

**Town of St. Albans
Development Review Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 13th, 2020
6:30 p.m.**

On Thursday, August 13th, 2020 at 6:30 p.m., the Town of St. Albans Development Review Board met at Town Hall and via Zoom for hearings.

Present: Chair, Brent Brigham, Vice Chair, Arthur Omartian, Clerk Bruce Thompson, Mike McKennerney, and Zoning Administrator, Becky Perron

Absent: Tom Stanhope

Christina Boissoneault appeared via Zoom.

Zoom ID: 854 0249 3231

Chair, B. Brigham called the Development Review Board hearing to order at 6:30 p.m.

New Business:

Application of R.L. Vallee Inc. requesting Site Plan Amendment and Conditional Use Approval in accordance with Sections 406, 410, 802 and 803 of the St. Albans Town Unified Development Bylaws. The property is located at 555 Fairfax Road in the Commercial District within a Designated Growth Center and owned by the Applicant.

The Application was represented by Chris Galipeau, of Civil Engineering Associates, Aj LaRosa, Attorney for R.L. Vallee Inc, Jack Vallee, of R.L. Vallee and Andres Torrizo of Watershed Consulting Agency.

The Applicants were sworn in by Clerk, B. Thompson. There were no Interested Parties.

C. Galipeau started by saying there seemed to be some confusion on the items submitted. He offered to go over the project to clarify some of the questions within the staff report. He explained that most of the site is going to remain unchanged.

The existing site is a gas station / convenience store as well as tenant space that is currently Guys Farm & Yard. There is a small tenant space that is unused. In regards to the exterior development, the Applicant is proposing one new stand-alone diesel MPD which will be an extension of the existing canopy. The electric vehicle charging station is proposed to be relocated to the north-east corner of the building. Additionally, the Applicant is proposing truck parking spaces along the east side of the project. Currently the existing site serves a lot of large trucks, and trucks with trailers and the existing parking conditions are poor. Truck drivers tend to fuel up, and if they want to utilize the store, they end up parking in the median, or along the driveway.

The other significant change to the site is for the Stormwater structure which is currently located on the South side of the project. The Applicant has designed a Stormwater system which will treat most of the Stormwater on the site. C. Galipeau stated the system will help the City and Town with their Stormwater goals.

The floorplan of the building currently hosts a convenience store on the West side of the building, with retail space on the East side which is currently mostly occupied by Guys. There is a pet wash area (grooming) in the back portion of Guys Farm and Yard. The Applicant explained the grooming station is not being proposed, it is currently existing; the Applicant just wants to get accurate permits to reflect what is currently there. He explained that Guys Farm and Yard had subleased the space.

The convenience store is proposed to get a facelift which includes rearranging the seating area to the West side of the store, moving the deli and adding a welcome center on the South side. The welcome center will essentially be retail space consisting of Vermont made products such as beer, cheese, and maple products.

A separate room east of the welcome center is proposed to be a lounge area with seating, bathrooms and a laundry facility.

A. Torrizzo gave an overview of the proposed stormwater system. He reiterated the benefit the system will provide for the Town and the City since the site had been identified in the Town's Flow Restoration Plan for Rugg Brook. The proposed system is a gravel wetland stormwater system which will remove phosphorus and detain flow. The Applicant prepared a comprehensive planting plan with a diverse arrangement of local native species. The system can be trimmed and groomed to be kept in a nice aesthetic.

A. Omartian questioned how many inches of rainfall within a 24-hour period would it take for the pond to be full. A. Torrizzo explained that a ten-year storm is 3 inches within 24 hours. By putting in the proposed system, the pond could handle 3.5 inches of rain. The Applicant stated this system exceeds the state minimum requirement. The system will discharge into the Rt 104 Right of Way.

A. Omartian noted that the Applicant is requesting to add 15 spaces for trucks to park after fueling. He wondered how long the trucks would idle for. The Applicant was unsure and explained the answer could vary depending on the needs of the driver. Some truck drivers fuel and leave, some go in the store for coffee, and some need to "wait out the hours" until they are able to drive again. The State Police enforce idling laws, so the Applicant does not foresee truck drivers excessively idling.

A. Omartian inquired if the Applicant could foresee a truck driver spending the night there. The Applicant confirmed. A. Omartian asked if the 15 spaces are full, how might that be handled? Is the Applicant considering a reservation system? They are not considering taking reservations and the spots will be first come first serve.

B. Brigham asked if R.L. Vallee has used the "diagonal configuration" at other locations. J. Vallee stated the configuration is used in Shoram, VT and appears to work well. The advantage of the angle is two-fold; less impervious surface than right angle parking, and easier turning movements.

B. Perron inquired what are the size of the parking spaces. After checking and measuring the plan, it was determined that the spaces are either 12x70 or 12.5x70, but the Applicant would forward the correct size.

B. Brigham asked if the Applicants had seen the comments submitted by the Fire Chief. The Applicants stated they had just received the comments, so they had not fully digested all of them but they were willing to discuss their initial thoughts and there were some issues they would like to discuss.

The Applicant stated that technically the existing project has one curb cut on 104, there are really two curb cuts to access the site. There is an East curb cut and a West curb cut. They are both two-way curb cuts, and the West curb cut is striped with arrows for two-way traffic. The existing site currently serves tractor trailer trucks at R.L. Vallee and Guys Farm & Yard as well as a host of other vehicles with trailers, and campers. The Applicant explained they are not proposing any changes to the curb cuts. They are not aware of any accidents or safety issues from having the two curb cuts. The Fire Chief's comment regarding access to the overnight truck parking area did not seem practicable to the Applicants from an engineering stand point, nor does the Applicant see a need to reduce it to one way since there is adequate room.

In looking at the access around the building, there is currently double loaded parking on the West and South sides. The movements work great for vehicles right now, and drivers can go both ways around the building. The Applicant does not agree with the Fire Chief's finding that there should only be one-way traffic along the back side of the building since the majority of the isle along the back side is 33 feet wide, which the Applicant feels is adequate for two-way traffic. The isle does neck down where the existing dumpster area is, to around 21.5 feet, which they feel is still adequate for two-way traffic. They do not understand the push for one-way traffic; if there was a fire event there would not be anyone in the lane.

B. Brigham asked for clarification that the Applicant stated there is 30' from the dumpster to the existing pavement. B. Perron stated there is 21.5' feet. The Applicant explained the proposed conditions plans show 33' for the entire section, except where the dumpster and EV charging area is, which necks down to 21.5'. The Applicant feels 21.5' is still a reasonable width, and

expressed willingness to talk with the Fire Chief regarding their plans.

B. Thompson inquired if the new truck spots would pass the existing edge of the pavement. The Applicant said they will, the front of the truck will be at the edge of the existing pavement, but since they are reducing some of the width along the building, and so the only area that really necks down is where the dumpster area is, which is still going to be 21.5' wide. B. Brigham stated that based on the scale on the drawing, there is only 18' by the dumpster. The Applicant scaled it out and stated there is 21.54' from the end of the stripe, which assumes the truck is taking up the full 70'. Depending on what truck is there, it could be less.

B. Brigham explained that as a rule, the Fire Chief makes recommendations and the Board tries to follow them.

A. LaRosa asked if there are Fire Department requirements for isle width. B. Perron stated there are not.

The Applicant is also contesting the Fire Chief asking to remove the existing parking spot along the building so there can be a clearly marked no parking area in front of the Fire Department sprinkler connection. The R.L. Vallee office did not permit the Site Plan originally, but they felt if it had been approved as it currently is, it should be allowed to stay that way. The Applicant stated R.L. Vallee is going to look at the Original CO to see if it was approved as constructed. B. Perron agreed to see if the original Site Plan provided any clarity.

B. Thompson asked why the application indicated there would be no additional impacts to traffic. The Applicant stated that in general a lot of the trucks are already fueling in the area, or at their location. The traffic volume on the road is already high and the trip generator would not change greatly. C. Galipeau explained they did not indicate the traffic would not be increased; in fact, they hoped there would be increased traffic from their investments. He stated that a gas station is not a destination, generally speaking a lot of the traffic will be people who are already on the road and driving in the area. The project was submitted to the State for a Letter of Intent since it is a State curb cut.

B. Thompson asked if the Applicant thought UPS would still utilize their space for overnight parking. The Applicant confirmed. B. Perron asked if UPS works from the site. If a UPS driver runs out of hours, another driver may back their truck up and transfer the packages.

B. Brigham wondered why there is not a stop sign from the access road to Fairfax road. Was this originally an oversight? The Applicant stated that it may have not been on the original Act 250 permit. Perhaps it was never required. B. Perron asked if the new plans would require an Act 250 permit. It will, and all plans have been submitted and the State has granted a minor amendment; the stormwater permit and wastewater permit just needs to be received.

B. Thompson asked the Applicant if they wanted to talk to the Fire Department prior to them making a decision.

C. Galipeau addressed the error on the plans submitted which indicated the building height is proposed to be more than 65' where it is actually less than 65'. This was a typo.

B. Perron asked for clarification on how many parking spaces the site would be required to have. The Applicant explained the site is permitted for 83 spaces, and is proposed to have 104 spaces. The minimum required spaces are 75. There will also be bike parking and racks.

B. Perron clarified the Conditional Use approval application is due to the unapproved grooming business currently on site.

Deliberative Session

MOTION: A. Omartian made a motion to enter deliberative session at 7:35 p.m. M. McKennerney seconded. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

MOTION: M. McKennerney made a motion to come out of deliberative session at 8:45p.m. C. Boissoneault seconded. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Application of R.L. Vallee Inc. requesting Site Plan Amendment and Conditional Use Approval

MOTION: A. Omartian made a motion to continue the Application of R.L. Vallee Inc. requesting Site Plan Amendment and Conditional Use Approval in accordance with Sections 406, 410, 802 and 803 of the St. Albans Town Unified Development Bylaws. The property is located at 555 Fairfax Road in the Commercial District within a Designated Growth Center and owned by the Applicant to the tenth of September and request the following at that time: 1. That R.L. Vallee resolve any issues of the St. Albans Town Fire Chief and obtain an official Police Department sign off on official letter head, 2. The Applicant review and correct item number 1 on the Conditional Use and Site Plan Applications. B. Thompson seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Minutes

MOTION: M. McKennerney made a motion to accept the minutes of the DRB meetings dated July 23rd. B. Thompson seconded. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Adjournment

MOTION: A. Omartian made a motion to adjourn the DRB meeting at 9:00 p.m. M. McKennerney seconded. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

**Respectfully Submitted,
AJ Johnson, Administrative Assistant**

Brent Brigham, Chair

Arthur Omartian, Vice Chair

Bruce Thompson, Clerk

Mike McKennerney

Christina Boissoneault