

**SEEKONK ZONING BOARD**  
**PUBLIC HEARING and WORK SESSION**  
**June 5, 2023**

ZONING BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ch. Keith Rondeau, Vice Chair G. Sagar, D. Robillard, G. Gauthier and N. Almeida

ABSENT WITH CAUSE:

R. Robert

TOWN REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT:

N. Abelson, Zoning Enforcement Officer  
Chief Sandra Lowry, Seekonk Fire Department

APPLICANT REPRESENTATIVE:

Paolo Carissimi, The Galante Architecture Studio  
Daniel Tavares, OPM, CGA Project Management  
Steve Garvin, Samiotes

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: 7:00 p.m.

Type of Meeting: **Public Hearing and Work Session**

Ch. Rondeau read the rules and regulations for the public hearing for all of the petitioners and audience members. He then read the petition in its entirety.

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

1. **2023-10 Town of Seekonk**, 100 Peck Street, Seekonk MA 02771 Owner/Petitioner, requesting a **Special Permit** under Section 4.2 Use Chart, (4.2.2) Institution or Utility Uses of the Seekonk Zoning By-law to allow to erect a new Fire Station on the property located at 69 School Street, Plat 7, Lot 35 in an R-1 Zoning District lot containing 42,148 +/- s.f.

**Daniel Tavares** gave a brief history of the project to the Board. He let it be known that there have been 58 building committee and design related meetings for this project since its inception. They are close to completing the construction documents. They presented to the BOS to update them on the status of the project. Also, an overview was given at the last Town Meeting.

He updated the Board on the next steps in order for them to go to the November 2023 Town Meeting for the remaining funds for the remaining construction and closeout. He noted that there were some abutters attending the Building Committee Meetings.

They are not anticipating an increase in traffic. A more in depth and detailed presentation will come.

**Paolo Carissimi** from the architectural firm presented a slide show to the Board. He stated there is a need to have a fire station for the southern part of the Town to allow for a quicker response time to

emergencies. He showed where the two existing stations are and where the proposed one will be built. Zoning and setbacks were looked at as well as other site concerns.

The proposed building will be approximately 8,000 s.f. There are two volumes to the building, one is for the apparatus bay area and the other would be for offices, dispatch center, and living quarters for the firefighters. He continued with a review of the site plan.

The foundation plan was presented next. The building will be structural steel with CMU walls around the apparatus bay area; also, metal studs with a brick veneer. He showed pictures what the building will look like. He noted there will be two forms of egress and pointed out their locations. Next, he presented a three-dimensional view of the building. He stated that it is a standard red brick building; there is a red CMU base around the building; the canopies are steel, with lettering to identify the building.

A lighting plan was presented. He showed the Board which types and styles of lights will be used for this project.

**Steve Garvin** presented to the Board that the building meets all setbacks and dimensional requirements. A stormwater plan was shown to the Board. He noted there is a good amount of paved area on the site. There is no drainage to the street. He said water and electricity will be brought in off of the main road. A septic system will be installed; they will go to the Board of Health for their approval. They will also go in front of Mass DOT for curb cuts as School Street in under their jurisdiction.

Ch. Rondeau asked if there were any questions from the Board.

D. Robillard asked why another fire station is needed in the south end when we have one on Taunton Avenue?

G. Gauthier asked for a full display of the radio tower? He asked if other designs were available other than an "erector set" type? He noted that cellular towers can look like an oversized flagpole rather than an erector set. Paolo replied that a study is being done to see if the 130 ft. tower already in Seekonk can be used or if they would need a 150 ft. tower. He did not want to speak for the tower company since that is not his forte.

G. Gauthier commented that he would want to know what everything looked like prior to construction.

G. Sagar believed that the Town permitted a tower near the Church on Route 6. Per the by-laws the Town is exempt from any height requirements. He noted that in his experience, a collapse zone should be taken into consideration. He asked if the tower has to be right next to the building? P. Carissimi said it does because of the system connections.

G. Gauthier hoped there will be follow-up meetings with the radio expert in attendance in order to answer some questions the Board may have. G. Sagar reminded everyone that the applicant still has to go in front of the Planning Board for site plan approval. K. Rondeau made the distinction that cell towers can look like pine trees, whereas radio towers are not.

Ch. Lowery replied there were 3 fire stations previously; one in the north end, one centrally located and one in the south end. She explained the reasons why another fire station is needed. She noted that 65% of the calls are from south Seekonk. It takes the fire department 6+ minutes to get down this section of Town. She is trying to figure out how to staff this new station. The need is there because of the

increasing population in Seekonk. She said that folks down south deserve the same care as the folks in north and central Seekonk receive.

She cited more examples of why another fire station is needed.

G. Sagar explained that there was a study that stated two stations strategically positioned in Town would take care of Town; this never came to fruition. He discussed this further and added more information on why a third fire station is needed. He said we are more like a small city. Other locations for a station had been looked at in the past. The station next to Town Hall opened in 2005; the Town has grown. The ideal locations were not available. Ideally the station on County Street will be kept for storage of the extra apparatus.

Mr. Sagar went on stating that hopefully they can man this station; personnel are key. The other big thing that is lacking, from his perspective, is more room for dispatch. The current station has two consoles for dispatchers. The proposed station will have four consoles; all of the dispatchers will be moved down there. There will be a bigger server room in the new station.

Ch. Rondeau asked if this and the Greenbrier II Project gets built, there will be a greater need for this station. Chief Lowery agreed that there will be a lot of people moving in town with these developments. G. Sagar said that there is a shortage on housing and the state is pushing for more growth.

Ch. Rondeau asked if anyone would like to add anything else. P. Carissimi said that in the plan there is a provision for additional growth that would comply with zoning. S. Garvin noted that all of the utilities would allow for that growth; also, there will be room for two more apparatus.

Ch. Rondeau asked if there were anyone in the audience in favor of the Special Permit; there were none. He then asked if there were anyone against or had any questions.

**Alicia Parker of 20 Raymond Drive** spoke to the Board first. She said that there is a lot of empty land in south Seekonk that is not built on. She is very concerned with the traffic on School Street. She said that School street is a cut-through from Fall River Avenue to Wampanoag Trail. She is not in favor of the fire station because of the traffic; it's a residential zone. She asked why the Town couldn't purchase land on Route 6 and build there. She asked for a traffic count on School Street during the daytime.

Ch. Rondeau inquired about several sites on Route 6 that the Town was unable to obtain due to the cost. G. Sagar replied that the Town tried to construct a joint DPW and fire station, but that fell through. The Town liked this site because it is already owned by the Town; no land acquisition costs. There had been attempts to purchase other locations, but this property made the most sense. Ch. Rondeau pointed out that there are not a lot of accoutrements to the building. G. Sagar said the ideal station is a drive-through which cannot happen here because of space. N. Almeida added that this is an ideal location to get to many locations in Town for response time. As far as traffic, there could be a flashing light installed. It wasn't to upset the neighbors; it was for the safety of the Town.

**Inez Najas of 25 Catalpa Street** was the next neighbor to speak to the Board. She went to the BOS meeting last month when she learned of a pole being constructed. She disagreed that she did not receive a letter stating that this fire station is happening prior to the one she received for this meeting. She said this is unfair to the homeowners because their homes will be less valuable. The pole will be an eyesore. The buses didn't remain on this property because a neighbor complained. She understands it is a growing Town. She thinks another location should be looked at. This station will disrupt the tranquility of the neighborhood.

Ch. Rondeau asked about the landscape and screening? S. Garvin responded that they are trying to preserve as much of the natural vegetation as possible. They are installing shield lighting to minimize light escaping the property. Ms. Najas said that her property is much higher than this property. Ch. Rondeau asked if a screen of arborvitaes will help? Ms. Najas replied that it won't help with the tower, noise and lights. The Chair replied that the arborvitaes would help with noise and ambient light. He said a stipulation for the Planning Board can look at this. Mr. Garvin agreed during site plan review this could be considered. G. Gauthier asked if the retaining wall is existing? Mr. Garvin said yes, but it is low; the building is at a lower elevation and grades up in back.

**Helen Sousa of 50 School Street** wanted to express her discontent with the entire process. She lives directly across the street and this was her first notice about the fire station. The lights and noise will be prevalent every time there is an emergency. She hoped the Town would try to put the station in a non-residential area. She went on to say that School Street is pretty busy, she doesn't think it's fair.

D. Tavares said no physical notice was needed prior to this. The meetings are public and are posted. He wanted that clarification. This has been going on for a couple of years; ever since there was a feasibility study. He wanted that understood. There would not have been a public notice for these meetings prior to this one. He stated that some residents were present at meetings early in the process.

G. Sagar said that every municipal use of this town; all are in residential neighborhoods; not one is in a commercial zone. There is great access from this site. He went on to say that site plan review has been added to the by-laws; the next step would be to go to the Planning Board. Ch. Rondeau said tonight's meeting is all about the use. The Planning Board would be able to help with other issues addressed by the residents.

N. Almeida said that after the Banna Station was built, there had not been complaints from neighbors about noise or traffic; it blended in with the neighborhood. As loud as a fire station can be, there are not as many calls as a big city would have.

Ch. Rondeau added that to this day, the trucks don't put on the lights and sirens until they get to the main street. He asked if having an Opticom lights installed could be an option. Chief Lowery replied that they probably would, there has not been a study completed yet. She stated that the fire department respects the neighborhoods and the Town. She said there might be an Opticom at School Street and Route 6.

**Mary Rose of 34 Primrose Drive** said that her land used to be a very quiet place. Seekonk is getting to be out of hand. She can't understand why this has to be built in a residential area. She asked how many trucks will be at the station? Ch. Rondeau said there will be four parked inside the building. Mr. Carissimi showed her the plans indicating how the trucks will be parked. Ms. Rose asked how this passed. Ch. Rondeau said it went before Town Meeting two times; it passed the design and will be brought to Town Meeting in November. It was clarified that the zoning would not be changed. She is very disappointed.

Ch. Rondeau said from a personal standpoint, he lives not too far from here. He thought there would be issues with the fire station that is next to Town Hall. He does hear sirens, but it is not a big issue. It wasn't as much an intrusion in his life as was originally thought. This won't be as bad as people think if this is approved. D. Robillard said that you get used to things.

No other comments were added. Chief Lowery thanked the public.

**G. Sagar made a motion to close the Public Hearing, seconded by N. Almeida.**

**VOTE: 5-0-0**

**G. Sagar made a motion to uphold the decision of the Zoning Enforcement Officer, N. Almeida seconded the motion.**

**VOTE: 5-0-0**

**G. Sagar made a motion to approve the petition as submitted with stipulations as part of the approval the Board will instruct the applicant to use due diligence on the site plan for screening and lighting in accordance with the by-laws and to be reviewed in earnest by the Planning Board; evaluate the traffic situation and an alternative design be considered for the tower, seconded by N. Almeida.**

**VOTE: 5-0-0**

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G. Sagar announced that tonight is Mr. Rondeau's last meeting as a member of the Zoning Board. He thanked him for his 20+ years of service. He will be sorely missed.

Ch. Rondeau recognized Ms. Mallory Demty as a new alternate Board Member.

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**WORK SESSION:**

*1. Discussion on "Sign by Direction"*

G. Sagar and I had many discussions on this topic. He does not believe it is legal to have the Clerk "sign by direction." Ch. Rondeau reminded the Board that every effort should be made to come in to sign documents. A PDF fillable form was created for the Board to sign at the next meeting they attend which gives the Clerk authorization to sign for them. This may not be legal, but it is a better solution than we currently have.

It was asked if Docu-sign is legal for Town documents. I was tasked with checking to ensure that Docu-sign is available and if it could be used for this purpose. N. Almeida stated some Board members have a rubber stamp that is used if they are unable to sign forms.

*2. Annual Appointments*

G. Sagar stated that G. Gauthier will take the seat of Robert Read when Mr. Read's appointment lapses at the of this month. Mr. Gauthier will then begin a three-year term (ending in 2026) and Mr. Read will complete Mr. Gauthier's term which lapses in 2025.

There will be a reorganization of the Board at the next meeting. Mr. Sagar stressed that he will not sit on a 40B application.

Mallory Demty asked to be considered for a regular seat versus the alternate position; G. Sagar that is a possibility. He suggested talking about it at the next meeting during the reorganization discussion.

3. *Consider having a member join the Planning Board discussions regarding Zoning Districts*

There is an opening for another member to come to the Planning Board for the Zoning Districts discussions.

4. *Approval of minutes from: May 1, 2023*

**G. Sagar made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by G. Gauthier.**

**VOTE: 5-0-0**

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**G. Sagar made a motion to adjourn; seconded by D. Robillard**

**VOTE: 5-0-0**

**Meeting adjourned: 8:40 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Lori Trenteseaux

Secretary of the Zoning Board of Appeals

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*Formally accepted on: 7 / 1 0 / 2 0 2 3*

*4 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstention (Robert Read was not present at this meeting)*

**[Full Video available to view on TV9 Seekonk Community Access Television Link:](http://tv9seekonk.com/)**

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