



Town of Boxborough, Massachusetts
Planning Department
Staff Report – Site Plan Approval

Prepared by: Simon Corson, Town Planner

July 15, 2021

Site: 1414 and 1320 Massachusetts Avenue, 244A & 244B Adams Place, 984, 984A, 984B, 984C, 1451, 1497, & 1634 Hazard Lane, and 328 & 1451 Rear Hazard Lane

Applicant Name: Arranta Bio

Applicant Address: 1414 Massachusetts Avenue, Boxborough, MA 01719

Owner Name: LPCH Boxborough L.P.

Owner Address: 53 State Street, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02109

Engineer Name: Level Design Group, LLC

Engineer Address: 249 South Street, Plainville, MA 02762

Surveyor Name: Beal & Thomas, Inc

Surveyor Address: 144 Turnpike Road, Southborough, MA 01772

Legal Notice: In accordance with Boxborough Zoning Bylaw Section 8000 (Site Plan Approval), the Planning Board will conduct a public hearing on July 19, 2021 at 7:30 PM to review the application for Site Plan Approval, submitted by Level Design Group, LLC on behalf of the Applicant, Arranta for the resumption of use discontinued for more than two years.

The subject property, owned by LPCH Boxborough, is located at 1414 & 1320 Massachusetts Avenue; 244A & 244B Adams Place, 984A, 984B, 984C, 1451, 1497 & 1634 Hazard Lane; and 328 & 1451 Rear Hazard Lane and is know as Assessor's Parcels 12-027, 12-028, 12-030, 13-004, 13-022, 17-005, 17-009, 17-010, 17-022, 17-023, 17-024, 17-025 and 18-001.

Based on current COVID-19 circumstances, this public hearing will be held via Zoom videoconferencing. All details will be made available on the Planning Board agenda when posted, a minimum of 48 hours prior to the meeting on the Town website at www.boxborough-ma.gov

Zoning District(s): Office Park, Aquifer Protection, and Flood Plain

Zoning Approval Sought: Site Plan Approval under Section 8000 of the Zoning Bylaw

Date of Application: June 10, 2021

Date(s) of Public Hearing: July 19, 2021

I. Project Description

1. Subject Property: The subject property consists of 13 parcels in southwestern Boxborough on the south side of Massachusetts Avenue/Route 111 totaling approximately 213 acres in an Office Park Zoning District. The parcels, formerly owned by Cisco Systems, Inc. but sold to LPCH Boxborough L.P., stretch from Massachusetts Avenue/Route 111 southward almost to the Boxborough-Harvard municipal boundary. On the northern-most parcel, 1414 Massachusetts Avenue, there is a large office building (currently vacant) which contains 273,181 square feet with an approximately 787 surface parking spaces.

There is also a water treatment building at the southern edge of the rear-most parking area for this building. The vast majority of the parcels are currently occupied by wooded upland area and contain the leaching fields for the large septic system which handles the wastewater from the office building. The subject parcels are located directly south of the Gulf Gas Station on Massachusetts Avenue/Route 111 and the 244-unit rental project, Paddock Estates at Boxborough, just east of the Interstate 495 North on-ramp. To the west is the Boxboro Regency hotel on Adams Place and to the northeast is a 59,925 gross square foot office building which fronts onto Massachusetts Avenue/Route 111.

2. Proposal: The Applicant is proposing to occupy and use approximately 129,181 square feet of the existing two-story facility at 1414 Massachusetts Avenue to develop, manufacture and analyze small volume Pharmaceutical products. The Applicant intends to grow the workforce at the facility progressively over the next 24 to 36 months to around 200 employees, with 120 employed on dayshift and a further 80 employed on off shifts.

3. Nature of Application: Section 8002 of the Boxborough Zoning Bylaw states that no permit for construction, exterior alteration, relocation, occupancy, or change in use of any building or lot shall be given and no existing use shall be extended unless site plan approval has been granted by the Planning Board. Site plan approval is also required for the resumption of any use discontinued for more than two years or for the expansion of any use discontinued for more than two years or for the expansion of any existing use. Arranta Bio requested a Zoning Determination from Boxborough's Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer through their submission of a Form of Intent and associated letter received on July 12. The interim Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer, Frank Ramsbottom has not issued a Zoning Determination in response to this request. However, Arranta Bio submitted a Site Plan Approval Application to the Planning Board under Section 8002 of the Zoning Bylaw.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject parcels are located in an Office Park Zoning District in southwestern Boxborough and stretch from Massachusetts Avenue/Route 111 southward almost to the Boxborough-Harvard municipal boundary. The properties are located directly south of the Gulf Gas Station on Massachusetts Avenue/Route 111 and the 244-unit rental project, Paddock Estates at Boxborough, just east of the Interstate 495 North on-ramp. To the west is the Boxboro Regency hotel on Adams Place and beyond that Interstate 495. To the northeast is a 59,925 square foot office building which fronts onto Massachusetts Avenue/Route 111 and the remainder of the eastern boundary is formed by the Wolf Swamp conservation land. To the south are wetlands and open water including Elizabeth Brook and Eldridge Pond, which straddles the Boxborough-Harvard municipal boundary.

5. Comments:

Select Board: The Select Board did not provide any comments regarding the proposed project.

Board of Health: The Board of Health did not provide any comments regarding the proposed project.

Building Department: The Building Department did not provide any comments regarding the proposed project.

Conservation Commission: In an email to the Town Planner on July 13, 2021, the Conservation Commission Chair provided the following comments:

“The ConsCom reviewed at our last meeting.

If there is any work on the site beyond the footprint of the existing building, it may be subject to review under the Wetland Protection Act and/or Town By-Law depending on the extent and scope of any work. The property owners were recently issued an Order of Resource Area Delineation from the ConsCom, and should consult the ORAD to evaluate the need for a Wetlands filing if any site work is proposed.”

Consulting Engineer: The Town’s Consulting Engineer, Places Associates, Inc. provided a review letter that is attached to this staff report.

Sustainability Committee: The Sustainability Committee did not provide any comments regarding the proposed project.

Water Resources Committee: The Water Resources Committee did not provide any comments regarding the proposed project.

Fire Department: In an email to the Town Planner on June 22, 2021, Captain Shawn S. Gray stated the following:

“Hi Simon,

Since the building is already under construction at this time we don't see any issues in them moving forward. We have been in discussions with the contractors on site and have informed them many times that since there is so much of the building under construction they need to make sure that the entire Life Safety system (sprinkler, fire alarm, etc..) for the building is brought up to code. If there is anything that might need to be mentioned it would be that they need to make sure that all the life safety for the entire building has to be gone over and updated to today's codes accordingly. The amount of the building that is being renovated more than exceeds the requirements for the life safety equipment upgrades then you figure in the renovation cost. The work they are doing throughout the building definitely checks off all the boxes for a life safety upgrade. I have been mentioning this to all the GC's that are on site to make sure their respective contractors review the entire building and make sure it is in compliance. I believe Bentley also has mentioned it to them.

Shawn”

Littleton Electric Light Department (LELD): In an email to the Town Planner on June 23, 2021, Engineering and Operations Manager, Patrick Laverty stated the following:

“Hi Simon,

Thank you for sending. At this time LELD does not have any comments however as the plans are finalized we will need to have a meeting with the owner to go over their power requirements to see what equipment is going to remain and what needs to be upgraded.

Thank you,

Patrick Laverty”

Police Department: The Police Chief did not provide any comments regarding the proposed project.

Public Works Department: In an email to the Town Planner dated June 22, 2021, Director Ed Kukkula stated the following:

“Simon,

I have no comments at this time.

Ed”

II. Compliance with Section 7000 Aquifer Protection District

The southern-most subject parcels are located within the Aquifer Protection District and the proposed occupancy and use of the facility at 1414 Massachusetts Avenue is located on the northern-most parcel, which is not within the Aquifer Protection District. However, the existing Wastewater Treatment Facility and leaching field for the facility at 1414 Massachusetts Avenue are within the Aquifer Protection District. The addition of the Wastewater Treatment Facility was the subject of an amendment to the Site Plan Review Decision dated September 18, 2001. Despite this approval, subsurface disposal of liquid or leachable waste, and the storage or disposal of hazardous waste is prohibited in the Aquifer Protection District. While the Wastewater Treatment Facility is not currently in use, the reasoning behind why the Planning Board granted approvals for these prohibited uses within the Aquifer Protection District is unknown. The applicant proposes to use an above-ground, dual wall industrial wastewater containment tank with leak detection. If there is a leak in the primary vessel, the entire contents will be contained. The applicant will ensure that suitable infrastructure for liquid transfer to a tanker truck is provided. Therefore, the proposed project is in compliance with this section of the Zoning Bylaw.

III. Compliance with Section 7100 Flood Plain District

The southern portion of some of the southern-most parcels are located in the Flood Plain District. However, this project is not a subdivision nor is any encroachment activity being proposed where the flood zones are located on the subject parcels. The proposed occupancy of the facility at 1414 Massachusetts Avenue is located on the northern-most parcel, which is not within the Flood Plain District. Therefore, the proposed project is in compliance with this section of the Zoning Bylaw.

IV. Compliance with Section 8007 Site Plan Approval Decision

Site Plan Approval shall be granted upon determination by the Planning Board that new buildings or other site alterations have been designed in the following manner, after considering the qualities of the specific location, the proposed land use, the proposed building form, grading, egress points, and other aspects of the development. The Planning Board should review the proposed project for consistency with the following Site Plan Approval Requirements of the Zoning Bylaw:

1. The proposal shall comply with the purpose and intent of the Zoning Bylaw and with existing local and regional plans.

The proposal to occupy and use approximately 129,181 square feet of the existing two-story facility at 1414 Massachusetts Avenue to develop, manufacture and analyze small volume Pharmaceutical products fits well within the Office Park Zoning District in southwestern Boxborough. The applicant proposes to occupy approximately half of the currently vacant office building, bringing about 200 new jobs to Boxborough. The Town Planner finds the proposal complies with the purpose and intent of the Zoning Bylaw.

2. The development shall be integrated into the existing terrain and surrounding landscape and shall be designed to protect abutting properties and community amenities. To the extent possible, building sites shall be designed to minimize the use of wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains, hilltops; minimize obstruction of scenic vistas from publicly accessible locations; preserve unique natural, scenic and historic features; minimize tree, soil and vegetation removal; and maximize open space retention.

The Applicant is not proposing to erect any buildings at the property as they are only seeking to occupy and use the existing facility at 1414 Massachusetts Avenue. Therefore, the Town Planner finds the proposed project is well integrated into the existing terrain and surrounding landscape, and is designed to protect abutting properties and community amenities.

3. Architectural style shall be in harmony with the prevailing character and scale of buildings in the neighborhood and the Town through the use of appropriate building materials, screening, breaks in the roof and wall lines, and other architectural techniques. Proposed buildings shall relate harmoniously to each other.

The Applicant is not proposing to erect any buildings at the property as they are only seeking to occupy and use the existing facility at 1414 Massachusetts Avenue. Therefore, the Town Planner finds the architectural style of the proposed project to be in harmony with the prevailing character and scale of buildings in the neighborhood and the Town.

4. Adequate measures shall be proposed to prevent pollution of surface and ground water, to minimize erosion and sedimentation, to prevent changes in groundwater levels, to minimize potential for flooding, and to provide for stormwater drainage consistent with the functional equivalent of the Planning Board's Subdivision Rules & Regulations.

The Town's Consulting Engineer is recommending that the trench drain at the loading dock area be equipped with a gate valve as a precaution so that in the even of a spill, liquids could be contained in the immediate area and be prevented from entering the drainage system. The gate valve access would be identified by the appropriate signage, be included in the spill prevention plan, be included in the Drainage System Operations and Maintenance Plan including exercising the gate valve on a regularly scheduled basis. It is recommended that this be included as a condition of approval in the Board's decision.

The applicant is proposing to retrofit three manholes with Water Quality structures and to remediate and maintain the existing stormwater basin near the ballfields. The Consulting Engineer is recommending that these improvements be included as a condition of approval in the Board's decision.

5. Roadways and circulation system shall be designed to promote convenience and safety for both pedestrians and vehicles. Access roads by which the proposed development is reached shall be adequate in width, grade and construction to carry, without danger or congestion, the additional traffic that is generated from the development.

The Applicant is not proposing to construct any new roadways at the property as they are only seeking to occupy and use the existing facility at 1414 Massachusetts Avenue. The Applicant has indicated that there will be a total of 200 employee over two shifts. Vibalogics US, Inc., which has obtained approval from the Planning Board to occupy and use 65,923 square feet at the existing facility at 1414 Massachusetts Avenue, has stated that the maximum anticipated parking load would be 200 parking spaces. If Arranta Bio's Site Plan Approval Application were to be approved by the Planning Board, 400 parking spaces would be utilized. The current site plan has approximately 787 parking spaces, which would have generated significantly more vehicle trips than proposed. Per the current site plan, the Town Planner finds the roadways and circulation system for the project has been designed to promote convenience and safety for both pedestrians and vehicles.

6. Adequate buffers shall be provided to protect abutting properties from lighting, sight, sound, dust, and vibration.

The existing facility sits within a forested area with the building and parking lot set back from the Route 111/Massachusetts Avenue. The building and parking lot is also screened from abutting properties. The Town Planner finds the proposed project provides adequate buffers to protect abutting properties from lighting, sight, sound, dust, and vibration.

7. Adequate facilities shall be provided for water supply and for handling and disposal of waste and other production by-products.

This proposal would involve conducting research and development of new pharmaceuticals, the laboratories would use a variety of materials that are considered hazardous. As such, this use will be highly regulated by the Federal Food and Drug Administration, as well as the Department of Environmental Protection for the wastewater discharges. The Consulting Engineer is recommending that an Operations and Maintenance Plan for the overall site drainage system is required as a condition of approval in the Board's decision.

8. Any new building construction or other site alteration shall provide adequate access to each structure for fire and service equipment.

The Applicant is not proposing to erect any buildings at the property as they are only seeking to occupy and use the existing facility at 1414 Massachusetts Avenue. However, the Town's Consulting Engineer recommends that Arranta Bio work with Fire and Police Departments regarding the specialize equipment and appropriate emergency response required. As such, the Town Planner is recommending a condition requiring that the applicant work with the Fire and Police Departments to ensure compliance with 527 CMR 1.00: Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code.