



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Review Memorandum: Associated Environmental Systems, Inc.

8 and 10 Post Office Square, Acton, MA

Room 126, Town Hall

December 6, 2019

DRB Members in attendance:

Holly Ben-Joseph (Chair), Peter Darlow (Assistant Chair),

Kim Montella, and David Honn

No project proponents were in attendance.

Review date:

November 20, 2019

Documents reviewed: Site Development Plans prepared by Bohler Engineering dated 10.25.19 including:

Applicant Cover Letter

| Sheet Number | Drawing |
|--------------|--|
| 1 | Cover Sheet |
| 2 | General Notes Sheet |
| 3 | Demolition Plan |
| 4 | Overall Site Plan |
| 5 | Site Plan |
| 6 | Grading and Drainage Plan |
| 7 | Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan |
| 8 | Soil Erosion Control Notes and Details Sheet |
| 9 | Lighting Plan |
| 10-12 | Construction Detail Sheet |
| 1-4 | Boundary and Topographic Survey |

Project Summary and General Findings

- The project involves adding a new parking lot to an existing office building parking lot.
- The site is currently heavily wooded and in a Zone 3 groundwater protection district.
- Substantial excavation and regrading will be required to create the parking area.
- The site is close to an aquifer.



- The existing building contains offices and the Colebrook School; a special needs facility for Acton students.
- A site visit by a DRB member on a weekday mid-morning noted that the existing parking lot appears under-utilized and not exclusively devoted to the office/school uses. For instance, approximately 20 spaces were being used for what appeared to be new vehicle storage for a car/truck dealership; approximately 8 spaces appeared to be used for van parking.
- The request for 85 additional parking spaces appears to be for the C.A.S.E transport program.
- The DRB noted that an existing parking facility for C.A. S. E. vans already exists at 20 Main Street in Acton. A site visit by a DRB member noted that on Saturday, November 23, 2019, there were approximately 120 C.A.S.E. vans parked at that location.

DRB Comments

The DRB in general is not in favor of adding impervious surfacing (bituminous parking) in wooded, natural areas of Town since it runs counter to Acton's goals of being a Green Community and we all agreed that this project falls into this unfavorable category for the reasons listed below:

- Actual need questioned: The project appears to be of little benefit to the Town; and, given the current amount of parking available for the office building/Colebrook School functions and apparent CASE parking elsewhere around town, seems to be unnecessary.
- Harm to Acton's natural assets: The project requires complete removal of all trees in a heavily wooded area near an aquifer. To create this level parking lot, much manipulation of the topography is required as are retaining walls.
- Not smart growth or use of facilities: It was not clear to the DRB whether the request for 85 C.A.S.E. van spaces is a partial replacement for the vans parked at 20 Main Street or for an additional 85 spaces for the van program. Either way, there is no justification for creating a new parking lot as a cursory review of Acton's paved areas would reveal numerous underutilized existing parking areas that could be leased for this use.
- Traffic generator and carbon footprint increaser: Although the logistics of the van operations are not explained, the DRB assumes that drivers come to the facility in the morning in their personnel vehicles, switch to a van, perform their van route and return to their personal vehicles. This generates a minimum of four vehicle trips per van or 340 trips per day. If the same scenario is repeated in the afternoon, then 680 trips per day. Having this increased traffic (which is already difficult in Acton) does not benefit the community in any way not to mention the increased level of the carbon footprint of the Town. (Many towns charge a carbon footprint tax for all additional trips the company is responsible for to offset the increased carbon footprint. Calculators are available on the web from many sources including the EPA).



- Acton's future and what type of development do we want: The DRB questions why the Town is allowing Acton sites to be used for parking for non- Acton related uses. Recently, there seems to be a trend for properties that once had active uses becoming a repository for other towns' vehicles. This not only adds unnecessary traffic congestion, increases pollution and carbon footprint, but also is transforming the usage of land in Acton. The DRB supports businesses that improve the quality of life in town rather than ones that have no benefits and are eye-sores.
- DRB believes this project and represents the antithesis of what the Town is trying to accomplish and is contrary to the goals of the 2020 Master Plan. Among those goals being: reduced pollution, less traffic, reduction of impervious surfaces, preservation of open space; providing wildlife habitats, etc.

Given all of the above, DRB members voted unanimously **not** to support this project.

Respectfully submitted,
David Honn
DRB Member