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February 15, 2007

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CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS ON THE SINGLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PROJECT NAME : Proposed Retail Center
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Wilbraham
PROJECT WATERSHED : Chicopee and Connecticut
EOEA NUMBER : 13860
PROJECT PROPONENT : Merchants Wilbraham II LLC
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : January 9, 2007

As Secretary of Environmental Affairs, I hereby determine that the Single Environmental Impact Report (Single EIR) submitted on this project **adequately and properly complies** with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and with its implementing regulations (301 CMR 11.00).

Project Description

According to the Single EIR, the project consists of redevelopment of an existing commercial plaza to allow for the construction of a 68,635 square foot (sf) Big Y Supermarket and a 5,800 sf restaurant. A portion of the existing self-storage warehouse facility (approximately 22,880 sf) will be maintained and continue to operate at the rear of the site. The project also includes the replacement or upgrading of the site's utility and drainage system to accommodate the redevelopment. The existing surface parking areas will be reconfigured and expanded to provide an on-site supply of 386 parking spaces. The project will alter approximately 2,380 sf of Bordering Vegetated Wetland (BVW) and, as mitigation, will create approximately 4,760 sf of new BVW in the southern portion of the project site. The project will also temporarily alter approximately 680 sf of BVW in the southwest part of the site for the construction of the BVW wetland replication area.

The project will relocate access driveways to reduce curb cuts along Route 20. The project will include a new traffic signal at the western site driveway opposite the Wilbraham Crossing retail plaza, and the creation of a right-in, right-out secondary access driveway along the eastern property line. Internal access driveway connections are proposed to adjacent uses (Interskate 91 and Home Depot) to facilitate improved traffic flows on Route 20. The project is anticipated to generate 5,970 new vehicle trips per day (6,060 total) in association with the supermarket and restaurant uses.

MEPA Jurisdiction and Permitting Requirements

This project is subject to a mandatory EIR pursuant to Section 11.03(6)(a)(6) of the MEPA regulations, because it generates 3,000 or more new vehicle trips per day. The project will require a State Highway Access Permit for Route 20 from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway). It must comply with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for stormwater discharges. The project has already obtained an Order of Conditions from the Wilbraham Conservation Commission and a Special Permit from the Wilbraham Zoning Board of Appeals. Because the proponent is not seeking financial assistance from the Commonwealth for the project, MEPA jurisdiction extends to those aspects of the project that may have significant environmental impacts and that are within the subject matter of required or potentially required state permits. In this case, MEPA jurisdiction exists over transportation/traffic related issues.

MEPA History

In accordance with Section 11.05(7) of the MEPA regulations, the proponent submitted an Expanded ENF (EENF) with a request that I allow the proponent to fulfill its EIR obligations under MEPA with a Single EIR, rather than the usual process of a Draft and Final EIR. The EENF received an extended comment period pursuant to Section 11.06(8) of the MEPA regulations. In a Certificate issued on September 14, 2006, I found that the EENF met the regulatory requirements and I allowed the proponent to file a Single EIR in fulfillment of Section 11.03 of the MEPA regulations. The Certificate on the EENF laid out the issues to be addressed in the Single EIR.

Review of the Single EIR

The Single EIR included a general description of the proposed project and design alternatives. The project has been slightly modified since the filing of the EENF, including additional grading in the southeast corner of the subject property to facilitate site grading (and avoid the importation of fill), and an increase in the size of the on-site detention basin. None of the expanded grading work will be located within the 200-foot Riverfront Area or the 100-foot Buffer Zone. The proponent obtained an amended Order of Conditions from the Wilbraham Conservation Commission to accommodate these site design modifications.

The Single EIR provided expanded traffic analysis of two additional intersections at the request of MassHighway; Stony Hill Road at Old Boston Road (unsignalized intersection) and Route 20 (Boston Road) at Kent Road (signalized intersection). Traffic signal warrant analyses were performed at two intersections, including the Boston Road at West Site Driveway, and

Stony Hill Road at Old Boston Road, also at the request of MassHighway. The Single EIR provided additional information regarding project wastewater demand and permit requirements, operations and maintenance procedures for the proposed stormwater management system, potential construction impacts and mitigation, and sustainable design measures to be incorporated into the project.

Traffic/Transportation

As noted previously, the Single EIR presented an updated traffic study with supplemental information requested by MassHighway as part of the EENF review process. The Single EIR includes a conceptual program for internal signage, driveway connections, and pedestrian improvements. The proponent has committed to providing signs to direct traffic to signalized intersections, driveway connections to adjacent properties, and walkways and crosswalks to the extent practicable. I note in MassHighway's comment letter that the proponent has documented the agreement to procure the internal connecting roadways between the project site and the Home Depot and Soccer City/Interskate. The accommodation of cross-connection access easements between the Proposed Retail Center site and the existing Home Depot site does not change the provisions set forth in the Certification on the Final EIR for the Home Depot project (EOEA #6543) and will not necessitate the filing of a Notice of Project Change by Home Depot. I strongly encourage the proponent to finalize these agreements for cross connecting driveways. Furthermore, the Single EIR addresses the provision of a future bus stop for the Pioneer Valley Transportation Authority, and outlines a transportation demand management program. Finally, the Single EIR has provided sufficient information outlining traffic mitigation commitments related to intersection signalization, additional turning lanes, and traffic signal coordination efforts.

Mitigation and Draft Section 61 Findings

As required, the Single EIR included updated Draft Section 61 Findings. The proponent has committed to the following mitigation measures:

- Relocation of the West Site Driveway so that it aligns directly across from the Wilbraham Crossing East Driveway and installation of a four-phase actuated coordinated traffic signal with emergency preemption and exclusive left turn lanes;
- Coordination of the Boston Road (Route 20) at Home Depot/Ski Haus traffic control signal with the West Site Driveway traffic signal and the Stony Hill Road traffic signal;
- Coordination of the Stony Hill Road traffic signal with the West Site Driveway and Home Depot/Ski Haus driveways traffic signals;
- Provision of cross-connecting driveways to adjacent properties (Home Depot and Interskate 91);
- Provision of an internal signage program to guide vehicles from adjacent properties to the proposed traffic signal located at the West Site Driveway;
- Creation of a traffic monitoring plan reviewing the three signalized study area intersections (Stony Hill, Home Depot and the proposed site driveway) and adjusting

any signal timing of phasing modifications as necessary within 6-months following occupancy of the site;

Implementation of a Travel Demand Management (TDM) program to reduce project-related trips that include features such as: carpooling information, preferential parking, and staggered work hours.

- Provisions within the site plan to accommodate a bus shelter if the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) wishes to provide a bus route leading to the site.

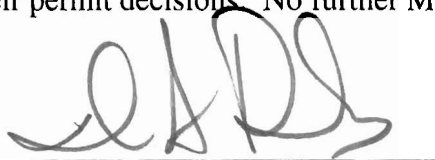
The Single EIR presents Draft Section 61 Findings that address mitigation measures. The final Section 61 Findings will be included with all state permits issued for this project, and will be considered binding upon the proponent as mitigation commitments. In accordance with Section 11.12 (5) (e) of the MEPA regulations, final Section 61 Findings must be forwarded by each permitting agency to the MEPA Office, which will publish a Notice of Availability in the Environmental Monitor. The proponent should provide an updated electronic copy of its proposed Section 61 Findings to MassHighway.

Conclusion

I find the Single EIR to be adequate and am allowing the project to proceed to the state agencies for permitting. The Single EIR contained adequate information on project alternatives, impacts, and mitigation, and provided the state permitting agencies with sufficient information to understand the environmental consequences of their permit decisions. No further MEPA review is required.

February 15, 2007

Date



Ian A. Bowles

Comments Received:

- 02/07/2007 Executive Office of Transportation
- 02/07/2007 Department of Environmental Protection -WERO

IAB/HSJ/hsj