



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

## NOTICE OF DECISION

Case No: PB#128

Address: 250 Fresh Pond Parkway

Owner: City of Cambridge

Application Date: May 1, 1997

Public Hearing: May 20, 1997

Planning Board Decision: June 3, 1997

Date of Filing Decision: October 29, 1997

Application: Special Permit in the Parkway Overlay District for a Water Treatment Plant, to replace the existing facility.

Decision: GRANTED

Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk. Copies of the complete decision and final plans, if applicable, are on file with the Office of the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Authorized Representative to the Planning Board

*Elizabeth M. Paden* 10/29/97

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For more information regarding this special permit, please contact Liza Paden at the Community Development Department, voice: 349-4647; TYY: 349-4621, email lpaden@ci.cambridge.ma.us

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#### Application

Special Permit Application, submitted to the Planning Board on May 1, 1997, containing the complete application, as well as photographs of the existing site. Drawings were included under separate cover as "Preliminary Design Submittal", dated April 1997.

#### Documents Submitted

Letter to Paul Dietrich, Chair of the Planning Board, from Jane Wheeler, and Barry Giorgi, of Camp, Dresser & McKee, Inc., dated May 30, 1997, re: the Water Treatment Plant Dimensions.

Letter to the Planning Board from Lauren M. Preston, Deputy Traffic Director, dated May 15, 1997, containing a site plan review.

Extension of time from Robert W. Healy, City Manager, dated July 28, 1997

#### Public Hearing

A public hearing was held on May 20, 1997. Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager, presented the plans and process for the replacement of the water treatment facility. He indicated that the new facility is intended to bring the operations of the plant current with new requirements for water quality and new technology to meet those requirements. He covered the siting issues involved in making the decision making, the other approvals required, as well as the construction schedule, expected to take two years starting with bidding and demolition in the fall of 1997. Options have been reviewed by the MDC; peer review of the proposal has identified this site as the best option. On the larger site surrounding the

plant, the plan is to enhance the natural elements and not over-develop the area.

John Kissida, landscape architect, presented the master plan for the building and the site and identified the relief being sought. Two million dollars will be available for site enhancement, including new plantings, paths, fences and other improvements. The building itself will occupy 60% of the area of the existing facility. There will be a new bikeway, screening from Kingsley Park, new parking lot layout, public restrooms, a weir structure incorporated as part of the public art, as well as embellishments on the building, like the clock tower. The parking will not be visible from the Parkway and will be available for public use on the weekends. The intent is to make the site and the building's operations as accessible as possible for the general public

There is a request for relief for an expanded curb cut to meet the demands of the railroad as the access road crosses the tracks, which are used approximately three times a week. The special permit is requested for a building in the Parkway Overlay District that exceeds 80,000 square feet in size. As permitted in Section 10.45 the Planning Board is also being requested to issue the use special permit for "Municipal service facility" required in an Open Space District and normally granted by the Board of Zoning Appeal. The Board is also considering minor variations from the development standards of the Parkway Overlay District related to parking, and building facades.

Roger Boothe, the Community Development Department staff, who along with consultant Dennis Carlone and Paul Feloney, former City Architect, reviewed the design, pointed out that this proposal will contribute significantly to improvements along the Parkway.

Dennis Carlone, design consultant to the Community Development Department, discussed the design of the building, noting the use of stone-like materials with a softer limestone color and a granite base, accenting the basically brick building; there will be a slate-like roof edge.

The architect reviewed in detail the layout of the building and the factors motivating its specific design features.

The questions from the Board covered the issues of access from the Parkway and the building's fit on the site.

There was discussion of the square footage of the building, with the uses broken out: it was indicated that the new structure will be slightly larger than the current facility but will be more compactly sited.

The Board asked about the fire tower: it will not be accessible and will have no internal function.

There will be no left turns into the site, which is also currently the case. Left turns that may be made now are illegal. The traffic access to the site was more generally discussed. There will be fewer parking spaces than are now on the site, they are better designed, and the approach off of the highway will be safer than now. In addition new pedestrian and bicycle facilities will be installed and there will be a pedestrian activated signal to allow pedestrians to cross the Parkway safely. A traffic consultant was engaged as part of the team. It was noted that the facility was not designed as a magnet for activity but rather to serve the activities that currently occur at the site.

The public comments concerned the building's architecture, access to the site, the impacts on water bills of the new construction, and the consequences for water quality. In general, comment was favorable.

There was a discussion of the public art opportunities which will include aeration.

The Board, in general, had no substantive concerns with the proposal. It was suggested that the brick materials be carefully chosen (the architect indicated that the rendering was not an accurate reflection of the actual brick color). It was also suggested that there be some history of the water department included in the information to be provided to the public on the site.

On June 3, 1997 the Board received additional detailed information on the siting of the new facility, including revised figures on the actual gross floor area contained in the building. After a short deliberation the Board voted to grant the permit.

### Findings

In reviewing the proposal the Planning board makes for the following findings.

#### **1. Purpose of the Parkway Overlay District, Section 11.62**

The proposal will create a more unified image along the parkway by enhancing the natural and landscape quality of the site and by constructing a building of architectural distinction. Public safety will be greatly enhanced with the installation of new facilities to specifically serve pedestrians and bicyclists, by improving the layout of drives and parking lots serving automobiles, and by improving configuration of the

drive as it meets the Parkway. Public use and enjoyment of the area will be greatly enhanced by the installation of new facilities, the improvement of the quality of the landscape around the building, and the elements that will be incorporated into the building to make the operation of the facility more accessible to the general public for educational purposes.

## **2. Applicability of the Parkway Overlay District, Section 11.63**

As the building exceeds 80,000 square feet in area (although only a portion of it is located within the Parkway Overlay District) a Planning Board Special Permit is required and is herein granted by the this Decision.

## **3. Consistency with the recommendations of the Cambridge Community Development 1979 report entitled *Alewife Revitalization*.**

The water treatment plant is a necessary component of the City's system of water distribution and the Fresh Pond Reservation exists principally to serve that function. The proposal herein under review will substantially enhance the use of the reservation in the vicinity of the water treatment plant for those other public recreational and open space uses to which it is put in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the ***Alewife Revitalization*** report's objectives to protect the natural elements of the district and increase the parkway quality of the major arteries in the Alewife area.

## **4. Conformance with the Dimensional Standards in the Parkway Overlay District**

The proposal conforms with the dimensional requirements of the Parkway Overlay District or is appropriately granted a waiver from those requirements.

a. The yard facing Fresh Pond Parkway is a side yard and is not subject to special regulations. Nevertheless, in its dimensions and landscaped treatment, it is consistent with the objectives of the Overlay District's requirements for front yards that they be of sufficient size and appropriately landscaped so as to increase public safety and to positively contribute to the visual and environmental quality of the district. The yard, like all of the site, will be extensively landscaped and will include a bike path connecting to a similar facility elsewhere in the Alewife area.

b. The buildings height will not exceed 35 feet except for those elements allowed by Article 5.000 to extend above the height limit.

Therefore those provisions of the Overlay District limiting the height of buildings above 55 feet do not apply.

c. Building's facades have been designed to enhance the visual quality of the Parkway Overlay District and the Open Space District within which the treatment plant is located. With the use of windows and wall articulation, the inclusion of towers and other architectural elements and details, and an extensive sloping roof the design is fully consistent with the objectives of the Overlay District. The principal building entrance faces the Parkway at the east elevation of the building. The facade is elaborately articulated with windows, towers, and architectural details; to the extent that the precise requirements of Section 11.64.3, with regard to facade articulation and transparency, are not met, a waiver of those requirements as permitted in Section 11.63.7 is appropriate.

#### **5. Conformance with Other Requirements of the Parkway Overlay District**

a. Curb Cuts (Section 11.66.1): The one curb cut in the Overlay District is proposed to exceed the maximum width allowed of 40 feet. The additional width, to 60 feet, is proposed to meet requirements imposed by the railroad over whose property the access road must cross and to provide safer entry into and exit from the site from the heavily trafficked Parkway. Given the extensive frontage of the site on the Parkway, the presence of only one access point (and the elimination of another existing access point), and the heavy vehicular use of Fresh Pond Parkway, the Board finds the proposed configuration of the driveway access to the site reasonable and in the best interests of the safety of the general public making use of the site.

b. Siting of Parking Areas (Section 11.66.2): Parking areas are on grade and open areas generally located behind the building's facade. They have been arranged to minimize their visibility through siting, landscaping and mounding of the earth.

c. General Landscaping of On Grade, Open Parking (Section 11.66.3): Landscaping of parking areas will help to ensure public safety, moderate the micro-climate and minimize noise, glare and the unsightly intrusion of automobiles and unbuffered hard surfaces in the area of public open space. There will not be walls or fences employed to screen the parking but the layout and landscaping proposed will assure that the parking areas blend into the reservation's landscape appropriately.

**6. Criteria for Waiving the Limits for a Curb Cut in an Open Space District, Section 6.43.5 (b).**

As stated above, the wider curb cut will improve safety for the public by accommodating car and truck movements into and out of the site and over a railroad right of way from a very congested Fresh Pond Parkway.

**7. Criteria for Issuing a Special Permit, Section 10.43.**

a. The requirements of the Ordinance will be met with the issuance of this special permit and construction of the building and development of the site in conformance with the Plans submitted with this application.

b. The site plan will enhance access to the site for vehicles servicing the treatment plant and will improve the access to the site for those using the adjacent grounds for recreation. Hazard and congestion will be reduced and the established character of the neighborhood will not be changed.

c. The recreational uses otherwise permitted in the Open Space District will be enhanced by the improvements to the site proposed in conjunction with the water treatment plant facility.

d. No nuisance or hazard will be created. The health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Cambridge will be enhanced by an improved water treatment facility and by an improved recreation environment.

e. The integrity of the district will not be impaired and the water treatment plant use does not derogate from the intent and purpose of the Ordinance or the Open Space district specifically.

**7. Requirements of Section 4.25 - Non Open Space Uses in Open Space Districts.**

For the purposes of Section 4.25, this special permit application and decision shall constitute the required report by the Planning Board on a non open space use within an open space district.

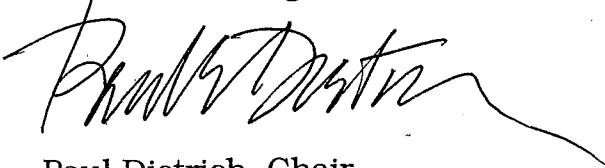
**Decision**

After review of the information contained in application documents, information presented at the public hearing, and based on the above findings, and authorization provided by Section 10.45 of the Zoning Ordinance, on a motion by member Russell and member Tibbs, the

Planning Board **GRANTS** a special permit as follows: for a Municipal Service Facility in an Open Space District, Section 4.33, f 4; for construction of more than 80,000 square feet of building in the Parkway Overlay District, Section 11.63.5; for a waiver of certain development standards in the Parkway Overlay District, Section 11.63.7, including but not limited to width of curb cuts, Section 11.66.1, siting of parking areas, Section 11.66.2, landscaping of on grade open parking areas, Section 11.66.3, and building facades, Section 11.64.3; and for a waiver of the curb cut requirements in an Open Space District, Section 6.43.5; subject to the condition that all plans for which a building permit is issued are in substantial conformance with the plans submitted with this application and referenced above.

Voting to GRANT the Special Permit were: P. Dietrich, H. Salemme, A. Cohn, H. Russell, W. Tibbs, and C. Mieth constituting more than two thirds of the Board.

For the Planning Board



Paul Dietrich, Chair

The Planning Board certifies that the decision attached hereto is a true and correct copy of its decision granting the Special Permit #128, and that a copy of this decision and all plans referred to in the decision have been filed with the Office of the City Clerk and the Planning Board. Appeal if any shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the decision filed with the Office of the City Clerk on *October 23*, 1997 by Elizabeth M. Paden, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have likewise been filed with the City Clerk on such date.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of this decision.

No appeal has been filed.

Date:

City Clerk, City of Cambridge