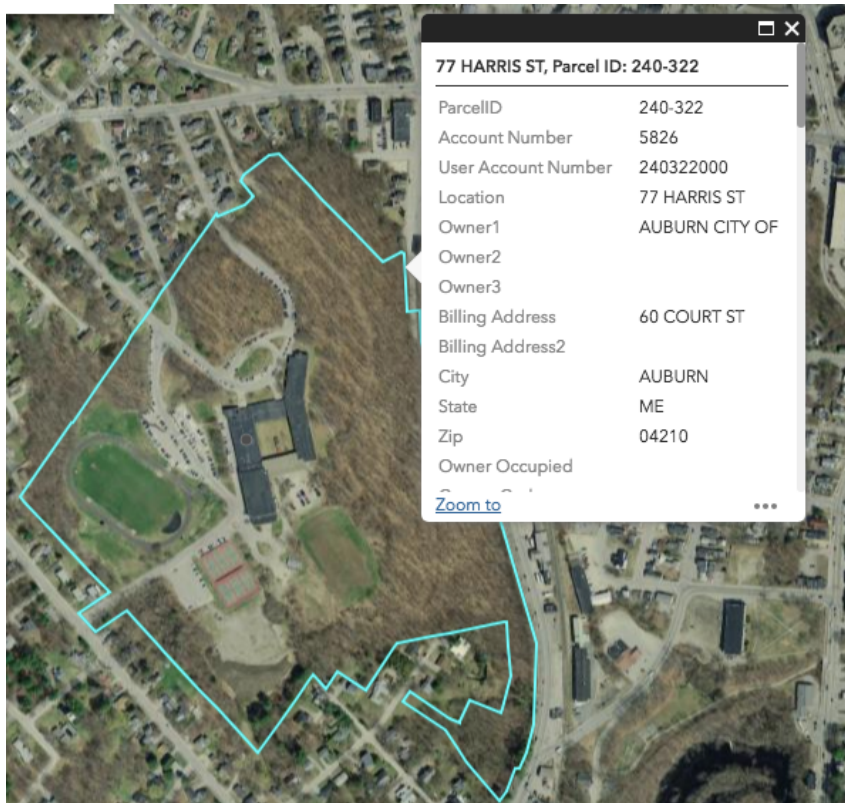


To: Auburn Planning Board
From: Megan Norwood, City Planner II
Re: The City of Auburn School Department is proposing construction of the new Edward Little High School building and associated parking, drives, track and field facility, tennis courts and new athletic fields on the existing site located at 77 Harris Street (PID: 240-322) in the Urban Residential Zoning District.
Date: July 14, 2020



I. PROPOSAL: Frank Crabtree of Harriman, on behalf of the City of Auburn School Department is seeking a Site Plan/Special Exception pursuant to Sec. 60-45 of the Auburn Code of Ordinances to construct the new Edward Little High School on the existing site located at 77 Harris Street. Municipal uses and buildings are permissible in the Urban Residential Zoning District.

The proposal includes siting the new High School building to the south of the existing high school. The lot is about 60 acres. Construction of the new high school will take about 2 years and the existing high school will continue to be occupied until construction of the new high school is completed, anticipated summer of 2023. The proposal

includes new paved parking and drives, new track and field facility (in just about the same location it is now), new tennis courts and new athletic fields and accessories such as dugouts, concession and storage buildings. They are just about doubling the building footprint, impervious area and parking spaces with the new construction. The construction requires clearing of approximately 16.7 acres of wooded areas adjacent to the existing developed areas. The City is reviewing the stormwater as a Site Location of Development Permit through DEP and the Applicant has already submitted the NRPA permit application to DEP for work in a wetland. As of July 6, 2020, the Engineering Department is still in the process of reviewing the stormwater for the site and will provide a report when it is completed.

The proposal includes keeping 3 of the 4 current public street entrances to the high school, the northeasterly access at Forest Avenue will be closed with a new cul-de-sac termination. The primary accesses off of Harris Street and Auburn Heights are also proposed to be reconstructed into a smoothly connected access drive through the site, with bicycle lanes and sidewalks.

The new High School will still use public water and sewer and the Applicant has provided a letter to Auburn Water and Sewer on the anticipated increase in flows. They also provided a traffic evaluation from Gorrill Palmer. They expect an increase of about 75 trips in the AM peak and 52 trip ends in the PM peak hour. As part of the report, they discussed that sidewalks in the school area are not ADA compliant and that there are no crosswalks across Western Avenue at the intersection with Auburn Heights nor are there sidewalks along Auburn Heights. It is also discussed that while the sight distance exiting Harris Street is exceeded for passenger vehicles, it is not met for larger vehicles due to the curves. Sight distance for Fairmount Avenue is not met looking left for passenger vehicles and is not met in either direction for larger vehicles again because of the curve in the road. There were some crashes involving school busses during the most recent 3-year period. Please see discussion below about this under Police Department comments.

City Staff and the Applicant held a neighborhood meeting with Abutters on June 23rd. There were a few concerns discussed:

- Buffering and lighting of the new track and field.
- Treeline between the property line of 15 Forest and the new softball field. It was discussed that a new detention swale is proposed in this area and replanting may be able to be done on the edge after grading is completed for the swale.
- Concerns about crime associated with a new low use cul-de-sac and requested a recommendation from the PD on a light.
- Home located at the Harris/Fairmount point. Concern about the large oak trees. If in good health, the 24-inch oaks are proposed to be saved. The homeowner has a cellar drain and continues to have issues with water in the driveway. The Applicant was going to look at the driveway issue and see what could be done.
- 106 Western Avenue concerned about the embankment behind the tennis courts.
- Cote Property at the end of Fairmount. House was built in the 1800s, concern about blasting. It was discussed that the blasting company will reach out to the homeowners before any blasting takes place. Any concerns should be logged so if there is damage, the homeowners will be compensated.
- Concerns about fencing on the property line separating the baseball field. The field itself is proposed to be fenced with a 6 foot chain-link fence.
- Recommendation to make the access from Western Ave and Auburn Heights slightly less steep than it is now with guardrails on both sides. Is it necessary to have it 2 vehicles wide? Should a speed table be added?
- Abutters asked for renderings from Western/Harris/Forest looking towards the proposed site and a view from the High School to the Abutters. The Applicant mentioned preparing these for the Planning Board meeting.

Applicable Ordinance Requirements:

Article V. – Off-Street Parking and Loading.

Sec. 60-607. – General provisions and design standards

- (1) The minimum number of off-street parking and loading spaces for the project are four per classroom. *There are 97 classrooms, which will require 388 parking spaces. They have provided 601. (the additional spaces were approved by Auburn voters to improve circulation at the site).*

- (2) Each parking space shall be 9x18 feet in dimension and accessible to a public way. *This standard is met.*
- (3) Loading spaces (b) for building with a gross floor area of greater than 10,000 square feet shall have a 50-foot length by 10-foot width loading area with a vertical clearance of at least 14 feet. *It does not appear that loading spaces are proposed. Based on the use, the Applicant should request a waiver from this standard.*
- (4) Interior driveways and ingress/egress points serving parking areas shall be at least 20 feet in width to allow safe and expeditious movement of vehicles. Ingress and egress points shall be separated wherever possible and signed. *This standard has been met, 24 feet in width has been provided.*
- (5) The required parking and/or loading spaces shall be provided on the same lot as the principal use, building or structure they are required to serve. *This standard has been met. All spaces are provided on the site.*
- (6) No required parking area or driveways servicing the same shall be used for the sale, repair, dismantling or servicing of any vehicle, equipment, material, supplies or merchandise (*not applicable*).
- (7) On any residential property or in any residential district, off-street parking may include the parking or storage of not more than one unregistered or uninspected motor vehicle per lot. If a vehicle is both unregistered and uninspected, the vehicle must be stored within a building (*not applicable*).
- (8) In any residential district, off-street parking may include not more than one commercial vehicle per lot. *Again, these standards are intended to capture all allowable uses in residential districts, this standard is not applicable.*
- (9) In any residential district, no portion of the front yard space, other than the driveway, shall be utilized for off-street parking. *They are not proposing to use the front yard space for the off-street parking areas.*
- (10) Any parking or loading space serving a business or industrial use which abuts the side or rear lot line of a lot in a residential district or use shall be screened from said lot by a tight evergreen shrub hedge or similar landscaping, a fence, a solid wall or a combination of two or more of the foregoing. The screen landscaping, wall or fence shall be at least six feet high and may be extended no closer than 15 feet from the street line. *This standard is not applicable as none of the parking/loading spaces abut residential uses.*
- (11) Exterior lighting provided in any parking or loading area shall be arranged and shielded so that it is deflected away from adjacent properties used for residential purposes and from any public highway. *The photometrics plan provided does not show any light spillage from parking areas onto adjacent properties. There does appear to be a small amount of light spillage onto the Moreau and Harris properties located at the Auburn Heights entrance to the High School where new site lighting is proposed.*
- (12) All uses containing over five parking and/or loading spaces shall either contain such spaces within structures or be subject to the following requirements:
 - a. All access drives, parking, loading and service spaces shall be graded and surfaced with a solid paving material that is impermeable to water and so as to be dust free and properly drained. Materials which satisfy this criteria include but are not limited to: bituminous pavement, concrete, geotextiles and brick or cobblestone or other paving block provided that it is mortared. *This standard is met. Bituminous pavement is provided.*
 - b. Parking and loading spaces shall be suitably marked by painted lines or other appropriate markings. *This standard is met.*
 - c. A substantial bumper of concrete, masonry, steel or heavy timber or a curb of similar material or an earthen berm shall be placed at the head of each parking or loading stall that abuts a structure, rear or side setback or property line, sidewalk, street right-of-

way, or landscaped area to prevent vehicles from rolling into such areas. *Cast in place concrete curbing is proposed in all parking areas.*

- d. Where, in nonresidential districts, parking is planned to occupy a portion of the required front yard area, parking shall not be placed nearer than ten feet from the street right-of-way line. The area between the parking area and the street right-of-way line shall be landscaped. *The project is located in a residential zoning district.*
- (13) Parking and loading spaces shall be so arranged as not to require backing of vehicles onto any public street. No loading platforms or receiving doors shall be located on the street side of any retail store or other commercial building unless such platforms or receiving doors be located not less than 60 feet from the sideline of any street right-of-way lines. *This standard has been met. No vehicles will be required to back onto any public street.*
- (14) No portion of any entrance or exit driveway serving a residential use or building shall be closer than 50 feet from the nearest public street intersection unless prevented by dimensional or physical difficulties. No portion of any entrance or exit driveway serving a commercial or industrial use of building shall be closer than 100 feet from the nearest public street intersection unless prevented by dimensional or physical difficulties. *Not applicable as the driveways already exist and this is not a residential use.*
- (15) On lots where one entrance and exit driveway or curb-cut is constructed, the curb-cut shall not exceed 32 feet in width. Where two or more driveways or curb-cuts are constructed, the curb cuts shall not exceed 20 feet in width. For automotive service stations, the curb cut widths may be increased to 32 feet for each driveway or access, but shall not exceed two driveways. These widths may be increased up to a maximum of 44 feet on arterial roads if required by the city engineering department or the state department of transportation. *Not applicable as the curb-cuts already exist.*
- (16) A parking lot cluster containing more than 80 stalls shall contain landscaped areas within the perimeter of the overall lot, in the form of landscaped perimeter and islands. *There are two parking areas immediately adjacent to the new school and courtyard that each contain more than 80 stalls. The ordinance does not specific how this standard should be met. However, landscaped areas are proposed within the perimeter of the overall parking areas in the form of both landscaped perimeter and islands.*
- (17) For those developments subject to site plan review (division 2 of article XVI of this chapter) the relaxation of the requirements of this section shall be reviewed by the planning board. *This applies to waiver requests discussed throughout the Staff Report.*
- (18) Required off-street parking in the Auburn Downtown Action Plan for Tomorrow area for lots which cannot provide their own parking because of location, lot size or existing development may be substituted by parking facilities which, in the public's interest may be provided for by the municipality or private parking resources. No such public or private off-street parking shall be considered as a substitute unless located within 1,000 feet of the principal building or use as measured along lines of public access. *This standard is not applicable, parking is provided on the site.*
- (19) In calculating the required number of off-street parking spaces, the gross leasable area shall be used. *See above for parking space calculations.*

Article X. – Access Management Standards.

Sec. 60-799. – Safe Sight Distance. While the curb-cuts already exist and these standards do not apply to the project, the traffic evaluation from Gorrill Palmer revealed issues with sight distances from the existing development that should be addressed when reconstructing access into the site. ADA compliant sidewalks are now proposed throughout the development, Bike-paths are proposed along Auburn Heights but sidewalks are not proposed. A crosswalk is provided across Western Avenue at the intersection with Auburn Heights on a raised speed table.

Sec. 60-800. – Curb cut and driveway spacing. Not applicable as the curb-cuts already exist but are being reconfigured.

Urban Residential Zoning District Requirements.

Building Height – 35 Feet Maximum Building Height. *The building height proposed is 51 feet, a waiver will need to be requested.*

Setback Requirements – The requirements apply to buildings and are as follows: Front/Rear: 25 Feet, Side: 15 Feet.

Sec. 60-34 of the ordinance has a provision that does not allow more than one principal building per lot in any residential zoning district (with the exception of the multifamily zoning districts). *Given the circumstances, Staff recommends the Planning Board grant a waiver in this instance, as the existing High School will be demolished upon completion of the new High School.*

II. DEPARTMENT REVIEW:

- a. *Police* – Recommend the addition of a light in the proposed Forest Ave cul-de-sac. Another traffic analysis is warranted due to the increase in traffic from closing the Forest Ave access – which will now be directed towards Harris/Auburn Heights.
- b. *Auburn Water and Sewer* – No comments received.
- c. *Fire Department* – Needs to work with Applicant on internal site circulation.
- d. *Code Enforcement* – No comments received.
- e. *Engineering* – Is in the process of reviewing stormwater under the City’s delegated review authority by the DEP.
- f. *Addressing* – Will need an addressing plan for the new HS location.
- g. *Airport* – The “airspace” is done and the planners have the 18 Letters of Determination that paraphrased say there is no aviation conflict with the location of the poles. It does require a Notice of Completion (a 7460 – 2) when the pole is finally installed, but I can do that with just an email say it’s done.

I asked Harriman to include obstruction lights like the ones that were installed at the Intermodal Center on top of the tallest poles (over 380 ft above mean sea level) because they will be above the canopy and may become an obstruction if something does need to land in that area (I am thinking EMS but there are other scenarios). The intended materials provider can incorporate the single red LED light as part of the purchase, and it shouldn’t cost much extra.

II. PLANNING BOARD ACTION – Sec. 60-1277. – Objective. In considering a site plan, the Planning Board shall make findings that the development has made provisions for:

- (1) Protection of adjacent areas against detrimental or offensive uses on the site by provision of adequate surface water drainage, buffers against artificial and reflected light, sight, sound, dust and vibration; and preservation of light and air;
- (2) Convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site and in relation to adjacent areas;
- (3) Adequacy of the methods of disposal for wastes; and
- (4) Protection of environment features on the site and in adjacent areas.

Sec. 60-1336. – As conditions prerequisite to the granting of any special exceptions, the board shall require evidence of the following:

- (1) That the special exception sought fulfills the specific requirements, if any, set forth in the zoning ordinance relative to such exception.

- (2) That the special exception sought will neither create nor aggravate a traffic hazard, a fire hazard or any other safety hazard.
- (3) That the special exception sought will not block or hamper the master development plan pattern of highway circulation or of planned major public or semipublic land acquisition.
- (4) That the exception sought will not alter the essential characteristics of the neighborhood and will not tend to depreciate the value of property adjoining and neighboring the property under application.
- (5) That reasonable provisions have been made for adequate land space, lot width, lot area, stormwater management in accordance with section 60-1301(14), green space, driveway layout, road access, off-street parking, landscaping, building separation, sewage disposal, water supply, fire safety, and where applicable, a plan or contract for perpetual maintenance of all the common green space and clustered off-street parking areas to ensure all such areas will be maintained in a satisfactory manner.
- (6) That the standards imposed are, in all cases, at least as stringent as those elsewhere imposed by the city building code and by the provisions of this chapter.
- (7) That essential city services which will be required for the project are presently available or can be made available without disrupting the city's master development plan.

Potential Waivers Discussed:

- The building height in the UR Zoning District is 35 feet and the HS is proposed to be 51 feet. The PB will have to grant a waiver for this as an exception for a municipal use. Staff will provide the PB with an update as to the height of the current HS and what that difference looks like.
 - *Suggested Motion: I make a motion to grant a waiver from Sec. 60-278 (4) to allow a building height of greater than 35 feet, 51 feet is proposed.*
- The off-street parking/loading provisions require there to be loading spaces which are not provided. We recommend a waiver for the loading space requirements based on the type of development.
 - *Suggested Motion: I make a motion to grant a waiver from Sec. 60-607(3) to not require loading spaces given the type of development proposed.*
- The ordinance has a provision in residential zoning districts that no more than one principal building can be constructed per lot. Given the circumstances, we recommend the PB grant a waiver as the existing HS will be demolished upon completion of the new HS.
 - *Suggested Motion: I make a motion to grant a waiver from Sec. 60-34 to allow the construction of a second principal structure at 77 Harris Street given the circumstances that the existing HS will be demolished upon completion of the new HS.*

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS – Staff recommends the Planning Board carefully consider the public testimony discussed at the meeting, update the suggested list of conditions below based on the comments received and approve the project.

Suggested Conditions:

1. A street light shall be added in the proposed cul-de-sac at Forest Avenue.
2. Driveway drainage issues concerning the property owner at the corner of Harris/Fairmount shall be addressed.
3. Obstruction lights like the ones installed at the Intermodal Center shall be installed on top of the tallest poles (over 380 feet above mean sea level).
4. A follow up traffic analysis shall be provided looking specifically at the increase in traffic using the Harris/Auburn Heights access. Any potential issues with sight distances at all entrances shall also be included in the report with recommended solutions to be reviewed by Staff.

5. Signoff shall be provided by the Fire Prevention Officer regarding proposed turnarounds and site circulation.
6. An addressing plan shall be provided to the addressing officer for the location of the new High School.
7. The Engineering Department shall sign off on the stormwater review before building permits are issued.

Suggested Motion: *I make a motion to approve the Site Plan/Special Exception by the City of Auburn School Department to construct the new Edward Little High School building and associated parking, drives, track and field facility, tennis courts and new athletic fields on the existing site located at 77 Harris Street (PID: 240-322) in the Urban Residential Zoning District with the following conditions:*

1. A street light shall be added in the proposed cul-de-sac at Forest Avenue.
2. Driveway drainage issues concerning the property owner at the corner of Harris/Fairmount shall be addressed.
3. Obstruction lights like the ones installed at the Intermodal Center shall be installed on top of the tallest poles (over 380 feet above mean sea level).
4. A follow up traffic analysis shall be provided looking specifically at the increase in traffic using the Harris/Auburn Heights access. Any potential issues with sight distances at all entrances shall also be included in the report with recommended solutions to be reviewed by Staff.
5. Signoff shall be provided by the Fire Prevention Officer regarding proposed turnarounds and site circulation.
6. An addressing plan shall be provided to the addressing officer for the location of the new High School.
7. The Engineering Department shall sign off on the stormwater review before building permits are issued.

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